Private Lives of Old Books

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Nomium alius est substantium. Alius adiectivum
men substantivum e illud quod stare potest vel quod est unus
im tunnum articulum tunc
lunos ad plus et hic petrus cetera homo
Private Lives of Old Books
Recovering Personal Histories from Early Books of Latin

Kate Barnes
Catherine Conybeare
Eric Pumroy
Jason Scott-Warren

Bryn Mawr College
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Class of 1912 Rare Book Room, Canaday Library
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Gina Siesing
Chief Information Officer &
Constance A. Jones Director of Libraries

As its delightful title suggests, the Private Lives of Old Books exhibition promises to stimulate our curiosity and to reveal the intimate histories of a set of rare volumes. All of us who love books and reading know the uncanny experience when we encounter marginal inscriptions from a previous reader of a book we hold in our hands: they were just “here,” and just like us in their particular interest in this specific book, but their full identities and their motivations for interacting with the book remain often tantalizingly out of reach. This innovative exhibition, led by graduate student curator Kate Barnes, brings us closer to the exceptional collection of rare books held at Bryn Mawr College and makes these marvelous materials accessible, focusing our attention on the ways that their diverse uses over time have marked them and created for us artifacts delightful to decipher. The exhibition was prepared in collaboration with Leslie Clark Professor in the Humanities Catherine Conybeare, Seymour Adelman Director of Special Collections Eric Pumroy, Curator/Academic Liaison for Art & Artifacts Carrie Robbins, and Curator/Academic Liaison for Rare Books and Manuscripts Marianne Hansen. This catalogue commemorates a creative intellectual framing of the ways that old books accumulate value and meaning as they pass through the hands and under the eyes of readers through the centuries.
Claustra igit combinatoriae detia & exire vetatia: ianu custodie pacis: & Romana formidat parthis: te princeipe i. sub tuo principatu: nasi signa ro-

nes scribere quae dicta: si ego possem quaestu quantu cupidere. Sic arista chus homeri castigator aiebat: neq posse scribere quaedam vellet nec velle quaedam posset. Sed neq mi-

estas tua recit paruui carmen: nec dormeo audet teterminate: i. attentare revera vires reculent ferre. Aut quae sed: sed tas: i. diliges conatus vrget: i. impet

eu quae diligit stulte. Pcipue cu ipfa mendat se numeris & arte. i. cophys ficiose compositioni. Eni pro qua dicti & meninit libeti us illud qua grauat: i. qu id ultra vires meas est. A imaginies poetar: i. ede camoenar: re ab impito plaste qu mosit: nec ope ne rubea i. erubea donatus pingui

meo i. cu opere scriptoris mei & re ficit deserunt cadauera: hoc est op res i. aromata od orivera: & pipera

Argumentum est

Vltima scrib

Vltima epita. f. toti

Aper"
Hands on the Page  
Manus in Libris

Catherine Conybeare

Latin is a language  
As dead as dead can be  
It killed the ancient Romans  
And now it's killing me.

We recited that rhyme in 1978, a class of twelve-year-old girls encountering Latin for the first time. Sometimes, for variation, one of us lay on a row of desks with her hands crossed over her chest and we changed the last line: “And now it’s killed Henrietta!”

We chanted the rhyme as the Latin master came into the classroom, Henrietta recumbent on her desks, trying to stay motionless, quivering with suppressed laughter. How many times had he heard that particular rhyme? He had probably chanted it in his own youth. Iona and Peter Opie, compiling The Lore and Language of Schoolchildren, recorded versions of it being sung in schools from south of London to north of Edinburgh, and observed that they “were also repeated by American schoolchildren.” Yet the
Latin master still managed to be amused. He was one of the most gifted teachers I have ever encountered.

But he wasn’t the reason I decided to become a Latinist. No, I had made up my mind to do that long before I actually started learning the language. And the bizarre alchemy that could prompt a little girl in the middle of England in the 1970s to decide she was going to commit her life to the study of a language she didn’t even know is part of what this exhibition is trying to capture.

Bizarre alchemy. That Latin should be a tool both of exclusion—witness the Bryn Mawr entrance exams with which we have chosen to start the exhibition—and of inclusion. That Latin should be both a language associated with power and a language of jokes and lightness. For centuries, Latin was a mode of communication between hundreds of thousands of individuals otherwise divided by geography and language and culture. Latin brought people together. Latin also pulled people apart and humiliated them, as girls and women and people of colour and underclasses of all descriptions were told, subtly or not so subtly, that it was not for them.

Latin has ostensibly been “as dead as dead can be” for centuries. Yet for centuries it has maintained its allure. Not for everyone, to be sure; but the current culture wars around “classics” in general and the learning of Latin in particular would not be so energetically fought out if Latin had entirely lost its magical nimbus. The power is still there. So is the humour that is the flip side of that power—for who bothers to joke about something that is wholly insignificant to them?
We can’t undo the historical cachet of Latin or its association with the ruling classes. What we can do—what we are doing in this exhibition—is to particularize it. Instead of an idealized bastion of Latinness designed to repel the unworthy, we are showing the encounter of individual people with individual pieces of Latin. They struggle; they try harder; they mark passages; they gather little bits of erudition; they give up altogether and doodle or scribble or color in the pictures.

