

The RARE BOOKS AND MANUSCRIPTS LIBRARY

T H E O H I O S T A T E U N I V E R S I T Y

INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

Medieval Manuscripts Open House	2
Research Opportunities	2
Avant Writing Collection Gallery	3
James Thurber: Unpublished and Uncensored	4

S E R E N D I P I T Y I N T H E S T A C K S

I am consistently amazed at the frequent occurrence of serendipity in the Rare Books and Manuscripts Library (RBMS), a condition that I imagine is common to most libraries where, amidst our thoughts about great thinkers, writers and historians, we are surrounded by the physical works, the books and papers, of these very geniuses whom we are meditating upon. I would like to relate some coincidences that appear, to me anyway, to be crossing the bounds from the serendipitous to a benign eeriness.

In recent years it has been my good fortune to become friends with Joseph William (Bill) Rich, Professor Emeritus from the Department of Mechanical Engineering and re-

ipient of Ohio State University's Distinguished Scholar Award, which recognizes scholarly accomplishments by senior professors who have compiled a substantial body of research. In addition to being a renowned scientist, Bill is also an avid and knowledgeable book collector of 18th and 19th century British and American literature. While RBMS was relocating to its temporary headquarters during our Main Library renovation project, I took Bill on a tour of our rare book stacks before they were completely empty. There were still some choice items on the shelves and Bill took down our cased set of the six volume first edition of Henry Fielding's *The History of Tom Jones, A Foundling* (1749). Book

provenance, the history of a book's ownership, is an area of book research of traditional interest but experiencing a particular resurgence over the past decade. Imagine our surprise when Bill noticed that our *Tom Jones* contained the bookplate of Richard Brinsley Sheridan, the great 18th century British dramatist. Such a remarkable association is rare and this discovery was a talking point for weeks afterwards.

Before the winter meeting of RBMS' Advisory Committee, of which Bill is a member, we were clearing rare books from a class that had just vacated our meeting room. We decided to leave the books, for

Continued on page 2

FUTURE DIRECTIONS: THE LIBRARY WIKI

In 2006, the University Libraries launched its own wiki, christening it "An Experiment in Collaborative Communication." A wiki is a Web site that invites users to edit its content. The most famous example is the Wikipedia, a Web-based encyclopedia created from the collective knowledge of its users. The Rare Books and Manuscripts Library rec-

ognized that a wiki could be used to foster collaborative projects. Curator Lisa Iacobellis set up a wiki and introduced the staff to the basics of working with it.

The first project to appear on our wiki is a site created by our Public History interns devoted to our collection of personal journals of Ohio soldiers who fought in World

War I. Our interns worked together to post detailed descriptions and transcripts from the journals onto the wiki, where they can be accessed by scholars worldwide. Curator Steven Galbraith then established a site to maintain our finding aids. The collaborative nature of the wiki allows scholars using our materials to augment our finding

aids by sharing bibliographical and historical information that can be used to update and augment our catalog records and provenance files.

Library users are encouraged to contribute to our wiki. Instructions on setting up an account are available on the wiki site:
<http://library.osu.edu/wikis/>.

Serendipity, continued from page 1

this was, after all, a meeting of supportive faculty who might well wish to view a variety of rare books. Bill and his physics colleague, Igor Adamovich, were inspecting a copy of an early English translation of Thomas More's *Utopia* when the two scientists gasped: contained within was the bookplate of Michael Faraday, perhaps the world's greatest experimental scientist and the discoverer of electromagnetism. Again, the

benign eeriness of remarkable coincidences; our leaving the books out and a book owned by Michael Faraday settling in the hands of two scientists.

Thus it was decided that I would write on Bill Rich's own magnetism for special books. I asked Bill's permission, of course, and he agreed. Shortly thereafter, at a Saturday morning meeting of local bibliophiles, I gave a desultory talk on author's last books, subsequent to an earlier session of the same

author's first books. In the case of Walt Whitman, his first book was *Leaves of Grass* and his last book was *Leaves of Grass*. As an example of the book's constant evolution, I displayed editions of the book from 1855 to 1892. (In my rapid preparation for the talk, I had little time to look closely at any of the books, some of which I had never handled before). After the talk, people were looking at the books by Poe, Hawthorne, Melville, Twain et al. that I had selected for

display. I was with Bill when he opened the 1856, second edition of *Leaves of Grass*: therein was the bookplate of Oliver Wendell Holmes with its emblematic "Chambered Nautilus," the title of Holmes' most famous poem. That moments earlier I had read a selection from John Greenleaf Whittier's poem "To Oliver Wendell Holmes" caused the chill up my spine to linger ever longer.

