

# The H · A · L · C · Y · O · N

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

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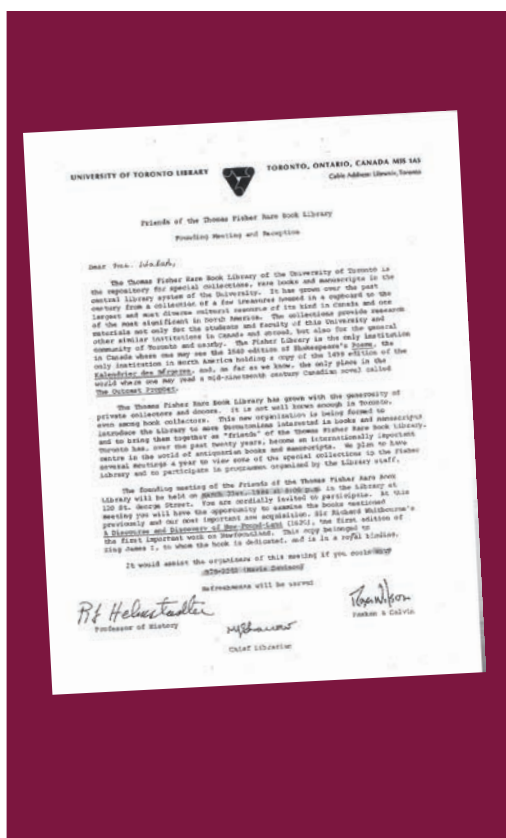
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## THANK YOU FOR BEING A FRIEND...

Loryl MacDonald

Director, Thomas Fisher Rare Book Library

**T**HIS YEAR, WE celebrate the fortieth anniversary of the Friends of the Thomas Fisher Library. In 1984, a Friends group was established to bring together those who wished to strengthen the library's rich collections and to promote greater awareness of the library's remarkable resources. The Friends of the Fisher Library support acquisitions, special projects, and public engagement programs. These include the publication of our award-winning exhibition catalogues, the four Friends' lectures, as well as numerous open houses, workshops, and special events that bring in thousands of visitors each year.

In addition to public engagement, the generosity of our Friends has been critical to the growth of our collections. The support of Friends through gift-in-kind and financial donations has made possible key acquisitions to develop Fisher's internationally renowned special collections. Gifts of books, manuscripts, and archives demonstrate the range

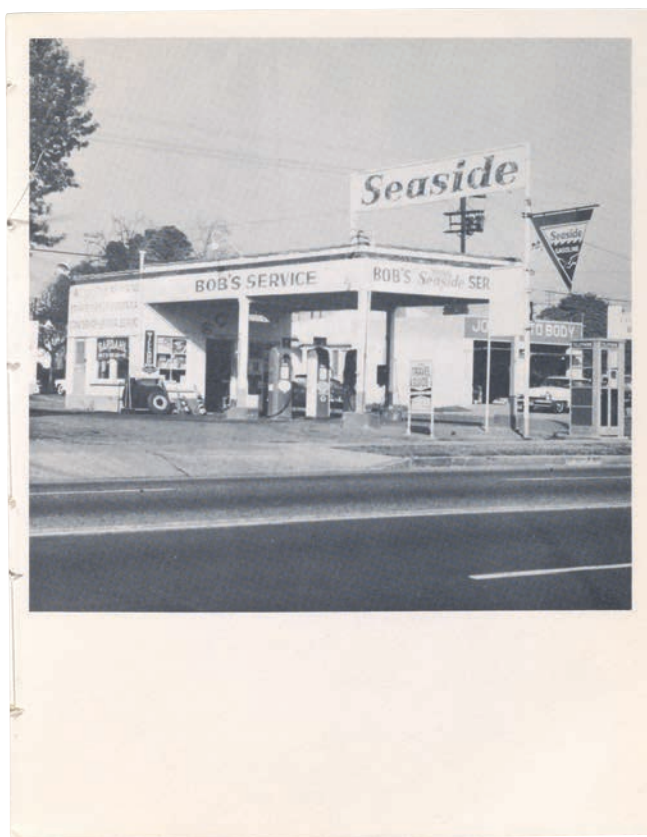
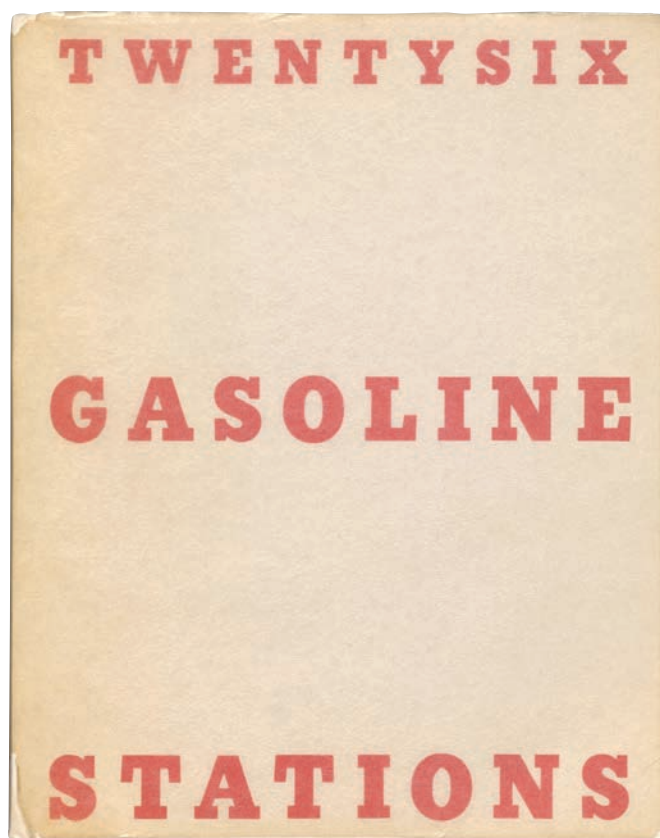
of interests of our donors and the breadth of research and teaching done at the university. We are also grateful to those who have made financial contributions for acquisitions by contributing funds to the Friends of Fisher, by arranging for bequests to be made from their estates, or by establishing endowed funds to support acquisitions in specific subject areas. For example, this past year, only through the Friends funds were we able to purchase a manuscript version of Sir John Mandeville's *Travels*, one of the most popular and influential works of the Middle Ages. Faculty have called this acquisition one of UTL's most important medieval manuscripts as it is believed to be the earliest surviving copy of the work. This would not have been possible without our Friends.

This issue of *The Halcyon* is a tribute to the Friends of the Fisher. The Head of Rare Books and Special Collections, David Fernández, reflects on the importance of friendship, including yours. Our colleagues, Hayat Abdulhakim, Leora Bromberg, Grant

Hurley, Julieann Mercer, Tim Perry, Nadav Sharon, John Shoesmith, and Andrew Stewart contribute fascinating articles on material acquired through Friends' support. Meanwhile, our UTL Advancement colleague, Michael Cassabon, introduces us to a new Friend, Neil Cochrane. Finally, our wonderful Friend, Marie Korey, discusses a very important and remarkable new acquisition purchased through the Richard G. Landon and Marie E. Korey Fund.

I thank our generous Friends who have for the last forty years made the Thomas Fisher Rare Book Library the institution it is today. This issue of *The Halcyon* is a tribute to your generosity and remarkable legacy for future generations of scholars. Thank you for being a Friend.

**COVER:** Cover of Marlene MacCallum's *sleep walk*. Article on page 3. **ABOVE:** Letter to Michael Walsh, inviting him to attend the founding meeting of the Friends of the Thomas Fisher Rare Book Library. Friends enjoy the 2024 John Seltzer and Mark Seltzer Memorial Lecture, *The Monster Collectors*, by Dr. Surekha Davies, PhD.



## FROM THE BANAL TO THE SUBLIME: PHOTOGRAPHIC ARTISTS' BOOKS

John Shoesmith

Special Collections and Outreach Librarian, Thomas Fisher Rare Book Library

**T**HERE IS A well-worn story about how the artist Ed Ruscha's book *Twentysix Gasoline Stations* was originally received by the library community. First published in 1963 in an edition of four hundred, the book consists solely of photographs and captions of, yes, twenty-six gasoline stations that Ruscha snapped on the famed Route 66 between Los Angeles and his native home of Oklahoma. Produced under Ruscha's own National Excelsior Press imprint, the artist did the due diligence of sending the book to the Library of Congress for legal deposit. The library's chief of the Exchange and Gift Division, however, returned the three dollar, forty-eight-page book to Ruscha, along with the following note: 'Dear Mr. Ruscha: I am, herewith, returning this copy of *Twentysix Gasoline Stations*, which the Library of Congress does not wish to add to its collection. We are, nevertheless, deeply grateful for your thoughtful consideration of

our interests'. Even though today the book is considered one of the most important and influential artists' books of the past sixty years, the Library of Congress still does not have a copy in its holdings.

Artists' books have long been a collecting challenge for libraries. Not only are they difficult to properly define, the sheer range and scope of what's produced under the label of artists' books is daunting for even the most seasoned special collections librarian. Perhaps the best definition comes via Johanna Drucker in her book *The Century of Artists' Books* (1995): that they are works by artists self-conscious about book form, rather than merely highly artistic books. Over the past decade, the Fisher has made great strides in building up its artists' book collection, both important historical representations of the form and contemporary works produced by Canadian and international artists. Still, like all our collections, there are

always gaps to fill. That's been particularly true of the types of works produced by artists like Ruscha: photographic artists' books.

It was very exciting then to finally add the seminal *Twentysix Gasoline Stations* to the library this year. While it may not be the difficult-to-find—and expensive—first edition, all three editions released in the 1960s are highly prized. There is virtually no difference in content between any of the three except that only the first comes in a numbered edition. The second edition, released in 1967, had a print run of five hundred. Two years later, Ruscha printed a third edition of three thousand copies, which is the edition the Fisher purchased. It's a pristine copy, still in its original and rare semi-transparent glassine wrapper.

It may be surprising that a book so modest and seemingly banal—its content is nothing more or nothing less than what its title promises—has been so influential.



**OPENING PAGE:** Cover and inside page from Ed Ruscha's *Twentysix Gasoline Stations*. **THIS PAGE:** Front cover, inside spreads, and back cover from Michael Snow's *Cover to Cover*. **FACING PAGE, TOP:** Covers of the four volumes of Marlene MacCallum's *where steps stop*. **FACING PAGE, BOTTOM:** Interior spread from MacCallum's *sleep walk*.



In fact, it's often referred to as the first true 'modern' artist's book. Part of the appeal is its simple aesthetic, particularly the flatness of the black-and-white photography. There is nothing flashy about any of the minimalist photographs, although there is a uniformity to the images: most are taken from across the highway from the stations themselves, and few contain cars or human figures. That, essentially, is the point: the work is reactionary in that it eschews the highly stylized photography and design that was in vogue in the 1960s. It also demonstrated to other artists that books, particularly produced on a seemingly small scale, were a true and viable vehicle for artistic expression. Ruscha, who is often assigned to the world of pop art, continued to produce artists' books throughout the 1960s and into the 1970s. Along with *Twentysix Gasoline Stations*, the Fisher also purchased his 1970 work *Some Los Angeles Apartments*, but his first remains his most celebrated.

Rivalling Ruscha's artistic influence over the past fifty years is Canada's own Michael Snow. While Snow worked in different media including film, music, and sculpture and will be familiar to many via his public art installations in Toronto, such as the life-sized geese at Eaton Centre and the sculptures of cheering

fans emerging from one of the facades at the SkyDome, he also produced artists' books, including the one that is often singled out as his most important: *Cover to Cover*. Published by the Nova Scotia College of Art & Design in 1975, it draws upon his previous success as an experimental filmmaker to create nothing short of a photographic masterwork. We were delighted to add the book to our collections this past year after purchasing it at the Toronto Antiquarian Book Fair. In a nice twist, the book was acquired via the endowed fund of experimentalist and iconoclast, writer Crad Kilodney.

Much like Ruscha's work, *Cover to Cover* relies exclusively on photography. Also like Ruscha's work, the title is literal: it documents the journey of the character in the book, in this case Snow himself, from the front cover of the book, showing a closed door, to the back cover which shows a hand holding a photograph of the other side of the same door. There is a narrative here: it follows Snow as he leaves a house, drives around town, and eventually ends back at the house, but it is disjointed and at times jarring. This seems deliberate: Snow is trying to convey through photographic images, which are often indecipherable and nonsensical, that most of our day's activities

are non-linear, scattered, and haphazard. Snow also toys with the reader's perception via the book form itself, particularly when halfway through it must be rotated as the images appear upside down. Getting to the end of the book doesn't necessarily mean the narrative is over: by rotating it again, it can then be read from back to front, or, as the title implies, cover to cover. Unlike *Twentysix Gasoline Stations*, which utilizes white space to great effect, Snow uses the full pages of the book with no white space and no text, with the images bleeding to the very edges of the pages. It also uses two photographers, who are often taking the same pose of Snow via different angles and represented on the recto and verso of a two-page spread. This is a book that, like all great art, is challenging, demanding, and not easily digestible on initial 'reading', requiring multiple interactions.

