



# THE OSLER LIBRARY NEWSLETTER

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Osler Library of the History of Medicine, McGill University, Montréal (Québec) Canada

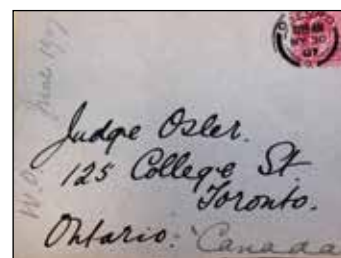
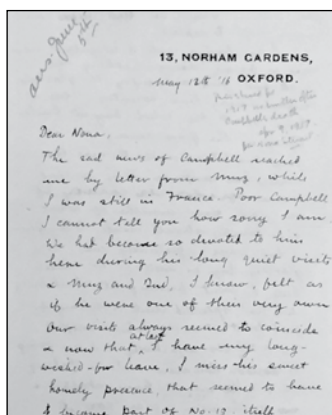
## Dancing, Death, and Vimy Ridge: New Osler Family Letters

Anna Dysert

A group of new letters recently donated to the Osler Library provide fresh insights in the prewar and wartime experiences of the Osler family. Last spring, the Osler Library was fortunate to receive five original letters connected to William Osler, which have now been added to our collections. The letters were a generous gift of Lawton Osler of Windermere, Ontario, a great-great nephew of Sir William himself, and his family. The letters are of particular interest because of this family provenance and the compelling insights they provide into the experiences of the Osler family during the period of the First World War. They provide rare information into events that marked the Oslers, such as the death of Sir William's brother Edward, as well as more general hints about the prewar social and cultural milieu that they inhabited.

The first letter provides an interesting witness to the social and cultural milieu of the Osler families during the time before World War I. Written by a youthful Featherstone Britton Osler and dated June 13, 1894, the letter describes the nineteen-year-old's social activities and preoccupations, including a note about a dance he attended, comments about a young lady, observations about the Toronto weather, and remarks on a serious local fire that he rushed out to see. Britton was Sir William's nephew, the son of Sir William's brother Featherstone. His correspondent, Clare, is unidentified.

A revealing letter from 1907 sheds light onto the relationship between two of the Osler offspring. In a typewritten letter to his eldest brother Featherston ("Fen," born 1838), Sir William reflects on the recent death of his older brother Edward: "the news of poor Ned's death was not unexpected. It was surprising, indeed, that he lasted so long." Edward, born 1842, was the third son of Reverend Featherstone Lake and Ellen Free Picton Osler (Sir William was the sixth brother) and practiced law in Toronto and later Winnipeg. Compared with the four "intensely



Letters donated by Lawton Osler: letter, May 12, 1917, from Revere Osler to Nona Gwyn Stuart (upper left); envelope inscribed to "Judge Osler," from William Osler to Featherston Osler (upper right); letter, Jan. 13, 1894, from Featherstone Britton Osler to "Clare"

hard-working, ambitious" Osler offspring, Edward remained a so-called "gray sheep and [fourth brother] Frank became a black one." Besides Sir William's stoic note about his brother's death, he relays the location of a relative ("Mrs. Divine, who was a granddaughter of Benjamin Osler") and conveys his hopes that Featherston will come visit Oxford.

Three of the five new letters are of particular relevance this year of the one hundredth anniversary of the World War I battle at Vimy Ridge. They relate to Charles Campbell Gwyn (1884-1917), son of Osler's sister Charlotte and her husband, Herbert Gwyn. Campbell Gwyn was a captain with the 18th Battalion of the Canadian Expeditionary Force and acting Major at the time of his death. The first letter in this group is dated

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# McGill



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# An Osler Centenary

Mark Gardiner

**O**n November 14, 1916, Sir William Osler took a train from Oxford to the tiny village of Fenny Stratford a few miles away. He travelled with Dr. Henry Viets, who later recalled that, “it was a brilliant morning with W.O. at his best reading a batch of book catalogues and telling stories.” (1) They went to attend the 183rd Patronal Festival at St. Martin’s Church, Fenny Stratford, held in memory of Thomas Willis (1621-1675), the founder of neuroanatomy and neurology, known to every medical student on account of the eponymous circle of Willis. Documents relating to this visit are held in the Osler Library and an account of the visit and the address given by Osler was published by Viets in 1917. To mark the centenary, members of the Osler Club of London (OCL) attended the 283rd Patronal Festival on St. Martin’s day, November 11, 2016. But why does this unremarkable English village commemorate Thomas Willis on St. Martin’s Day in a church dedicated to St. Martin of Tours? Why, moreover, were the ceremonies accompanied by the ear-splitting roar of small cannons, the Fenny Poppers, being fired by the normally un-warlike members of the OCL?

## Fenny Stratford, Thomas Willis, and St. Martin of Tours

It all goes back to a touch of ancestor worship by the grandson of Thomas Willis, an antiquarian named Browne Willis, and a link between Thomas Willis’s last place of residence, his date of death, and St. Martin of Tours, which seemed to Browne Willis so unlikely as to be of deep significance. But why Fenny Stratford? Browne Willis (1682-1760) was the eldest son of Willis’s only surviving son, also called Thomas (1658-1699), and

Alice Browne. He was a wealthy man, having inherited large estates ultimately derived from his grandfather’s vast fortune. He was an antiquarian, author, and MP for Buckingham. Moreover, he was Lord of the Manor of Bletchley, which includes the small village of Fenny Stratford. The name means “marshy ford on a Roman road,” the road in this case being Watling Street.

Browne Willis was very proud of his famous medical grandfather and took several actions to commemorate him, including building a church in Fenny Stratford dedicated to his memory. The foundation stone was laid in 1724 and the original building was consecrated in 1730. St. Martin of Tours was chosen by Browne Willis as its patron saint because his grandfather had lived in St. Martin’s Lane, London, worked in the parish of St. Martin-in-the-Fields, and died on St. Martin’s Day, November 11, 1675. Browne Willis also gave a sum of money to endow a sermon and an annual patronal festival on St. Martin’s Day in the memory of both his grandfather and himself. During his lifetime he also celebrated the occasion with an annual dinner attended by local clergy and gentry. This annual event is now in its 283rd year, and features the ceremonial firing of the Fenny Poppers.

The Fenny Poppers are six tankard shaped gunmetal castings each weighing 8.6 kg. Where and when they were first used is not recorded but tradition says they were presented to the town by Browne Willis. Unfortunately, one of the original poppers burst in 1856, partially destroying the local inn, the Bull and Butcher. New poppers were forged in 1859 and are still in use. The poppers are fired on special occasions, including the death of Queen Victoria in 1901 and the beginning of the third millennium in 2000. They are fired three times on St. Martin’s

Day, at noon, 2:00 PM, and 4:00 PM. St. Martin’s Church is one of the few churches in England with a licence to use gunpowder.