Boys and girls, women and men, loved these books. Or they hated them. Or they considered them a necessary evil or a means to an end. Or they used them for something completely different from what was intended by their predecessors who had copied or compiled or printed or edited the books they were using.

What fascinates me now about Latin is the sense of a conversation that continues through the centuries and across divisions of all kinds. Perhaps that’s just another version of the bizarre alchemy I talked about earlier. But the ability to see individual people reaching out to each other and to their books and inserting themselves into an ongoing story about their past and their present is, to me, an extraordinary gift.

Let me give an example of what I mean. This is not from a book displayed in our show—it couldn’t be, because it is a letter that survives in only three manuscripts, all in Europe. But it shows the power and particularity of Latin writing for a lonely woman in Britain in the eighth century.

Eangyth, an abbess, and her daughter, who has the charming nickname of “Bugge”, are writing from England to Boniface, who is on a mission in
North Germany. The date is about 720 CE. Eangyth laments how utterly alone in the world she and her daughter are. They have no male relations to protect them except a cousin of unsound mind, and the king (she says) hates her family. She adds that:

... our life will continue to be wretched, and we are thoroughly weary of living. Every person failing in circumstances and mistrusting their own advice seeks a faithful friend for themselves, in whose advice they may trust when they don’t trust their own, and in whom they may have such faith that they may lay open every secret of their heart—as in the saying: ‘What is sweeter than to have someone to whom you can say everything as if to yourself?’ So because of pretty much all these desperate troubles—which we have listed in elaborate detail—it is necessary for us to seek a faithful friend, the sort of person we can trust even more than ourselves, who would make our pain and grief and poverty his own and would be compassionate to us and console us and sustain us with his conversation and support us with excellent speech. We have been searching for a long time, and we trust that we have found in you the friend we desire and hope and expect.

... taedebit nos vitae nostrae et paene nobis pertaesum est vivere. omnis homo in sua causa deficiens et in suis consiliis diffidens quae est sibi amicum fidelem, in cuius consiliis confidant qui in suis diffidet, et tale fiduciam habeat in illo, ut omnem secretum sui pectoris pandet et aperiat, et ut dicitur: ‘quid dulcius est, quam habeas illum cum quo omnia possis loqui ut tecum?’ et ideo pro his dumtaxat omnibus miseriarum necessitatibus, quae lacinioso sermone enumeravimus, nobis necessarium fuit, ut quae erga nos amicum fidelem et talem, in quem confidamus melius quam in nosmet ipsos, qui dolores nostros et miserias et
paupertates suas deputaret et conpatiens nobis fuissest et consolaret nos et sustentaret eloquius suis et saluberrimis sermonibus sublevaret. diu quaesivimus et confidimus, quia invenimus in te illum amicum quem cupidimus et optavimus et speravimus.

Eangyth is desperate: the whole letter breathes desolation. She apologizes for her poverty of expression; in fact, she writes with careful and emphatic proficiency. But Latin opens the world to her. At least, Latin opens a world that extends from south-west England to northern Germany and down to Rome, for she is hoping to alleviate her desperation by gaining permission to go on a pilgrimage. And Latin also opens a whole cultural history that for her is not remote or inaccessible, but simply the language in which she relates to a past and reaches forward to a future.

It is not that Eangyth would have spoken Latin from birth; her native language would have been what is now called Old English. She would have learned Latin, painfully or easily, slowly or fast, and probably, on the evidence of this letter, quite punctiliously. Perhaps she had then begun teaching it to her daughter. The order in which she learned the nouns and verbs and the different forms they might take would be pretty much the same as it had been in the fourth century CE, when the first systematic grammar books were compiled, or in the fifteenth century CE, when an Italian child wrote in the margins of the grammar book in our show, or for that matter in the twenty-first century CE in a classroom at Bryn Mawr.

And Eangyth would have read in Latin the works whose words and phrases she carried in her mind and wove into her letter. There is language,
of course, from the Latin bible, with which her familiarity would have been reinforced by daily readings and services. There is language from one of the greatest British Latin writers, Bede, who was still alive at the time she wrote her letter—some of his work had reached her even though he was hundreds of miles away in Northumberland. The long quote—‘What is sweeter...?’—is from Cicero’s wonderful dialogue on friendship which was composed back in the first century BCE. Had she read the whole dialogue? If so, what did she make of the conclusion that the most perfect form of friendship is that between men who share their homes, their commitment to the state, and their sense of virtue? Or had she just come across the phrase in a book of excerpts and memorized it? Or had she marked it or copied it out for her own future use?

For the length of this one letter we see Eangyth interposing herself in the long tradition of Latin writing. Around the letter shimmer her emotions, her isolation, poisonous political entanglements at which we can only guess. She gathers together her thoughts, reaches towards a different future, dreams of Rome. She is, she says, getting on in age (“aetate provectior sum”), though her daughter is still young. She is trying to seize the moment. She has asked a priest called Berther to carry the letter to Boniface, and she asks Boniface to be kind to him when he arrives.