While the Fisher continues to fill gaps with these classic artists' books, we are also committed to supporting artists currently working in the book medium. One such artist is Marlene MacCallum, who came to our attention via a presentation she gave last May at the Bibliographical Society of Canada conference. Originally from Newfoundland and Labrador, she has since relocated to



Prince Edward County in Ontario, and with that move she has altered her artistic practice, moving away from single photogravure prints to integrating her photographs into book works. At the BSC conference, she was presenting on her work *sleep walk*. As she explained in her talk, the book came out of her walks along Lake Ontario, and the photographs she took from the same vantage point at the edge of the lake. Repeating this over a series of months, she accumulated a visual record of how the sky, the water, and the land changed over time. 'My conception of this vast lake as a static entity was transformed into a realization of the mutability, vulnerability, and adaptability of this environment', she writes in the artist's statement about the book on her website. 'This process of making *sleep walk* was a discovery of the phenomena of shifting states: natural, physical, social and psychological'.<sup>1</sup>

MacCallum has divided the book into seven sections, and while she's interspersed

each section with minimal text, it's the sheer sensual beauty of the photographs, which like the *Snow* book are full-page bleeds, and how beautifully she's bound the book, that make this a pleasure to experience. It's a magical and contemplative work: in that spirit, she's chosen as well not to include a title page or a colophon within the book, which adds to its mystery (while at the same time making it a challenge for a cataloguing librarian). Earlier this year, MacCallum released what is very much a complementary piece to *sleep walk*. A four-part photographic work titled *where steps stop*, it is meant to represent the visual convergence of the flux of water, sky, and the ground. As MacCallum herself explains in separate printed material she includes with the book, it's also about the nature of printing: 'How the record of an ephemeral situation is transformed to become a fixed printed object'. She again uses the lake and water as her starting points, but this time she explores different themes within

to identify cloud formations. MacCallum experiments with printing with the third volume, *surfaces murmur*, layering the five digital prints with polymer photogravure intaglio printing. As she writes: 'The distinct layers of printing generate photographic and graphic realities that echo both the human presence and the natural world'. The fourth and final volume, *steps stop*, was inspired by the work of composer Arvo Pärt, where she echoes his use of repetition of melodic lines via the six images of the sky, water, and land taken by the lake's edge. While each of these volumes, all well-conceived and executed, can stand on its own merits, together they form a quartet of sublime beauty.

While all three artists, Ruscha, Snow and, MacCallum, use photography as their primary palette for these books, each comes with its own unique sensibility. *Twentysix Gasoline Stations* offers up a slice of seemingly mundane Americana; Snow pushes the boundaries of conceptual art; and MacCallum celebrates the majesty of our natural environment. They display the broad arc that photographic artists' books can capture, and why they are and will continue to be an important medium for artistic expression.



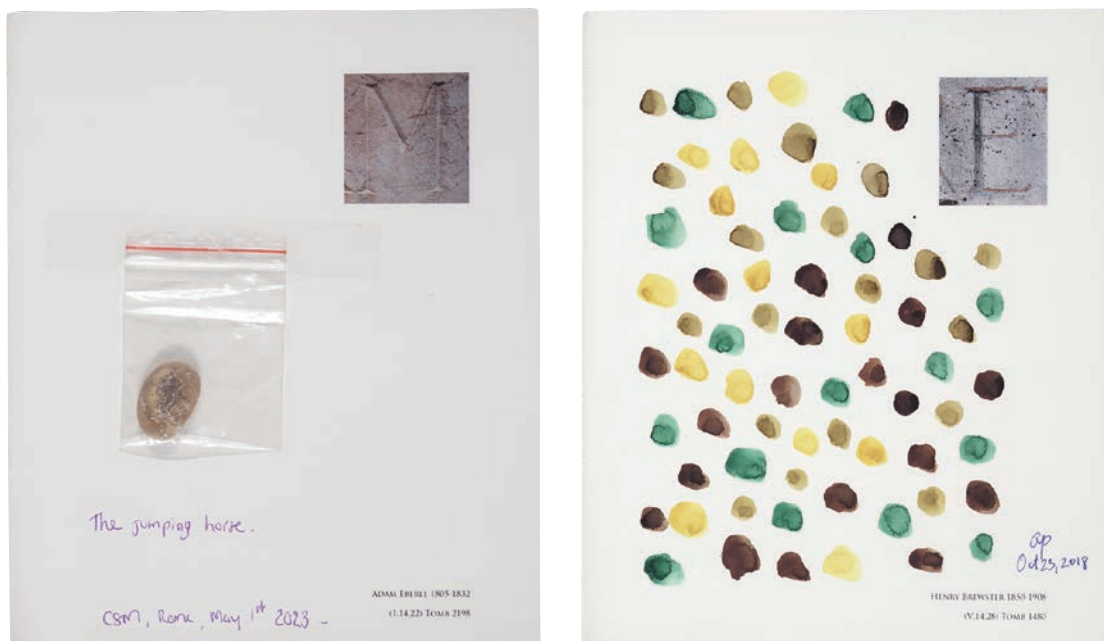
the four separate volumes.

The first, *when watercolours*, delivers precisely on its title as it contains four images of the lake changing colour as summer shifts into autumn. The second, *below fragrant skies*, is meant to evoke 'memories conjured by the wind, air pressure and weather environments'. She incorporates letterpress printed words

## Endnotes

- <sup>1</sup> Marlene MacCallum, "sleep walk," <https://www.marlenemacallum.com/sleep-walk/>.





## EPHEMERA REMEMBERED: JANICE GURNEY'S *TRANSITORY*

Grant Hurley

Canadiana Librarian, Thomas Fisher Rare Book Library

**T**RANSITORY THINGS, WE are ephemera in memory; both the rememberer and the remembered'. So says Marcus Aurelius in book four, line thirty-five of his *Meditations* according to a translation by Canadian contemporary artist Janice Gurney. It's an apt reflection on the work of a memory institution like the Thomas Fisher Rare Book Library, whose mere fifty years of existence pales in comparison with the hundreds of years lived by many of the books on its shelves. Despite being dedicated to the work of preserving memory, only fragments of past lives, histories, and the relationships between people and their books and archives are passed down to us to keep. And sometimes what has been forgotten tells us as much as what is remembered. It was therefore quite appropriate that the library acquired Gurney's book work *Transitory, with marginalia written by several hands* (2018) that centres Aurelius' meditation among a network of rememberers.

*Transitory* consists of ten volumes, each identical in form, but individually transformed by the unique triangulation of the artist, her social network, and a shared relationship with place. Each book spells out a letter from

Aurelius' meditation one page at a time using photographs of letterforms on tombstones in the Protestant Cemetery in Rome. The site of the stone, the name of the person memorialized, and their birth and death dates are recorded on each page. Letters from the tombs of notables like Percy Bysshe Shelley and Antonio Gramsci are there, but many lesser-known residents are represented too, including a cat named Romeo who died in 2006. For spaces and punctuation, Gurney uses other forms from the plant and animal life of the cemetery, such as a small snail's shell to represent a comma, or patterns of moss on stone for spaces, a reminder that cemeteries are not exclusively places of the dead. Gurney had ten copies of this book printed, hand-bound, and enclosed in a beautiful leather slipcase reminiscent of a traveller's journal by Erin Ciula of Il Torchio in Florence. She then passed these copies on to friends and collaborators who had themselves visited the Protestant Cemetery and asked them to annotate the book in some fashion, pulling from their memories of being in this place. Some contributors wrote journal entries, others added drawings and paintings or glued in photographs, and in one case taped in a tiny

stone in a plastic bag. Among the twenty-two annotators are artists Jamelie Hassan, Yam Lau, and Andy Patton; poets George Amabile and Roo Borson; botanist Giulia Caneva; and journalist Eric Reguly. The soft leather cases, a little scuffed from these journeys between hands, already show the books as having had a rich life following their creation.

*Transitory* was shown at the Birch Contemporary Gallery in Toronto in June 2022 and subsequently at Brock University before arriving at the Fisher Library last spring. In its new home, *Transitory* resonates with many materials holding histories of annotation and inscription, but also works in the collection by and about Marcus Aurelius, dating to as early as 1566 in English, and including an edition of the first English translation of the *Meditations* from 1635.

Gurney has been working with the words of Marcus Aurelius as inspiration since she first came across a quotation in P.D. James' book *Original Sin* (1994). As she told me over email from Rome, 'A fragment of a meditation was spoken as part of a eulogy for a murder victim. I was immediately drawn to the beauty of the thought and its connection to a past that

**FACING PAGE, LEFT TO RIGHT:** Stone taped onto page by *Transitory* annotator Cristina S. Martinez. Page painted by *Transitory* annotator Andy Patton.  
**BELOW:** The leather slipcase for *Transitory*.



resonates so strongly in the present'. Since then, she has produced numerous works that respond to the *Meditations*, including a series of works called *Punctuation in Translation* started in 1998, where Gurney makes paintings of only the punctuation from a translation of a meditation, intentionally surfacing the often-forgotten interventions of translators over time.

When the Fisher acquired *Transitory*, Gurney also supplied the library with a small book called *A Day* (2014) that serves as a prototype for the later work. *A Day* is simpler in that it consists of the same mediation from Aurelius (this time in a 1964 translation by Maxwell Staniforth) also spelled out one letter per page using photographs of letterforms from the National Roman Museum. Unlike *Transitory*, which contains an inserted card that writes out the full meditation, the reader of *A Day* must make out each word by paging through the book itself. Doing so creates a meditative experience, forcing the reader to carefully consider each letter in turn to compose the whole. Whereas *A Day* is a quieter, more solitary experience of careful reading, *Transitory* brings forth a tumult of

voices and visual ideas. However, both works subtly decentre notions of both time and singular authorship in bookmaking. The text belongs to Marcus Aurelius via a translator. The letterforms are borrowed from stone carved by artisans decades or centuries previous. The annotations in *Transitory* transform the work completely into a canvas for cooperative artistic expression, memory making, and memory keeping. In addition, a few copies of the book were held back by Gurney for further annotation before joining their comrades at the library, calling into question whether the work was completed in 2018 (as its date of printing) or when its annotations cease to transform it.

In bringing these voices and sources together, Gurney looks towards networks of relation and the memory encoded in those relationships as a creative force. As she says in the artist statement for *Transitory*, 'the book forms a network of the living and the dead'. We could say the same for the many thousands of volumes in the Fisher's collections and the role of our staff in connecting old books with new readers each day.



## NEW SPECIAL COLLECTIONS ACCESS SYSTEM NOW LIVE!

On your next trip to the Reading Room, you will be introduced to the new Special Collections Access system which provides a user-friendly interface for reader registration and accessing archives, rare books, and special collections.

Special Collections Access implements the Aeon software developed specifically for archives and special collections by Atlas Systems. The system is now available to readers making appointments to consult material in the Department of Rare Books and Special Collections and the University of Toronto Archives and Records Management Services (UTARMS) at the Thomas Fisher Rare Book Library, along with the reading room in the Victoria University Library Special Collections. The University of Toronto Libraries is the first institution in Canada to implement Aeon, which has a wide adoption in the United States.

The new Special Collections Access will lower barriers to consulting rare books and archival materials onsite, streamline communications with our users, and enable our units to accurately understand the usage of our collections. Please visit this link to register, request materials, and book an appointment: [aeon.library.utoronto.ca](http://aeon.library.utoronto.ca).





## PEACOCKS, SNAILS, AND RIPPLES: FEELING MARBLED

Julieann Mercer

Graduate Student Library Assistant, Thomas Fisher Rare Book Library

THE RECENTLY ACQUIRED artists' book *Marbled Paper* by Barbara Hodgson and Claudia Cohen (2023) is a delight to the senses. A sand-coloured box covered with soft linen protects the book's gilt-tooled, red leather binding with marbled paper inlay. Turning its thick, textured pages, you become visually absorbed in its meticulous details, from its visible watermarks to its decorated endpapers and marbled initial letter. Complementing the book's visual charm are fifty-one samples of different types of paper with marbled patterns that encourage tactile engagement. Each paper sample invites readers to feel how it differs from or is like previous and subsequent examples while looking at the mesmerizing swirls and shapes on its surface. Hodgson asserts that marbling literature hardly discusses paper texture and choices 'aside from warnings about what is not suitable'.<sup>1</sup> In response, the book artists crafted *Marbled Paper* as a visual and tactile exploration of how paper types affect the art form.