— Geoffrey D. Smith
Head, RBMS

MEDIAEVAL MANUSCRIPTS OPEN HOUSE

In late February, the Rare Books and Manuscripts Library and the Hilandar Research Library co-hosted a Medieval Manuscripts Open House Exhibit for students and faculty interested in medieval manuscript studies. The goal of the event was to introduce the local scholarly community to the manuscript collections held at the Ohio State University.

The exhibit included twelve complete manuscript books of diverse origins held

at the Rare Books and Manuscripts Library, a selection of leaves from the Library's collection of over 900 manuscript leaves, and several examples of medieval Slavic manuscripts from the Hilandar Library.

More than a dozen scholars attended the event, including undergraduates, graduate students, and professors. In response to the attendees' various levels of experience with rare books and manuscripts, Predrag

Matejic, the curator of the Hilandar Research Library, opened the event with an introduction to handling rare materials. Attendees were then encouraged to explore the books on display.

Participant feedback indicated a successful event. Our local community grew familiar with new teaching materials and potential research projects. One scholar made an exciting discovery concerning a curious 14th-century bookmark. The Hi-

landar and the Rare Books and Manuscript Library hope to continue to host similar events in the future.



Ohio State students and faculty examine medieval manuscripts.

RESEARCH OPPORTUNITIES: BELLINGHAM'S COMMONPLACE BOOK

The Commonplace Book of Sir Henry Bellingham is an exciting capsule of history. The book ranges from 1620-1653, focusing much attention on the English Civil War. It is possible Bellingham served in Parliament during 1640 and would have witnessed the historic events occurring firsthand. Bellingham also kept personal

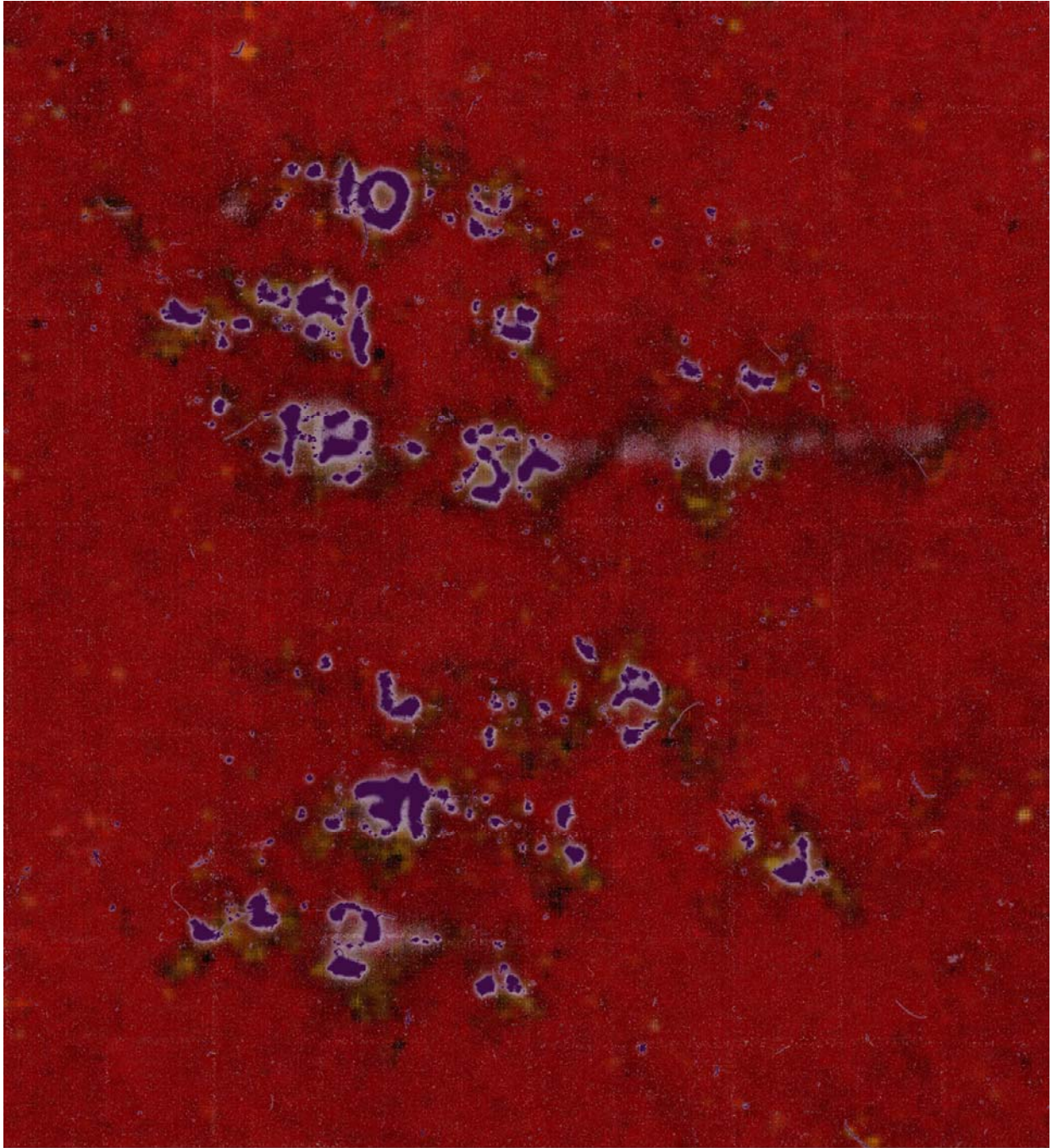
notes and transcribed contemporary printed works, including studies of government and speeches given by figures such as John Pym.

