An “Ideal Bibliography” and a “Kind of Pageant”: Osler’s Library and Conrad Gesner’s Bibliographia Animata

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Over many decades, both as a librarian in the Osler Library and now as a regular reader within its walls, I have tried to understand what makes it distinctive. There are many libraries dedicated to the history of medicine, and many of them were created and endowed by individuals: one thinks of Henry Wellcome in London, or Harvey Cushing at Yale. Yet none of these libraries seems to me to have the vital and organic quality of the Osler Library. This is to a large degree due to the reputation of Osler himself, and the fact that so much of him, including his ashes, rests in the Library. But this explanation never completely satisfied me. The Osler Library “constitutes an intimate record” (in Cushing’s words)¹, but it is not a library about Osler. It is a Library created by Osler, and it is not a great exaggeration to claim that it is a sort of unique work of art – even a performance (or some combination of the two, like an installation) – that brings to life an idea of medicine and of education that was profoundly significant to its founder.

In puzzling over this problem, I have come back again and again to my encounter with a particular sixteenth-century author whom Osler revered. This essay presents a preliminary argument for the significance of this author in helping Osler himself clarify his vision. In so doing, it will try to clarify the vision itself.

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William Osler loved libraries; he loved them as much as he loved books, and he loved them because he loved books. It might fairly be said that he found it hard to detach any book from its context as part of an organism that was more than the sum of its parts. He was certainly concerned that the

Title page from William Osler’s copy of Conrad Gesner’s Bibliotheca Universals (Zurich, 1545). B.O. 623.
Library he created and bequeathed to the Faculty of Medicine of McGill University not be mistaken for a mechanical assemblage of books. As is well known, he stipulated as part of his memorandum of gift that his books be kept together. The reasoning behind this requirement was articulated, albeit allusively and indirectly, in the introductory essay he composed for Bibliotheca Osleriana.2 “The Collecting of a Library” (note: not “The Collecting of Books”) is not just about the genesis of Osler’s own library. It is an autobiographical confession of his life-long passion for libraries; at the same time, it is a gesture of respect and gratitude offered to the people who created these libraries, welcomed him into them, and through them, gave him the education that made him what he became.

The chronicle begins in Osler’s youth, with three teachers, and three libraries. The first was the library of the Rev. W.A. Johnson, Warden of Trinity College School, which Osler attended from 1866 to 1867. “Father” Johnson not only initiated Osler into practical microscopy and field work in natural history, but gave him the run of his library of scientific literature, opening for him “a book world” totally different from what he had known hitherto.3 One item from this library, Beale’s How to Work with the Microscope (1865) is now B.O. 1969.

The second library was even more important, and like the first, it was inextricably bound up with the personality of a teacher. As a young undergraduate at the University of Toronto, Osler boarded with Father Johnson’s friend Dr. James Bovell, a physician and naturalist who later took holy orders. Bovell’s library was an intellectual epiphany. It has been remarked that for a young man the privilege of browsing in a large and varied library is the best introduction to a general education. My opportunity came in the winter of 1869-70. Having sent his family to the West Indies, Dr. Bovell took consulting rooms in Spadina Avenue, not far away from his daughter, Mrs Barwick, with whom he lived. He gave me a bedroom in his house, and my duties were to help him keep appointments – an impossible job! – and to cut sections and prepare specimens. Having catholic and extravagant tastes, he had filled the rooms with a choice and varied selection of books. After a review of the work of the day came a long evening for browsing, and that winter gave me a good first-hand acquaintance with the original works of many of the great masters. After fifty years the position in those rooms of special books is fixed in my mind: Morton’s ‘Crania Americana’, Annesley’s ‘Diseases of India’ with the fine plates, the three volumes of Bright, the big folios of Dana, the monographs of Agassiz. Dr Bovell had a passion for the great physician-naturalists, and it was difficult for him to give a lecture without a reference to John Hunter. The diet was too rich and varied, and contributed possibly to the development of my somewhat ‘splintery’ and illogical mind; but the experience was valuable and aroused an enduring interest in books.4

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James Bovell’s library was the projection of his untrammelled and generous intellect, and Osler’s warm and grateful memories merged them together: “Books and the Man! The best that the human mind has afforded was on his shelves, and in him all that one could desire in a teacher, a clear head and a loving heart.”

When he migrated to McGill to attend medical school, Osler embarked upon a friendship with his teacher Palmer Howard, “whose library,” he hastens to mention, “was at my disposal.”

“The Collecting of a Library” goes on to chronicle Osler’s committed involvement with institutional libraries in Philadelphia and Baltimore, with the Surgeon-General’s Library in Washington, and with libraries in Great Britain, Europe and beyond. But it is these three formative libraries of his student years which meant the most to him, as the men who created them were the midwives of his mind, and his fathers in the art of medicine. He dedicated his famous textbook, *The Principles and Practice of Medicine*, to Johnson, Bovell and Howard.

Two other prefatory items in *Bibliotheca Osleriana* supply additional details based on Osler’s cues. The Editors’ Preface by W.W. Francis, Reginald Hill and Archibald Malloch stresses that Osler designed his Library “with a definite educational purpose,” and that this purpose drove its unique arrangement. The Bibliotheca Prima, arranged in chronological order and featuring the most significant medical authors from ancient Egypt and India to Osler’s own day (the sequence closes with Röntgen), was explicitly a resource for a course on the history of medicine – formal or self-directed – for busy and overburdened medical students. The structure was chronological and biographical, the criteria for inclusion both sweeping and selective. Moreover, the books about the author were listed directly after the author’s own writings. “Primary” and “secondary sources” (to borrow the historians’ jargon) went together. This yoking of original works and interpretive scholarship is continued in the Bibliotheca Secunda, and is a distinctive feature of the Osler Library. As Lloyd Stevenson observed in his Preface to the 1969 edition of *Bibliotheca Osleriana*, Osler wanted, through the Secunda, to write lesser known figures into the fabric of medical history – individuals who, if isolated from the context of a medical history library, could easily be forgotten. This two-tiered plan imposed an important element of discipline on Osler’s collecting. In a letter to Casey Wood from June 1912 he states: “I am collecting along two lines – books that are of historical importance in the history of medicine [Bibliotheca Prima], and books that have interest through the character or work of their authors [Bibliotheca Secunda]. In that way I limit the field, which is large enough!” This thoughtful and selective approach went hand in hand with Osler’s educational purpose; it gives a distinctive character to a Library which, by global standards, is not exceptionally large.

Prima and Secunda occupy the bulk of *Bibliotheca Osleriana*. The next section, Bibliotheca Litteraria, is dedicated to physicians who are primarily noteworthy as literary figures: this includes Osler’s own hero, Sir Thomas Browne. The Bibliotheca Historica, Bibliotheca Biographica and Bibliotheca Bibliographica form a reference collection that supports the Prima, Secunda and Litteraria. Finally come two sections determined by format; incunabula printed prior to 1500, and manuscripts. Notably the incunabula and manuscripts connected with the Prima and Secunda remain with those sections. The idea was always more significant than the form.

This seems clear and logical, but as Stevenson and the Editors remark, Osler was often hard pressed to decide where an author “belonged” in his scheme. He tried not to let personal preference sway his judgment. Indeed, the book that meant the most to him, Browne’s *Religio Medici* – the first book he ever purchased and the one that lay on his coffin at his funeral – is modestly quartered in the Bibliotheca Litteraria. But there is one author whose inclusion in the Bibliotheca Prima raised some eyebrows. The Editors’ Preface hoped that “no one but an advocate Diaboli will cavil at the reasons given at the entry of no. 623 for the inclusion of Conrad Gesner” in the Bibliotheca Prima.

So who was Conrad Gesner, and why did the Editors feel it necessary to explain, and perhaps apologize for his presence in the Prima? Conrad Gesner or Gessner (1516-1563) was a Swiss physician, naturalist and classical scholar. He was one of the most famous and prolific humanists and polymaths of the sixteenth century, and B.O. 623 is the *Bibliotheca Universalis*, printed in Gesner’s home town of Zurich by Christoph Froschauer in 1545. This is his most remarkable book. The long entry on B.O. 623 mentioned by the Editors ends with Osler’s admission “I am not sure that this fellow should go into ‘Prima’: but I love him so much that I must put him there. Besides, he is the father of Bibliography.” Indeed, the *Bibliotheca Universalis* was the first attempt to inventory every book ever written in Latin, Greek or Hebrew, both extant and lost. As such, it constituted an essay in reconstructing the entire domain of classical, Jewish and Christian learning on the basis of its written record – a truly Renaissance project. But this was not the only reason Gesner won a seat among the Olympians of the Bibliotheca Prima. Conrad Gesner was a writer that Osler said he loved. I would argue that Osler loved Gesner not in the way he loved Browne, but more in the way in which he loved Johnson, Bovell and Howard. There was something about this sixteenth-century Swiss savant and his writings that mirrored, albeit at a historical distance, the experience and the mind of Osler himself, as it was shaped by his education, and as he hoped to shape the education of others.
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Into his copy of Gesner’s *Bibliotheca Universalis* (B.O. 623), Osler pasted this quotation about Gesner opening his house, his library, to others.

Returning to the note on B.O. 623, we can find more clues. Here Osler copied a word-portrait of Gesner, taken from Henry Morely’s biography of Girolamo Cardano (B.O. 2244). This was a passage that Osler treasured. He wrote it on the flyleaf of the copy of Gesner’s *Historia animalium* which he forwarded to Dr George Dock in June 1909.14 And in a note to the book scholar and collector Leonard G. Mackall15 from Bologna, written in the same year and boasting of his acquisition of Gesner’s *Lexicon Graecolatinum* (Latin-Greek Dictionary, B.O. 634), Osler promises to show him the passage from Morely when he returns to Oxford, describing it as “a touching tribute” to the character of one who was “above all a lovable soul.”16 As Cushing observes, this “tribute” could have been addressed to Osler himself,17 for it depicts Gesner as the host of a sort of Renaissance “Open Arms”, a man generous, cosmopolitan and sociable, ready to help others (especially young people), and phenomenally productive.

Conrad Gesner, who kept open house there for all learned men who came into his neighborhood. Gesner was not only the best naturalist among the scholars of his day, but of all men of that century he was the pattern man of letters. He was faultless in private life, assiduous in study, diligent in maintaining correspondence and good-will with learned men in all countries, hospitable — though his means were small — to every scholar that came to Zurich. Prompt to serve all, he was an editor of other men’s volumes, a writer of prefaces for friends, a suggester to young writers of books on which they might engage themselves, and a great helper to them in the progress of their work. But still, while finding time for services to other men, he could produce as much out of his own study as though he had no part in the life beyond its walls.18

Like Osler, Gesner awoke to science under the influence of a clergyman-naturalist, in this case his maternal uncle, surrogate father and benefactor Canon Johannes Frick.19 He shared with Osler the reputation of being something of a Wunderkind, having published the monumental *Bibliotheca Universalis* before he was thirty. In his own time, Gesner was most famous for his extraordinary illustrated works of natural history, especially the *Historia animalium* (History of Animals 1551-1558; B.O. 636) and the *Icones avium* (Image of Birds 1560; B.O. 637), but he also wrote on practical chemistry (*Thesaurus Euonymi Philiatri* / The Treasury of ‘Well-Named Physicians’-Friend*, n.d. and 1569, B.O. 638-9), mineralogy (*De omni rerum fossilium genere/* On all Kinds of Minerals, 1565-6, B.O. 646), practical medicine, and above all, botany. Besides *De raris et admirandis herbis* (Rare and Wonderful Plants, 1555, B.O. 642) which includes his account of climbing Mount Pilatus near Luzerne, Gesner laboured on a huge botanical encyclopedia which was left unfinished when he died of plague in 1565.20

But the flagship item in the Gesner section of the Bibliotheca Prima is *Bibliotheca Universalis*, and not the apparently more suitable medical or scientific titles. Osler identified Gesner as a pioneer of bibliography, so we might ask whether this choice reveals some connection between Gesner and Osler’s own Bibliotheca.