## Osler’s Visit in 1916

In 1916 the patronal festival was held on Tuesday, November 14. The Osler Library has several documents relating to the visit including the programme (annotated with a note by Osler), the train timetable, a copy of the local newspaper’s report of the festival, and a letter by Dr. Henry Viets written on 10 February, 1952, recalling the events of the day. In his letter



Figure 1: A view of St. Martin’s Church



Figure 2: Browne Willis Memorial Tablet

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Dr. Viets comments: "It was a great day--one of the few W.O. took off during my sojourn in Oxford and we went up first class to Fenny Stratford on a brilliant morning with W.O at his best reading a batch of book catalogues and telling stories. As we bumped along- clickety-clack-the recurring sounds, he said, always reminded him of Johnathon Hutchinson-Johnathon Hutchinson, etc etc."

It is worth remembering that on the day of the visit the Battle of the Somme, in which Osler's only son Revere was involved, had just four days left to run. On his programme Osler has written: "We had such a happy visit. Most interesting church- particularly the ceiling with the coats of arms of the donors. Good dinner and a good meeting afterwards, about 200 present."

The *North Bucks Times* (sadly now extinct) provided a detailed report of the proceedings and a verbatim account of Osler's speech in its edition of November 21, 1916. About thirty enjoyed the dinner at the Swan Hotel (still in existence) which included ox-tail soup, roast chicken, boiled leg of mutton, and apple tart with custard. After dinner, a reception was held in the town hall, where toasts were drunk and Osler gave his speech. About 100 people assembled and there was a small exhibition, including the portrait engraving of Thomas Willis which still hangs in the church and a bound volume of the works of Thomas Willis brought by Osler (possibly number 4248 in the *Bibliotheca Osleriana*).

### Osler's Address

Dr. Viets reprints Osler's speech in its entirety. He relates that, "when Sir William Osler was called upon to speak the hall was crowded with villagers from miles around. His presence in Fenny Stratford was a red letter day for this little country town. Sir William was at his best in his talk on 'Willis the anatomist' not a bit of which was lost on these simple country folks and honest practitioners."

Interested readers can read the transcript in Viets's article and judge for themselves how optimistic or not this judgement may have been. The talk was of course a masterly *tour de force* not only placing Willis in the context of the extraordinary intellectual ferment of seventeenth-century Oxford, but also giving a lucid summary of the realities of his clinical practice and the breadth and importance of his contributions to medicine in general and neuroscience in particular. The talk was full of humorous asides which would have doubtless engaged the audience, both lay and professional:

*"Other remarkable men of Willis's circle included John Locke, the author of the 'Essay on Human Understanding', which even an ordinary woman can read"; "Willis studied this mystery (of fermentation) and made it still greater in the pages he devoted to it"; "One would not care to have had Typhoid fever and to be treated by Willis. It gives me a shudder to think of the*

*constitutions our ancestors had, and of how they withstood the assaults of the apothecary"; "Since I had your kind invitation I have had to read Willis's large book through, from which I got a great deal of information I did not want and have refrained from giving to you."*

### The Centennial Visit

Father Victor Bullock, the present vicar and parish priest of St. Martin's was approached with a request that the Osler Club of London be allowed to mark the centenary of Osler's visit by participating in the 2016 patronal festival. He was well aware of his church's connections to Thomas Willis but had not previously been aware of Sir William Osler's visit. He was warmly enthusiastic about marking the centenary and spared no effort to make the occasion a great success.

Dr. John Ward and his wife Ruth, well known to members of the American Osler Society as organisers of the recent Oxford meeting, attended the 2015 patronal festival to determine what might be feasible. It was sadly evident that the Swan Inn was no longer the quaint establishment remembered by Dr. Viets, being now mainly devoted to displaying football on widescreen televisions.

In the event, about fourteen members of the Osler Club of London including past, present, and future presidents were able to visit on November 11, 2016. Several members participated in firing the Fenny Poppers at 4:00 PM and were rewarded with certificates to prove their achievement. Father Bullock conducted a fascinating tour of St. Martin's Church which, unlike the Swan Inn, remains much as Osler would have found it. The original chapel consecrated on May 29, 1730, still exists

*Continued on page 4*



Figure 3: Firing the Fenny Popper

# An Osler Centenary

Continued from page 3

as part of a building much enlarged by additions in the Victorian era. The armorial ceiling that so impressed Osler is still visible, as is the memorial to Browne Willis (see Figure 2) and the portrait of Thomas Willis donated by Browne Willis with the inscribed verse:

*In Honour to thy Memory;  
Blessed Shade*

*Was the Foundation  
of this Chapell laid:*

*Purchased by Thee –  
Thy Son and Present Heir*

*Owe these three Mannours  
to Thy Art and Care*

*For this – may all Thy Race  
Thanks ever pay*

*And Yearly Celebrate  
Saint Martin's Day*

Several original editions of books by Browne Willis and Thomas Willis, including *De Anima Brutorum* of 1672, are held in the church library and were inspected by OCL members with great interest. A Festal Evensong service was held in honour of St. Martin at 7:00 PM with music by “Quorum” under the direction of Juliet Baxter. About thirty parishioners together with OCL members then sat down to the Browne Willis dinner in the church hall and enjoyed a menu similar to that of 1916. After dinner, the president of the Osler Club of London, Richard Osborn, gave a brief account of the life of Sir William Osler. OCL secretary, Mark Gardiner, discussed Osler’s address of 1916 and his description of the life and

work Of Thomas Willis.

## Conclusion

It is a tribute to the persistence and devotion of the vicar of St. Martin’s Church and the parishioners of Fenny Stratford that the annual celebration of the patronal festival and the Browne Willis dinner and oration has continued for almost three centuries. It was a great privilege for members of the Osler Club of London to participate in these events in 2016 and to honour not just one but two great medical men associated with the city and University of Oxford: Thomas Willis and William Osler.

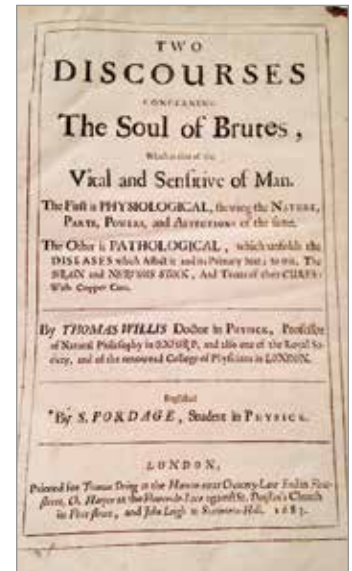


Figure 4: Copy of Willis's Two Discourses (London, 1683) held at St. Martin's Church

1. Viets, H. A Patronal Festival for Thomas Willis (1621-1675) with remarks by Sir William Osler, Bart.,

F.R.S. Annals of Medical History. 2017; Summer. pp. 118-124.