Throughout the letter, Eangyth dwells on the themes of faith and love. Her closing farewell addresses Boniface as her “most faithful and most loving spiritual brother” (“frater spiritalis fidelissime atque amantissime”). But in the first letter of Paul to the Corinthians, from which this association of ideas is derived, faith and love are joined by a
third element: hope. Eangyth’s letter may breathe desolation, but it also breathes hope. She relies on Boniface, I think, to spot the missing element and supply it himself.

It is these fragments of hopeful, anxious, eager, learned, unlearned, and above all, connected human beings that we hope to capture in this exhibition. Each of these Latin books was used and used again. Each user hoped for something different from what she or he was doing. Each user may or may not have been aware of contributing to that majestic notion, “the Latin tradition.” Some were quite self-conscious about passing on knowledge. Some were reaching out in other ways. Some were just trying to pass the time.

Acknowledgements

The idea for this exhibition was born in a conversation with Carrie Robbins, Curator for Art and Artifacts at Bryn Mawr, about a series I had just started with Cambridge University Press. The series is called Cultures of Latin from Antiquity to the Enlightenment, and charts the reading and writing of Latin as a continuous tradition throughout some eighteen centuries. Carrie and I began to explore how that narrative might be expressed in material form with the help of our Special Collections, so rich in their holdings of Latin texts and manuscripts. The conversation expanded to include my graduate student Kate Barnes: she selected the Latin books for the show and ingeniously explored an astonishing range of signs and registers of use. In time, she became the chief architect of Private Lives of Old Books, supported by myself, Carrie, and Eric Pumroy, our generous and erudite Director of Special Collections.
Further reading

_Bizarre alchemy_: I explore further the intersection of Latin, power, and playfulness in “Playfulness, Pedagogy, and Patrician Values”, *Journal of Latin Cosmopolitanism and European Literatures* 4 (2020).

_Exclusion and inclusion_: many of the articles in the online journal *Eidolon* are important explorations of this theme. For Latin’s history with people of color, I was thinking particularly of the article “Out of Africa” by Nandini Pandey.

The letter of Eangyth will be published in Carolinne White (ed.), *The Cambridge Anthology of British Medieval Latin* vol. 1: 450–1066 (Cambridge, forthcoming). White supplies a translation into English, but this one is my own.

My reading of Eangyth’s letter as a fragment that suggests a whole life is based particularly on the techniques used by Saidiya Hartman in *Wayward Lives, Beautiful Experiments: Intimate Histories of Riotous Black Girls, Troublesome Women, and Queer Radicals* (Norton 2019). Hartman shows how, starting from close readings of the smallest textual traces, one can pose questions and suggest contexts that illuminate personal histories.
Anoni Curatris

Viva rivis fumum diffusus

differt aegris formis

Viva appendice

Sine facta est Sae

Vivis terra

M. M. M. M.
The books in this exhibition are drawn from Bryn Mawr College’s extensive collection of medieval and early modern books. This collection includes more than 100 Medieval and Renaissance manuscript volumes and about 1250 books known as *incunabula*, books printed during the first half-century of printing, roughly 1450–1500. As is true of most research libraries in America, Bryn Mawr’s collections owe their richness to the work of private book collectors who assembled the books over many years before donating or selling them to the College. This collecting was part of a larger phenomenon that began in the late nineteenth century in which vast numbers of European books, artworks and other cultural properties were purchased by wealthy Americans with ambitions to build libraries and art collections that would rival those of Europe. This exhibition features books from three of these collections, one assembled by a nineteenth-century German scholar that was sold as a whole to Bryn Mawr, and the other two by wealthy and academically-inclined Americans who built their collections piece by piece over a period of years before donating them to the College.
The collection that established Bryn Mawr as a center for Classical Studies was assembled in Germany by the classical philologist Hermann Sauppe (1809–1893) of the University of Göttingen. When the Sauppe library went up for sale following his death, German officials made sure that potential American buyers were aware of the opportunity by publishing a notice about the collection in the October 26, 1893 issue of the The Nation. The notice had its intended effect. Within days of being named President of Bryn Mawr College, M. Carey Thomas prevailed on her close friend Mary Garrett, heir to the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad fortune, to provide the funds to purchase what Thomas believed would give Bryn Mawr the best American collection of Greek and Latin books outside of Harvard. To add urgency to the request, Yale was also showing interest in the collection. Garrett agreed, Bryn Mawr won out over Yale, and by February 1894 the books were on their way to Pennsylvania. At the end of 1894, Bryn Mawr Latin professor Gonzalez Lodge informed readers of The Nation that the Sauppe Library had come to Bryn Mawr College, a triumph not just for the College, but also for the country’s scholarly ambitions. As he noted: “thus another of the collections of great German scholars has found its way to this side of the Atlantic.”