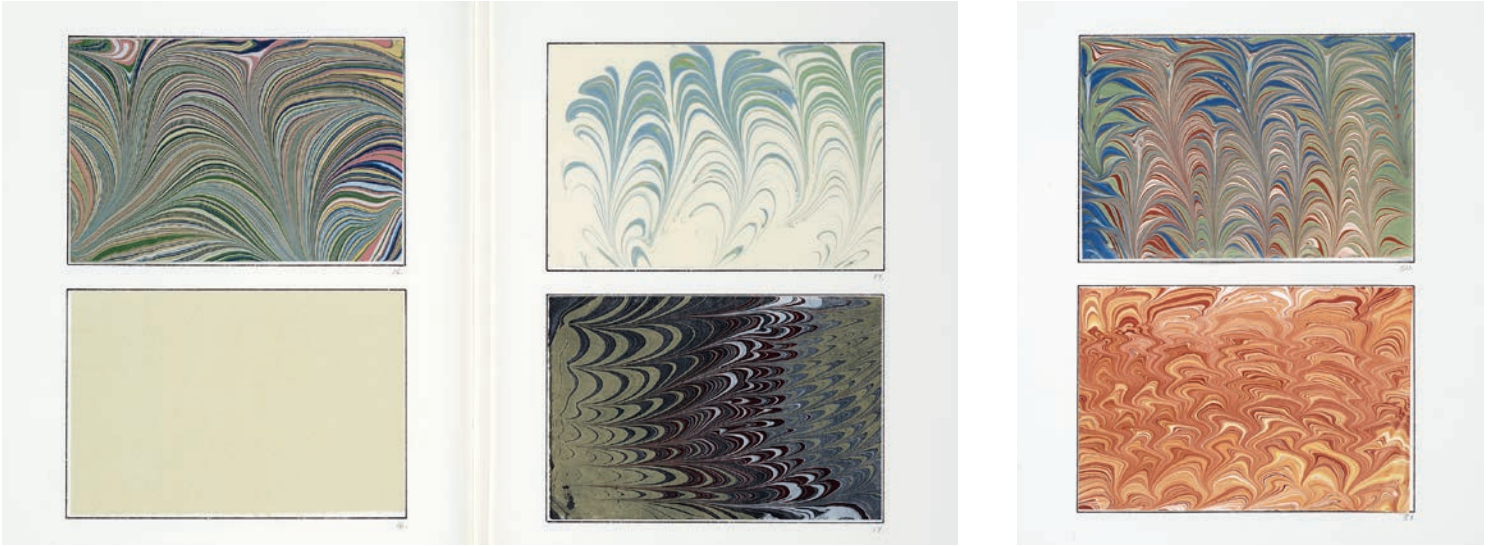


Since meeting in 2005 and forging a friendship, Hodgson and Cohen have worked collaboratively on several artists' books and recently established the Byzantium imprint. Hodgson writes and designs Byzantium's books, describing how she focuses on 'specific aspects of design and paper arts', while Cohen binds the materials and designs their boxes, in addition to 'enthusiastically [hunting] down the historical samples frequently included in their books'.<sup>2</sup> *Paper Botanists* (2022), another one of their collaborations also held by the library, greets readers with distinct smells from real pressed flowers and plant samples enclosed in the book. The artists explain they 'are typically able to spend several hundred hours per copy illuminating the printed sheets with original handwork, including art and graphic samples', which is evident in the level of detail and unique materials put into each copy.<sup>3</sup>

Through *Marbled Paper*, the book artists contribute practical research about marbling, a popular art form used to decorate endpapers,



**FACING PAGE, TOP:** Arches watermark (enhanced for print) visible to the right of paper sample 27, Strathmore Charcoal 500 series, a Western machine-made paper that feels soft. **FACING PAGE, BOTTOM:** Marbled initial 'M' in the introduction to *Marbled Paper*. **BELOW, LEFT TO RIGHT:** Samples of Western mould-made paper that feel textured. 16: Guarro Ingres, laid. 17: Hahnemühle Ingres, laid. Eastern machine-made paper sample 51, calligraphy paper, that feels thin and delicate, almost like tissue paper.



bindings, and the edges of text blocks for hundreds of years. Richard J. Wolfe remarks that despite its popularity, it remains ‘the most obscure, and least investigated and understood, of all aspects of the book arts’.<sup>4</sup> This is surprising considering how frequently we see marbling in everyday life, from fine press books to household objects. The art form can also be found in contemporary art: one notable and local example is the artist Shannon Garden-Smith’s recent work, *Snail work, or give the colours what turns you please (Bouquet)*. Exhibited in 2023 at Patel Brown, a contemporary art gallery in Toronto, the installation invited visitors to walk on top of colourful marbled sand intricately spread on the gallery floor. While Garden-Smith’s design changed over time from people stepping on and diminishing its pattern, Hodgson and Cohen emphasize the art form’s idiosyncrasies by demonstrating how its patterns can be absorbed and its colours softened or enhanced by certain types of paper. The way the patterns dance in *Marbled Paper* evokes vibrational movements that reflect the creation process. Marblers place coloured ink—often combined with a surfactant or other chemical additive to help it float—onto the surface of a liquid in a tub or container, and use a variety of tools, from combs to sticks, to make patterns in the floating ink. Once the desired pattern is achieved, the artist places a sheet of paper on top and carefully lifts the pattern from

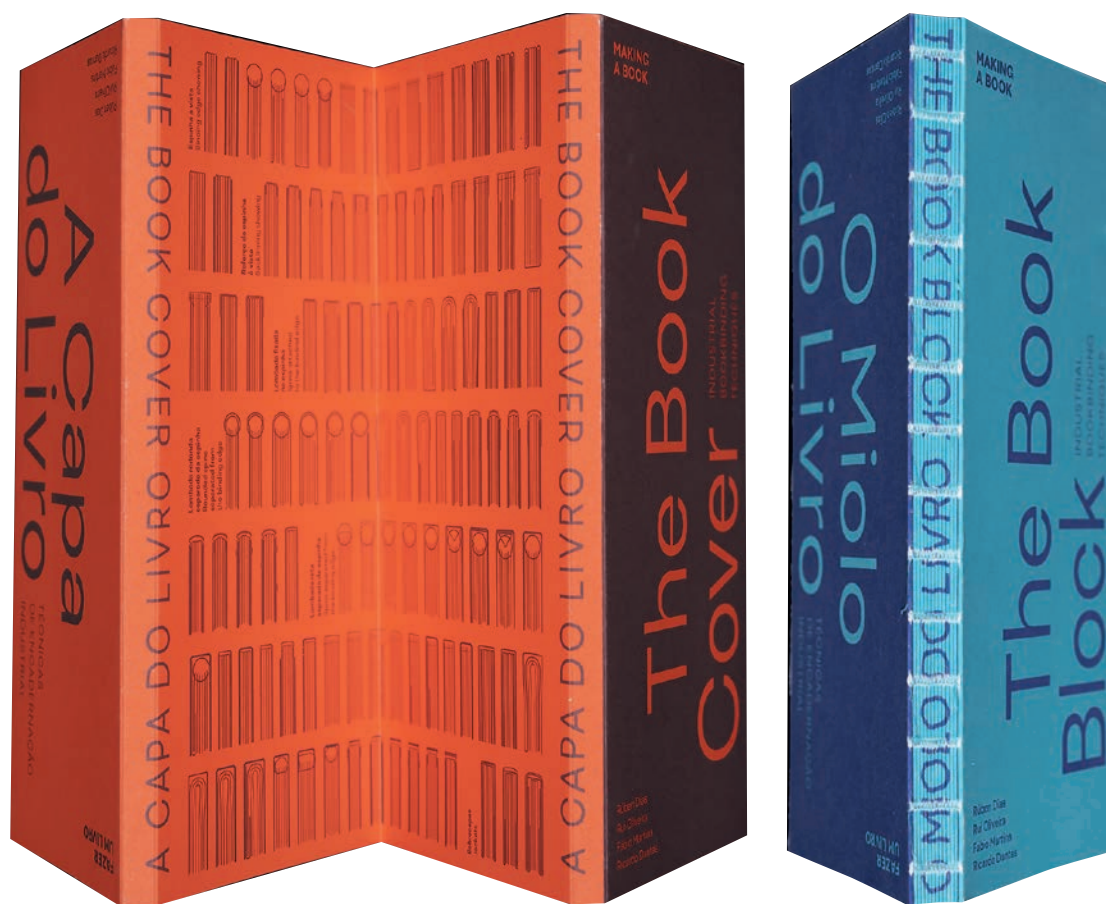
the liquid onto the paper. Marblers can create several types of patterns, from shapes that look like peacock feathers, snails, or the circular, iridescent shells you might find on a beach, to nonpareil patterns that look like the rippled reflections of the trees and sky that you sometimes see in bodies of water. Last summer, I learned how contemplative the practice can be during an introductory marbling class, which was taught at the Clark Centre for the Arts in Scarborough by Liz Menard, a local artist with a selection of books also collected by the library. The process made me hyperaware of my movements as I tried to prevent the tub of liquid from shaking and changing the swirled pattern. Even dropping the coloured ink into the tub of liquid required a careful motion to prevent the ink from sinking to the bottom.

Just as marblers perfect their craft through thoughtful movement, *Marbled Paper* teaches readers about the art form through touch. Tactile learning is predominantly encouraged when we are children, through sturdy books with thick, hard-to-rip pages filled with interesting textures and materials. As adults, we almost lose this sense of play with reading since most books convey ideas with words. Alex C. Purves explains in *Touch and the Ancient Senses* that touch gives us ‘the ability to perceive such different qualities as temperature, pressure, moisture, thickness, texture, weight and vibration’.<sup>5</sup> Feeling the different paper samples gives readers a sense

of their preferences or favourites in terms of texture or weight. Tactile learning also makes the material a ‘connective surface’. J. D. Sargan explains that books ‘pass from hand to hand and on their surfaces go the touch of previous readers, whose experiences link them to further networks of books read and shared’.<sup>6</sup> Each reader is connected by touch, regardless of their diverse backgrounds, time, and place. Echoing the collaborative nature of *Marbled Paper* and its spirit of friendship, the sensory book links marbling enthusiasts and book lovers alike through a keen curiosity about book arts.

## Endnotes

- <sup>1</sup> Barbara Hodgson, *Marbled Paper* (Vancouver, British Columbia: Byzantium, 2023).
- <sup>2</sup> “About,” Byzantium, last modified April 25, 2024, <http://www.heavenlymonkey.com/ByzantiumAbout.html>.
- <sup>3</sup> Byzantium, “About.”
- <sup>4</sup> Richard J. Wolfe, *Marbled Paper: Its History, Techniques, and Patterns* (New Castle, Delaware: Oak Knoll Press, 2018), 1.
- <sup>5</sup> Alex C. Purves, *Touch and the Ancient Senses* (Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge, 2018), 2.
- <sup>6</sup> J. D. Sargan, “What Could a Trans Book History Look Like? Toward Trans Codicology,” *Criticism (Detroit)* 64, no. 3–4 (2023): 581.



## BOOKS ABOUT BOOKS: INTERACTIVE AND VISUAL REFERENCE MATERIALS

Leora Bromberg

Acquisitions Specialist, Thomas Fisher Rare Book Library

**P**ROVIDING REFERENCE SERVICES to assist readers with using our collections is integral to our day-to-day work here at Rare Books and Special Collections. While much of this work involves personalized, hands-on support for readers, we can also direct them to supplementary materials in our reference collection to help contextualize the unique and valuable items in our holdings. Located in the reference area and Reading Room on the first floor of the Fisher Library, the reference collection is available for visitors and researchers to browse. Here, researchers can expect to find texts such as encyclopedias, dictionaries, bibliographies, and indices. These secondary sources support our collections by serving as guides to topics like book history and provenance or offering insight into material aspects of the book such as paper types, book-

binding techniques, and historical methods of production. By extension, these resources also offer insight into adjacent disciplines like publishing and the book arts. Together these collections aid in teaching and outreach; identifying, describing, and cataloguing rare books and archival materials; and informing preservation and conservation efforts. In some cases, traditional reference texts like bibliographies may be dense or address niche areas of study that might not feel approachable to new audiences. Our recent purchases for the reference collection take this into consideration and reflect the ever-changing research and learning needs of our readers.

Some of our other holdings complement the main reference collection, such as the L. B. Duff Collection which includes materials relating to book history and print culture.