The principal model for the *Bibliotheca Osleriana* is often said to be John Ferguson’s *Bibliotheca Chemica* (B.O. 7040), the 1906 catalogue of the Scots chemist James “Paraffin” Young’s library of historic works on alchemy, chemistry and pharmacy. Osler found Ferguson’s catalogue appealing both “as a combination of historic works on the sciences (bibliography brought to life)” shaped the form of scholarly libraries on the history of the sciences from Albrecht von Haller’s (1708-1777) *Bibliotheca Medicinae Primae* (B.O. 1163) to Erik Waller (1875-1933),21 with Osler standing between as its premier modern exponent.25
“Bibliographia animata” in the Gesner mode serves the living as much as it preserves the dead. Gesner wanted the information he had gathered in the Bibliotheca Universalis to be put to use, so he followed it with Pandectarum siue Partitionum uniuersalium libri XXI (Encyclopedia or Universal Analysis B.O. 624), a sweeping and innovative classified arrangement of the material in the Bibliotheca Universalis that Lucien Braun calls “un savoir sur le savoir” – an essay in systematizing the knowledge-base of Western culture.26 Oddly, the one domain which Gesner did not tackle in the Pandectae was medicine; Gesner apparently knew so much about medicine that he found it difficult to arrive at a definitive scheme, and he kept postponing. Nor did he ever find the time or means for his projected third part of this trilogy, an alphabetical index of all the material in the Pandectae. But the aim of making the Bibliotheca into the basis for education was innovative. Moreover, Gesner hoped that the Bibliotheca Universalis could provide a checklist for the creation of real libraries: he deliberately allowed wide margins and encouraged readers to add the shelf marks of the books they actually owned into the margins; in short, it functioned as an ideal or model library.27

Both Lloyd Stevenson and the Editors of the Bibliotheca Osleriana cite a letter to the Osler Club of London by Alfred W. Pollard, Keeper of Printed Books at the British Library and the pre-eminent English bibliographer of the early twentieth century. Pollard, who knew Osler very well, writes that Osler “had the dream of an ideal bibliography of epoch-making books which was almost religious in its enthusiasm.” But even the printed Bibliotheca Osleriana would be hard pressed to articulate Osler’s second ambition, namely to create through his Library “a kind of pageant”28 – in sum, a bibliographia animata. I would suggest that this “almost religious” view of the Library as “pageant” owes less to Ferguson and more to Gesner, that “lovable soul.” Reading Gesner’s autobiographical account of his youthful sojourn in Paris, when he spent all the time he could in the Royal Library, puts one in mind of Osler combing the shelves of James Bovell’s library in Toronto:

I followed whatever was attractive in my studies, as I was wont to do since I was a child; I did not bother with philosophy and strict disciplines, but glanced through the various author’s works without a fixed aim, Greek and Latin writers, historians, poets, physicians, philologists, sometimes also writers on dialectics and rhetoric, skipping many things and reading only a few books from cover to cover, all in order to benefit my mind through sheer variety and diversity of reading...29

What Gesner was doing was thoroughly, if unsystematically, orienting himself within the universe of the written word, and if he lacked system, he more than compensated for it in an extraordinarily retentive memory, meticulous note-taking, and above all a vision of how all this might be distilled in a manner both comprehensive and orderly. The encyclopedic dream which Gesner developed across the vast range of his writings was a product of harnessing his work habits to his scientific orientation to empirical reality, and his instincts as a teacher. Osler’s barely articulated longing that his own Library might “come alive” for the medical students to whom he bequeathed it – a longing which seemed to grow stronger with time – owes (as Cushing intimates) a profound debt to the quest of this Renaissance scholar to see the world in a library.

Cushing ends his biography of Osler on the night between his funeral and his burial. Osler’s coffin lay in the watching-chamber of Christ Church Cathedral in Oxford, and Cushing imagines a midnight procession – a “pageant” if you will – of the souls of those who had meant the most to Osler in his lifetime. Chief amongst these was his son Revere, killed in battle in 1917. But joining the procession were Osler’s role models from the deep and recent past:

...the spirits of many, old and young – of former and modern times – of Linacre, Harvey and Sydenham; of John Locke, Gesner, and [Pierre] Louis; ... of Johnson, Bovell and Howard...30

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Strangely absent from the pageant is Sir Thomas Browne; curiously present, is Conrad Gesner of Zurich.

As it enters upon its second century of life, the Osler Library will undoubtedly need to find new ways to convey the “animation” and the “pageantry” its creator hoped to convey that address the questions that are meaningful to us now. But the core vision of the Library remains secure: to educate medical students and practitioners through the written record of the past.

References
5. “Collecting,” xxiii.
8. Lloyd Stevenson, “Prologue,” in *Bibliotheca Osleriana* notes (xiv) that the expansion of the Osler Library, particularly since it secured long-term funding from the Wellcome trust, allowed it to extend Osler’s intention by continuing to acquire new secondary sources to complement the primary works added by donation or through funds bequeathed by Lady Osler and others.
10. Cushing, 1004.
12. *Bibliotheca Osleriana* p. 64; the epithet is from J.C. Bay, “Conrad Gesner, the Father of Bibliography,” *Papers of the Bibliographical Society of America* 10,2 (1916):53-86 (B.O. 651).
13. For a thoughtful assessment, see Ann M. Blair, *Too Much to Know: Managing Scholarly Information Before the Modern Age* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2010), 162-166.
15. Mackall later served as “adjunct editor” of the *Bibliotheca Osleriana* and read the proofs: see “Editors’ Preface,” xx.
17. Cushing, 869.
20. It was eventually published as *Opera botantica* in Nuremberg, 1754-1771 (B.O. 650). Gesner’s lively and exquisite watercolours of plants, preserved at the University of Erlangen, were published in facsimile as *Conradi Gesneri Historia Plantarum* by Urs Graf-Verlag in Dietikon-Zurich in 1972. A copy of this limited edition is held in the Osler Library. For a perceptive study of Gesner’s illustrated works, see Sachiko Kusukawa, *Picturing the Book of Nature: Image, Text and Argument in Sixteenth-Century Human Anatomy and Medical Botany* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2012), chs. 7-8.
22. The importance of *Bibliotheca chemica* is signalled by Stevenson, “Prologue,” x;

he last decades of the 19th century were a time of great anxiety regarding the deleterious effects of modernity, industrialization, and urbanization on the populations of Europe and North America. For many politicians, social reformers, and medical professionals, ensuring a strong and healthy population depended on one key strategy: dramatically reducing infant mortality. Central to this effort was the study and depiction of the pregnant and parturient body, which appeared intensively mapped and replicated in the illustrated medical studies that proliferated in this period. My current book project, *The Transparent Woman: Medical Visualities in Fin-de-Siècle Europe, Canada, and the United States, 1880–1910*, examines these representations in the form of widely circulated anatomical atlases, illustrated textbooks, and obstetrical models that defined the female reproductive body for both professional and popular audiences.

Anatomical dissection, clinical training, and work with teaching models remained the mainstays of obstetrical teaching in this era. These were supplemented, however, by numerous forms of printed media, including charts, diagrams, and even paper manikins, that offered fin-de-siècle students of medicine a visual and tactile simulacrum of the human body—one that could be studied, manipulated, and collected. In this article, I examine a work in the Osler’s collection that provided students with an opportunity to not only study the processes of childbirth but also to reenact them, namely *The Obstetrical Pocket-Phantom*, first published in 1891 (Fig. 1).

To its author, was to enable students to visualize the various presentations and positions of the fetus during pregnancy and labor. To this end, the work included two jointed paper manikins, one for head and breech presentations, and another for shoulder presentations, paired with a paper pelvis affixed to the inside back cover (Figs. 2 and 3). Beginning with the second German edition, the text also included line-drawn illustrations of the most common configurations (Fig. 4).

Created by a Japanese medical student at the University of Munich, Koichi Shibata, the *Pocket-Phantom* first appeared in Munich, with three subsequent German-language editions in 1892, 1895, and 1898, and a Japanese-language edition in 1893. The work was translated into English by Ada Howard-Audenried, M.D., a physician at the Woman’s Hospital of Philadelphia, in 1895. In 1903, a new version of the work, edited by McGill Professor J. C. Cameron (1852–1912), appeared in Montreal. Chair of Midwifery since 1886, Cameron was a prolific author and a well-traveled and progressive...
physician who complemented his own medical training at McGill with further study in Dublin, Berlin, Paris, and Vienna before assuming a place on the faculty. Cameron’s teaching emphasized hands-on training and the acquisition of clinical skills: in addition to his general midwifery courses, he offered both a graduate clinic in Aseptic Midwifery at the Montreal Maternity Hospital and a laboratory course in Operative Midwifery at McGill.

Cameron’s interest in the visualization of pregnancy and childbirth appears to have been of long standing. In 1895, he served as one of the contributors to the widely employed *An American Text-Book of Obstetrics for Practitioners and Students* (1895), which included nearly 900 images. Cameron’s lectures were likewise rich in two- and three-dimensional images and objects, including “diagrams, fresh and preserved specimens, the artificial pelvis, [a] complete set of models, illustrating deformities of the pelvis, wax preparations, [a] bronze mechanical pelvis, etc.” and “the phantom and preserved foetuses.” Cameron seems to have also been an avid collector: in 1890, he dedicated his large personal collection of “models, casts and anatomical preparations” to the university.

It is hardly surprising, then, that Cameron sought to create an inexpensive, convenient, and practical guide for students, one that could help them visualize the hidden recesses of the pregnant body. Indeed, he had already done something similar in 1896, when he published *The McGill Obstetric Note Book* (Fig. 5). Designed to assist students in honing their powers of observation and reporting skills, the book offered charts, tables, and illustrations of the fetus in utero. By leaving a number of pages blank for students to record their own case notes and including schematic drawings of the female body to be annotated with their visual observations, Cameron created an interactive text designed to be ‘completed’ by the reader (Fig. 6). Unlike the *Pocket-Phantom*, however, the images in the *Note Book* are static and do not invite manipulation by the user.