The largest number of books in the exhibition come from the Medieval and Renaissance Library built by Howard Lehman Goodhart, with help from his daughter, Phyllis Goodhart Gordan, class of 1935. Goodhart (1884–1951) made his money in his family’s investment firm in New York and married a Bryn Mawr graduate, Marjorie Walter Goodhart, class of 1912. After her early death in 1920, he and his family provided much of the money to build Bryn Mawr’s theater, named Goodhart Hall in her
honor. His book collection owes its beginnings to Phyllis’s interests in Renaissance Humanism which developed at Bryn Mawr. In January 1934, Goodhart bought his first fifteenth century book, the 1476 edition of Poggio Bracciolini’s *Historia Fiorentina*, so that his daughter could use it for a class paper that semester. Within a few months, this one-time purchase had turned into a passion. By the end of the year he owned nearly 100 incunables, and by 1937 the total was about 750. He continued buying early books for the rest of his life, and in 1949 decided to donate most of them to Bryn Mawr as the Marjorie Walter Goodhart Medieval Library.

Goodhart kept good records of his purchases, and these allow us to see which dealers he bought from and sometimes who the immediately previous owners were. With only a few exceptions, he worked with a small number of American and British rare book dealers. His most important relationship was with the London firm of Maggs Brothers. His first purchases from Maggs were in the summer of 1934, following an extended visit to the shop by his daughter Phyllis. Maggs became by far his most important supplier, responsible for more than 40% of his collection, primarily books that were coming out of private English collections that had been built in the nineteenth century. Maggs also served as a broker for continental churches and religious houses that were selling off their old books to raise money for current operations. Goodhart acquired a few of those, including some duplicates being sold by the Vatican Library. Three other British dealers supplied about 200 additional fifteenth-century books to the library, so in all about 60% of Goodhart’s collection came directly from England. American dealers provided almost all of the rest.
of his collection, especially A.S.W. Rosenbach in Philadelphia during Goodhart’s initial burst of buying in the mid-1930s. Many of Goodhart’s purchases from Rosenbach had come from England, including two William Caxton editions sold to Rosenbach by the Cathedral at York to help raise funds for the building’s restoration. Many of the books from the other American dealers, though, appear to have been previously in American collections, an indication that the transfer of books from Europe to the United States had started well before Goodhart began collecting in the 1930s.

Three of the books came from Bryn Mawr alumnae, two from Ethelinda Schaefer Castle, Class of 1908, and one from Marion Lawrence, class of 1923. Castle came from a prominent Hawaiian family and became a major collector of illustrated books, particularly on natural history. She was a long-time member of the Friends of the Bryn Mawr College Libraries’ board, and left the College 1500 of her books when she died in 1970, including the 1496 collection of Terence’s plays in the exhibition. Lawrence’s donation, the Book of Hours, is an anomaly in that it came to Bryn Mawr as a solitary item rather than as part of a collection. Lawrence taught art history at Barnard College for many years, and she appears to have acquired this volume and a number of manuscript leaves to use in her teaching. The book came to Bryn Mawr from her niece following Lawrence’s death in 1978.

The movement of books among dealers, collectors and libraries in the United States and Europe is still very much alive: three of these books are purchases by the library, two within the last few years. All three books were purchased at least in
part with endowed funds donated by members of the Goodhart/Gordan family.

In 1972 Phyllis Goodhart Gordan gave a talk at Bryn Mawr entitled *Of What Use Are Old Books?* She focused on the fifteenth-century books that she and her father had given to Bryn Mawr, and the historical value of the texts they preserved. But as the talk went on, she expanded her attention to the “owners, bindings, and scribbles” that were also part of the books’ history:

> These old books are here for us to study. We can handle them; most of them are even fairly tough. We can read them and read the notes their former owners left in them.

This exhibition takes up the implied invitation that Phyllis Gordan issued almost fifty years ago. Thanks to her generosity, and that of the other donors mentioned here, we continue to read and interpret and love these Old Books.
CATULLVS.

TIBULLVS.

PROPERTIVS.
What is this strange thing we call reading? Has it always been roughly the same sort of activity, over centuries and millennia, or has it undergone changes and upheavals over time? Are some kinds of reading—critical reading, immersive reading, ‘improving’ reading—better than others? When does an act of reading begin, and when does it end, if ever? Is reading only done by individuals, or can it be a collective activity, undertaken by groups of people or whole societies? How have different physical materials (such as papyrus, parchment and paper) and forms (such as the scroll or the codex) evolved to accommodate reading? Is reading best thought of as a mental phenomenon, a transaction between the eyes and the brain, or as something bodily, reliant on all five senses and on a panoply of spaces, furnitures and technologies?

These are just some of the questions that are raised when we peep beneath the covers in an attempt to get at the ‘Private Lives of Old Books’.

This is an exhibition that sets out from traces—signs of wear-and-tear, ink-stains and doodles, handmade indexes and marks in the margins, and many different kinds of annotation. The auction
houses that trade in rare books have tended to view such traces with suspicion, celebrating copies that are pristine and unsullied, unless they could be shown to be elevated by their connection to some famous figure from the past. But academics, and some booksellers and collectors, have become ever more fascinated by this sort of evidence.