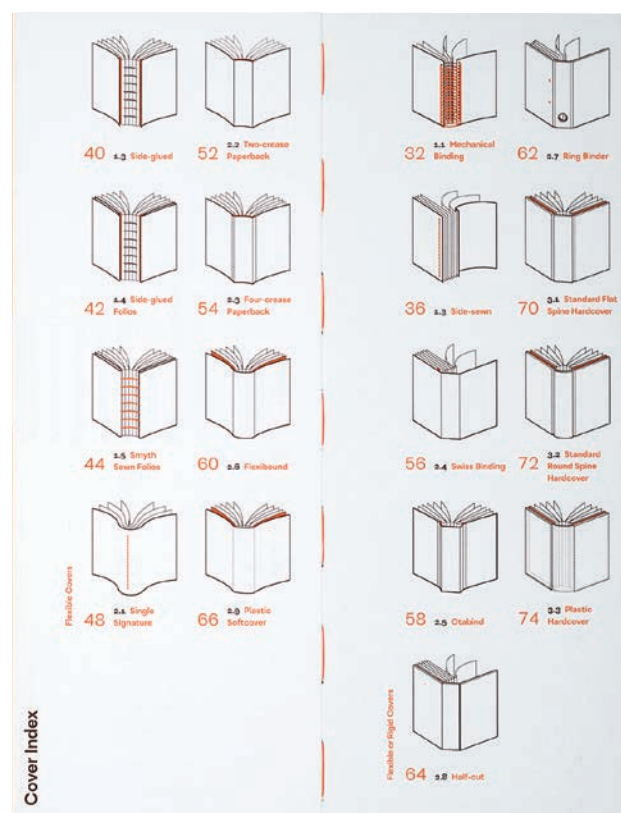
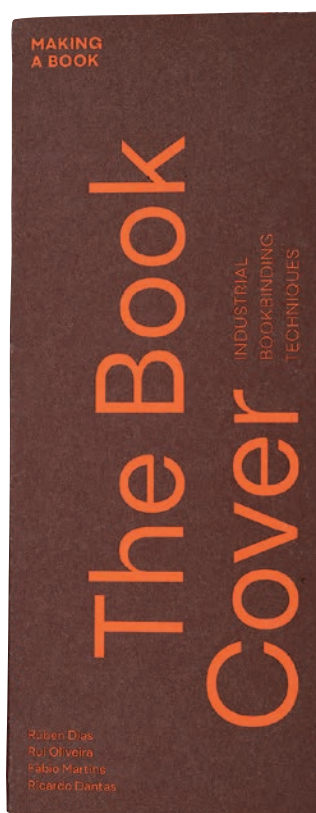
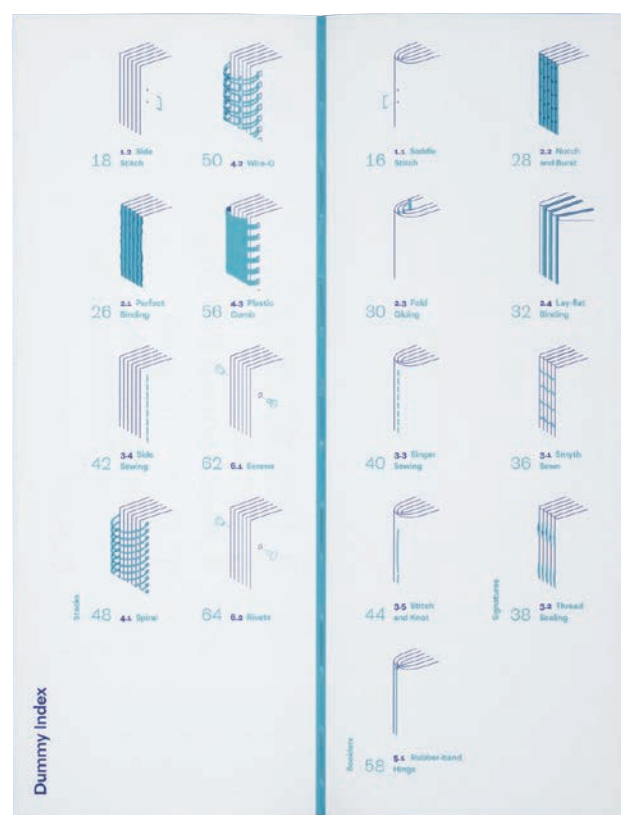
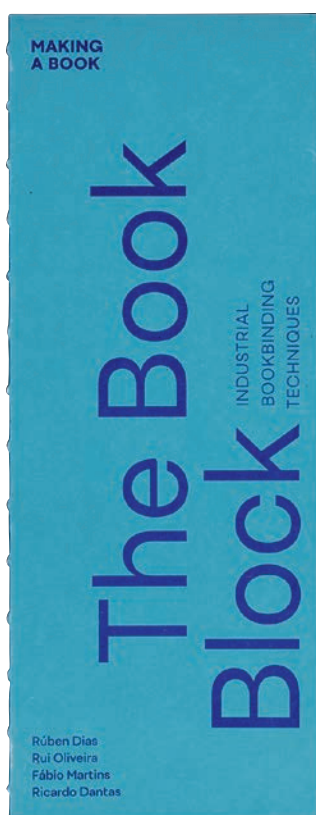
These collections represent what we typically refer to as ‘books about books’, which is one of the library’s subject strengths. Many of our new reference materials fall into this category, with a focus on texts relating to bookmaking and book arts. What distinguishes these new additions is that many of them depart from the conventions of standard reference texts to offer more creative, visual, and interactive approaches geared towards a more general readership. Many of these works also make efforts to highlight the contributions of individuals and communities that have traditionally been underrepresented or marginalized in various fields of the book arts.

Books like *The Book Block / O miolo do livro* (2019) and *The Book Cover / A capa do livro* (2021) use colourful visuals to break down bookbinding techniques into actionable



steps while also familiarizing readers with the English and Portuguese terminology used in the industry. These books are playfully aware of their materiality, serving as examples of special formats and binding techniques themselves. Others, like *Libromancia: Modelo para armar* (2024; 'Bibliomancy: Model to Assemble') or *Plagie, copie, manipule, robe, reescriba este libro* (2023; 'Plagiarize, Copy, Manipulate, Steal, Rewrite this Book') challenge how bookmakers and other creators interact with reference texts. In the spirit of bibliomancy (the practice of making predictions by interpreting randomly selected passages in books), *Libromancia* invites non-linear readings and ideating. These books also aim to reframe publishing as a form of activism and memory work within the context of Latin American print culture. Some of the other recent arrivals feature moving or interactive elements, as is the case in Kelli Anderson's *ABRACADABRA: An Interactive Examination of Letterforms and Technology* (2022), which invites readers to project their phone's flashlight through cut-outs and movable inserts to learn about concepts like phototypesetting and early animation techniques. Many more vibrant and visual contemporary reference works arrived as selections curated by the Miriam Gallery and Letra Muerta in New York City, which aim to decentralize traditional reference collections by amplifying the voices of women graphic designers and non-Western perspectives.

Collecting examples of more experimental approaches to reference not only broadens the collection's potential use, but also supports efforts to create a space that is welcoming to visitors and researchers from diverse backgrounds. In doing so, we create opportunities to foster new connections and collaborations. Researchers visiting the Reading Room to study visual elements such as decorated papers as sources of inspiration for contemporary artwork is certainly becoming a more common practice (see Julieann Mercer's article in this issue for further examples). Moreover, many of our ongoing outreach initiatives invite artists and bookmakers into the library, such as the ARCANA collaborative project, which pairs Fisher librarians with contemporary artists to publish a series of artists' books inspired by our holdings. Another way the library connects with artists is by hosting class visits, such as a recent seminar facilitated for second-year Print Media students from Sheridan College. During this seminar, students engaged with a variety of artists' books from the collection in preparation for creating their own for their final projects. Book artists and enthusiasts

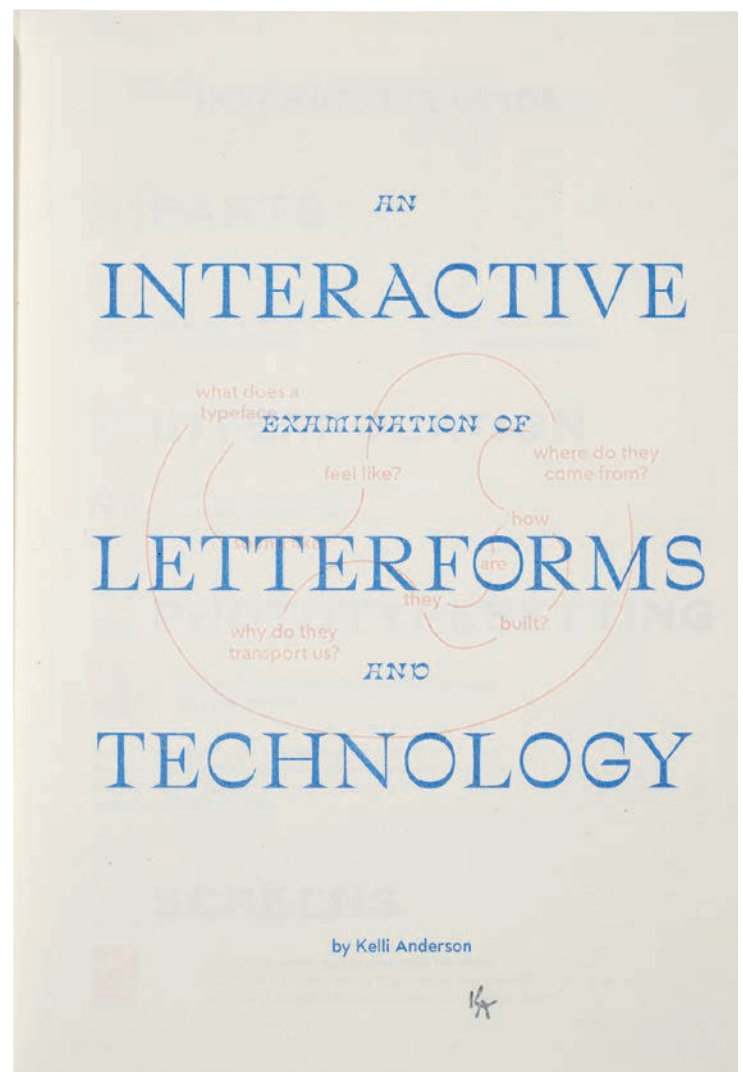
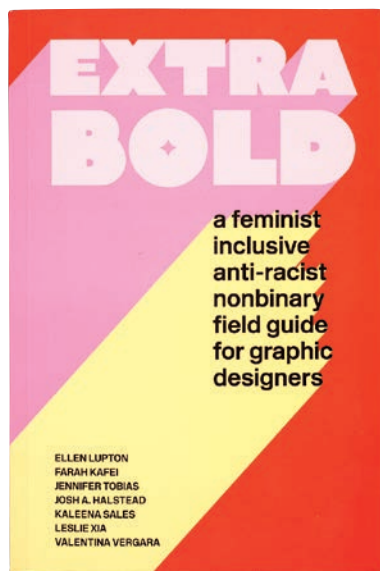
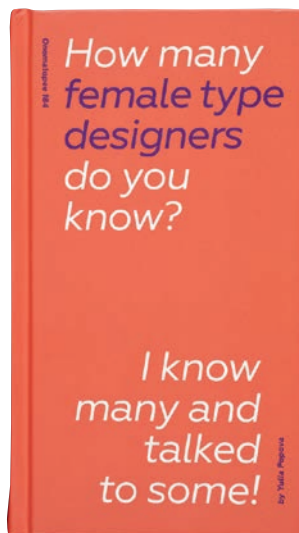
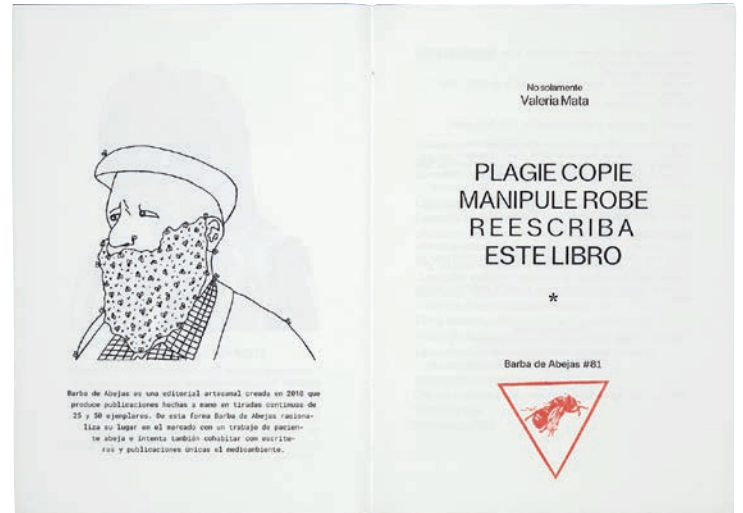
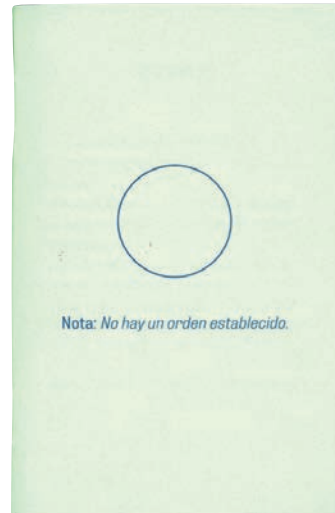


**FACING PAGE AND ABOVE:** *The Book Block / O miolo do livro* (2019) and *The Book Cover / A capa do livro* (2021) by Rúben Dias, Rui Oliveira, Fábio Martins and Ricardo Dantas (Itemzero & Gráfica Maiadouro: Espinho, Portugal).

alike also have the Fisher Library's Small and Fine Press Fair to look forward to this year, coming up on 7 September 2024. Through

these events and collaborations, alongside developing our reference collections and keeping up with advancements in scholarship

and research, we are better able to facilitate meaningful interactions between visitors and our collections.



**CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT:** *Libromancia: Modelo para armar* (Chile: Kikuyo Editorial, 2024). *Plagie, copie, manipule, robe, reescriba este libro* by Valeria Mata (Buenos Aires: Barba de Abejas, 2023). • *ABRACADABRA: An Interactive Examination of Letterforms and Technology* by Kelli Anderson (New York: Kelli Anderson, Center for Book Arts, 2022). • *Extra Bold: A Feminist, Inclusive, Anti-Racist, Nonbinary Field Guide for Graphic Designers* by Ellen Lupton, Farah Kafei, Jennifer Tobias, Josh A. Halstead, Kaleena Sales, Leslie Xia and Valentina Vergara (Hudson, New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 2021). • *How Many Female Type Designers Do You Know? I Know Many and Talked to Some!* by Yulia Popova (Eindhoven: Onomatopoe Projects, 2021).



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## 2023–2024

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## HONOURING HERITAGE AND FOSTERING FUTURE GENERATIONS: THE LEGACY OF NEIL COCHRANE AT THE FISHER LIBRARY

Michael Cassabon

Director of Advancement, University of Toronto Libraries

**A**T THE THOMAS Fisher Rare Book Library, the enduring spirit of giving and community support plays a crucial role in our sustained excellence. Among the ways alumni and friends contribute, planned giving stands out for its profound and lasting impact. This form of giving not only offers significant tax benefits but also allows donors to create a meaningful legacy. One striking example of this is Neil Cochrane, a retired book designer and art director, whose passion for books and gardening inspired the creation of the Neil Fraser Cochrane Florialia Fund at the Thomas Fisher Rare Book Library. Neil's bequest supports the acquisition of pre-nineteenth-century English literature on gardens and plants, aligning with his personal heritage and interests.

Neil's journey with the Fisher Library began during the COVID-19 pandemic, a period that, despite its challenges, did not hinder his ability to make a significant impact. He worked closely with the University of

Toronto Libraries to establish a fund that not only honours his family's longstanding tradition in the practical arts but also enriches the university's collection, ensuring that future generations have access to valuable resources.

The process, as Neil describes, was 'signed, sealed, and delivered' with ease, thanks to the supportive and efficient staff at U of T. This ease of process is something U of T prides itself on, ensuring that the act of giving is as rewarding for the donor as it is beneficial for the recipients. The name of the Neil Fraser Cochrane Florialia Fund is particularly poignant as it reflects a time when books were revered as precious artifacts, a sentiment deeply rooted in Neil's ancestry. His great-great-great-grandfather, William Cochrane, was an esteemed gardener in the late eighteenth century whose life's work resonates through this legacy. The incorporation of the word 'florialia' is a nod to the ancient Roman festival honouring Flora, the goddess of flowers, highlighting the deep connections between

Neil's contributions and his historical and personal interests.

Neil has conducted deep and fruitful research into his family history. William Cochrane was an accomplished and sought-after gardener at estates in Somerset and Gloucestershire, England. According to Neil, his ancestor showed up at Hadspen House in 1779, moved to nearby Batcombe in 1783, then worked at Over, Almondsbury, and Bristol. By the 1790s he worked in Bathwick where major estates were being developed, then to Kilmersdon—probably at Babington House—before returning to the Bristol area at Westbury on Trym near a major plant nursery and the estates of prominent Bristol citizens. He died in 1831 aged 90. Neil remarks: 'A good, healthy outdoor life! Theirs was a pre-industrial, agrarian, and "green" world, before plastics and massive greenhouse gas emissions threatened our very existence. Even the paper they printed their books on was acid-free and survives in pristine condition. Perhaps we can heal the planet by, symbolically, taking a leaf from their book?'

Neil's story is just one of many. The university encourages others to consider how they too can leave a lasting mark on the world through strategic charitable donations. Whether it's to honour a loved one, support a cause close to the heart, or simply give back to the community, each contribution helps propel the University of Toronto toward future successes. Neil Cochrane's thoughtful approach to legacy giving serves as an inspiration to all. We look forward to welcoming more stories like his, as we continue to advance the mission of the Fisher Library and the University of Toronto.

**LIKE NEIL,** many of our loyal Friends have included the Thomas Fisher Rare Book Library as part of their personal legacy. A bequest in your will or another type of planned gift can provide you and your beneficiaries with significant tax benefits, while having a meaningful, long-term impact in an area of your choice.

**If you are interested in learning more, please contact:**

Mimosa Kabir  
Senior Development Officer  
University of Toronto Libraries  
[mimosa.kabir@utoronto.ca](mailto:mimosa.kabir@utoronto.ca)  
416-946-4041





**OPENING PAGE:** Colophon of *On Old Age* with reader's annotation. **BELOW, LEFT TO RIGHT:** Eli Holiday reading as Dank Sinatra for Pride open house, 29 June 2023. View of display for Celebrating Ethiopic Book Heritage open house, 27 September 2023. View of display for Protest Print Cultures in Latin American open house, 20 October 2023.



of ownership can denote friendship between bibliophiles as well, such as bookplates and inscriptions with the motto '*et amicorum*' or 'and of friends'. References to friendship are also clear in the elaborate design of the bindings and interiors of gift books. Another popular genre of rare books bound to friendship is the *album amicorum*, a collection of autographs, excerpts of readings, moments of learning between mentors and students, or literary exchanges among friends. Aside from readers and collectors, publishers have also embraced friendship in imprints bearing names like '*Editorial los amigos del libros*' or '*Instituto amigos del libro*'. In the world of libraries, friendship finds its greatest expression in the formation of 'friends of the library' associations or communities of individuals with various interests in archives, rare books, and special collections.

As members of the Friends of the Fisher Library reunite this year to celebrate the fortieth anniversary of the foundation of the association, each of us at the library wish to express our gratitude for your constant generosity and support of the work in Rare Books and Special Collections. Cicero reminds us that 'friendship gives us bright

hopes for the future', and your contributions as Friends are crucial for the future of the library as a welcoming space, where we all come to learn, create, enjoy, and work together towards a vision of expanding access to the largest collection of rare books and special collections in Canada.

Since last June, the library has hosted eight open houses or one-day displays of collections with the goal of raising public awareness of the library's collections and services. We welcomed hundreds of visitors and new Friends during this year's open houses, which included a Pride event in June where we hosted the first drag performance in the library; readings from drama students in celebration of the four hundredth anniversary of the publication of Shakespeare's First Folio in July; a celebration of Ethiopic books and scrolls with the Ethiopian community and the Hidden Stories team in September; special presentations by historians at U of T and a display of material on protest print cultures in Latin America as part of Latin American Heritage Month in October; a display of resources on Black history in Canada and other regions for Black History Month in February; an engaging assortment of new and

existing holdings for Indigenous Languages Day in April; and, also in April, a selection of Passover Haggadot marking the end of another season of public events at the library.

Join us this year for a very special season of events including a new series of lectures, exhibitions, open houses, workshops, and tours, and encourage your friends to join the Friends of the Fisher to enjoy the benefits of belonging to this vibrant community centred on friendship and books.

## Endnotes

- <sup>1</sup> *Letters of Marcus Tullius Cicero, with His Treatises on Friendship and Old Age*. (New York: P.F. Collier, 1909), 16.
- <sup>2</sup> William Oldys, *The British Librarian* (London: Printed for T. Osborne, 1738), 259.
- <sup>3</sup> Romi Levine, "U of T library acquires the oldest English-language book in Canada", *U of T News* (23 April 2018).
- <sup>4</sup> *Letters of Marcus Tullius Cicero*, 15.





## FRENCH CONNECTIONS: MEDIEVAL LITERATURE IN THE RENAISSANCE AND BEYOND

Timothy Perry

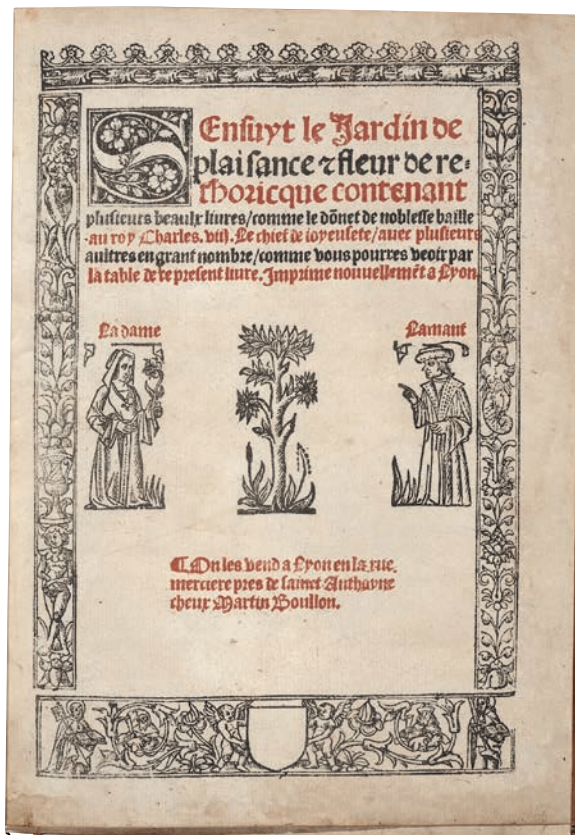
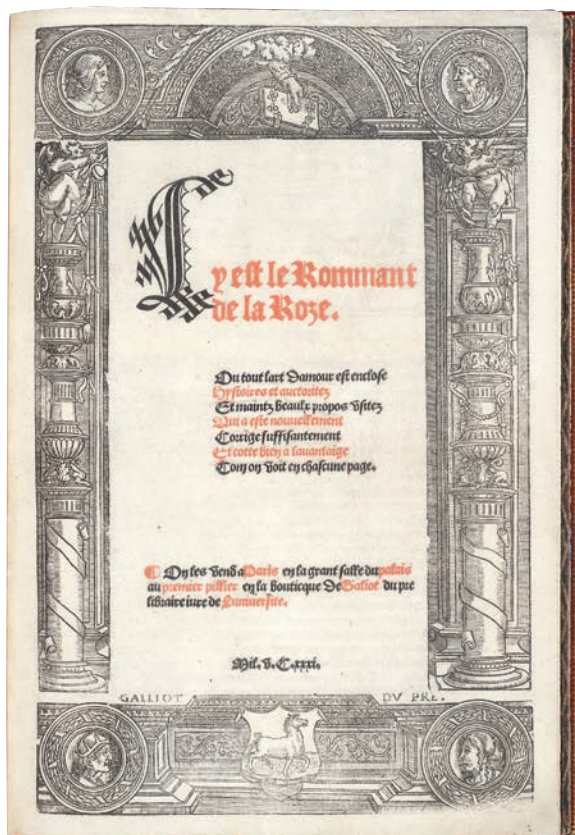
Medieval Manuscript and Early Book Librarian, Thomas Fisher Rare Book Library

**T**HE FISHER LIBRARY is a marvelous assemblage of books but, more than that, it is an inexhaustible source of human connections: connections between those who write and edit books, those who print and bind them, and those who own and perhaps even read them. In recent years, the Fisher has acquired several medieval French manuscripts, and each such acquisition has added to the network of connections to be found in what is fast becoming an area of strength for the library. These acquisitions include a fourteenth-century manuscript of Guillaume de Lorris and Jean de Meung's *Roman de la rose* (added to the collection in 2017), a fifteenth-century manuscript of Clément Prinsault's *Traité de blason* (added

in 2018), and a fifteenth-century manuscript of Christine de Pizan's *Livre de paix* (added in 2019). While these acquisitions have been part of a determined effort to expand the Fisher's holdings of medieval materials in vernacular languages, and French in particular, the process of developing this part of the collection (which naturally involves a survey of materials already at the library) has also brought to light connections with preexisting and underappreciated holdings of French literature. This increased knowledge helps in turn to inform decisions regarding the further development of the collection, which has led to some significant acquisitions over the past two years.