In his version of Shibata’s *Pocket-Phantom*, Cameron replaced the author’s line drawings with illustrations from the *Note Book*, doubling the number of positions and presentations displayed (Figs. 7 and 8). As both the *Note Book* and the *Pocket-Phantom* were published by Renouf, it is likely that the publisher simply re-used Cameron’s original illustrations for the 1903 edition. The Montreal edition retained, however, what was easily the most innovative aspect of the *Pocket-Phantom*: its use of jointed, movable anatomical manikins. A manuscript version of Shibata’s work in the collection of the Huntington Library includes the likely prototypes for these figures as well as hand-drawn illustrations representing different positions of the fetus in utero. Shibata’s hand-painted figures were translated into lithographic form by Munich publisher J. F. Lehmann, and the two manikins bear the phrase “Dr. K. Shibata’s geburtshüfl. Phantome Verlag v. J. F. Lehmann München Nachdruck verboten gesetzlich geschützt,” which serves to identify the artist and the publisher and to assert that reproduction is legally prohibited. All known examples
of Shibata’s work include identical manikin and pelvis figures, suggesting that American and Canadian publishers imported the pre-printed figures from Germany.

The centrality of the figures to Shibata’s design is not merely novel—it also reflects the work’s intended function. The Pocket-Phantom served to render visible and even tangible what remained inaccessible to 19th-century observers: the living fetus in utero. Thus Cameron advises, “After palpating a case, the student should arrange the phantom in the pelvis as nearly as possible in the position he has found the foetus lying in utero; thus will be obtained a more vivid mental picture of the foetus and its relations.” Students were thereby encouraged to translate the haptic experience of palpating a patient’s abdomen into a mental image which could be in turn recreated using the Pocket-Phantom’s paper manikins and pelvis.

“Having made his diagnosis,” Cameron writes, the student should next “turn back to the cuts of the various presentations and positions and find the one which corresponds most closely to that shown by his phantom; in this way he can verify his nomenclature of the position and presentation.” The use of the phantom thus entailed a form of making, in which the student created an imaginary representation of the interior of the patient’s body and then ‘verified’ his or her observations through reference to a two-dimensional illustration. The process at once seeks to impose standardization upon the sensory experience of encountering the pregnant body and embraces imagination as central to diagnosis.

The Pocket-Phantom thus offered its users a substitute for the body, both as clinical subject and as anatomical cadaver—one that was relatively impervious to decay, pain, and the passage of time. In this sense, the work functioned in a manner similar to the life-sized obstetrical phantoms or ‘machines’ upon which students practiced clinical techniques. Unlike these bulky and costly objects used in classroom teaching, however, the Pocket-Phantom could accompany the student or physician on their clinical rounds and be consulted in tandem with physical examination of the pregnant patient. Indeed, Shibata’s slim volume could easily be held in the hand, creating a more intimate, personal, and even private viewing experience. It is not surprising, then, that in its visual language, the Pocket-Phantom thematizes the act of seeing as the fulfillment of a desire to peer inside the body and examine its most secret recesses.

In Shibata’s line-drawn illustrations, the effort to visualize the unseeable is expressed through the use of a dotted line that visually dissolves the pubic bone, revealing the head of the fetus behind it. This not only evokes the fantasy of rendering the maternal form transparent to the medical gaze, but also brings to mind the contemporary practices of symphysiotomy and pubiotomy, both of which entailed surgically dividing the pelvis to enlarge the birth canal. The work casts impediments to sight, therefore, as barriers to birth itself, equating the act of picturing with both a revealing of the body’s depths and the process of delivery.
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The result is a kind of visual cleaving, as fetus and pelvis are pictorially separated from surrounding tissues, creating a narrative of struggle in which the two protagonists exist in mortal conflict. The paper fetus is shown as whole, unblemished, and healthy, an impression heightened by its pinkish hue, while the pregnant woman’s body—represented by the pelvis alone—is shown stripped of its flesh, incomplete, and anatomized. Shibata’s Phantom thus reduces the maternal body to a single, bony barrier that must be overcome in order to ensure a safe delivery.

To use the Phantom, the reader must move the articulated limbs of the manikins so as to approximate the positions and presentations encountered during physical examination and then match them to those illustrated in the text. In this act of translation from one ‘text’ to another, Shibata enacts a continual deferral of the physicality of the pregnant body. The fetal manikins and the pelvis itself remain flat throughout this procedure. What is approximated, then, is not the embodied, real-life passage of a rounded head and body through the birth canal, but rather an abstraction: the diameter of the fetal body and the corresponding pelvic inlet.

Shibata’s articulated, doll-like figures are stored in a deep pocket inside the book’s front cover, at once evoking the ‘hidden’ nature of fetuses nestled within the womb and allowing the reader to enact their ‘birth’ by removing them from their protective envelope. The scale of Shibata’s phantom renders the manikins miniaturized, and the tiny pelvis can be carried next to the reader’s own body. Shibata argues that his phantom “can easily be folded so as to form a small package and can be carried in the pocket”—yet another womb-like enfolding.13 In this view of childbirth, it is the physician who is the active agent, symbolically overcoming the obstacles presented by the pregnant woman’s own anatomy to ‘deliver’ a healthy infant.

Another work published by Lehmann, Arthur Müller’s Geburtshilfliches Taschen- und Demonstrations-Phantom (1899), took this approach one step further. It offered readers a flattened paper model of the pregnant body depicted in sagittal section, five fetal heads representing different presentations, and a metal tool that could be used to ‘deliver’ the fetus via a birth canal fitted with clockwork springs.14 Indeed, the two works were often advertised together and may have been designed to function in tandem: by using the Pocket-Phantom, students could determine which positions and presentations necessitated the use of obstetrical interventions. They could then practice using Müller’s forceps and pelvis.

Positive reviews of Shibata’s Pocket-Phantom in a broad range of 19th-century periodicals attests to the work’s widespread use. Many commentators emphasized the phantom’s faithful “imitation of nature”15 and lauded it as “a fair representation of the real state of affairs,” one which would “help many an American student to transform an indistinct mental image into one which conforms more closely to nature.”16 In this respect, reviewers found the work superior to more commonly available two-dimensional images, arguing that it gave “a clearer conception of the relation of the fetal parts to the parturient canal.”17

Shibata’s Pocket-Phantom bears many similarities with so-called flap anatomies, anatomical images composed of multiple superimposed layers, which date back to the early 16th century (Fig. 9). Whereas such works typically emulate the logic of anatomical dissection by progressively penetrating deeper into the body, Shibata’s work is more akin to three-dimensional obstetrical machines, which simulated the beginning of life, rather than death. In the preface to the Pocket-Phantom, Shibata compares his work with these earlier obstetrical phantoms, drawing upon the authority of older models even as he asserts the modernity of his own design.

Indeed, reviewers were quick to affirm the work’s innovative aspects. Many noted that the work offered a portable, economical, and concise alternative to classroom models. For some, the work’s modernity was also associated with the identity of its author, “a Japanese professor,” and its American translator, “a medical man of the gentler sex.”18 The Pocket-Phantom’s status as a printed, paper object would likewise have connoted its modernity, as the fin-de-siècle witnessed an unprecedented proliferation of printed images at every level of society. The chromolithographic medium employed by Shibata was shared by postcards, Valentines, and trade

Continues on page 11
nomenclature it sought to visualize was “distinctly German,” chief among them was the accusation that the medical specialization, one premised upon the union of sight and touch and dedicated to the exploration and representation of the interior recesses of the pregnant body.

Shibata’s paper manikins offered students and physicians an opportunity to re-enact the drama of birth in their own homes and to carry its mysteries in their pocket. Through its replication in book form and its use in many countries around the world, Shibata’s Phantom served as a physician at the Woman’s Clinic at the University of Munich. Despite its apparent practicality, ease of use, and low cost, Shibata’s Pocket-Phantom did encounter a few scattered criticisms. Chief among them was the accusation that the nomenclature it sought to visualize was “distinctly German,” leading Cameron to instead employ the system developed by the International Medical Congress in his 1903 edition. Despite its apparent realism, reviewers also acknowledged the inherent limitation of Shibata’s format—namely, that it rendered three-dimensional structures as flat, layered surfaces, noting, “The practical value of the manikins is of course limited, owing to the fact that they represent plane surfaces only.” In spite of these objections, reviewers overwhelmingly concluded that Shibata’s work answered what had become a pressing need to visualize the interior recesses of the pregnant body.

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As Co-Presidents of the Medical Students’ Osler Society, we had the great pleasure of collaborating and leading the activities of the Society during the 2020-2021 e-academic year – and what a year it has been!

**HERE IS A SUMMARY OF THE VARIOUS ACTIVITIES AND EVENTS THAT TOOK PLACE THIS YEAR:**

**SUMMARY OF OSLER DAY 2020**

In light of the COVID-19 pandemic, Osler Day activities occurred virtually this year on November 4, 2020. The activities started with the *Annual 43rd Osler Lectureship* which took place thanks to the efforts of the department of Social Studies of Medicine. Dr Richard Reznick, Professor of Surgery and Dean Emeritus at the Faculty of Health Sciences in Queen’s University, gave a stimulating talk on medical education and the systems-based approach to the novel competency-based training model for medical residents. This session was well received by many medical learners as post-graduate medical residency programs across Canada have officially transitioned towards a competency-based curriculum. The talk was recorded and can be found at [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=o6yB2GOERn4](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=o6yB2GOERn4).

As with our tradition, in partnership with the Osler Library, we also held the annual *Del Maestro Family Medical Students’ Humanities and Social Sciences Symposium* this year on November 5th, 2020, thanks to the generosity and support of Pam and Rolando Del Maestro. The symposium marks a special occasion for medical students to excavate the plethora of enticing themes within the humanities of the health sciences. A total of seven candidates gave a riveting presentation on their selected topic, with three lucky winners taking home the prizes at the end of the night. Cassandra Poirier placed third for her essay on “The Path of the Wounded Healer: Revisiting the Study of Shamanism Through a Phenomenological Approach.” Minahil Khan placed second for her essay on “Colourful Innovations in Neuropathology: Robert Hooper and the Shift in Portrayal of the Morbid Brain in the Nineteenth Century”. And, the first-place winner and the owner of the 2020 Osler Library Board of Curators’ medal was Saman Arfaie, who orchestrated a beautiful essay on “Exploring the Relationship Between Robert Schumann’s Bipolar Disorder and His Creative Musical Genius.” Their reflective essays can be found at [https://www.mcgill.ca/library/branches/osler/essay-contest/2020-winners](https://www.mcgill.ca/library/branches/osler/essay-contest/2020-winners). We were so humbled by the essays produced by all of the candidates this year and we cannot wait to see the essays that will be produced for future iterations of this symposium.

As with previous years, in light of the pandemic and to respect public health measures, the Osler Society was not able to host the *99th Annual Osler Banquet*. We take this opportunity however to be mindful of the efforts of many of the faculty members, administrative officers and personnel that provided guidance, support and ensured that other Osler Day activities went forward. Notably, the virtual transition of activities and library support for the Osler Essay contest would not have been possible without the leadership of Dr. Mary Hague-Yearl. We take pride in recognizing the support of these personnel in fostering the intellectual curiosity and blossoming of medical learners amidst a turbulent period. As we prepare for a return to in-person activities for the Fall 2021 term, we look forward to seeing how we can prepare for the *100th Annual Osler Banquet*.
VIRTUAL TRANSITION OF ACTIVITIES

With public health measures in place, the Osler Society was unable to host its regular in-person activities and aimed to transition our in-person presence to the virtual landscape.