The idea of the ‘private’ is crucial here, because marks in books are usually enigmatic. Often we don’t know who made them, or when, or why, and the absence of these key pieces of information immediately awakens the detective in us. The traces may not in fact be private at all—they could have been made in a schoolroom or added by an institutional owner such as a library—but the incompleteness of the evidence, coupled with our sense of the intimacy of reading, makes them tantalizing. If we do some research, and if we succeed in putting names, dates and places to the marks, the element of enigma does not go away, since most books open only a very narrow window onto the lives of their owners. We get a ghostly sense of the much broader life that swirled around the book and left no evidence behind it. That sense of lost lives is driven home by books that are marked by many generations of readers, sometimes passing as heirlooms through a single family, sometimes changing hands many times. It always feels like a small miracle to handle an old book, an object that has survived against the odds for hundreds of years; the marvel is intensified by signs of use.

One dominant way in which we conceive of reading is as a meeting of minds, a kind of communion between authors and their audiences. Sometimes the traces we find in old books were made by learned readers or by great writers,
who engaged deeply with the text at the level of content. The Latin word ‘marginalia’ was imported into English by the poet Samuel Taylor Coleridge, who was one of the most inveterate of writers in books; anyone wanting to understand the development of his thought can study his marginalia, which have been edited and published. Heavily annotated books can be a revealing source for the history of ideas and of literary imitation; volumes such as Montaigne’s copy of Lucretius’s *De rerum natura*, Ben Jonson’s copy of Spenser’s *Faerie Queene*, or (in this exhibition) Melanchthon’s copy of the poetry of Horace show us how readers who were themselves writers assimilated the works of their predecessors. Textual encounters of this kind could also be sharply hostile, as when John Keats condemned Samuel Johnson’s critical commentary in his edition of Shakespeare’s *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*, first by crossing it out and then by adding a series of mocking quotations from the play. As he transcribes the lines ‘Newts and blind worms do no wrong / Come not near our fairy queene’, Keats makes clear his view that Johnson is the equivalent of a newt or a blind worm that needs to be kept as far away as possible from the text of Shakespeare. In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, there was a fashion for printed controversies, published in the form of *adversaria*, books which reprinted the text of earlier books, interspersed with adversarial commentary. It is likely that many such publications originated as annotated books, in which the aggressive glosses were penned in the margins.

Most book-traces are not of this exalted kind. Many are not even clearly made by human agents; among these we might reckon water-damage, the ravages of rats and insects, and numerous forms of dilapidation. The parchment used in
some medieval manuscripts bears the scars of its previous life as animal skin. Early modern paper was made from macerated rags, flecks of which are sometimes visible in the finished product. Animals had scant respect for books. Images of cat pawprints on medieval manuscripts circulate widely on Twitter, as does the exasperated annotation left by one Netherlandish scribe, alongside a tell-tale stain: ‘Cursed be the peesty cat that urinated on this book during the night in Deventer’ [Confundatur pessimus cattus qui minxit super librum istum in nocte Daventrie]. Many old books show signs of interventions by children, who practiced their handwriting or their mathematical skills in the margins, regardless of the book’s subject-matter. This is part of a broader pattern, in which books were used either as sources of spare paper for writing practice, or as storage devices for the preservation of information. The classic example of the latter usage is the list of family births, marriages and deaths found in many family Bibles. While the interplay between genealogical information and the text of the Bible, with its plentiful genealogies, is a complex one, other intersections between information and receptacle are less obviously rich. When, in 1591, a reader copied a prayer imploring God to protect Elizabeth I from traitors onto the back of the title-page in a copy of Thomas Elyot’s Latin dictionary, the relationship between the text and the prayer was left unclear. The inscription, signed by the man who penned it, can perhaps be read as a grandiose mark of ownership, a sign at once of the reader’s identity and of his fidelity to the state.

Marks of ownership are another element in the private life of the book that does not obviously count as ‘reading’. Such marks often come in the form not of annotations made with pen and ink,
but of heraldic crests stamped on bindings, or of book-plates pasted into the book, usually on a pastedown or flyleaf. The visual flamboyance of many ownership marks suggests the importance of the book as a vehicle of display and self-fashioning, which was at the same time a display of literacy. William Mount, a fellow of King’s College, Cambridge, in the 1560s, signed his name four times on the title-page of a Latin religious treatise, showing off his mastery of fashionable italic handwriting and adding short snippets from Latin and Greek texts to indicate his learning and moral probity. People buying foreign books in order to learn or polish their language skills would sometimes sign their names in the target language; thus the translator Thomas Hoby becomes ‘Thomaso Hobys Inglese [Englishman]’ as he inscribes his copy of Dante’s Divine Comedy. Marks of ownership suggested aspiration: when Elizabeth Colles, probably a gentlewoman from Somersetshire, had her name stamped on the gold-tooled binding of a Latin dictionary bound together with two Latin grammars in the early seventeenth-century, she was clearly announcing her ambition to deepen her linguistic skills. Traces left by women attest to the broad range of their interests and agency; in the present exhibition, the name ‘Marge’, inscribed in a Latin medical book, alerts us the presence of a female owner, reader or user, even if the trace is (as her name suggests) fleetingly marginal. In this way, ownership marks make a powerful connection between a project of personhood and a particular kind of reading matter, even if they do not count as evidence of reading in themselves.