## Dancing, Death, and Vimy Ridge: New Osler Family Letters

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April 7, 1917, from Charles Campbell Gwyn to “Dear Aunt Grace,” Grace Revere Osler. It is written on two leaves of graph paper, likely removed from Campbell’s field notebook. He gives a brief but picturesque description of soldiering (“We are out of the line but still in the mud and wet”) and of military action (“They pounded us with their guns pretty hard but did not manage to drive us under cover.”) He speculates with cool humour about the impending possibility of battle and injury: “We are in for a do almost any day now so I may be returned for repairs.” This tongue-in-cheek yet ominous prediction, penned

two days before the battle of Vimy Ridge, turned out to be partially true and partially false: Campbell Gwyn was killed on the first day of fighting on April 9. His letter from the following day, dated Easter Sunday (April 8), is stunning in its simplicity and poignancy:

*“Dear Aunt Grace, Just a line to say I am well and fit. Tomorrow we go over the top and are looking for a successful day, by the time you get this letter you will most likely know if all is well or not.*

*Very many thanks for all your kindness to me & much love, - Campbell*

The news of Campbell’s death must certainly have contributed to the Grace and

Sir William Osler’s worry over the fate of their son, Revere, who was killed three months after Campbell. As Revere indicates in the fifth letter from this donation, Campbell was like another child to the Oslers and his death was sorely felt: “We had become so devoted to him here during his long quiet visits & Mum and Dad, I know, felt as if he were one of their very own.” This last letter, a very rare one from Revere to his cousin Nona Gwyn Stuart, dates from May 12, 1917 (although it is mistakenly dated 1916). Revere writes affectingly of how much he misses Campbell Gwyn and his “sweet homely presence.” Revere sent this letter while on a long-awaited leave from

the military and writes of his delight in the countryside, filling his time with fishing (“catching 40 good trout”) and reading. He passionately expresses his distaste for war: “How I detest this war and everything to do with it!” Revere Osler and Campbell Gwyn’s three 1917 letters allow us to imagine in a small way the loss and devastation that the First World War wrought on the various close-knit Osler families..

Thanks to the generosity of Lawton Osler and his family, these significant new resources have now been added to the Osler Library’s Sir William Osler Collection (P100, Acc. 2016-001) and are available for consultation.

# A Tribute to Christopher Lyons

Steph A. Pang

Steph A. Pang is a second year medical student and currently serves as co-president of the McGill Osler Society. Beyond medical school, Steph has diverse interests including the intersection of medicine and architecture, and the anatomy, physiology, and medical treatment of owls.

On March 30, 2017, the Osler Library, the Osler Library Board of Curators and the Osler Society paid tribute to Christopher Lyons as he leaves the Osler Library to become Head Librarian of McGill Rare Books and Special Collections.

In her remarks on the occasion, Trenholme Dean of Libraries Dr. Colleen Cook expressed how much the McGill community has benefited from his leadership of the library: “Chris’ enthusiasm and knowledge and appreciation for the materials and their beauty was truly infectious. I have yet to be cured of the Chris Lyons book bug.” Prof. Annmarie Adams, Chair of the Department of Social Studies of Medicine and member of the Osler Library Board of Curators, highlighted Chris’s ability to make everyone feel so at home at the library, explaining, “it comes from his generosity of spirit, incredible grace and his unmatched warmth.”

The Osler Society presented Chris a card with handwritten well wishes from six generations of Society members. The Society also presented him two handpicked gifts: a Hippocratic Oath tie and two pairs of light-heartedly Osler-esque socks. As Chair of the Osler Library Standing Committee, Dr. Del Maestro also presented two restoration gifts in Chris’ honour. The first restoration gift was an original copy of Sir William Osler’s textbook, *The Principles and Practice of Medicine*. This copy was the fourteenth of the first 105,000 copies printed and was signed by Sir Osler for Dr. T. McCrae. The second restoration consisted of a large book by Francis Sibson, M.D., containing exquisite anatomical illustrations:



From left to right: Steph A. Pang, Chris Lyons, Trenholme Dean of Libraries Colleen Cook, Dr. Rolando Del Maestro, Professor Annmarie Adams



Above left: *Medical Anatomy: or, Illustrations of the Relative Position and Movements of the Internal Organs* | Francis Sibson | London : John Churchill & Sons, 1869 | 4 leaves, 88 columns, XXI leaves of plates : illustrations (some color) ; 53cm



Above right: *The Principles and Practice of Medicine: Designed for the Use of Practitioners and Students of Medicine* | William Osler | New York : D. Appleton and Company, 1905 | xvii, [1], 1143, [1] pages : illustrations (some color) ; 25 cm

*Medical Anatomy: or, Illustrations of the Relative Position and Movements of the Internal Organs* (London: John Churchill & Sons, 1869).

I finish this article with an excerpt of the well wishes expressed in the Osler Society’s card for Chris:

*Thank you for your wholehearted support and delightful times together over all these years. From co-organizing the Osler banquet to hosting us in the magnificent Osler Library, you have always been there for us with your classic cheery Chris Lyons grin, your infectious enthusiasm and your winning sense of humour. With you, the Osler Society has been able to bring the joys of medical humanities and Oslerian fun to many cohorts of students. We will carry on the happy memories of you in our hearts. Without a doubt, William Osler would have been very proud of the vibrance and warmth you have brought to his library and the students.*

*We will miss you greatly, but we are very happy for you. It heartens us that the larger McGill community will now get to experience the ripple effects of your energy and vision. Please know that you will always be welcome at our events! We send you many good thoughts for this incredible new chapter of your career.*

*With much gratitude, The McGill Osler Society*

# Report for the Academic Year

Steph A. Pang

In the spirit of Sir William Osler, the McGill medical students' Osler Society aims to enrich the education of students in medicine with the humanities and social sciences. The Society also puts a focus on philanthropy and other experiences that enrich the development of a well-rounded physician. Twenty-nine years after the last Osler Society yearly report was published in the *Osler Library Newsletter*, it is our great pleasure to revive the tradition of sharing our activities with the *Newsletter's* esteemed readership.

The 2016-17 year kicked off with the much-anticipated annual Osler Day on October 26, organized in collaboration with the Department of Social Studies of Medicine (SSoM) and the Osler Library. In the afternoon, the three finalists of the Pam and Rolando Del Maestro William Osler Medical Students Essay Contest gave presentations of their work, with Ms. Maria Barrette (Med-2) winning first place. The presentations were followed by the Board of Curators' meeting in which the Society partook in a surprise tribute to Prof. Faith Wallis, who was a leading light in organizing Osler Day for many years. The evening's activities began with the 39th Annual Osler Lectureship, "Treatment as Prevention: From a Research Hypothesis to a New Global Target Beyond," by world-renowned HIV specialist Dr. Julio Montaner, OC, OBC, MD, from University of British Columbia. Following Dr. Montaner's inspiring talk, students, faculty, and Curators made their way down to the University Club for the 95th Osler Banquet, sponsored by SSoM, with Dr. Montaner as our guest of honour.

The Society's new additions to the Banquet included door prizes courtesy of the Osler Library, awarded to Mr. Yuxing Gu (Med-1), Prof. Tobias Rees (SSoM) and Mrs. Pamela Del Maestro. In collaboration with PhotoFund, a group of photographers fundraising for life-saving surgeries for underprivileged children around the world, the Society brought forth the inaugural Oslerian Photo Booth, with humorous Oslerian props. The all-important task of the Loving Cup ceremony, the Banquet's highlight, fell to Mr. Christopher Lyons, Osler Librarian. With much cheer and charm, he carried out the ritual and sent the cup on its way around the room.