History Minute

Having in mind the difficulty of connecting amidst the pandemic between medical learners, the Osler Society decided to kickstart a socially-minded hub. Originally, the intent was to promote a Humanities Journal Club. However, one thing led to another and we ended up revamping the idea of a journal club to a bi-weekly segment on our social media page (https://www.facebook.com/mcgilloslersociety/). The aim of this History Minute segment was for executive members of the Society to highlight any aspects of medicine that had caught their eye, so as to stimulate conversation and engagement with colleagues. We look forward to hosting this on a regular basis during the upcoming academic year.

Racism in Medicine Subcommittee/ Medical Reflections Podcast

During this year, the Osler Society’s enthusiasm and fervor for tackling difficult topics such as racism led to the creation of the subcommittee called “Racism in Medicine”. One of the fruitful products of this subcommittee is the Medical Reflections Podcast, which aims to have insightful conversations with speakers who have experience in the topic. Our first podcast series is on the topic of Indigenous Health and will be posted very soon! Stay tuned via our social media page (https://www.facebook.com/mcgilloslersociety/) for more details!

Perspectives on Sir William Osler in the 21st Century

Amidst the colonial and racist critiques of Sir William Osler, McGill’s Department of Social Studies of Medicine hosted a symposium on Perspectives on Sir William Osler in the 21st Century on February 3, 2021 where a panel of six presenters outlined relevant and differing lens on Sir William Osler. The symposium was recorded and can be viewed at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tUFzsANaiOl. This was very well received by medical students as it allowed learners to be able to grapple the discussion through a multi-faceted approach. The event was definitely a success as it highlights the importance of dialogue and communication within the context of difficult topics.

COVID-19 AND MEDICAL EDUCATION

Amidst the COVID-19 pandemic, the fall 2020 and winter 2021 scholarly activities were transitioned online with little-to-no in-person exposure for most junior students.

The MDCM Class of 2024 (first year) were able to have a partial in-person orientation session in August 2020; however, the majority of their didactical year was spent learning the fundamentals of medicine virtually. As much as it is a difficult year due to the transition to medical school and to the breadth, depth and extent of learning during the first year, we can only imagine the impact this has had on their mental health and well-being considering the limited connection with peers. We are excited for them to be able to resume in-person activities this upcoming Fall term.
The MDCM Class of 2023 (second year) also finalized their didactical training virtually but were able to debut their clinical training during the winter term. They will be starting their clerkship year in summer 2021 and will resume the pre-pandemic clerkship schedule composed of eight weeks of clinical training in core medical rotations.

The MDCM Class of 2022 (third year) pursued a revised clerkship year which was delayed due to the pandemic’s impact on the healthcare system. Instead of the traditional 8-week curriculum, they pursued six weeks of rotations in core disciplines. The Faculty initiated the use of Shelf exams which took place after every rotation to ensure students were meeting the clinical objectives of rotations. Additionally, many students took a leadership role and initiated events relevant to clinical reasoning and medical education, notably E-Digesting Cases, an initiative by students from the Class of 2021 where senior medical students fostered clinical reasoning of junior learners by leading through a variety of clinical cases.

The MDCM Class of 2021 (final year) completed their senior clerkship and the requirements of the MDCM programme this year. They were the first cohort that went through a virtual residency interviewing period and dealt with many adversities amidst the COVID-19 pandemic. We salute our colleagues and wish them the best as they advance in their medical training as residents.

COVID-19 AND THE UPHEAVAL OF SYSTEMIC INEQUITIES

In addition to the changes in our day-to-day routines due to the pandemic, we also witnessed immediate and direct impacts of COVID-19 on marginalized and vulnerable communities, specifically those living in multi-generational households and racialized and naturalized neighborhoods.

These inequities were further accentuated by the televised murder of George Floyd, which amplified the Black Lives Matter movement. This was further compounded by the notable increase in hate crimes perpetrated against Asian communities along with the increase in anti-Semitic and Islamophobic sentiment and terrorism throughout North America. These mournings were inflamed by the loss of Joyce Echaquan and the systemic failings of our very own healthcare settings and accentuated more recently by the discovery of Indigenous bodies within the Canadian residential schools. We invite our colleagues to join us and take the time to learn about these societal problems and unlearn about the biases, behaviors and emotional responses we have come to hold. A good place to start is the National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation (https://nctr.ca), which provides a thorough understanding of Canada’s colonial and neocolonial actions.

The journey of truth and reconciliation has never seemed so long, but we owe it to our shared humanity to do better as we can only be human together.
Reflective Essays of the Three Finalists of the 2020 Pam and Rolando Del Maestro Family William Osler Medical Student Essay Awards

Reflective Exercise
Saman Arfaie | Mentored by Prof. Roe-Min Kok
MC GILL MD, CM CANDIDATE (CLASS OF 2024)

I am particularly grateful for being able to conduct this research during my first semester of medical school at McGill University. First, I was incredibly fortunate to connect with my mentor Professor Roe-Min Kok who kindly shared with me invaluable resources pertaining to Robert and Clara Schumann. Second, as someone who has studied piano since the age of 5, minored in music and has majored in Molecular Cell Biology at UC Berkeley, I find interdisciplinary research highly fascinating. In fact, the values and ideals of the great William Osler reflect a similar line of reasoning which I deeply admire and am impressed by. As he was able to revolutionize the study of medicine with dedication, wit, and commitment, he always continued his learning in other disciplines. This is evident given the wide range of books that he read which is now bequeathed to McGill University.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, I certainly felt overwhelmed with the challenges of not being able to access the wonderful resources of the Osler Library. However, thanks to Dr. Mary Hague-Yearl and her colleagues, I was able to redirect my research to online platforms instead. I am incredibly privileged that my own personal library contains over 2,000 volumes of books—many of which are on musicology, music theory and music history. However, not content with what was conveniently accessible, I actively sought to find the best literature available online. Unfortunately, as Professor Kok reminded me, there were two key papers that have been written about Schumann’s mental illness in German by Dr. Reinhard Steinberg; not being fluent in the language, I was unable to decipher them. However, thanks to my friend Mr. Tahmoures Tabatabei, who is a DMA candidate in piano performance at the University of North Carolina Greensboro, and fluent in German, I was able to use his expertise of the language to translate some of the key figures from these papers. Moreover, after some correspondences with Professor Kok and my own research, I was able to obtain a highly valuable chapter, in English, that was recently published (2015) by the same author, Dr. Steinberg, who is an academic neurologist with a strong background in German Romantic music.

By carefully studying numerous books, peer-reviewed journals, and Doctorate-level dissertations within a span of a few months, I was able to gradually develop a Gestalt sense of the areas of scholarship that are most pertinent to my study. Moreover, I closely studied many of Schumann’s solo works for the piano and delved through the scores of his Four Symphonies, to better appreciate his harmonic language of composition. In fact, I sight-read some bits and pieces of the Papillons (Opus 2), Carnaval (Opus 9) and Kinderszenen (Opus 15). This was crucial in choosing which musical excerpts I wanted to discuss in my essay.

Another important point I have realized is that most research is purely on clinical matters concerning Robert Schumann’s mental illness. However, very few studies exist that analyze his work in relationship to his neuropsychological conditions. Therefore, this research is an original case-study exploring the connection between achieved creative eminence and psychological disorders. While I feel that there is certainly room for expansion of this study into a peer-reviewed format, I believe that this formative stage has allowed me to fully expose myself to the relevant studies in musicology, music history, neurology, psychopathology, psychiatry, and the psychology of creative genius at the caliber of Robert Schumann.

As someone who aspires to receive a Masters in Piano Performance at the McGill Schulich School of Music during my medical studies, I believe that this eye-opening experience has attuned my brain to focus on transcending the boundaries between disciplines and finding meaningful ways to connect them together. I hope to be able to conduct similar work during my medical studies as well. Therefore, my skills grew immensely in analyzing and appreciating German Romantic music and conducting original interdisciplinary studies. These
will be highly relevant to my academic medical career as well since humanity and humility are central concepts in medicine.

This project is relevant to the mission of this essay competition for two reasons: on one level, it is clinically useful in providing us with a better understanding of Bipolar Disorder’s association to creativity through studying a canonical genius via primary documents such as his letters, diaries and compositions. On another level, it incorporates core elements of the humanities through its investigation of musical scores and research on the Zeitgeist of 19th century Europe. Working under the supervision of Professor Kok, who is one of the leading Schumann scholars in the world, and a McGill faculty is a fortunate coincidence that I am grateful for.

I am honoured to have participated in the Osler Essay competition and won the first prize alongside the William Osler Medal. Recently, my mentor Professor Kok has kindly offered that a revised version of my essay be published in a volume titled *Clara and Robert Schumann in Context* contracted with Cambridge University Press for 2022. This is a great honour that I am tremendously grateful for.

Overall, I cannot thank the Osler Library team enough for their kindness and generosity in guiding me through this enlightening endeavour. By participating in the Pam and Rolando Del Maestro Family William Osler Medical Student Essay Contest, I was able to partake in an experience that cultivates critical thinking and emphasizes the link amongst the medical humanities. To all future participants for this wonderful essay competition, should you have any questions about the competition, or need any assistance along your research journey, I would be delighted to be of assistance. Please feel free to email me. Thank you for your time and consideration.
Over the summer and fall of 2020, I had the enriching experience of participating in the Pam & Rolando Del Maestro Osler Essay Contest. I had been introduced to Hooper’s *Morbid Anatomy of the Human Brain* by Dr Del Maestro early in the year and became interested in completing a project on this remarkable volume. Of course, the COVID-19 pandemic produced a challenge in accessibility of the many historic volumes available in the Osler library, and my work with the library was entirely remote. However, my reliance on virtual resources multiplied my appreciation for the comprehensive library resources and made me further recognize the essential work of librarians in maintaining these resources.

Since not all historical works in the Osler Library had been digitized, I relied on the gracious assistance of librarian Mary Yearl to find digital versions of the pathological atlases of Hooper, Baillie, Cruveilhier, and Richard Bright. Their books were found on the non-profit library *Internet Archive*, which allows access to many books, website and software for free. Since the pandemic had created restrictions on library staff, I also learned that the Library had a large backlog of resources that needed to be digitized. This recognition made me appreciate the hard work and resources needed to create faithful digital versions of historical documents, which I relied heavily on for my essay. I was also able to appreciate the vast accessibility of these resources, either provided for free on *Internet Archive* or easily viewable for McGill students and staff. I also learned of other digital resources for historical documents and artwork, such as The Royal Society Picture Library and Jubilothèque. I am confident that my newfound knowledge of these digital resources will increase my scope as a researcher even after the pandemic, as I have learned of ways to access materials that may not be available at a library close to me.