A fascinating aspect of Bellingham's book is the wide range of subjects it contains. He includes a study of the development of language, reflects upon scripture passages, and compares

the value of elements and senses. He also delves into the subject of the human soul and its location. One of the most intriguing passages is "A Discourse Concerning a New World" by John Wilkins. This study of the moon includes calculations of its distance from the earth and the possibility of man flying there.

The Commonplace Book of Henry Bellingham is an excellent resource for scholars studying the era of the English Civil War. It also provides a fascinating glimpse into the interests of a man living during this time. The Rare Books and Manuscripts Library invites further investigation into this book.

— Gabriella Mangino



“Two Red Fish”
© 2000 K.S. Ernst

K.S. Ernst, "Two Red Fish", 2000. From the K.S. Ernst Collection in the Avant Writing Collection. Visual poetry using eroded text. See the Avant Writing Collection webpage at <http://library.osu.edu/sites/rarebooks/avantwriting/>



UNIVERSITY LIBRARIES

Rare Books & Manuscripts Library

134 Depository Building
2700 Kenny Road
Columbus, Ohio 43210-1046

Voice (614) 292-5938
Fax (614) 688-4150
library.osu.edu
rarebooks@osu.edu

THURBER: UNPUBLISHED AND UNCENSORED

The Ohio State University and Thurber House proudly present the first public showing of "Thurber: Unpublished and Uncensored. Sex, War and Dogs." The exhibit features original drawings by author, humorist and *New Yorker* cartoonist James Thurber. The vast majority of the collection has never been published or even viewed. Selections from the 68 drawings will be on display from May 25th through September 14th at the Thurber Center, located next to the Thurber House and Museum, at 91 Jefferson Avenue, Columbus, OH 43215.

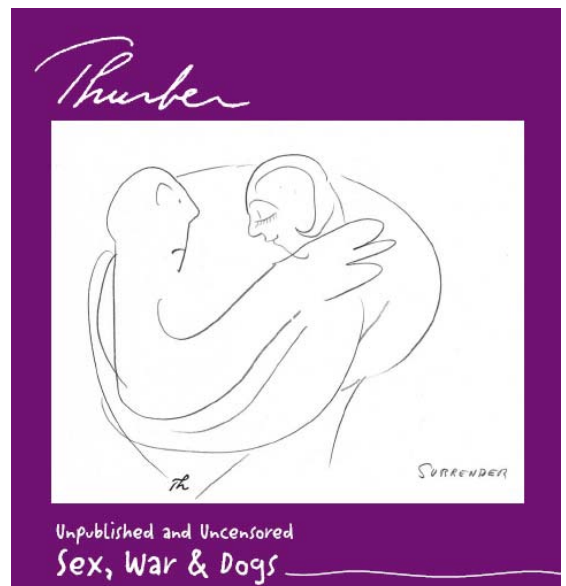
The featured James Thurber drawings from the Ohio State University Rare Books & Manuscripts library encompass nearly two thirds of the original drawings donated to the university from the estate of Nora Sayre, renowned film critic and daughter of Joel Sayre, James Thurber's colleague and friend from the *New Yorker*.

The drawings on display (circa 1935-1945) include those bordering on the risqué, the libelous, and the sardonic.

At the heart of the exhibit are two semi-autobiographical series. The first depicts the struggle to find humor during times of war. The second, a series Thurber dubbed "American Romance," explores marriage, family, and infidelity.

Please contact the Thurber House & Museum to make an appointment to view the exhibit. For exhibit hours and information, please contact Thurber House at www.thurberhouse.org or 614.464.1032.

For additional information regarding the James Thurber collections at The Ohio State University, contact Rebecca Jewett, Rare Books & Manuscripts Library at jewett.36@osu.edu or 614.292.5938.



The Thurber exhibit runs from May 25th through September 14th at the Thurber Center