Following Osler Day, the Society has been involved in number of other events pertaining to our dual mandate of education and philanthropy. To spread appreciation for the medical humanities amongst medical students and the general public, we established the Discovering Osler Library Treasures lecture series. The series brings in distinguished speakers from the McGill Faculty of Medicine to give a talk on the medical humanities, accompanied by a guided tour in the Osler Room to view rare materials selected for the occasion. In November, Dr. Rolando Del Maestro gave the first talk in the series entitled,



McGill Osler Society, Executive Committee 2016-17. From left to right: Liang Chen, Alexandre Bélanger, Hidy Girgis, Soumiya Bouhout, Casey Wang, Curtis Quan, Steph A. Pang. Missing: Ke Xuan Li

"The Neurology of Leonardo da Vinci and other Interesting Characters," tracing Leonardo's search for the soul through a neurological perspective. Dr. Richard Fraser followed in February with "The Maude Abbott Medical Museum: 1822 – 2017." He recounted the 100-year history of the colourful characters, including Dr. Maude Abbott and Sir William Osler, who collected the museum's astonishing specimens. Dr. Del Maestro returned a month later with his talk "A History of Neuro-Oncology: Canadian Savoir-Faire," leading us through the intertwined histories of surgery, neurology, and oncology. The talk was coupled with a surprise tribute to Mr. Lyons and a celebratory wine and cheese (see page 5).

In March, the Society collaborated with Dr. Del Maestro and his research team to bring students to the world-class Neurosurgical Simulation Research Centre. As Director of the Centre, Dr. Del Maestro gave us an enlightening talk about the exciting field of virtual reality neurosurgical training. The students then tried their own hands at the stunning simulation neurosurgery technology in the lab. Ticket proceeds were donated to the Brain Tumour Foundation of Canada.

With the Faculty of Medicine's Equity Committee, Government Advocacy and Action Committee, and Wellness Committee, the Society co-organized "Trans 101: How to Advocate for your Trans\* Patients," a workshop about providing safer and more accessible healthcare for gender minority patients. Proceeds were donated to the Centre for Gender Advocacy.

In April, Ms. Maria Barrette gave a presentation on her Osler Essay Contest winning paper, "Contrarian Contraception: Radical Feminism and *The Birth Control Handbook* in Late 1960s Montréal," at the annual meeting of the American

# 2016-2017

Osler Society (AOS) in Atlanta, Georgia. She also received the inaugural AOS William Osler Academy Medal.


Upcoming events in the next few months include the continuation of the Osler Library Treasures Lecture Series, and a lunch event with Dr. and Mrs. Del Maestro, who will answer questions about the annual Pam and Rolando Del Maestro William Osler Medical Students Essay Awards and chat with students about their career aspirations.

The Osler Society would like to extend special thanks to the wonderful individuals of the Osler Library and SSoM who shared their time and expertise to help bring this year's events to life: Mr. Christopher Lyons, Ms. Anna Dysert, Ms. Lily Szczygiel, Ms. Bozena Latinic, Ms. Melissa Como, Ms. Andie Tomlinson, Prof. Andrea Tone, Ms. Heike Faerber, and Ms. Elena Bernier. We would also like to express much gratitude to Curators Dr. Rolando Del Maestro and Dr. Richard Fraser for their continued engagement and support. The dedication and passion of all the people mentioned above continue to inspire us students. It has been an honour for the Osler Society to work with them, and equally as important, to learn from them.

## Winners of the Pam and Rolando Del Maestro William Osler Medical Students Essay Awards\*

The three winning essays from the 2016 round of the Pam and Rolando Del Maestro William Osler Medical Students Essay Awards have now been published on our website. First place was awarded to Maria Barrette (M.D.,C.M 2019). In her essay, "Contrarian Contraception: Radical Feminism and *The Birth Control Handbook* in Late 1960s Montréal," which was also presented at the annual meeting of the American Osler Society, she uncovers *The Birth Control Handbook*, a 1968 pamphlet published by student activists at McGill to spread vital, yet illegal, information about contraception and abortion. Sunny Wei (M.D., C.M. 2018) asks why it took so long for the medical community to acknowledge the existence of neonatal pain and to conduct research into pediatric anesthesiology in her second-place essay, "Neonatal Anesthesia: The Origins of Controversy." Third place in the contest was awarded to Yi Tong (M.D., C.M. 2019) for the essay, "The Antipsychiatry Movement of the 1960s and its Influence on the Mental Health Care Model in the United States," which investigates the deinstitutionalization of psychiatric patients in the 1970s and 1980s from a sociological and medical perspective. Essay writers were also asked to submit a reflective piece accompanying their work describing which library resources they came to know during their research, what skills they developed as

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Follow the Osler Library as we explore our collections through social media on Instagram. Instagram is an image-based social media network developed for mobile phones that facilitates the sharing and discovering of photographs posted by people and institutions. The Osler Library joins a large cohort of libraries and archives that are using the platform to connect to users and improve discovery of collections. The posts are curated to highlight visually compelling material from our collections and match Instagram community-generated themes such as #ManuscriptMonday, #ThrowbackThursday (#tbt), and #FrontispieceFriday.



From left to right: Mrs. Pam Del Maestro, Maria Barrette, Yi Tong, Sunny Wei and Dr. Rolando Del Maestro

researchers, and how using library material helped them to increase the scope, depth, and significance of their subject. We are pleased to print the students' reflective pieces in this issue. **Please find a link to their full essays on our website:** <https://www.mcgill.ca/library/branches/osler/essay-contest>

# “Contrarian Contraception: Radical Feminism and *The Birth Control Handbook* in late 1960s Montréal”

*Maria Barrette, 1st Place*

*Maria Barrette is a second year medical student at McGill University. Before starting medical school she completed an undergraduate degree in Arts and Science with a major in Biomedical science and a minor in Women’s studies during which her interest in women’s health blossomed.*

Writing this essay was a valuable learning experience which helped me appreciate McGill’s exceptional library resources. The resources I used most throughout my research were the online archives. Thanks to some guidance from Christopher Lyons, I was directed to the Montreal Health Archives, which gave me access to digitized copies of several editions of *The Birth Control Handbook*. In addition, I was able to access McGill yearbooks and copies of *The McGill Daily* from the 1960s through the McGill library archives. Having access to these resources allowed me to refer back to the secondary sources I was using with a richer understanding of the events being described. I enjoyed looking through these archives

of publications which are staples of student life to this day. Moreover, I was thrilled to learn that both the Osler Library and the Schulich Library of Science and Engineering held hard copies of several editions of *The Birth Control Handbook*.

As a researcher, I learned most from two major challenges encountered throughout the writing process. The first related to research scope. This is the first historical essay I have written, and in the beginning of my research I felt flooded with a vast amounts of interesting information. It was difficult to sift through all of the information, and to keep my attention focused on what was relevant to my main area of interest. I also struggled with keeping track of all the documents I was reading and the notes taken from these sources. I have learned that taking detailed and organized notes is crucial right from the beginning stages of research.