The Osler Library also possesses individual pieces of Hooper’s plates, which contained incomplete versions of the illustrations found in the final product. I was kindly provided with pictures of a selection of these plates by Mary Yearl. I initially wanted to analyse these individual illustrations to learn about Hooper’s methodology in creating the final product. This was because my essay was going to have a deeper focus on the printing technique of lithography, which was believed to be the medium used by Hooper. Unfortunately, the incorporation of these individual plates became difficult when we learned that the printing technique used by Hooper was contested. However, this challenged me to adapt, and I used the *Internet Archive* to incorporate pathological works by other authors into my essay, such as Matthew Baillie’s *A Series of Engravings* (1799).

When we learned that there was controversy in the technique used by Hooper to achieve his illustrations, I had the opportunity to consult with Dr Mary Hunter of Art History and Communications Studies Department at McGill, and Dr Richard Taws of the History of Art Department at the University College of London. I learned about shifting printing techniques of the nineteenth century from the perspective of art history, which was a rewarding experience. This enriched my research skills for the future, as I learned to embrace information from interdisciplinary sources. Of course, a conclusive analysis of the technique used by Hooper was not possible by only observing digitized versions. However, discussion of the controversy increased the depth of my essay by opening a new area of research.

To conclude, although the experience of the Osler Essay Contest was different in 2020, I learned many unique skills as a researcher. I learned about many digital resources and archives that are available to the public, completely free of cost, which will be useful to me in later research projects. I also acquired the skill to rapidly adapt my project to changing information. Finally, I gained a greater understanding of the value of interdisciplinary discussion, as this expanded the depth of my essay.
Reflective Exercise
Cassandra Poirier | Mentored by Prof. Ian Gold
MCGILL MD, CM (CLASS OF 2021)

I first came to know and deeply appreciate the contents of the Osler library during my undergraduate degree in Honours Psychology at McGill University. The Osler library was the only place where I could obtain a hard copy of the first Diagnostic and Statistical Manual for Mental Disorders (DSM-I) published in 1952. Although the diagnostic criteria for a multitude of mental illnesses listed in the DSM-I were often quoted and frequently mentioned during my undergraduate courses, I was never able to find a copy of the DSM-I online or in any other library, for that matter. Of course, the DSM-I has not been used for any clinical purposes since the 1950’s. However, it was a very interesting experience for me to map out the substantial revisions of the DSM criteria for schizophrenia verbatim over time (see Appendix 1 of my Osler essay). The Osler Library became one of my favorite places on campus since I started my academic journey at McGill. In addition to my B.A. in Honors Psychology, I also obtained a B.Sc. in Cell and Molecular Biology and an M.Sc. in Transcultural Psychiatry, and I am currently completing my fourth year of medical school at McGill. Throughout this non-traditional academic path toward becoming a physician, I always frequented the Osler Library for different needs and purposes.

In order to provide an accurate account of shamanism, historical views of shamans, comparisons to the DSM’s criteria for schizophrenia as they have changed over time, and counterarguments to these views, I needed to use several books and resources found in the Osler Library (see Reference list). In my essay, I borrow several concepts from numerous fields of study, including philosophy, anthropology, art, psychology, psychiatry, ethnographic research, sociology, medicine, among others. Although the resources I obtained from the Osler Library allowed me to write about these different perspectives in great detail and to thrive as a researcher, I unfortunately had to be selective in what I chose to include in my essay owing to the 3,000-word limit.

I took great pleasure in writing about this topic, especially given that I am pursuing a career in medicine where such topics are seldomly discussed. The shaman is often referred to as the ‘wounded healer,’ drawing the strength of his therapeutic power from his past suffering(s). The image of the wounded healer is also seen in the Asklepian religious cults of ancient Greece (Kirmayer 2003). Reading the mythological accounts of Asclepius, his rod being the symbol of medicine, was the perfect adjunct to my research on shamans. Important lessons can be learned from the changing perspective of shamans over time. As future physicians, it is important to be aware of cross-cultural differences in clinical encounters and to not be so quick to label something that may appear unfamiliar or strange as pathological or abnormal. We learn to organize our thoughts and actions into categories of convenience in order to serve our community as health care professionals. However, physicians fall too often victim to their own category fallacies by not considering the sociocultural context of a given clinical encounter. In order to truly best serve our communities, it is essential to be aware that such cross-cultural differences do exist and that different patients and healers may differ in their views of the clinical encounter, their ways of making sense of illness, and their expectations of the healing process.

In sum, I truly enjoyed writing my essay for the Osler competition and feel as though I have grown as a researcher and a future physician.

or over a year now, we have been working mainly from home, continually adjusting to the challenges and opportunities offered by the pandemic. Throughout, we have been able to offer what might be regarded as a regular level of service. Our workflows may be different, our response times adjusted to account for limited access to the physical library, but operations have continued. Events went forward; wonderful new additions joined our holdings; and we have continued to work with conservators to ensure the long-term safety of our collections. This is reassuring, and is a testament to the dedication of Osler staff, our colleagues in the McGill Library, and above all the tremendous support the Osler Library has received from its Friends.

While none would dispute that this has been a challenging year – logistically and otherwise – the increased opportunity to reach audiences via virtual platforms has been encouraging. Between November 2020 and March 2021, we were involved with three virtual events:

- **November 2020**, the [Del Maestro Family Medical Students’ Humanities and Social Sciences Symposium](https://youtu.be/62SM8BFDAiQ). Mentioned in the Winter 2020 newsletter, this symposium was viewed live by over one hundred individuals from around the world, and the recording posted a few days later has been viewed over three hundred times.

- On 23 March 2021, the 25th anniversary of the inauguration of Norman Bethune Square near the Guy Concordia Metro station, we hosted a discussion on “The Many Faces of Norman Bethune Square,” which has been viewed 240 times in the first four months since it was posted ([https://youtu.be/ZEtpnlxDE4](https://youtu.be/ZEtpnlxDE4)). The Osler Symposium and moderated discussion on Bethune reflect a current emphasis in the academy upon revisiting past characters and weighing their positive contributions with traits that would not be deemed acceptable in 2021. The two discussants chosen for the Bethune event both share the distinction of having been an essay contest winner: Dr. Julian Xue is now a psychiatrist and director of the Libera Clinic in Montreal; third-year medical student and Fulbright Fellow Brendan Ross based his comments on research he did as an inaugural Molina Foundation Osler Library Medical Student Research Award, for which he focused on the formation of Bethune’s reputation in China. Each came to know Bethune via different paths, but each offered a nuanced – and often humorous – take on a man who has been held up as a medical hero in China, but whose reputation in Montreal has been mixed. The Bethune discussion was conceived to highlight the inclusion of archival materials relating to Norman Bethune in a significant project by Gale Primary Sources, Archives Unbound: The Norman Bethune Papers.

- We worked closely with the Faculty of Medicine and Health Sciences as they were organizing the February 2021 symposium, “Perspectives on Sir William Osler in the 21st Century.” The live virtual event met its registration cap of 300, and in the first five months after the edited recording was released, it was viewed over 800 time ([https://youtu.be/tUFzsNaI0I](https://youtu.be/tUFzsNaI0I)).

Every year we have a steady flow of long-term projects and individual items that go to the digitization lab where Greg Houston oversees a team that makes them more accessible to local and global audiences; his team normally consists of student workers, but when strict sanitary measures were in place, Osler Library Document Technician Lily Szczygiel devoted a few hours a week of her time on site at the library to helping in the digitization lab.

Figs 1-3. In the past year, our colleagues in Digital Initiatives photographed some of our catalogued artifacts. All three of these are recent additions to the Osler Library. From left to right: (Fig. 1) a late 18th-century Chinese carved tortoise shell case containing two lancets for bleeding; (Fig. 2) a homeopathic medicine case by F.E. Boericke, ca. 1870; (Fig. 3) a portable electroshock therapy unit, originally from the Hôpital du Sacré-Cœur, Montréal, ca. 1950.
Though the vast majority of our medical artifacts are not catalogued, we began adding newly acquired artifacts to the catalogue a couple of years ago. This has opened up the opportunity to digitize some of those, too, and to link images to the catalogue record. Among those added this year are a tortoise shell case for a pair of lancets, a homeopathic medicine case, and a portable electrotherapy unit that had been used at Montreal’s Hôpital du Sacré-Cœur in the mid-twentieth century [Figs. 1, 2, 3 - page 19]. Another new acquisition that we had digitized upon arrival is a work that speaks to the transmission of medical knowledge between Europe and East Asia (specifically, via trade between the Dutch and Japanese) in the eighteenth-century: Gen’etsu Kagawa and Genteki Kagawa’s *Sanron Yoku* (1775) along with its accompanying text, *Shigensi Sanron*; the images in the *Sanron Yoku* [Fig. 4] shows common knowledge with European works from the same era, namely William Smellie’s *A Sett of Anatomical Tables* (1754 – soon to be digitized), and another purchase from the past couple of years, Angélique Marguerite le Boursier du Coudray’s *Abbrégé de l’art des accouchemens* (1769).

Amongst works we had scanned this year, it is also worth highlighting two that were particularly close to Osler: the manuscript notes and typescript of *A Way of Life* and a bound edition Osler collected of Herman Boerhaave’s letters, including manuscript copies of thirty-four letters Boerhaave wrote to Giovanni Battista Morgagni.

An annual appeal summarizing a fraction of the ways in which we apply the generous support given to us by Friends of the Osler Library and other donors would not be complete without a word on material donations. At the start of June, Dr. Charlene Drew Jarvis sent us a number of items that connect her father, Dr. Charles Drew (MD, CM 1933), to McGill. The gift coincided with the inauguration of the Dr. Charles R. Drew Graduate Fellowships, which offer graduates of HBCUs (Historically Black Colleges and Universities) in the United States the opportunity to undertake graduate study at McGill. The gift includes several textbooks that Drew used as a student at McGill, among them: J. Whittridge Williams, *Obstetrics*; Harvey Ernest Jordan, *A Text-Book of Histology*; and Bradley M. Patten, *The Early Embryology of the Chick*. Present among the medical books is also a German translation of Oscar Wilde’s *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (*Das Bildnis des Dorian Gray*). In addition, there are unique pieces of memorabilia that tell another part of the story of Drew’s time as a McGill student: medals and a jersey that reflect his status as a track star. [Images 5,6,7] In addition, there are documents reflecting the many public honours Dr. Drew received for his pioneering work on blood plasma, which led to his role in developing blood banks. Among the papers is a letter that Dr. Paul Beeson (MD, CM 1933) wrote to Mrs. Drew following her husband’s death in an automobile accident. It speaks to the great appreciation that Dr. Drew’s classmates had for his talents as a doctor and his presence as a person:
April 4, 1950

Dear Mrs. Drew:

I was grieved to hear of your husband’s tragic death last week. Please accept my sincerest sympathy. Charles and I were classmates at medical school, where I knew him fairly well. Since graduation I had heard of his progress with great pleasure. He had already become one of the important figures in American medicine. We counted heavily on his advice and help with our problems here in Atlanta, and had indeed an appointment to confer with him in Tuskegee tomorrow.