The acknowledged strength of the Fisher Library's French literature collections lies in

the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, with strong holdings of the works of Voltaire and Rousseau and smaller holdings relating to the French Revolution and Napoleon. It turns out, however, that earlier periods of French literary history are also well represented, for which we have to thank a largely forgotten collector: Joseph Stanley Will. Will was born in Newmarket, Ontario, and read for a Bachelor of Arts at University College, University of Toronto, from 1894 to 1897, followed by a doctorate from Columbia University. He taught at Manitoba College and Dartmouth College before returning in 1910 to the University of Toronto, where he spent the rest of his career. Will's collection, much of which may have been acquired



during a fifteen-month sabbatical spent in Paris in 1922 to 1923, comprises printed books from the fifteenth to the twentieth century (including two incunables, approximately 130 sixteenth-century editions, and approximately 230 seventeenth-century editions). The collection was purchased by University of Toronto Libraries in 1962, with nearly fifteen hundred items going to the Department of Rare Books and Special Collections and nearly two thousand more going to the circulating collections. The rare materials fall into two categories: eleven hundred or so bound volumes covering a variety of topics (but with an emphasis on the early history of French Protestantism, Will's specialization); and around three hundred *noëls* (or Christmas carols), published in pamphlet form in a variety of French dialects. Many of the items in the former category are further distinguished by fine bindings dating from the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, with the most famous names in French binding at the time—Capé, Chambolle-Duru, Chatelin, Hardy-Mennil, Lortic, Quinet, Trautz-Bauzonnet—all represented.

A number of items with connections both to recent manuscript acquisitions and to the preexisting collection of J. S. Will have now been added to the Fisher's holdings. The earliest of these is the first edition of the *Roman de la rose moralisé*, printed in 1503. This work is a prose adaptation and interpretation of Guillaume de Lorris and Jean de Meung's *Roman de la rose* and was undertaken by the Burgundian writer Jean Molinet at the request of his patron Philippe de Clèves. Molinet takes a two-pronged approach. First, he converts the verse into prose, keeping the literal sense but modernising the language to make it more accessible. Second, he 'moralises' the original by giving what he calls its 'spiritual' meaning. The acquisition of this book obviously serves to complement the manuscript of the *Roman de la rose* acquired in 2017. There is also a link to Prinsault's *Traité de blason*, however, for the Fisher's copy of the *Traité* opens, unusually, with another moralising work by Jean Molinet, his short poem on the *Arma Christi* ('Arms of Christ', or Instruments of the Passion).

Further extending this network of connections is the Fisher's acquisition of a 1531

edition of the *Roman de la rose* edited by the poet Clément Marot. The *Roman de la rose* was one of a comparatively small number of medieval French texts that became well enough established in print to have an influence on French Renaissance literature. This survival into print is largely attributable to Marot, who issued four editions of the poem. The 1531 edition not only preserves a medieval text, but it also presents it in a way that is self-consciously reminiscent of a medieval manuscript. Rather than adopting a modern, roman typeface, as had the printer of Marot's 1529 edition, the printer of this edition, Galliot du Pré, opted for a gothic face (though the title page, by contrast, contains Renaissance decorative elements). The superb inlaid binding, meanwhile, is by Lortic, one of the most famous French bookbinding firms of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. This book is, again, obviously related to the Fisher's manuscript copy of the *Roman de la rose*. However, there is also a connection with Will's collection, which contains a number of volumes of the poetry of Clément Marot, one of which, it so happens, is also in a fine Lortic binding. Marot was an influential figure who





began his career working in the late medieval tradition of the Grands Rhétoriciens, of which his father Jean Marot was one. He soon abandoned this style, however, and took up (and adapted) the new literary forms being developed in Italy, where he spent some time in exile, ultimately serving as a precursor to the Pléiade, the most famous group of French Renaissance poets.

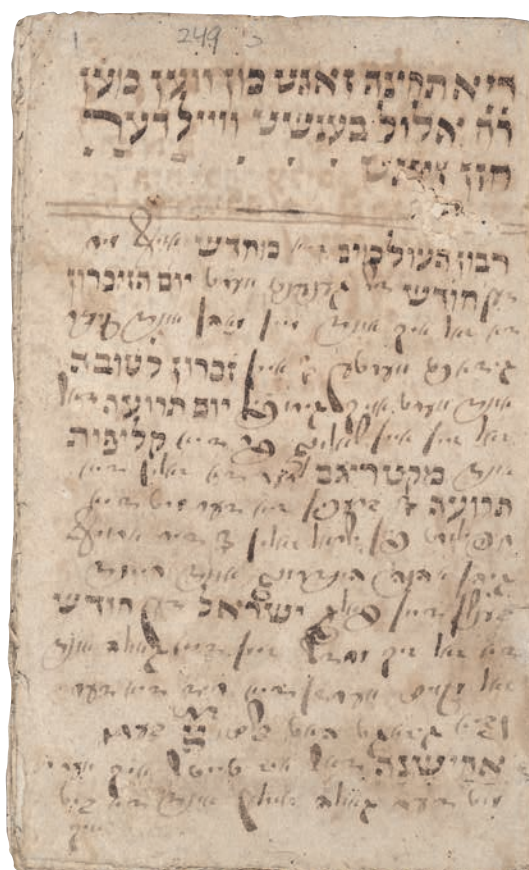
Clément Marot's efforts were crucial to the survival of the *Roman de la rose* into the Renaissance, but he was not the only person interested in preserving the poetry of the past. While most medieval French poetry did not make the transition from manuscript to print, a handful of anthologies of such poetry were printed in the sixteenth century, the earliest and most famous of which was the *Jardin de plaisance*. The first edition of this work was printed c. 1502 by Antoine Vêrard, and a further eight editions had appeared by 1528. The Fisher Library has acquired a copy of the c. 1525 edition printed by Martin Bouillon and Olivier Arnoullet. This new copy enjoys a fine provenance: the names of two sixteenth-century owners are recorded in

marginal inscriptions and in the nineteenth it belonged to Prosper Blanchemain (who was careful to add a manuscript note to the effect that Madame de Pompadour's copy, unlike his, was defective). Blanchemain, a moderately successful poet in his own right, was influential in the rediscovery of a host of 'minor' French poets of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, bringing out editions of such writers as Mellin de Saint-Gelais, Louise Labé, Olivier de Magny, and Thomas Sonnet de Courval. Several of Blanchmain's editions, two of which were formerly in Will's collection, can be found at the Fisher. The *Jardin de plaisance* begins with a treatise on poetry that is attributed to a figure identified only as 'l'Infortuné' (the Unfortunate One). This is followed by three long poems, one of which is a moralising work by Jean Molinet, and then several hundred shorter ones, all dating from the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. Among the poets represented are some of the most important in late medieval French literature, including Christine de Pizan, Alain Chartier, Charles d'Orléans, and François Villon. In a second treatise near the end of the book, l'Infortuné sets Christine alongside Sappho and 'les autres nobles dames escrivaines'. The *Jardin de plaisance* is, then, an important witness to the reception of Christine (and many other

medieval authors) in early print culture and, as such, an interesting complement to the Fisher's manuscript copy of Christine's *Livre de paix*.

Further evidence for Christine's reception in the sixteenth century can be found in one final recent acquisition: the 1527 edition of Christine's *Arbre des batailles*, printed by Philippe le Noir. Originally appearing in 1410 under the title *Livre des fais d'armes et de chevalerie*, this was the first work on tactics and strategy to be printed. Antoine Vêrard, printer of the first edition of the *Jardin de plaisance*, produced the first edition of the *Livre des fais d'armes et de chevalerie* in 1488 and William Caxton brought out an English translation the following year. Whereas the *Jardin de plaisance* is complimentary towards Christine, she meets with a rather different fate in this case: Vêrard claimed that Christine's work was his own translation of the ancient writer Vegetius. Le Noir does little better in the 1527 edition, omitting any mention of Christine as author. The *Arbre des batailles*, which presents a slightly abridged version of the original work, covers a wide variety of topics, from training to command structures to the laws of war. A brief section on the use of heraldry in warfare provides an interesting connection to the Fisher's copy of the *Traité de blason*. (All that is missing is a moralising poem by Molinet.)

**ABOVE:** Title page of the 1527 edition of Christine de Pizan's *Arbre des batailles*.



## DIVERSIFYING THE JUDAICA MANUSCRIPT COLLECTIONS

Nadav Sharon

Judaica Librarian, Thomas Fisher Rare Book Library

THE FISHER LIBRARY'S Hebraica and Judaica collections comprise a diverse assortment of manuscripts. They include fragments discovered in the Cairo Genizah and complete medieval manuscripts from the Middle East, Yemen, and all around Central and Western continental Europe (e.g., Spain, Italy, Germany, and France). Yet, manuscripts from the Early Modern period and beyond are, with a few exceptions, all from Yemen and Europe alone.<sup>1</sup> In addition, nearly all the Judaica manuscripts are of texts that were composed by men, were copied by male scribes, and were principally intended for male users. During the past year, the Fisher Library has been fortunate enough to purchase four manuscripts that diversify our collection of modern Jewish manuscripts. The dates of these 'new' manuscripts range from the late eighteenth to the early twentieth centuries, and they originate in Central Europe, Northern Africa, and the Persian world. The

manuscripts were acquired in three sales from the same auction house this past year. All four previously belonged to the same Judaica collector, William Gross. The Gross Family Collection, Tel Aviv, is considered one of the largest and most important private collections of Judaica of our times.

The two earliest of the four manuscripts are both from Central Europe and belong to one genre. They are called *teḥīnē* in Yiddish (תְּחִינֹת; *teḥīnot* in Hebrew). Literally meaning 'supplications', *teḥīnē* are a form of personal prayers and requests (as opposed to set, institutionalized prayers). The genre of the *teḥīnē* flourished especially in the Yiddish speaking world among Ashkenazi Jewry (Jews from medieval Germany and France) at least from the Early Modern period. *Teḥīnē* were written in Yiddish and were intended for the use of women, who at that time were not usually as well versed as men in the Hebrew of regular prayers and, being personal prayers, *teḥīnē*

needed to be understood by the person reciting them. They were intended to be a medium of 'direct' communication with God and as such there are *teḥīnē* for every occasion in a woman's religious and personal life. *Teḥīnē* thus became a sort of folk liturgy alongside the canonized prayer service. Some could be recited at home or elsewhere, while some were intended to be said along with the communal prayer service in the synagogue, and our two manuscripts are of the latter kind. *Teḥīnē* were often written by men for women, but sometimes written by women. Thus, *teḥīnē* open a window into the spiritual and religious lives of Jewish women—an aspect that is often overlooked—as well as into Jewish women's scribal and book cultures.<sup>2</sup>

Printing of *teḥīnē* began near the end of the sixteenth century in Central Europe (modern Poland and the Czech Republic) and printed *teḥīnē* became widespread from the seventeenth century. However, the two





*teḥinēš* recently acquired by the Fisher are both rare exceptions to this trend as manuscripts. As such, they were written specifically for the women who would be their owners. The first manuscript is a *teḥinēš* book for the Hebrew month of *Elul* and for the High Holidays (the month of *Elul* is the lead-up to the High Holidays). This manuscript, which is believed to have been written in Poland around 1780, contains a variety of personal prayers to be recited at important moments of these significant times in the Jewish religious calendar, such as supplications that are to be said during the blowing of the *shofar* (ram's horn) on Rosh Hashanah (the New Year). What makes this manuscript especially interesting is that it was written by its female owner. Her name, Mirel, is mentioned on leaf 4 (verso) in the midst of one prayer.

The second *teḥinēš* manuscript is written in beautiful square script and has a title page naming Serl Hikel as the woman for whom it was written, as well as the year 5590 [1830], and the town where it was made, *Roystits* (the Yiddish name of the Czech town Rousínov). A colophon repeats the information from the title and adds the specific date on which the manuscript was completed, which corresponds with 20 May 1830, as well as the name of

the scribe who wrote it for Serl Hikel; a male scribe named Yosef Moshe Merishal. This manuscript only contains *teḥinēš* to be said during Yizkor, a memorial service recited as part of the communal prayer in synagogues on some holidays. The memorial prayers for one's parents thus contain the names of Serl Hikel's parents.

The remaining two manuscripts originate from the world of *Mizraḥi* (Middle Eastern or Oriental) Jews. One is a decorated manuscript containing an anthology of over ten works in Hebrew, Aramaic, and Judeo-Persian all copied by one scribe. The works are various versions and translations of the Aramaic *Targum* (translation) of some of the five *Megillot* (the Five Scrolls; the biblical books of the Song of Songs, Ruth, Lamentations, Ecclesiastes, and Esther), of other more distinct parts of the Bible, such as the Ten Commandments, and of some *piyyutim* (liturgical poems) and other specific prayers (e.g., the prayer for rain). All the pages of this manuscript are framed and some pages, including the beginning of most of the individual works, are decorated in colour with floral decorations and text frames that often include the titles and the scribe's name (Moshe) and the year ([5]620=1860). Many of the colophons, usually at the end of the works,

also state the scribe's name and the dates of completion of the copying of the specific work and, in several places, he indicates the person for whom he wrote the manuscript: 'I wrote for Ḥaim ben M' (?) Aga'. This manuscript was written in Persia (Iran), probably in (Iranian) Kurdistan. Thus, this manuscript is not only the library's only manuscript (and one of only very few books) with Judeo-Persian, but also its first work produced in Kurdistan.