Overall, I had a great experience writing this essay and will take away valuable lessons in research and writing and a newly inspired perspective on women’s health.

# “Neonatal Anesthesia: The Origins of Controversy”

*Sunny Wei, 2nd Place*

*Sunny is a 3rd year medical student at McGill with a background in immunology. She is an aspiring surgeon, with a new appreciation for anatomy and a long-lasting fondness for literature by writers both good and great.*

In recent times, “research” has become a loaded term, associated with a multitude of hot button topics. Though it is often marketed as the solution to all our problems, from ending

world hunger to averting an influenza epidemic, I believe that there is one role of research that is frequently undervalued and ignored. In my experience, research is a great teacher of patience and persistence. Rarely does a research project go perfectly smoothly, without any hiccups or obstacles. Yet at publication, only the tip of the iceberg, or the end result, is seen. The hours spent trouble-shooting and collecting data are a given, but rarely mentioned except for a brief acknowledgement in the methods section. And so it is as such, that research serves as a silent mentor. It is unyielding to the most dramatic of cries



## REFLECTIVE PIECES FROM THE WINNERS OF THE PAM AND ROLANDO DEL MAESTRO WILLIAM OSLER MEDICAL STUDENTS ESSAY AWARDS

and unwavering in its impenetrability. Yet it is there, in the background, ever present and always available when you want to peruse its depths once more and try again. In this regard, it is like the best and worst of teachers – uncompromising, but otherwise forgiving of failure. Though the stack of books and articles will not reveal its secrets to you at your demand, regardless of how hard you plead, it will remain there for when you are ready to look.

In this sense, I became aware of several new library resources and more familiar with others during my research process. To my undisguised and probably inane amazement, I learned that the Osler Library was not just a storage place for Osler's personal library, but contained thousands of other books as well and, incredible as it may seem, functioned just like any other library. This was quite shocking, as I had been convinced that it was simply a relic, like a museum artefact, all throughout my

undergraduate degree. Another new aspect of the library that I had discovered was the so-called “closed stacks” of the Redpath Basement. Venturing to such a destination, with the aid of the ever-knowledgeable librarians was again a new experience during this research process. In this respect, though I was already familiar with conducting literature reviews using published journal articles, I became better acquainted with the journals that published on the topics of ethics and humanities, rather than the basic science journals to which I was most accustomed. I was also pleasantly surprised that the prominent journals, like the Lancet and the JAMA had digital copies of their earliest editions online, as it greatly aided the search for early material. All in all, I would say that this research experience could be characterized as a well-needed injection of humanities into a well-perfused body of basic science research, which had preoccupied me for so long.

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### “The Antipsychiatry Movement of the 1960s and Its Influence on the Mental Health Care Model in the United States”

*Yi Tong, 3rd Place*

*Yi Tong is a second-year medical student at McGill University, which she entered as part of the Med-P program. She has strong interests in cognition, human behavior, and the history of social and political movements.*

Writing this piece for the Osler Essay Contest was quite a challenge. I think the hardest part was to find out where to start: I knew I wanted to write about deinstitutionalization in psychiatry, but the subject was too wide for me to get a clear sense of direction. Doing some preliminary research using PubMed and Google Scholar, I got lost in the large number of papers and articles on the Internet; I seemed to be swimming in a bottomless source of information. I jotted down a few interesting resources, but was quickly overwhelmed. My first meeting with my mentor was very fruitful: Dr. Wright directed me towards specific books on the history of psychiatry and recommended I read the chapters that interested me in order to get ideas.

I started with a thesis that turned out to be too ambitious, so throughout my readings, I pinpointed a specific period that interested me. I was impressed by the large collection of books on the history of psychiatry I found at the Osler Library

of the History of Medicine. I came in with a shortlist of four titles, which I located in the Osler Library by using the McGill WorldCat search engine. Through associating ideas, searching for other related keywords, and just browsing the shelves, I found many more relevant books. I was also surprised by the large collection of books in foreign languages owned by the library. In the many titles I ended up taking home, I was able to find all the information I was looking for. The books were much more focused and in-depth than the papers or journals I had found on the Web, and they had a much larger scope. Moreover, the annotations and list of references were very helpful in probing further: I could go back to the primary sources and get another point of view. Most surveys of the history of psychiatry also had a helpful index or table of contents. I think this was the most useful research skill I learned: how to make the most of the index table at the end of a book in order to go straight to the information needed. I also learned the importance of establishing a precise thesis early on in order to avoid scattering attention and energy.

All in all, this experience taught me a lot about the process of writing a research paper, how to find information and appraise it (books generally having more depth and scope than articles), and organizing my essay around a concise thesis.

# Retour sur trois mois de stage à la bibliothèque Osler

Sophie Ientile

Élève conservateur d'État des bibliothèques à l'École nationale supérieure des sciences de l'information et des bibliothèques (Enssib) à Villeurbanne (France), j'ai eu la chance de faire un stage de trois mois à la bibliothèque Osler d'histoire de la médecine de l'Université McGill. A l'issue de ce stage, il est temps pour moi de faire un bilan de cette expérience québécoise.

A mon arrivée à la bibliothèque Osler, ma première réaction fut l'étonnement: je savais que la bibliothèque était réputée pour ses collections patrimoniales, mais j'ignorais qu'elle représentait elle-même une curiosité. L'*Osler room* est un endroit vraiment surprenant. Son histoire l'est tout autant. Cette bibliothèque a été créée en 1929 d'après les plans de l'architecte Percy Nobbs, pour abriter la collection personnelle de Sir William Osler, diplômé de McGill, médecin renommé et bibliophile. Initialement installée au Strathcona medical building, la bibliothèque Osler fut transférée morceau par morceau dans un nouveau bâtiment en 1965, le *McIntyre building*. De fait, la première fois qu'on entre dans ce bâtiment typique des années 1960, on ne s'attend pas à trouver une telle bibliothèque! Pénétrer dans l'*Osler room*, c'est donc en quelque sorte faire un saut hors du temps: livres anciens, boiseries, tapis, vitraux, mobilier et objets ayant appartenu à William Osler... tout a été conservé comme en 1929! La sensation est d'autant plus forte que l'on semble voir l'empreinte de William Osler dans chaque recoin de la bibliothèque. Ses cendres, ainsi que celles de sa femme, y sont d'ailleurs conservées. Vous l'aurez compris, la bibliothèque Osler n'est pas une bibliothèque tout à fait comme les autres.

Ma deuxième surprise fut de voir combien les collections de la bibliothèque Osler étaient riches et diversifiées: manuscrits, incunables, livres imprimés, thèses, archives, objets... composent cette collection atypique, bâtie tout au long de sa vie par William Osler. Durant mon stage, chaque jour menait à une nouvelle découverte, de la tablette assyrienne (700 avant JC), aux almanachs publicitaires du 19<sup>e</sup> siècle en passant par des livres anatomiques à volets ou un exemplaire de la première édition du *De humani corporis fabrica* de Vésale. Il m'a fallu du temps pour oser ouvrir les capricieuses vitrines de l'*Osler room*, et trois mois n'ont pas suffi pour appréhender l'ensemble des collections, tant ces dernières sont importantes. Ce qui m'a frappé également, c'est la grande ouverture de cette bibliothèque au public et l'accessibilité de ses collections. Loin d'être cachées aux yeux du monde, les collections de la bibliothèque Osler ont vocation à être vues et consultées. C'était le souhait de Sir William Osler en léguant sa bibliothèque à l'Université McGill, et il a été exaucé: tout un chacun peut venir



PHOTO: MERIKA RAMUNDO

sans condition consulter un document de la bibliothèque, ce que je trouve remarquable.