I know how tremendous his loss is to you, and to many others. It should be some comfort to you to realize that in his short lifetime he had accomplished so much, and that his influence will be felt for long years to come, in the actions of those he had taught and worked with.

Very sincerely,

Paul B. Beeson

For trusting us with this letter, the books, the track memorabilia, and other items reflecting Charles Drew’s experience at McGill, we are grateful to Dr. Charlene Drew Jarvis and the rest of Dr. Drew’s family.

Beyond events and acquisitions, we devote part of our annual budget each year to conservation. We are fortunate to have an endowed fund, the Beverly Millar and Diana Catherine Muirhead Fund, dedicated specifically to conservation work. In the past year, we received a number of additional donations earmarked to increase our expenditures in this area; this is particularly necessary after the stress put on our books by spending the past few years (that is, since the fire) away from their usual habitat.

Each year, we select a small number of items to have restored. This year, we chose two sets of manuscript notebooks of lecture notes taken by students of Alexander Monro (secundus) in Edinburgh. These included two large volumes of notes on anatomy (B.O. 7598) and five smaller volumes on anatomical lectures, delivered in 1774-75. In the coming year, among the items slated for attention are Copernicus’s De revolutionibus (1543), which is in good condition but for which we will have a clamshell box made for further protection, and Galileo’s Dialogo (1632), which will live in a custom clamshell box following some needed repairs.

For our key activities – events and exhibits, acquisitions, and conservation – we rely upon the generosity of our donors. As we plan for the coming year and think about the most effective ways to engage with the local and global community of individuals who share our enthusiasm for the history of medicine, we thank you for your support.
Darwin’s Confirmation of William Osler’s Hippocratic Medicine: Implications for the 21st Century

Robert E. Becker, MD, CM ‘60

“Take as little as possible on trust”¹

—Sir William Osler

In a recent retrospective reassessment focused on the social conditions in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, Persaud et al.² questioned William Osler’s status as a Third Hippocrates. William Osler has long been accepted as a humanistic scholar and physician, the father of modern internal medicine, and as a quintessential model for bringing the humanities and sciences into patient care, both for our time and across the history of medicine. In the tradition of Hippocratic medicine, he advanced nineteenth-century medical education from classrooms to patients’ bedsides, introduced routine use of the microscope, laboratory and autopsy as part of a physician’s clinical practice, and brought scholarship, humility, and humanities into the doctor-patient relationship.³ Osler clarified a distinction between Sydenham’s observationally informed nosological advances and the diseases seen as unique illnesses affecting and affected by individual patients. With this step, Osler acknowledged the unique biology that had been innovated by Hippocrates and that was also contemporarily being independently credited to Hippocrates by Darwin.⁴,⁵

Osler brings a humility to medicine and greatness that could not raise him above the most burdened patient or fellow citizen. With his restraint concerning humans’ and his own abilities to come to the truth present in experience, Osler anticipated the twentieth-century emphases on error management in complex human endeavors such as medicine.⁶ For Osler an education is but “a preparation”⁷ “to recognize that the truth is hard to attain, that mistakes must be acknowledged, regretted, and above all, learned from.”⁸ Osler spent long periods every day on the wards with students, often teaching by examining patients never seen before and chosen at random.⁹ Committed to medicine as a humanistic science, Osler became beloved by those who knew him and respected by his and following generations. He is remembered for always providing care for the patient by caring for the person. Today, among those aware of medicine’s debts to Osler, he receives justly deserved accolades for advancing the places of science, humanities, and professionalism in medicine.¹⁰ Today, Osler teaches us how to understand the emergence from Hippocrates’ medicine of a modern biology of the individual interdependent with her environment. In their shared observational focus on the biological individual living in her environment and subject to disease threats, Hippocrates, Sydenham, Darwin and Osler translate an ancient concept to inform twenty-first-century medicine.

OSLER AND MEDICINE’S HIPPOCRATIC FOUNDATIONS

William Osler (1849-1919) was born in rural Ontario, Canada, the son of an Anglican clergyman. Destined by boyhood access to a microscope, the polyzoa he could study, and by an educational exposure to Sir Thomas Browne, Osler chose medicine.⁹ In later life he referred to his career as a reducing of sap to a maple syrup that was receptive to the new scientific vistas opening in medicine.⁹

After publishing as a young naturalist Osler enrolled at Toronto Medical School. Fascinated with anatomy, parasites, the humanities, but unimpressed with the lectures from faculty, in 1870 he transferred to McGill for bedside experiences not readily available in Toronto. After graduation in 1872 he studied in Europe for two years before joining the medical faculty at McGill. By 1883, acknowledged for his learning, Osler became one of only two Canadian fellows of the British Royal College of Physicians. Within a decade following graduation Osler put a stamp upon McGill medical education that lasted across the twentieth century. Similarly, as a professor at Philadelphia and later Johns Hopkins and Oxford, he revolutionized medical education by teaching students at the bedside.⁹

In 1884, based on the flip of a coin, Osler left Montreal for the larger center at the University of Pennsylvania. Then, in 1888 Osler eagerly accepted an opportunity to become physician-in-chief and professor at the planned Johns Hopkins Hospital and medical school. In 1905, encouraged by his wife to escape an ever-demanding Baltimore practice, he accepted the Regius Professorship of Medicine at Oxford University, where he remained until his death in 1919. Osler, never one to evidence his eminence to others, was made a baronet in 1912 at a ceremony he chose not to attend.⁹

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In learning, teaching, and practice Osler linked the clinic, laboratory, autopsy room and library. Osler’s values—learning at the patient’s bedside, observing, cautious induction, confirming impressions using library and laboratory, expanding knowledge by correlating autopsy pathology with clinical observations, and working with a love of each person equally without regard to rank—still define for many how medicine is best practiced.

TO ERR IS HUMAN

Osler greatly admired Sydenham, the English Hippocrates, as “a man of many doubts.”10 Persuaded by what he could not learn from patients, books, and laboratories even more than what he could learn, Osler tempered his enthusiasm for science with controlled skepticism. By example, moving cautiously towards a definitive diagnosis in each new patient, Osler taught America how medicine is to be practiced. In the late 1950’s, Osler’s heirs at McGill instilled his precepts in us as students. These decades later, those who knew him, such as W.W. Francis, and those teachers who emulated him, used precepts to organize both how and what we would learn as medical students at McGill and after graduation: “let the patient tell you the diagnosis, if at the end of the history and physical examination you do not know the diagnosis, repeat your history and examination of the patient;” “in an epidemic do not wait to treat the ill but immunize and protect the population;” “all drugs are poisons and as physicians you must learn to use them to benefit patients;” and “diagnose by exclusion.” Like Osler, we were trained to learn medicine at the bedside and to support our patient care with the laboratory, autopsy, research, library, and humanistic care and concern for each individual.11,12

THE SCIENTIFIC STATUS OF INDIVIDUALITY

In the mid-twentieth century, molecular, cellular and other specialty fields of research comprised biology. These theoretically organized specializations could not address the functional importance of the individuality Osler saw in patients and in their diseases and that we confirm with molecular biology. Our Hippocratic medical tradition of treating the individual in her environment could not be scientifically grounded. We were left to seek assurance with Osler: “Start out with the conviction that absolute truth is hard to reach in matters relating to our fellow creatures, healthy or diseased, that slips in observation are inevitable even with the best-trained faculties, that errors in judgement must occur in the practice of an art which consists largely in balancing probabilities.”13 “The best doctor, like the successful general, is the one who makes the fewest mistakes.”14 For Osler mistakes were inevitable, errors avoidance and correction a primary task in medicine, scientific clarity elusive, the quest for truth inescapable, and the approach to truth found in experience confirmed by science.

DARWINIAN INDIVIDUALITY

Now, in the twenty-first century, we have access to an advanced understanding of Darwinian biology. The 1930’s Evolutionary Synthesis, turned the gaze of biologists 180 degrees.14 Biology became the unique science of the individual in her environment.15 Osler’s emphasis appreciates Hippocrates’ medicine as a science of the individual in her environment. Jouanna observes how “One of the most important ideas of Hippocratic medicine, in fact, is that the natural environment of a place has an influence upon health and disease.”16 In this new appreciation of Darwin’s evolutionary biology, we can understand how Osler’s medicine reflects both the advance that Darwin brings to modern biology and Hippocrates conception of medicine as a biology. Osler, as a student of biology, held great respect for Darwin whom he visited while studying in London in 1874. By individualizing the diseases identified by Sydenham, Osler integrated two biology that Darwin acknowledged as sharing a method.17 As biology became a unique science of the individual in her environment, twenty-first-century medicine becomes the unique medical humanistic Hippocratic science of the individual in her environment.

Osler privileged the bedside for its access to the biological diversity in how a disease, in each patient, always will be in some ways unique in its manifestations and clinical course. He found a need to account in research and practice for this individuality and its individuation of disease: “Variability is the law of life, and as no two faces are the same, so no two bodies are alike, and no two individuals react alike and behave alike under the abnormal conditions which we know as disease.”18 Today this biological variability still challenges medicine to provide genetically personalized patient care and, made immediate by the recent increases in epidemic diseases, aware of how no individual exists without being affected by and affecting her environment.

METHOD BECOMES SCIENCE

Modern scientific medicine requires the best available research evidence.19 For Osler, as for modern evidence based medicine, “looking for the current best answer” requires validity.13 Osler practiced a clinical method intended to both benefit from and validate what books and experts taught. In the clinic, laboratory, autopsy, and research, one eliminates errors to practice safely.19 Darwin and Osler could accept Hippocratic medicine as scientific because it was grounded in observational methodologies interpreted, confirmed and refined with best available evidence from laboratory and research studies.17 Darwin defined for medicine new tools for understanding an organism, phylogenetic analysis of sources of mechanisms and functions across the organism’s evolution.20 Osler, the student of protozoa remained unaware but, sharing the observational methods of Hippocrates with Darwin, would have recognized this in medicine’s long research and clinical interests in mechanisms of health and disease shared across species.

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OSLER’S LEGACY

In the tradition of Hippocratic medicine, with unknown support from his older nineteenth-century contemporary Darwin, Osler reawakened Hippocrates unique focus of biology on the individual inextricably interdependent with her environment. Today, Darwin and Osler are positioned to revolutionize twenty-first-century biology, as a discipline and as the scientific foundation of medicine. The revolution in biology has confirmed that “that medical education should revolve around the patient and that physicians should come to the clinic with an open mind, rather than a set of theories.” 21 Unfortunately, still today medicine’s leadership misidentifies these views as “philosophy,” denying Osler’s contributions to shaping the Hippocratic and Darwinian modern biology appropriate as a foundation for twenty-first-century medicine. 21 Hippocrates was correct; as Darwin and Osler appreciated and as Ernst Mayr and DNA evidence confirmed in the twentieth century. Biology is unique among the sciences. Unlike the theoretically structured sciences, biology is the science of the individual and the uniqueness of the individual’s interdependence with her environment.