The last manuscript is a *ketubah* from Morocco, dated 1923. A *ketubah* is a traditional Jewish marriage contract that a groom is required to provide for his bride on their wedding day. It is intended to protect the woman primarily by establishing the man's financial obligations to her in case of divorce or widowhood, and also outlines other obligations undertaken by the groom. Although not obligatory, to this day it is not uncommon for *ketubot* to be written by hand by a scribe. In addition, since *ketubot* are often publicly displayed, frequently they have been decorated in many Jewish communities around the world. Thus, although the text is primarily the same everywhere, they reflect the scribal and artistic traditions of the areas and times in which they were created. Consequently, libraries and museums with Judaica collections often have

**BELOW:** Ketubah dated to 14 Kislev 5684 (22 November 1923) from Ait Ali Oussou, Morocco.

collections of *ketubot*. However, for the Fisher Library this is a first. This *ketubah*, written in Oriental script and framed by a colourful floral border, is from the Moroccan village Ait Ali Oussou and is dated to 14 Kislev 5684 (22 November 1923). In addition to the names of the bride and groom, one can see the unique style of signatures common among *Mizrahi* Jews in the signatures of the witnesses at the bottom of this document.

These outstanding additions to the Judaica collections significantly diversify them, especially the Jewish manuscript holdings. Two of them do so by way of the geographical areas from which they originate (Iran [probably Kurdistan] and Morocco), and two by the fact that they were written particularly for the use of women, one of which was written by its female owner. Furthermore, the addition of the *teḥinēš*, a unique compendium of translations, and a marriage contract (*ketubah*), enriches the genres of our Judaica collections. It is our hope to be able to continue diversifying the Judaica collections in these directions as well as others.



## Endnotes

- <sup>1</sup> For the Fisher Hebrew manuscripts see Barry Walfish, "The Friedberg Collection of Rare Hebraica at the University of Toronto Library," *Halcyon* 18 (November 1996) 1-3; Walfish, "Shabbetai Zevi, Abraham Miguel Cardoso, and the Friedberg Zohar," *Halcyon* 24 (November 1999) 3-5; Walfish, "Library Receives Second Collection of Rare Hebraica from Albert D. Friedberg," *Halcyon* 24 (November 1999) 7; Walfish "Up for Auction: An Illuminated Hebrew Manuscript Joins the Friedberg Collection," *Halcyon* 51 (June 2013) 7-8; and Nadav Sharon, "A Small Collection of Yemenite Jewish Manuscripts," *Halcyon* 66 (December 2020) 23-24; Sharon, "Manuscripts, Printings, and In-Between: Notable Recent Acquisitions of Judaica and Judaica-related Materials," *Halcyon* 69 (June 2022) 3-5.
- <sup>2</sup> See Z. Berger Shulamith, "Teḥinēš: A Brief Survey of Women's Prayers," in *Daughters of the King: Women and the Synagogue*, ed. Susan Grossman and Rivka Haut (Philadelphia: JPS, 1992), 73-83.



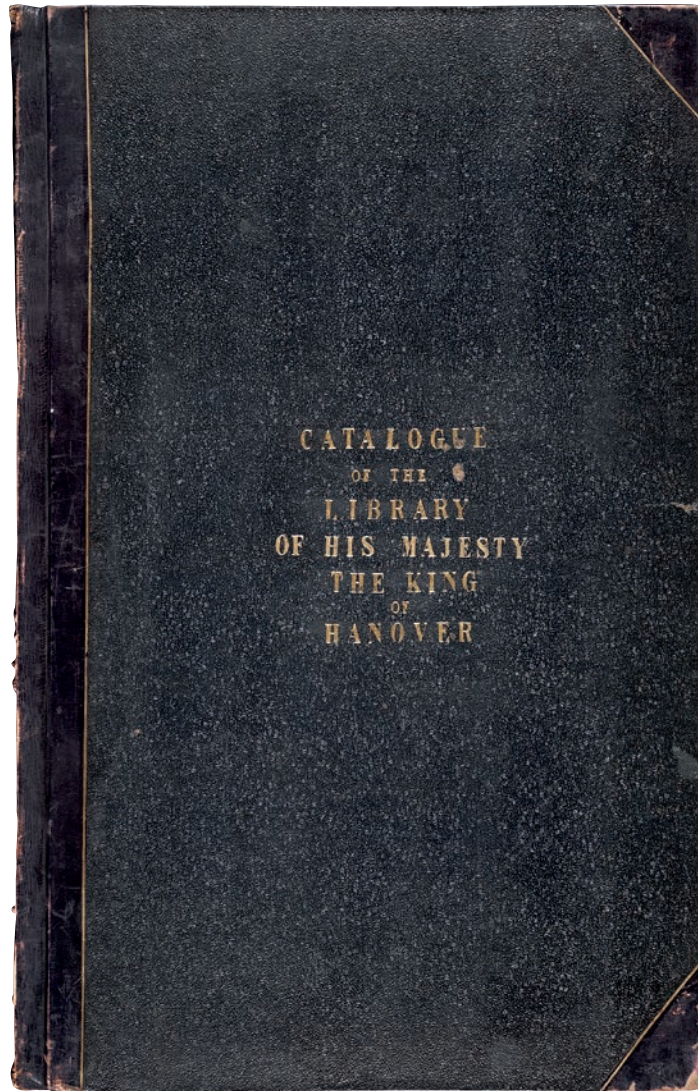
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**Thank you!**







## THE LIBRARY OF THE LAST KINGS OF HANNOVER

Andrew Stewart

Reading Room Coordinator, Thomas Fisher Rare Book Library

**T**HROUGH THE GENEROUS patronage of the Richard G. Landon and Marie E. Korey Fund, the Fisher Library has been building a considerable collection of catalogues of private libraries. As part of this effort, the manuscript library catalogues relating to three generations of the royal House of Hanover in the nineteenth century were recently added to the collections. Included in this collection are catalogues of the libraries of King Ernest Augustus (1771–1854), his son King George V (1819–1878), and his son Ernest Augustus, the Crown Prince of Hanover (1845–1923).

King Ernest Augustus was the uncle of Queen Victoria, and next in succession until

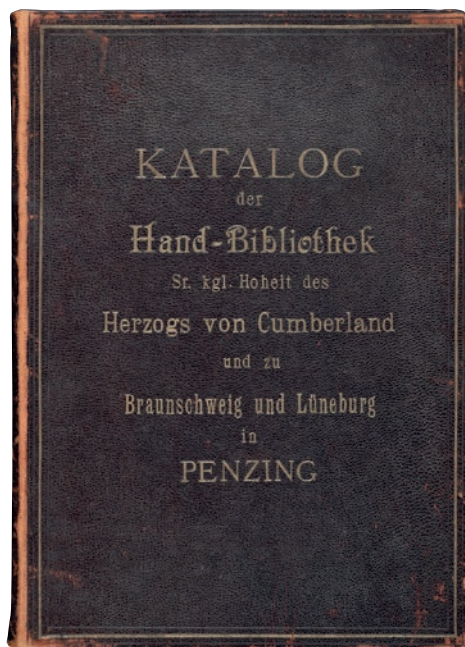
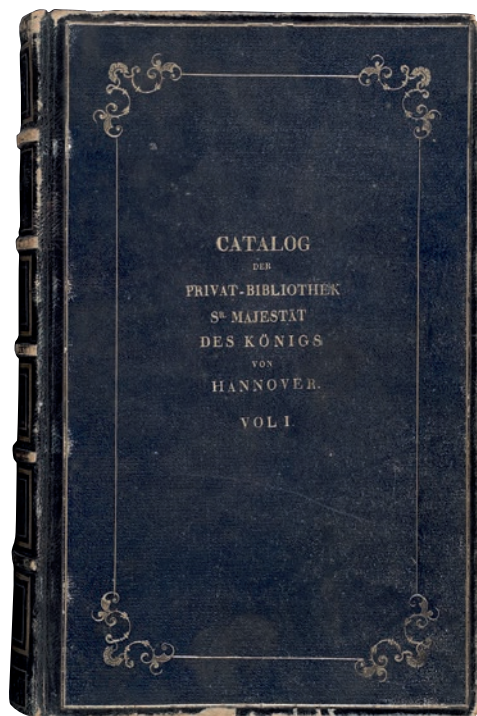
the birth of her first child. Upon the death of Ernest Augustus' brother King William IV, who died childless, Victoria ascended the throne in Great Britain. Women were barred from assuming the throne of Hanover, which was then split with the United Kingdom when Ernest Augustus became King of Hanover on 20 June 1837. Ernest Augustus had acquired a very poor reputation in England, partly due to his acerbic tongue, and partly through his involvement in various scandals. Two serious scandals in 1810 and 1830 each ended with the death of a member of his household by their own hands, with implications of sexual impropriety and even damaging rumours

of murder. Pettier rivalries also did little to endear him to the court or to the public. He took Queen Victoria to court over jewels he claimed were his by inheritance, a case which he won. He also refused to vacate his unused rooms at St. James Palace, forcing Victoria to rent a home for her mother in nearby Belgravia Square. The notoriously spendthrift Victoria was not impressed.<sup>1</sup> This reputation combined with financial difficulties led to him living for a number of years in relative exile in Germany prior to becoming King of Hanover.

The earliest catalogue in the collection relating to Ernest Augustus comes from his period of exile in Germany. Dating from 1826,



**FACING PAGE AND BELOW, LEFT TO RIGHT:** Catalogues of the libraries of King Ernest Augustus, King George V, and Crown Prince Ernest Augustus respectively. MSS 07802, MSS 05336, and MSS 05333.



it lists books on military history, military science, and other military works that were held in his library. Then holding the title of Duke of Cumberland, Augustus was known to be well-versed in current affairs and also had a military background, having participated in the War of the First Coalition (1792–1797) and the Napoleonic Wars. This catalogue is listed as being the ‘first section’, indicating that the Duke’s library contained many more volumes at this time. Interestingly most works are in French, with a smattering of titles in English and German. The Duke was relatively fluent in German, though was so grammatically challenged that his mistakes became a source of amusement in Germany. Conversely, German grammar and words began to infiltrate his English, including a habit of exclaiming ‘Ach So!’ which, being considered a ‘foreign affectation’, added to his poor reputation in England.<sup>2</sup>

Another manuscript in the collection, the *Catalogue of the Library of his Majesty the King of Hanover*, was likely produced around the time Ernest acceded to the throne of Hanover. As there are only three books listed as published in 1837 (the latest date in the catalogue), it seems likely that this list was compiled at the start of his reign, either as a list of items to be sent on to Germany or an inventory upon their

arrival. A bibliophile by nature, he amassed a considerable library that moved with him not only to Hanover upon his ascension, but also with his son King George V in 1866 to the family’s property in Gmünden, Austria, after the annexation of Hanover by Prussia.

The collection includes two manuscript catalogues for King George V. There is a catalogue of his private library along with a separate author index dating from approximately 1850 to 1859. His library is divided into topics, with history being the largest by far, and military books making up one of the smallest sections. In 1863 an updated version of this catalogue was published for general sale, and according to the introduction, publication was merited due to the interest shown by many in the catalogue of the King’s library. The latest library catalogue in the collection, dating from 1880, comes from the Crown Prince of Hanover Ernest Augustus and lists the books in the library where he lived in exile in Penzing (now Vienna) after the dissolution of the Hanoverian monarchy. Interestingly, three of the first four books listed in this catalogue are the manuscripts of his father and grandfather’s libraries that were part of this purchase. Their location on the list shows pride of place, and also that his library preserved the books of his forebears.

Interestingly, Ernest Augustus and his son both became blind due to a series of unfortunate events. A cannonball passing close to Ernest

Augustus in a 1794 battle caused him to lose sight in one eye. He also struggled with vision in his other eye, undergoing an operation in 1827 that improved his sight dramatically before he finally lost most of his eyesight in 1843. His son King George V lost an eye in childhood, likely due to illness, though another account put forward was that his father accidentally injured him while jingling keys in front of the young boy’s face.<sup>3</sup> George lost sight in his other eye at the age of fourteen when he swung a purse full of coins around and it struck him in the eye. Ernest Augustus had hoped that George would marry his cousin Victoria, but he was considered ineligible as a marriage partner for the Queen due to his blindness. There were also questions about his fitness to assume the Hanoverian throne, though his father argued in his favour and established him firmly as his heir.