Qu'ai-je fait pendant ces trois mois de stage et que m'a apporté cette expérience? J'ai pris part au quotidien de la bibliothèque Osler et j'ai pu m'investir dans plusieurs projets de valorisation des collections, notamment en langue française: rédaction de billets pour le blog de la bibliothèque *De re medica*, animation des réseaux sociaux (Instagram, Facebook et Twitter), et visites de la bibliothèque. L'objectif est de faire connaître les collections à un public le plus vaste possible. J'ai participé également à l'organisation d'une exposition sur la vie étudiante à la faculté de médecine de McGill, ainsi qu'à la préparation d'un fonds en vue de sa numérisation prochaine (description et état de la collection, évaluation de la pertinence d'une numérisation...). Ce stage a été aussi pour moi l'occasion de découvrir les autres bibliothèques de McGill, d'échanger avec les collègues bibliothécaires et de participer à diverses activités du réseau (conférences, formations à la recherche documentaire...).

J'ai beaucoup apprécié cette expérience à McGill, qui m'a permis de m'immerger dans un contexte de travail anglophone, mais tourné vers la francophonie. D'autre part, j'ai pris beaucoup de plaisir à travailler au contact des collections patrimoniales et à contribuer à leur valorisation. Les connaissances et les compétences que j'ai acquises durant ce stage me seront sans nul doute utiles dans les années à venir.

Mon expérience à la bibliothèque Osler s'achève, et c'est donc riche d'une expérience diversifiée et formatrice, mais avec un petit pincement au cœur que je pars. Je tiens à remercier l'ensemble des bibliothécaires de McGill qui ont pris le temps de me présenter leur travail, et plus particulièrement l'équipe de la bibliothèque Osler avec laquelle j'ai étroitement collaboré et qui m'a réservé un accueil très chaleureux. Ce fut un plaisir de travailler avec vous.

# Serendipity in the Discovery of New Vesalius Paintings

Two Osler Library paintings show Vesalius at work. But why does he wear clothes of different colors? READ ON to find the answer.



Fig. 1a. Painting by Johann Heinrich Robert Kohler, 1862, ca. 48 inches wide with frame.



Fig. 1b. Painting signed G.A.B. or J. A. B., undated, ca. 37 inches wide with frame.

*Bert Hansen, PhD*

Librarians and archivists are often pictured by outsiders as passive caretakers of their collections, and scholars seen as the people who do the research. But to insiders—and to scholars in the know—librarians and archivists are themselves experts with an amazing depth of knowledge. This is a story of serendipitous discovery, several times over, made possible by librarians, archivists, and curators in a long and circuitous adventure that started as an historian's simple search to learn more about a single painting that portrayed Andreas Vesalius.

Nearly ten years go I wondered if I could locate a painting from about 1850 by the Belgian artist, Edouard Hamman (1819-1888), that showed Vesalius alone in a cellar ready to dissect a cadaver. I had seen a few low-quality reproductions in black-and-white. But who owned it and what would it look like in color? A bibliographic search led me to two published articles, one from 1942 and the other from 1982. Hardly recent, but at least a start. No hint, however, of what treasures the pursuit would uncover.

## One original and one replica (at first)

In 1942, Frank Norman Low reported in the *Bull. Hist. Med.* that the original canvas had belonged to Andrew Dickson White, the founding president of Cornell University in Ithaca,

New York, and that a replica had been commissioned in 1876 by trustees of the medical school of Columbia University.<sup>1</sup> Forty years later, Samuel S. Kotttek described a second replica held by the medical school of Hebrew University.<sup>2</sup> (More about this Jerusalem version below.)

My personal pursuit of these three paintings began in early June 2010. I learned through calls and emails that the A. D. White painting was not in the collection of the Herbert F. Johnson Museum of Art at Cornell University, but on display in a biology seminar room, where it had recently been moved after many decades of hanging in a public corridor. Kindly, the administrator of Stimson Hall (Linda Capogrossi) invited me to come see it. Once I confirmed its location, the registrar of the Johnson Museum (Matthew J. Conway) generously walked across campus to take a photograph and shared it with me.

## The Columbia canvas (my first replica)

That same month I reached out to Stephen F. Novak, Head of Archives and Special Collections at Augustus C. Long Health Sciences Library at Columbia, to ask if he had any idea of how I could locate Columbia's canvas, which was not listed in the university's on-line art inventory. He quickly replied that it was hanging in an open stairwell leading to the medical school dean's office. Novak generously arranged a visit, and I had my

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# Serendipity in the Discovery of New Vesalius Paintings

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first chance to see this oil painting of Vesalius on June 9, 2010. I was bowled over by the power of the image, full-size, in oil and in color—even if somewhat darkened with age. FIG. 2

This replica was painted by Thomas Hicks, a prestigious New York City artist. That he traveled upstate for the work is confirmed by an entry in President White's diary for 8 January 1876, where he noted a dinner with Hicks and his wife, adding that "he has come to paint my *Vesalius* picture, a copy of it, for N. Y. Coll. of Phys. and Surgeons." Over a long career Hicks made portraits of many members of the New York City Chamber of Commerce. He also produced replicas of several famous canvases by other artists. Hicks was an especially good choice for copying Hamman's work since he had been trained in Paris in the studio of the influential history painter Thomas Couture—the very same studio where Hamman had been a student just a year or two earlier. I am especially grateful to Novak for helping me get a look at the Columbia canvas in 2010 since a few years later it was moved into storage, where it remains.

## The Cornell canvas (Hamman's original)

The Cornell canvas is a wonderful painting and one might wonder why it hasn't become better known. After all, it had been purchased by one of America's leading historians, A. D. White, and he wrote about *Vesalius* in his famous two-volume book *A History of the Warfare of Science with Theology in Christendom*, in prose that resonates with the Romantic and melodramatic style of the painting itself. He concluded his five-page section on the man by turning to this painting.<sup>3</sup>

*In this century a great painter has again given him to us. By the magic of Hamann's pencil Vesalius again stands on earth, and we look once more into his cell. Its windows and doors, bolted and barred within, betoken the storm of bigotry which rages without; the crucifix, toward which*



Fig. 2. Replica of Hamman's *Vesalius* painted by Thomas Hicks for the College of Physicians and Surgeons at Columbia University in New York City,

*he turns his eyes, symbolizes the spirit in which he labors; the corpse of the plague-stricken beneath his hand ceases to be repulsive; his very soul seems to send forth rays from the canvas, which strengthen us for the good fight in this age.*