NOT A SAINT, BUT NOT AN UNREPTANT SINNER

Osler “taught medicine in the wards.” 9 His concern for others is seen in his reactions to others: “Nothing will sustain you more ...than the power to recognize the true poetry of life—the poetry of the common place, of the ordinary man, of the plain, toilworn woman, with their loves and their joys, their sorrows and their griefs.” 23 He was dedicated to “the extra trouble required to meet the needs of an individual patient.” 23 He was equally dedicated to medicine becoming a science.

A colleague, Thomas Cullen described the spirit of “brotherly love” Osler inspired in the Maryland medical community as his most significant contribution. 24 Osler was a man of letters, lover of books and widely learned in the humanities. Others justly admired him as learned, charming, compassionate and unassuming. He impressed others with his sense of “meaning of culture, scholarship and character in the physician... humility, humor, humanity.” 25 Osler lived a love for his fellows, a sympathy for the sick and oppressed, and an upright and virtuous life. 26 Too easily others expressed their appreciation of him with metaphors of sainthood that lost the reality of a man who sought to first do no harm.

Recently Persaud et al. 2 focused on the appellations of sainthood and found extracts from the literature that would be unbecoming of a saint. Common to Hippocrates, Darwin and Osler is the concept that biology is made unique among the sciences by the sexually reproduced, genetically singular, individual organisms that it studies. 15 As Ernst Mayr emphasizes, this core of singularity, unique to biology and confirmed by molecular genetics, makes it biologically impossible to type people by generalizing across human individuals. Various chemicals, atomic particles, everyday and other objects that share properties are exemplars of types and naturally form groups, but people cannot be typed. In biology, from Hippocrates, to Darwin, to Osler, to Mayr the individual is unique. 15 A group of individuals, a population, is comprised of individuals who are immune to categorization; they are forever, as individuals, types-of-one. In acknowledging this Hippocratic biology, physicians cannot condone prejudice generalized against ‘others.’
A Hippocratic-Darwinian, molecularly informed, physician-biologist knows of human individuality. He or she knows, as Osler knew, that it would be scientifically indefensible to refer, in either positive or negative categorical ways, to individual human beings. With their recent article Persaud et al.\(^2\) remind us how Hippocrates did not protest the slave trade, but he treated patients who were slaves as he did patients who were not. Darwin did not protest British domination over Indigenous peoples, but he studied Indigenous people in the same way that he studied his fellow Englishmen. Osler did not protest segregated wards in America, but he treated patients on those wards as he treated patients on other wards. These authorities deepen our understanding of the human condition and the basic tenets of biology. Each draws to our attention the fact that human beings are individuals and cannot, scientifically, be collectivized as “slaves” or “coloreds.” Each shows us how we humans easily become complicit with injustice done to others.

Since Osler was first and foremost both a humble person and a scientifically dedicated physician and biologist, we would expect him to eschew prejudice and acknowledge past slights as personal mistakes. We have no evidence to the contrary. Persaud et al.’s concerns about possible biases best stand as possible misinterpretations, thoughtless oversights, and unrecognized, inexcusable tilts born of western society’s systemic racism. They draw to our attention how Osler is passively compliant with social injustice to the same extent that our own passive everyday complicity with social injustice compromises each of us.

**CONCLUSIONS**

Unaware of their shared contributions, in the nineteenth century, Darwin and Osler refreshed a biological tradition that identified the individual in her environment as its organizing focus. Informed by Darwin’s and Hippocrates’ supplementary perspectives in biology, Osler remains an invaluable bedside teacher with an estimable acknowledgement of his human flaws and failures. He brings to the twenty-first century the Hippocratic mechanistic expression of Darwin’s phylogenetic understanding of the individual in her environment. He certainly would reject characterizations of himself as a saint as hopefully would each of us. I propose that the world can join Canadians in celebrating Osler as the Third (and Canadian) Hippocrates. He framed medicine for the twenty-first century as a humanistic biology innovated by Hippocrates.

Thanks to Persaud et al. and others, we are reminded to honor Alexander Thomas Augusta, Anderson Ruffin Abbott, Dr. Oronhyatekha ( Burning Sky), Peter Edmund Jones and other forgotten pioneers by, too late, erasing forever the shameful errors of racism, stigma, stereotyping and division from human life. I am certain that Hippocrates, Darwin and Osler stand with us in this task.

**References**


Finding Mrs. J.A. Parks
Sophie Thompson, McGill University, Class of 2022

As a student worker for summer 2021, my focus thus far at the Osler has been in a special project to improve the biographical sketches available in our online catalogue records. Many of the subjects for whom the Osler keeps archival fonds are described simply by dates of activity or dates of existence, and in some cases no information is available at all. Expanding these short biographies will allow researchers to better understand the backgrounds of the people they may wish to research, more accurately identify further areas of interest, as well as allow us to better understand the context in which the documents in these fonds were created. The research experience has been intensely rewarding, but not uncomplicated; the following is a dramatization of one day of research during one of the cases I found most engaging.

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The next name on my docket was barely a starting point at all: Mrs. J.A. Parks, no first name, no maiden name, no biography. I stared blankly for a moment at my screen. Our fonds contains, the archive catalogue told me, her 1888 student casebook from a course at the Montreal Maternity Hospital, an attendance certification from this course—and a marriage certificate. Interesting. How could we have her marriage certificate, but not her name?

Luckily, the box was on a low shelf. I leafed through the files and found it, a crumbling bit of blue paper in a Mylar envelope. It had been creased over the years almost into eight pieces: a symbol of a long-past love, of hope for the future; a young man knocking on factory doors in Victorian Montreal; a young woman without access to birth control. I was hit with an intense wash of chronosonder, of the terrifying understanding that every human who had ever lived had worried and loved and feared; the sublime joy and terror of reaching back across decades and centuries. Carefully, carefully, I laid the document on the desk.

James Thompson and Isabella Bates, married 1856. The marriage certificate wasn’t hers at all!

“Well thanks for nothing, Mrs. Parks!” I shouted across those decades and centuries. She ignored me, but I felt an eye-roll.

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I turned back to the archival box. From the same file I pulled two other documents: the attendance record, also wrapped in Mylar, made out to a “Mrs. J. A. Parks” on yellowed, ruled notepaper, and a miniature notebook with a crumbly little pasteboard cover jacketed in thin black leather, lying at the bottom of the box. I opened it carefully – and yes, she’d written her name inside: “Mrs. J. A. Parks”. Dammit. I looked down at the casebook. It lay pathetically in my hand, one of the covers creased almost into two pieces, so Lily found me an envelope and a bit of twill tape to enclose it with while I mulled. The first entry was dated March 4, 1888, in clear, looping handwriting:

“Membrane ruptured 4:10 a.m. hour 8, delivery 4:55 a.m. Labour rapid and very easy. Cervix fully dilated quite soft and head well down in pelvis. Vertex presentation in second position. Baby boy. Administer castor oil third day...”

I flipped closer to the end. The writing here was spidery and ink-blotted; she’d forcefully underlined some words and crossed out others, ink bleeding through the page. Her handwriting had degraded dramatically – something in me squirmed with a mixture of amusement and sympathy. But nowhere else had she written her name.

I could see her clearly in my mind’s eye as I turned back to my screen, ignoring me firmly from beyond the veil while I went mad looking for her maiden name. “I’ll find you!” I told her.

“I don’t have time for this,” she replied pointedly, probably wrapping a newborn, or palpating a uterus.

I didn’t cast aside the marriage certificate. Perhaps it was hers from a much earlier marriage, or it belonged to her parents – something to corroborate with, anyway, if I could find their household on a census. “James Thompson” – too early to be my own great-great-grandfather James – was a depressingly common name, as was Isabella Bates. I booted up Ancestry and typed in their names, location, and marriage year anyway. Isabella Bates, married 1859 – could it be her, with the date scanned incorrectly? I clicked into the record. Ah. Married to a ‘Jonathan Kelly’. And the location was wrong anyway, I conceded. And what about James... aha! A James Thompson, married 1856, Montreal – to an Elizabeth Tappin. No luck.

“Yeah,” I muttered to myself as I went down my Ancestry results, “This isn’t going to work.” A parade of James Thompsons and Isabella Bateses rolled slightly sarcastically down my screen, married to the wrong people, or married in the wrong year entirely: no marriage record turned up for them on Ancestry at all. Let’s try the 1861 Census of Canada, I thought: Anglo family names in Quebec usually weren’t too numerous. I tried James’s name; several James Thompsons, or permutations thereof, popped up. Clicking down each likely candidate, though, none were married to an Isabella. Aggrieved, I huffed out a sigh.

Now I had to think of a different plan of attack. Were J. A. her initials or her husband’s? Potentially either, I granted, but probably her husband’s. Reopening Ancestry, I entered new search terms: ‘J A Parks’ ‘1888’, ‘Montreal (Urban Agglomeration), Quebec, Canada’. It returned a dizzying mix of hits, much as I had expected - John A Park, notarial record, George A. Parks, born 1890, Mary A Park, baptized 1850... I limited my search to birth, marriage, and death records – a marriage or census record, presenting both their names in clear, beautifully digitized, looping handwriting, would have been ideal. Mary Park, married 1886 to a John Toiner, no good... J. B. Parke, baptized 1809, unlikely... increasingly dismayed, I limited my search again to records of marriage.

Hold on. A marriage record blinked up at me, linked in dark blue. In 1879, a Margaret Thompson married a John Alexander Park, a carpenter, of Montreal. I opened the casebook again and frowned at the name written there. The K had a bit of a frill on it but perhaps there wasn’t an S there at all. I pulled out the attendance certificate, which had been written a little more clearly: indeed, Mrs. J. A. Park, no S. The place was correct, the timing of the marriage lined up for her to be James and Isabella’s daughter, her maiden name matched that of her potential father here on the marriage certificate on my desk, and if there was another J. A. Park at the right place and the right time, he hadn’t made a peep in the vital statistics record.

So it had to be her - I’d found her! “Is this you?” I called gleefully. “Is your name Margaret?” From somewhere among the shelves, I heard her say something faintly snippy. I added the Ancestry links to my notes and exited out of the image of her marriage certificate, pleased with myself. Perhaps there was something else that could confirm her occupation, I thought – a census record, or a child’s birth certificate. I jauntily tapped in my new search terms: Margaret Thompson, Montreal (Urban Agglomeration), marriage year 1879-

--and scrolled right into her death record: 1881, at the age of twenty-two.

I pushed back my chair, walked into the stacks, and screamed into a box of archival tissue paper.

Margaret Thompson, wife of John Alexander Park, died well before she could have ever taken that nursing course or scribbled in that 1888 casebook, so declared the Drouin Collection vital statistics archive. Well, I thought, furiously dumping myself back into my computer chair. Now what?

I turned and eyed her as she walked past my chair, holding an enema clyster. “Still having trouble with that odd ledger of yours?” she asked, a trifle acidly.

“I don’t suppose you could have used your own first name professionally, at least,” I said. I wasn’t feeling all that sympathetic at this point.

“I don’t understand why you’re so interested,” she remarked. I

Continues on page 28
"You're cited in a master's thesis!" I said, bubbling with indignation. "Your casebook is a brilliant piece of primary evidence into late nineteenth-century labour and delivery practices and medical pedagogy, not to mention the professional lives of working-class married women in the nineteenth century!"