Closer to our modern notion of reading are those markings that emerged from educational contexts, which are inevitably very common
in medieval and early modern Latin books. As well as interlinear and marginal translations, of the kind that language-learners still make today, students also left grammatical notes and copied down snippets of information offered to them by their teachers, who would typically have led them through the text line-by-line. There was little or no sense of a prohibition on the marking of books; students were encouraged to read with pen in hand, and were equipped with numerous techniques for the digestion and analysis of the texts that they were studying. This meant that readings were, as Bill Sherman has pointed out, frequently very impersonal, and consisted in the formal analysis of rhetorical structures—the organisation of the text, the way it marshalled its arguments, and the persuasive strategies that it used to drive those arguments home—rather than with the sort of free and subjective responses that are supposedly fostered by reading in modern Western societies. The numbering of sections, the diagrammatic analysis of an argument, and the marking of particularly pithy and memorable ‘commonplaces’, or sententious sayings: these were standard strategies for the annotating student. Breaking a text down into its constituent parts was a key skill that enabled one to recycle and repurpose those materials in other contexts, written and oral. Literacy was power, and the fruits of reading were considered to be valuable not just in the composition of new written works but also in public and political contexts, where one’s learning might be brought to bear to transform a situation.

In some cases, however, these fixed and formal scholarly procedures could lead to results that were weird and unexpected. The figure who has come to epitomise the strangeness of reading in
the past is a Cambridge-trained scholar named Gabriel Harvey (c. 1552/3–1631). Harvey was a voracious reader whose books are now scattered across the libraries of the world. Many of them are annotated with extraordinary intensity, Harvey’s notes flying in all directions and occupying every bit of blank space on the page. As well as adopting an array of symbols to indicate subject matter (such as the astrological symbol for Mars indicating references to war), Harvey also adopted various personae with their own names (‘Eutrapelus’, ‘Eudromus’, ‘Angelus Furius’) to articulate different aspects of a text, and added numerous personal anecdotes and critical judgments in the margins of his books. While he is often taken to be an eccentric, a view compounded by the failure of his ambitions for a career in public office, Harvey exemplifies the idea that reading could be a political activity and something of a profession in its own right. In some of his most celebrated annotations, in his copy of Livy’s history of Rome, he records that he read sections of the work with different courtiers at key moments in their careers. The aim was to extract practical wisdom that might assist these political players as they embarked on foreign embassies or colonial wars.

The classic study of Harvey’s reading, by Anthony Grafton and Lisa Jardine, stuck in the mind of a generation of scholars in part for the image it contained of a singularly outlandish piece of furniture. The ‘book-wheel’ was a massive rotating wooden contraption, with a series of desks on which books could lie flat, allowing the scholar to cross-compare numerous large volumes and so to negotiate the ever-expanding universe of learning. Whether or not many such wheels were ever built, the image remains resonant not just as depiction of the intertextuality of medieval and early modern
reading, but also for thinking about the embodied nature of reading in general. Reading takes place in particular locales, and the way in which those locales are dressed so as to frame the act of reading makes a great deal of difference to the nature of that act.

Reading is also a thoroughly bodily affair. It is a task for the eyes and the mind, of course, but it is also crucially a work of the hand; note the many manicules, or pointing hands, drawn in books in this exhibition, and the handmade indexes—where the word ‘index’ denotes both an alphabetical list of contents and a pointing forefinger. It is thanks to our hands, and the tactile sense that they give us of the shape of the book and the space of the page, that we find our way back to favourite passages even in a book that we have not marked. And we might go further and suggest that it is through the hand that a book’s content becomes graspable or comprehensible (the word ‘comprehend’ comes from the Latin ‘to grasp, seize, comprise’). Getting to grips with a book means not so much keeping it in the mind’s eye as holding it in the mind’s hand.
Expositio Dona


ti cui quivusti novis ac pulcerri
mis notatis scum viae doctoris
Sæcti perutilis Baccalariaédis.
Memories of Use

Kate Barnes

Books contain a kind of magic – not only in the worlds of their texts but also in the memories of use that can be seen in their pages. As a graduate student in Classics at Bryn Mawr, I have enjoyed learning about manuscripts and early printed books in my own work, and so I was thrilled to be invited to be part of an exhibition featuring some of the objects in our collection.

In the nascent stages of what has now become Private Lives of Old Books, I decided to explore as much as I could of the manuscripts and early printed books that we are privileged to have at Bryn Mawr College. This was an entirely selfish mission and really as much an excuse to become acquainted with all the parchment and paper treasures I had only been able to glimpse within the library catalogue as it was to gather potential objects for our exhibition.