The text of this work first appeared in *Popular Science Monthly*; and then in book form it went through several editions and appeared in French, German, and Spanish translations. A footnote in the *Vesalius* section reads, "The original painting of *Vesalius* at work in his cell, by Hamann [*sic*], is now at Cornell University." FIG. 3

Several factors help explain the painting's being largely overlooked for more than a century. It was White's personal property at first, and when given to Cornell it was not treated as part of the University's art collections, where curators and art lovers might have celebrated its presence. The university first placed it in the Medical School, which opened in Ithaca, but moved in the 1890s (without the painting!) to New York City. After the medical school moved out of Stimson Hall, the building became a home for the biological sciences (for whom Vesalius does not inspire the same awe he does among medical



Fig. 3. Edouard Hamman, *Vesalius*, owned by Cornell University and housed in Stimson Hall (Ithaca, NY), with Linda Capogrossi, administrator, in 2010.

students and physicians). Ithaca is not a convenient place to visit. Additionally, although White was himself fluent in several European languages, he always mis-spelled the artist's name as Hamann, instead of Hamman. In the index of a printed book, this would not be too misleading; but in digital searches, it means scholars largely miss White's discussion of his painting.

## An action portrait

Before going further let us pause to briefly consider the artwork itself. This painting was first exhibited at the Brussels Salon in 1848. Within a year or so, two different draftsmen, Adolphe Mouilleron (1820-1881) and Joseph Schubert (1816-1885), made fine lithographs of it. Mouilleron's print reversed the image; Schubert's did not. FIG. 4

The original canvas was apparently bought by an unknown art collector in Rotterdam, and it remained unseen except through these prints until White purchased it in 1867. Despite its dramatic and almost gruesome character, it was displayed in his home. This is a large canvas about 99 by 79 cm. in a gilded, but not overly ornate, frame. Hamman, the artist, was a book illustrator and painter of historical scenes, like his teacher Louis Gallait. And this action portrait of Vesalius embodies a nineteenth-century innovation in the traditions of history



Fig. 4. Adolphe Mouilleron, lithograph of Hamman's *Vesalius*, owned by the Osler Library at McGill University, a gift of Dr. W. Bruce Fye.

painting and historical portraiture. Before this change, from the sixteenth century to the mid-nineteenth, likenesses of physicians, as of other worthies, rarely showed them at work, but instead portrayed them seated in a dignified posture in front of generic drapery or with an indefinite dark background space.

Only at mid-century did European and American artists begin to create at-work portraits—initially of figures from history like Vesalius, Columbus, or Galileo—and Hamman was part of this new vogue. Then after 1875 artists began to portray even contemporary doctors and scientists actively at work, such as Louis Pasteur and Jean-Martin Charcot in Paris or Samuel D. Gross and David Hayes Agnew in Philadelphia.<sup>4</sup> Another student of Hamman's teacher Gallait, a German named Karl Theodor Piloty, worked in this genre as well, and his painting of Galileo in prison caught White's eye in a Cologne museum, prompting White to secure permission to have an oil-on-canvas copy made. I have not been able to locate White's replica, which is unfortunate since Piloty's original canvas was destroyed in a war. Fortunately, we have access to the dramatic image through an early print. <sup>FIG. 5</sup>

### A syracuse surprise

As part of my drive to Ithaca to view Hamman's painting, I also planned a visit to Syracuse (about 90 km farther north) to look at a quite different painting that



Fig. 5. Early print of *Galileo in Prison*, a destroyed painting by Karl Theodor Piloty (courtesy of the San Francisco Museum of Fine Art, [www.famsf.org](http://www.famsf.org), credit to the Achenbach Foundation for Graphic Arts).

I had also seen only in black-and-white reproductions, *The First Ovariectomy*, painted by George Kasson Knapp, a local artist and bank-note engraver. This painting from 1877 portrays a surgical operation that took place in 1809, the first successful removal—decades before the introduction of anesthesia or antisepsis—of a large ovarian tumor from a Mrs. Crawford in Danville, Kentucky by Dr. Ephraim McDowell. The painting is owned by the Onondaga Historical Association. <sup>FIG. 6</sup>

But while there, I asked Thomas Hunter, the curator, if I could also see another Knapp painting they owned, which was catalogued with the odd title, "The First Dissection." Unlike the first vaccination or the first ovariectomy or the first heart transplant, it was hard for me to picture what event might be characterized as the "first" dissection.

### Replica number two

To my shock—and delight—Knapp had clearly painted a replica directly from White's *Vesalius* painting, even though



Fig. 6. George Kasson Knapp, *The First Dissection*, owned by the Onondaga Historical Association (Syracuse, NY). (Used with permission.)

the Association's records for this painting made no mention of *Vesalius*, Hamman, or White. Obviously, someone making an inventory of the paintings that Knapp left to the Association at his death treated it as an original composition by Knapp and mistakenly bestowed on this canvas a name modeled on the ovariectomy painting (which had been exhibited, though not sold, and was better known). Without names like *Vesalius* or Hamman in the records, no historian or curator had given this painting much attention, and it languished in storage for a hundred years with its true nature unrecognized.

On my return home, I typed up notes about the Hamman original at Cornell and the two replicas (at Columbia and in Syracuse) and mailed them to Capogrossi, Conway, Hunter, and Novak for their files, where they might be used by future scholars. (And indeed they were used—as we shall see.) But, although I was delighted by these initial discoveries, I decided to put Hamman aside for a few years to work on Louis Pasteur, on paintings of him, and on his many close personal relationships with French painters and sculptors.<sup>5</sup>

### Replicas made by artists

As much as possible, I refer to these oil canvases as replicas, not as copies. These artistic efforts differ from mechanical reproductions, and it would be wrong to think of them as not artistic, not genuine,

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# Serendipity in the Discovery of New Vesalius Paintings

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or as intended to deceive (even if they are sometimes mis-catalogued). In the nineteenth century, painted replicas were common. A. D. White commissioned a replica (now lost?) of the Galileo painting, and he permitted both Hicks and Knapp to replicate the Hamman canvas he owned. Such replicas were not usually painted by hacks or apprentices, but by mature, highly skilled artists.

## Replica number three (New colors! Reversed composition!)

On a trip to Israel in early 2012, I planned to visit the medical library at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, which owns the Hamman replica described thirty years earlier in the article by Kottek cited above. Unfortunately at that time a large part of the library building was being renovated, and the painting could not be viewed. Fortunately, after the renovation, the painting was installed in a new arrangement in 2015 with other medical artifacts. In January 2016 Ms. Sharon Lenga, Director of the Berman Medical Library, kindly sent me the photograph in Figure 7. Their painting has a smaller format than most of the other replicas. And as one can easily see, the painting is a mirror-image (or left-right reversal) of the Cornell original and of the Syracuse and Columbia replicas. It was thus based on a print, probably the lithograph by Mouilleron (in Figure 4 above). And, as we shall see, all the following replicas have that same reversal. They are further distinguished (understandably) by having major variations in color for Vesalius's garments and other parts of the painting since their painters did not work directly from the original.<sup>FIG. 7</sup>

## Discovered in a footnote: replica number four

I learned of another example only from the passing reference in a book about dissection photography, which mentioned that a Dr. Weber in Cleveland had owned a painted copy of Hamman's *Vesalius*.<sup>6</sup> When I emailed James M.