She raised an eyebrow at me.

"You deserve for the world to know you!" I cried in fourth-wave feminism.

"That's not appropriate," she replied, walking away.

"Sure, I'm inappropriate," I shot after her, "but you're the one whose handwriting degraded hilariously over your nursing course. I know you, ma'am! I know who you are, and we are exactly the same!"

All I got back was a slightly offended silence. Well, I thought. If that's how she wants to be, I can match an offended silence. I took a lunch break.

Grimly, I reopened Lovell's Directory of Montreal. Praise old Lovell, I thought. He's the only one who's making me happy right now. Just to be thorough, I started with 1888. All was silent but for the scrunch of my computer mouse as I rolled the little rubber ball, scrolling down the Ps – Paquette, Parizeau – aha. Park. And there, in 1892, was a Mrs. J.A. Park, 'ladies nurse', living at 535 St Lawrence! And – oh. Right above her name was Park, John Alex, carpenter, also at 535 St Lawrence. Unless there were two John Alexander Parks in the Montreal carpentry industry at the same time, he was Margaret's widower. My spirits rose. So he had been the right J. A. Park! This is good, I thought to myself. Men don't chameleonize in the historical record the way women do, jumping from maiden to married name; I could search for his name again, now with more certainty.

I scrolled down the results of my search: John Parke in 1962 Canadian voter lists, John A Park in the 1900 US Census – aha. John Alexander Park in the Drouin Collection's vital statistics. My breath caught. A second marriage certificate – and it was dated 1882, the year after Margaret's death. I took a breath. If this was a different John Alexander, I told myself, I was going to change my major to accounting. I opened the digitized document.

"John Alexander Park of the city of Montreal, carpenter, a widower, and Miss Annie Porter of the same city, a spinster, were married by me with licenses and before witnesses, this thirteenth day of January, one thousand eight hundred and eighty-two."

Annie Porter. And yes, there were their names, signed again beneath.

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Annie Porter. And yes, there were their names, signed again beneath.

My stomach did a victorious little flip. Carpenter and widower – that would map perfectly. My gaze was drawn back to the bride's name – Annie Porter. Was she the woman I was looking for? Ancestry offered me her name, lit up blue on the page; I clicked it to view the same record under her information. And there, under ‘similar records’, an entry in the 1901 Canadian census for a Mary Ann Porter. A census record, I thought excitedly, might tell me her occupation. I opened it with bated breath. In 1901, the wife of John A. Park, thirty-eight, carpenter, living in Montreal, was one Mary Ann Porter, thirty-eight, nurse.

My triumphant whoop echoed through the stacks before I could contain it. I cringed apologetically as Lily looked quizzically over her computer.

Unless this was a hundred-and-thirty-year-old massive coincidence, Mary Ann Porter had to be her. A nurse, living with John A. Park, a carpenter, who had been listed at the same address in the city directory as Mrs. J. A. Park, a 'ladies' nurse'. I scroled back into my results page: aha! She'd died in 1918. Her Montreal death record was digitized terribly fuzzily, but the name was clear: Mary Ann Porter, épouse de John Alexander Park, charpentier.
I took my laptop and marched into the reading room; she was peering at the bust of Lawrence Lande, on tiptoe in the Little House on the Prairie-style brown calico dress my brain had eagerly supplied. It was spotted with something faintly disgusting. “You’ve got placenta on your apron,” I said, discreetly.

She looked down and brushed it off. “I am a ladies’ nurse.”

“Yeah, I noticed.” I held up my laptop screen. “This is you, right? In the 1892 city directory?” She bent closer. She didn’t look much older than me; if the 1901 census was correct, she had only been twenty-five, when she’d written in that 1888 casebook.

“I placed an advertisement there, yes.”

“And you as well, in the 1901 census?” I pulled it up.

She squinted. “It seems to be.”

“Well, dadgummit, Mary Ann,” I said, closing my computer. A triumphant little bubble rose in my stomach. “I’m going to have to put your name in parentheses to the side of your fonds title.”

She eyeballed me. “I don’t know what that means,” I heard her call as I returned gleefully to my desk.

I opened the Osler’s library intranet page to type in her details. There, I thought decisively. Open parenthesis. Mary Ann Porter. Close parenthesis. What was her birth date again? I reopened the 1901 census to check.

The 1901 census, as I took a closer look, puzzled me. Their daughter Frances, recorded age sixteen, was noted to be born on April 14, 1874, a date that would have made her twenty-six in 1901 and more likely to be a sister. Was the census official really so sloppy? Still, I reasoned, the other information matched. Perhaps the 1891 census could tell me something more. I searched for John's name. Indeed, there they were in 1891, but there were other odd details. John A. Park, carpenter – check – wife Annie, no occupation listed – unsurprising – daughters Fanny, seven, and Ellie, twelve. There were no recorded birth dates. Fanny would map neatly onto Frances, if not for the odd birth year noted in 1901. But John and Annie’s ages were listed respectively as thirty-three and thirty-seven, making them forty-three and forty-seven in 1901, not both thirty-eight. I felt my bubble start to deflate.

Frowning, I returned to Ancestry, where I’d searched for John Alexander’s name, for any supporting information; a baptismal record caught my eye. A baby in Montreal named John Alexander Park was baptized on May 18, 1857 – that corroborated the age of thirty-three in 1891, but also potentially the May 10th birthday recorded in 1901. Did that mean that the age of thirty-seven recorded for Annie was more likely to be right? How could all the ages given in the 1901 census, the only one with fully recorded birth dates, be wrong? With a growing feeling of doubt, I went back to Mary Ann's burial record. It really was grainy – was she âgé soixante-trois, perhaps? Sixty-three could line up with the 1891 age of thirty-seven, but the 1901 record of a February 23 1863 birth was a very specific date to put down without a reason.

With low hopes, I turned to Find a Grave, tapping in search terms for Mary Ann Park, death 1918, Quebec, Canada. One result: Mary Ann Porter Parker, declared Find a Grave in purple font, was buried in Notre-Dame-des-Neiges. Unknown birth date. No photo.

Well, that left me with more questions than answers. And I still hadn't found anything on where she was born, or what her parents did. Were Annie and Mary Ann even the same person? Could Mary Ann have been Annie's younger sister? And who was Frances, if not their daughter? However, I couldn't see how John Alexander Park could be the wrong husband; he lived at the same address as Mrs. J. A. Park the ladies’ nurse, and Mary Ann had been recorded in the census as a nurse. And Mary Ann was married to John Alexander Park when she died.

“Hey, Mrs. Park?” I called. “Can you tell me when you were born? And when did you marry John Alexander?”

She didn’t answer. The air in the stacks was still.

“Mrs. Park?”

Silence. I chewed my lip, a little consternated. My research during this project had turned up cases with even less information, people whose medical school notebooks and attendance cards had been filed dutifully away in the Osler archives, but were otherwise lost in a mass of cultivateurs and farriers and labourers all with the same name. About others, even where they had been recorded, census and newspaper records had sometimes turned up information even more bewilderingly contradictory than this hazy little household in 1901. But it stung me that I hadn’t been able to ascertain her date of birth, or find head or tail of where she was born. Maybe it was a twenty-first-century distaste in seeing a woman remembered solely by her husband’s name, even if it was the name she herself had chosen to leave us. Maybe it was simply the sympathetic squeeze I’d felt in my chest to see her handwriting deteriorate in that little notebook, mirroring each set of my own class notes. I didn't quite want to let her go.

Most likely, I concluded, Mary Ann Porter was our Mrs. J. A. Park. But uncertainties remained – I hadn’t been able to find her birth certificate, or her family on a census. What did Mary Ann’s parents do? What was her background? What did she do before taking her midwifery course? I couldn’t help but feel like I’d largely failed, but there were more people whose details were unknown, and I had to move on.
Surveying my evidence, I compiled my final timeline:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Event</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>c.1854</td>
<td>Mary Ann Porter is born, according to the 1891 census of Canada.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30 Dec 1856</td>
<td>James Thompson and Isabella Bates marry in Montreal and the blue</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>certificate in the Mrs. J. A Parks fonds is signed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18 May 1857</td>
<td>John Alexander Park is baptized in Montreal.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. 1859</td>
<td>Margaret Anne Thompson is born.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 May 1862</td>
<td>John Alexander Park, listed as carpenter on the 1901 census of</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Canada, is born.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23 Feb 1863</td>
<td>Mary Ann Porter, listed as nurse on the 1901 census of Canada, is</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>born.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1879</td>
<td>John Alexander Park and Margaret Anne Thompson marry in Montreal.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1879</td>
<td>Ellie Park, daughter of John Alexander, is born, according to the</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1891 census of Canada.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14 April 1874</td>
<td>Francis Park is born, according to the 1901 census of Canada.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1881</td>
<td>Margaret Thompson Park, wife of John Alexander Park of Montreal,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>dies, aged 22.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1882</td>
<td>John Alexander Park, widower, of Montreal, marries Annie Porter,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>spinster.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1884</td>
<td>Fanny is born, according to the 1891 census of Canada.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1888</td>
<td>Mrs. J. A. Park attends a nursing course at the Montreal Maternity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Hospital, producing the casebook and attendance certificate held in</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>the Mrs. J. A. Parks fonds.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1891</td>
<td>John Alexander Park, carpenter, of Montreal, is living with his wife</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Annie. In their household are daughters Ellie, 12, and Frances, 7.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1892</td>
<td>Mrs. J. A. Park is listed as ‘ladies nurse’ in the Montreal city</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>directory.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 Nov 1895</td>
<td>Marguerite A. Parke is born, according to the 1901 census of Canada.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1901</td>
<td>John Alexander Parke, carpenter, of Montreal, is living with his wife</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mary Ann Porter, nurse, of Montreal. Living in their household are</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>daughters Frances, 16, and Marguerite A., 5.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sept 1918</td>
<td>Mary Ann Porter, wife of John Alexander Parke, a carpenter, dies in</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Montreal.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

During the course of this research I delved mainly into vital statistics and census records to gain a picture of the lives of people who left traces here at McGill and the Osler Library. I matched the files of notebooks and attendance cards to people who were born, married, worked, and died decades or centuries ago. Aside from the fact that these documents held in the fonds tracked in some cases extremely important developments and discoveries in medical science, I found that the most interesting details of the documents were often the most mundane – the details that revealed something of the inner lives of our subjects, evoking the sense of discovery and a connection with people long dead that first drew me to working with history, archives, and the Osler Library.
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This fine copy of Antonio Scarpa’s Sull’aneurisma: riflessioni ed osservazioni anatomico-chirurgiche (Pavia, 1804) is one of the library’s prized recent acquisitions. Images cannot do justice to this magnificent elephant folio, which measures 65cm down the spine.
The library gratefully acknowledges the support it has received from the Friends who responded to our last Annual Appeal for funds for the 2020-2021 academic year.

Just over two hundred people contributed $80,000 to the Annual Appeal.

The 2021-2022 Annual Appeal can be found on pp. 19-21 of this issue of the *Osler Library Newsletter*.

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Thank you all for your generous support!

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