I was not sure what to look for, so I simply looked. As a classicist, my scholarly work is obsessed with text. However, I became fascinated with these books as material objects and archives of easily overlooked and yet immensely relatable histories of use. Books – and old, rare, precious books are no exception to this – were, and still are, living
objects. It is easy to think of them as sacred because of their age, but they were hauled around, read, re-read, written in, used in all manner of non-readerly ways, abused, and treasured. It was common for users to leave their mark in these books, and the doodles which fill the margins of so many of those on display were just as sanctioned as, for instance, the learned notes of a renowned humanist scholar. These very personal, very private lives of these objects are hidden in plain sight upon their very pages. The interventions of their users, whether in ink, dirt, or food stains, tell the stories of countless, often forgotten and unnamed people. Fire damage, water damage, even the nibbles of rodents give a great deal of insight into the unwritten stories these books contain. And while all the objects featured in *Private Lives of Old Books* are in Latin, we do not need to understand this language to read these stories and to connect with the many and varied users of these books.

In what follows, I consider two manuscripts which, while they did not make it into the exhibition, are both beautiful archives of different types of use. By paying attention to these various signs of use within these books, we can recover something of the varied lives of these objects and the individuals who used them.

*An unfinished commentary for an unfinished poem*  
– Statius, *Achilleid* (Gordan MS 8)

This is a beautiful copy of Statius’s *Achilleid* dating from around the mid-sixteenth century. It boasts on its first page notes from an early user, both prodigious and learned. Words are glossed and analyses are offered, creating a veritable wall of commentary in the margins of Statius’s famously incomplete poem. And then, with a single turn
of its parchment pages, this work is all but abandoned. There is a scant handful of readerly interventions through the rest of the book, all of which lack the promised density and vigor witnessed on this first page. Statius’s epic is all that remains – lonely and surrounded by blank margins.

If I may betray a personal bias: this book irks me. While there may be countless, more charitable reasons for this sudden cessation of marginalia, I cannot help but suspect that it is evidence of distraction and neglect. One individual’s grand intellectual endeavor, vigorously pursued for an afternoon, only to be put aside and never thought of again. There is something a little too relatable in this failure to follow through that has been preserved down the centuries. Even without understanding the Latin of the commentary, the familiarity in the frustrating patterns of use (and dis-use) of this manuscript is all too legible.

The parchment and its book - Leonardo Bruni, Epistolae familiares (MS 45)

There is a mid-fifteenth century manuscript of Leonardo Bruni’s letters which demonstrates a very different kind of use. On the bottom of its very first page, one user has crudely drawn an unidentified coat of arms – a relatively common practice of marking ownership of a book. In the upper margin of this page, a non-professional hand sketches out “Coquil[le]” in large letters which mimic the style of hyper-ornamented capitals. Perhaps a name, or just an excuse to scrawl. There are other occasional signs of use scattered in ink throughout this manuscript, but the real story here is not what has been added to these pages, but what has been taken away.
Exploring this book is a multi-sensory experience. Its delightfully thick parchment pages seem to reverberate as they turn, like a quiet drum. After a handful of these turns the secret of this manuscript reveals itself – the bottom margins of more than a third of its pages have been deliberately sliced out. It is likely that this book was used by a bookbinder as a source of precious parchment which then would have had a second life in the spines of other books.

There is an interesting conversation about value in the way these margins have been extracted. The bookbinder clearly had little regard for other marks of use, as some marginal notes have been snipped away without any compunction. The main text, however, has been carefully preserved. There is one page where the line of the cut would have chopped off a capital which dangled down into the margin, past the main line of text. Instead, the user has cautiously cut around this letter, preserving the wholeness of the main text. This book clearly had value, but so too did its material. The owner of the book then had to balance these two values in the way he or she chose to use it.

There are many stories that a book can tell, from the texts they contain to the memories that are left within their pages. In exploring these manuscripts and early printed texts, it is amazing what you can find when you simply look.
Sodd b trep eit ne de fal
tyraniitii guta. turri 
and in digman in lo 
kine i qe ihat utere moza

omni et debitum
Checklist of the Exhibition

**Ovid** / Publius Ovidius Naso (Italy, 43 BCE–17 CE) and others

*Nasonis Fastorum Liber Primus*
(The Fasti or Ovid’s Book of Days: The First Book)
Rome: Eucharius Silber, 1489
Bryn Mawr College Special Collections.
On deposit from the family of Phyllis Goodhart Gordan (Class of 1935)

**Aelius Donatus** (Italy, d. 380) and others

*Latin Grammars*
Written by an unknown scribe in
Florence, Italy, 1474
Bryn Mawr College MS 58
Bryn Mawr College Special Collections.
Purchased from Les Enluminures, New York with the Howard Lehman Goodhart Fund, 2019

**Magnus Hundt** (Germany, 1449–1519)

*Expositio Donati* (Commentary on Donatus)
Leipzig: Melchior Lotter, 1496
Bryn Mawr College Special Collections.
Purchased from Bruce McKittrick Rare Books, Narberth, PA with the Howard Lehman Goodhart Fund, 2019
Cicero / Marcus Tullius Cicero (Italy, 106–43 BCE)
Epistolae ad familiare (Letters to friends)
Written by Petrus de Carbonibus in Ferrara and Venice, Italy, 1432–34
Bryn Mawr College MS 6
Bryn Mawr College Special Collections.
Gift of Howard Lehman Goodhart, 1951

Poggio Bracciolini (Italy, 1380–1459)
De miseria conditionis humanae
(The Misery of the Human Condition)
Written by an unknown scribe in France, c. 1450
Bryn Mawr College MS 47
Bryn Mawr College Special Collections.
Bequest of Phyllis Goodhart Gordan (Class of 1935), 1995