It is interesting to consider what role their libraries played in the lives of Ernest Augustus and his son George V. They were obviously considered important enough to move between England, Hanover, and Austria, and their collecting habits continued well after each lost their eyesight according to the dates of publication of items in their catalogues. The introduction to the published 1863 catalogue makes clear that growing the collection was a priority for George V, through the purchase of new and older works and the inclusion of books that had belonged to other family members.<sup>4</sup> Further investigation could provide valuable insight into the history of disability and reading at a time when braille books were only beginning to appear, the first, *Method of Writing Words, Music, and Plain Songs by Means of Dots, for Use by the Blind and Arranged for Them* being published in 1829. These manuscripts will join Fisher’s extensive collection of published catalogues as well as those of auction houses charged with the selling of private libraries, all in their way shedding light on the history of reading, book ownership, and collecting.

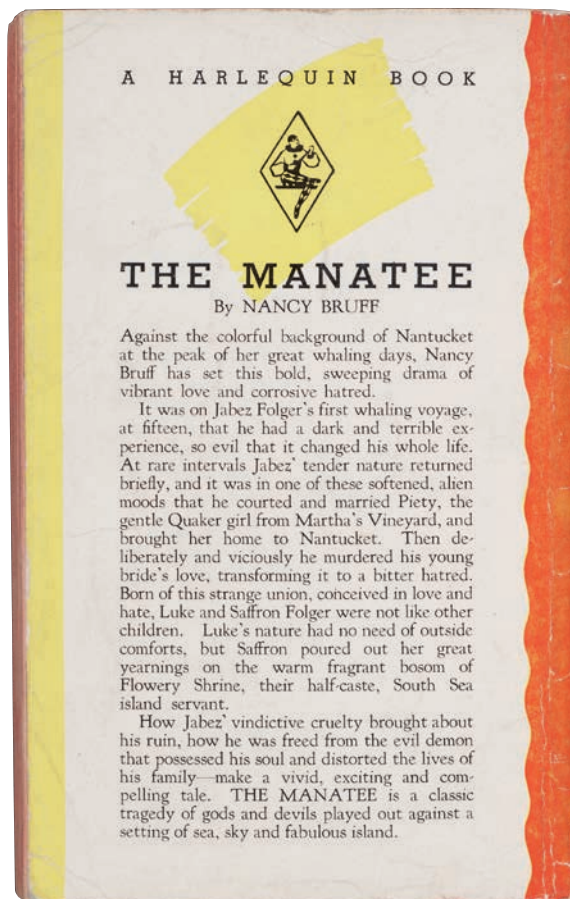
## Endnotes

<sup>1</sup> Anthony Bird, *The Damnable Duke of Cumberland: A Character Study of Vindication of Ernest Augustus Duke of Cumberland and King of Hanover* (London: Barrie and Rockliff, 1966), 286–287.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid, 28.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid, 166.

<sup>4</sup> Nachtrags-Katalog der Privat-Bibliothek Seiner Majestät des Königs von Hannover (Hannover: Schütersche Hofbuchdruckerei, 1863), [iii].



## HEARTTHROBS AND HAPPILY EVER AFTERS: THE WORLD OF HARLEQUIN ROMANCE NOVELS

Hayat Abdulhakim

Graduate Student Library Assistant, Thomas Fisher Rare Book Library

**I**MAGINE, FOR A moment, a romance novel. Hold it in your hands: what does it look like? Does it have a cartoon cover, perhaps? Or maybe your mind harkens back to an older time, an older cover: against a background of sweeping cliffs, women in white dresses clutching the muscular chests of their paramours, their eyes wild and searching.

If the second image strikes a chord, you're probably envisioning a Harlequin Romance novel, and we don't blame you—the iconic publishing house shaped modern understandings of both the aesthetics of romance novels and their contents. The Fisher currently holds over seven hundred volumes published by Harlequin, ranging from their very first offerings to books published as recently as the 1980s. The collection includes special edition reprintings of earlier Harlequin novels, and various Harlequin

lines including Harlequin American Romance, Harlequin Superromance—novels almost twice as long as the typical Harlequin—and a selection of Harlequin promotional magazines. The material is of interest as part of the history of Canadian publishing as well as the history of romance novels, with serious criticism of the genre and the stories becoming active areas of feminist discourse and general inquiry seventy-five years later.

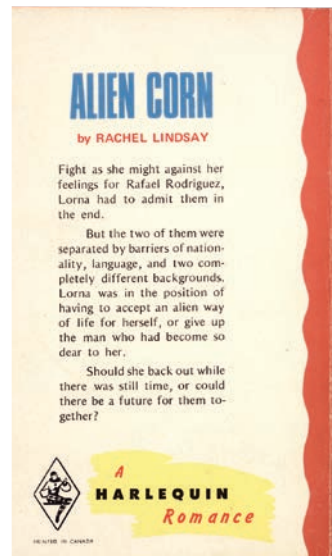
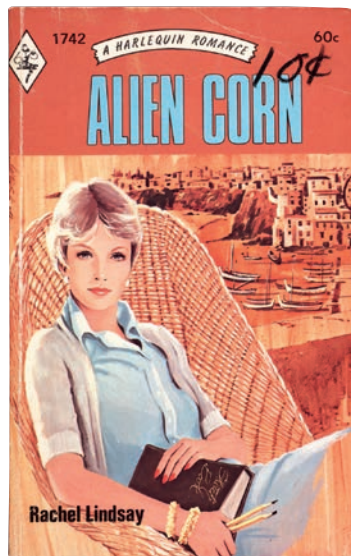
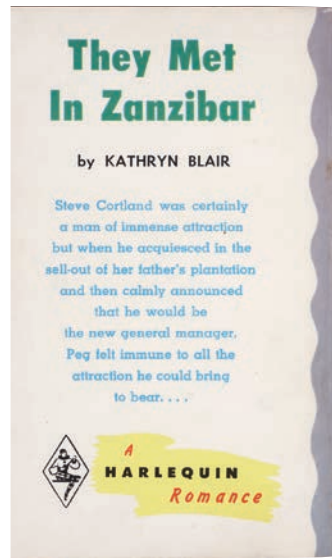
Richard Bonnycastle founded Harlequin in 1949 as a paperback reprinting company operating out of Winnipeg, Manitoba. Harlequin released its first book, a reprint of Nancy Bruff's 1945 novel *The Manatee* in May of that year. Harlequin Romance had some interesting ways of going about the business of publishing. In 1954, when the chief editor of Harlequin passed away, Bonnycastle's wife

Mary began proofreading books from home. Having read British publisher Mills & Boon's romance novels, Mary urged her husband to acquire North American distribution rights to their titles. The resulting contract between Harlequin and Mills & Boon relied solely on an annual handshake between Richard Bonnycastle and Mills & Boon's Editorial Director Alan Boon. With this handshake, the pair agreed to continue doing business for another year, and because of this partnership many of the Harlequins in the Fisher's collection have a Mills & Boon copyright. Harlequin ultimately acquired Mills & Boon in 1971.

From humble beginnings, Harlequin went on to become the biggest name in romance novels, with a formula that insulated the publishing house from the whims of the free market: a third of all adult mass-market



**FACING PAGE AND BELOW, LEFT TO RIGHT:** The front and back covers of the first edition of Nancy Bruff's *The Manatee* (1949), *Alien Corn* by Rachel Lindsay (1973), and *They Met in Zanzibar* by Kathryn Blair (1967).



paperbacks are romance novels, and the genre continued to flourish even during the recession of 2008. Despite Harlequin's global success, feminist theorists the world over have levelled serious concerns about them. Are they harmless, fun romance novels published by women for women? Or are these novels profoundly patriarchal and sexist, oftentimes deeply rooted in racist ideologies? The answer, unfortunately, is both.

The tropes and characters that make Harlequin novels appealing are often the very same ones that puzzle modern readers: who wants a brooding, rich man who suffers internally and whose stilted speech oftentimes results in a whirlwind of romantic confusion?

the daughters of plantation owners. For example, *They Met in Zanzibar* by Kathryn Blair (published by Harlequin in 1967) features Peg, the daughter of a notable plantation owner and her love interest, Steve Cortland, who takes over her father's empire. Some have otherwise unconscionable opinions on racialized individuals: in Rachel Lindsay's *Alien Corn* (published by Harlequin in 1973), Lorna fights her feelings for Rafael Rodriguez, and among other things, attempts to liberate several Portuguese women from what she deems 'backward' traditions in an 'alien' environment. These facets are sure to become major sites of research into the collection: how do the novels manage to balance the delicacy

But then again, who doesn't? With more women working outside of the home than at the time of their publication, the Fisher's collection of Harlequins moves further from current societal norms, and modern readers may very well engage with the paperbacks as works of fantasy, finding little desire to have their own lives align with the lives of the heroines presented in the novels. When viewed through the lens of fantasy, Harlequins become less prescriptive: readers aren't necessarily feeling the same patriarchal pull towards a 'traditional' life as the readers who first engaged with this material. However, viewing them as fantasy doesn't allow the novels to completely side-step their problematic roots.

A few Harlequins offer a deeply romanticized and concerning view towards oppression as a whole. They involve heroines who just so happen to be

of romance with the reality of oppression, especially when the authors oftentimes leverage oppression to facilitate the romance?

These inquiries, and the researchers that seek to answer these questions, are the reason Fisher continues to collect Harlequin Romance novels. Feminist scholars can critique traditional gender roles while understanding that some of the original Harlequin readers felt deeply empowered by narratives that modern readers can recognize as reductive. For example, various female protagonists are strong-willed, autonomous, and oftentimes meet the male hero by striking out on their own and leaving their familial home. However, these same heroines are often subjected to the whims of the male hero, and end up taking his lead even when it doesn't align with their earlier values. Additionally, scholars can explore Harlequins through an anticolonial lens while intertwining the aforementioned feminist discourse. Although the pairing of Harlequin romance novels and anticolonialism may seem unconventional, researchers have found that these novels offer a deeper look into the sentiments surrounding colonialism and colonial power dynamics. For example, some Harlequin novels feature doctor-nurse romances which are often set in various jungle and Saharan landscapes and usually feature colonial narratives surrounding people living in those places. By engaging with novels through an anticolonial lens, we can better understand how popular literature grapples with the legacy of colonialism and its ongoing impacts on individuals and societies.

The continued collection of Harlequin Romance novels by the Fisher is not merely a pursuit of literary pleasure but a testament to the rich world of inquiry these novels continue to provoke. Feminist scholars looking to engage with this collection can navigate the complexities within the novels, critiquing antiquated gender roles while acknowledging the empowering elements recognized by Harlequin's original readers. Scholars looking to explore these novels through an anticolonial lens allow for a deeper engagement with a wide variety of Harlequin novels, taking seriously these works that are often disregarded because of their romantic content. Through this interdisciplinary engagement, we gain a deeper understanding of how popular literature grapples with complex sociopolitical issues, inviting researchers and readers alike to explore the intersecting realms of romance, gender, and colonialism within these seemingly simple, spellbinding tales.

## UPCOMING EXHIBITIONS AND EVENTS

### EXHIBITIONS 2024

#### Exhibition Hours and Location

9–5, Monday to Friday, year round  
Thomas Fisher Rare Book Library  
120 St. George Street, Toronto, ON

#### 21 May to 9 August

*Kant and some Post-Kantians: A  
Tercentenary Exhibition*



To mark the occasion of the three-hundredth birthday of Immanuel Kant, the most influential philosopher of the modern era, the Fisher is exhibiting the outstanding Kant holdings

of the Walsh Philosophy Collection. Kant's books are joined by those of many contemporary critics as well as by complete collections of the monographs of Hegel and Schopenhauer.

THIS EXHIBITION IS CURATED BY F. MICHAEL WALSH.

Image: Johann Gottlieb Becker, Immanuel Kant, 1768.  
Courtesy of Deutsches Literaturarchiv, Marbach.



#### 2 September to 23 December

*Women on the Move: An  
Exhibition of Travel Books*

Why did women travel? How did they engage with the world during their journey? What did they choose to share when they returned?

Women's travel stories tell us about much more than the places they visit. Their carefully crafted narratives and keepsakes suggest intrepid adventurers, privileged tourists, devoted companions, tireless proselytizers,

perceptive scientists, or pioneers and colonizers. Through their shared experiences, made possible by a burgeoning travel book industry, they communicate their relationship to empire, participation in historical events, and inclusion and exclusion from many parts of culture at home and abroad.

THIS EXHIBITION IS CURATED BY DAVID FERNÁNDEZ, KSENIA KIEBUZINSKI, AND ELIZABETH RIDOLFO.

### EVENTS 2024

**Saturday 7 September • 10 AM–5 PM**  
*Fisher Small and Fine Press Fair*

**Monday 21 October • 6 PM**

*Finnegans Wake Reading*

Irish-Canadian actor Richard Harte in collaboration with One Little Goat Theatre Company will read Chapter 5 of James Joyce's *Finnegans Wake*.

#### To Be Announced

*Events, Friends of Fisher Lectures, Open Houses, Seminars, and Workshops*

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## EDITORS' NOTE

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

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

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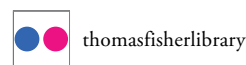
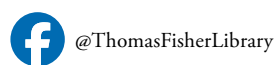
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