Giles of Rome (Papal Rome, c. 1243–1316)
De regimine principum
(The Governance of Kings and Princes)
Written by an unknown scribe in France, c. 1350.
Bryn Mawr College MS 2
Bryn Mawr College Special Collections.
Gift of Howard Lehman Goodhart, 1949

Antonius Guainerius (Pavia, Italy, active 1412–1445)
Opera Medica (Complete Medical Works)
Venice: Bonetus Locatellus for Octavianus Scotus, 1497–98
Bryn Mawr College Special Collections.
Gift of Howard Lehman Goodhart, 1951

Horace / Quintus Horatius Flaccus (Italy, 65–8 BCE)
Opera (Complete Works)
Paris: Jehan Petit, 1503
Annotated extensively in margins by Philip Melanchthon (Germany, 1497–1560)
Bryn Mawr College Special Collections.
Gift of Ethelinda Schaefer Castle (Class of 1908), 1958
Catullus (Italy, c. 84–after 54 BCE),
Tibullus (Italy, between 55 and 48–19 BCE),
Propertius (Italy, between 54 and 47–before 2 BCE)

Catullus. Tibullus. Propertius
Venice: Aldus Manutius, 1502
Bryn Mawr College Special Collections.
Gift of Mary Garrett, from the library of German
philologist Hermann Sauppe (1819–1893), 1894

Poggio Bracciolini (Italy, 1380–1459)
Poggii Florentini oratoris clarissimi, ac Sedis
Apostolicae Secretarii Operum (Works of Poggius of Florence, renowned writer
and secretary of the Holy See)
Argentinae (Strasbourg): Johann Knobloch, 1513
Bryn Mawr College Special Collections.
Purchased from E.P. Goldschmidt & Co., New York with
the Harold Lehman Goodhart Fund, 1956

Lucan / Marcus Annaeus Lucanus (Córdoba, Spain,
39–65 CE)
De bello civili sive Pharsalia
(The Civil War: Pharsalia)
Written by Frater Pius de Cremona at the
Monastery of the Holy Cross, Mantua, Italy, 1469
Gordan Manuscript 156
Bryn Mawr College Special Collections.
On deposit from the family of Phyllis Goodhart Gordan
(Class of 1935)

“Lawrence” Book of Hours
Written by an unknown scribe, probably from the
vicinity of Cambrai, France, c. 1450
Bryn Mawr College Manuscript MS 24
Bryn Mawr College Special Collections.
Gift of Elizabeth Grobe from the library of her aunt,
Marion Lawrence (Class of 1923), 1978
**Terence** (Carthage, Tunisia, c. 195–c. 159 BCE) and others

*Comoediae* (Comedies)

Strasbourg: Johann Reinhard Gruninger, 1496

Bryn Mawr College Special Collections.
Gift of Ethelinda Schaefer Castle (Class of 1908), 1970

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**Bryn Mawr College Examination for Matriculation, Latin**

1885–1931

Bryn Mawr Special Collections, College Archives, RG 4TE, Bryn Mawr College Entrance Examinations.

- Matriculation Examination Certificate for Gertrude Allinson, June 9, 1885
- Changes in the Examination for Matriculation, 1906
- Examinations for Matriculation. Latin. June 1895. First Section: Grammar & Composition; Second Section: Caesar and Cicero; Third Section: Vergil
About the Contributors

Kate Barnes is a PhD candidate in the department of Greek, Latin, and Classical Studies at Bryn Mawr College. She currently teaches Middle and Upper School Latin at Hackley School in New York.

Catherine Conybeare is Leslie Clark Professor in the Humanities and Professor of Greek, Latin, and Classical Studies at Bryn Mawr College. She is editor of the Cambridge University Press series Cultures of Latin from the Antiquity to the Enlightenment and is currently completing her fifth monograph, Augustine the African, for Liveright and Profile Books. Her transcription, in collaboration with Luigi Battezzato, of Housman’s Notebook X in the Bryn Mawr Special Collections is forthcoming from Edizioni della Normale.

Eric Pumroy is the Seymour Adelman Director of Special Collections at Bryn Mawr College. His most recent article is “Poggio Bracciolini, Phyllis Goodhart Gordan, and the formation of the Goodhart Collection of fifteenth-century books at Bryn Mawr College” in Poggio Bracciolini and the Re(dis)covery of Antiquity: Textual and Material Texts (Firenze University Press).
Jason Scott-Warren is Reader in Early Modern Literature and Culture at the University of Cambridge, where he is a fellow of Gonville & Caius College and Director of the Centre for Material Texts. His most recent book is *Shakespeare’s First Reader: The Paper Trails of Richard Stonley* (University of Pennsylvania Press). He recently discovered the annotations by Milton in the copy of Shakespeare’s First Folio held by the Free Library of Philadelphia.
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Special thanks to Phyllis Goodhart Gordan’s family for allowing us to include in the exhibition several of the books which they have placed on deposit in the Bryn Mawr College Libraries.

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