Fig. 7. Unsigned, undated replica of Hamman's *Vesalius* (ca. 68 cm wide with frame) on display in the Berman Medical Library of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem (courtesy of Ms. Sharon Lenga, Library Director).

Edmonson, Chief Curator of the Dittrick Medical History Center in Cleveland, to ask if by chance he knew more about Weber's painting, he replied in January 2012 that it was in the Dittrick collection, hanging just down the hall from his office. It had been received along with medical instruments and other materials belonging to Gustav C. E. Weber (1828-1912).<sup>7</sup> This painting, too, is smaller than the original and shows the left-right reversal typical of replicas based on a print.<sup>FIG. 8</sup>

## An "Ambroise Paré" by Bertrand turns out to be Vesalius replica number five

In the fall of 2015, I returned to my Hamman research in preparation for a talk at the AAHM in Minneapolis in May 2016. With the ever-expanding digital world, my replica discoveries grew even more numerous. By chance I was using Google to see if I could locate the original canvases of two other Hamman paintings of medical heroes, Ambroise Paré and Edward Jenner, which I knew only from old black-and-white reproductions. To my astonishment, I found an image posted by the municipal museum of Remiremont in eastern France, labeled as "Dr. Ambroise Paré with a Patient" by the French painter, James Bertrand (1823-1887). The website image was clearly a version of Hamman's *Vesalius*!



Fig. 8. Replica of Hamman's *Vesalius*, painted by R. Köhler, 1857, owned by the Dittrick Medical History Center (Cleveland, OH), with James M. Edmonson, Chief Curator.

Of course, I was unable to tell whether they owned a "Paré" but had accidentally posted an incorrect image file, or whether I was looking at a painting of theirs that was seriously mis-catalogued. My email inquiry in mid-January 2016 elicited a grateful and enthusiastic reply from Aurélien Vacheret, Director of the museum, who provided new insights. He noted that when this painting had been restored in 2013, the conservator working on it had discovered that the canvas lacked preparatory drawing or underpainting. This fact makes perfect sense, of course, once we know that the canvas is a copy, not an original composition. Vacheret also reported that in an early twentieth-century catalogue the painting's subject had been identified as "Paré (?)." But in the more recent catalogue the question mark had been dropped without comment.<sup>FIG. 9</sup>

## An accidental conversation reveals numbers six and seven

Entirely by chance on January 30 2016, I ran into Christopher Lyons, at the time Head of the Osler Library at McGill in Montreal, at a Bibliography Week event at the New York Academy of Medicine. In conversation, he happened to ask what I was working on. When I said it was a Vesalius painting by Hamman that he might be familiar with because his library had recently received an excellent



Fig. 9. Replica of Hamman's Vesalius, painted by James Bertrand, owed by Musée Charles de Bruyères, Remiremont, France (courtesy of Aurélien Vacheret, Director of Municipal Museums, Remiremont).

example of the Mouilleron lithograph as a gift from Bruce Fye, he shocked me by reporting that the library also has two of the painted replicas. <sup>FIGS. 1a and 1b</sup> Serendipity again!

### Number eight reported to be in Leuven

Also in January 2016, thanks to a note from Sharon Lenga at the Hebrew University, I learned of an important article recently published in Dutch. It appeared in an annual whose English title would be "History of Medicine and Health Care." The title of this year's issue can be translated as "Healers: Famous Physicians and Figures in the History of Medicine." The article's title in English is "The Vesalius Paintings

of E. J. C. Hamman (1819-1888)."<sup>9</sup> The twenty-page article describes Hamman's Vesalius and all the replicas that the authors found. Largely independently, these researchers (Maurits Biesbrouck, Luc Missotten, and Orner Steeno) and I had been covering much of the same ground. And they turned up another replica in Leuven that was unknown to me, yet they were unaware of the four canvases described above in Cleveland, Montreal, and Remiremont. The Leuven canvas is unsigned and undated. It measures 80 cm wide with the frame, and its composition follows the Mouilleron print, not Hamman's original. Because the lead author had been in touch with Linda Capogrossi at Cornell, she had shared my 2010 letter with this team, and their article cites my unpublished observations in many of its footnotes, thereby completing another circle of serendipitous, if informal, scholarly connections.

### Wrapping up

It would be easy to disdain these oil replicas as fakes or imposters, being two steps removed from *Vesalius*, first by their being produced in the 1840s or later and second by being replicas. But as an historian of the nineteenth century, I regard them as precious sources about medical culture and artistic practices of that era. And I believe they enrich the context for popular new views of medicine that I explored in my book

*Picturing Medical Progress from Pasteur to Polio*.<sup>10</sup> Casual references to "Vesalius in the picture by Hamman" in nineteenth-century medical journals suggest a wide familiarity with the lithographs at least. For example, consider this note in the *Medical News* of November 1, 1884:

*We have received from E. H. Schroeder, of Berlin, beautiful lithographic copies of Rembrandt's well-known painting of Tulp's Anatomy Lesson—one of the masterpieces of the Dutch school—and of Hamman's Vesalius at his Dissections. The striking features of the original are faithfully reproduced, and the admirable execution of these plates renders them desirable adornments for the walls of the consulting room, while their low price (about \$1.50 apiece) places them within the reach of all.*

If some people think the painted versions do not belong in art museums, I am glad that medical school administrators and librarians usually recognize their value in reminding today's medical students about worthy predecessors. If my report diminishes the stigma of being copies rather than originals, I hope that their owners will become more proud of them, treat them as precious objects rather than inferior items, catalogue them fully and publicly, and help us all get to know them better. And, of course, I look forward to learning from readers about additional examples of this popular painting.

<sup>1</sup> Frank Norman Low, "The famous Hamman painting of Andreas Vesalius," *BHM* 12, 1942, 129-131.

<sup>2</sup> Samuel S Kottek, "'Andre Vesale.' Some remarks on a painting by E. J. C. Hamman," *Korot* 1982 Aug; 8(3-4):135-43.

<sup>3</sup> A. D. White, *A History of the Warfare of Science with Theology in Christendom* (New York Appleton, 1896), v.2, p. 54.

<sup>4</sup> Richard E. Weisberg and Bert Hansen, "Collaboration of Art and Science in Albert Edelfelt's Portrait of Louis Pasteur: The Making of an Enduring Medical Icon" *Bull. Hist. Med.* 89:1 (2015), 59-91 at pp.85-88. The paintings referenced are *Pasteur in His Laboratory* (1885) by Albert Edelfelt, *The Tuesday Lectures of Dr. Charcot* (1887) by André Brouillet, and *The Gross Clinic* (1875) and *The Agnew Clinic* (1889) by Thomas Eakins.

<sup>5</sup> Bert Hansen and Richard E. Weisberg, "Louis Pasteur's Three Artist Compatriots —Henner, Pointelin, and

Perraud: A Story of Friendship, Science, and Art in the 1870s and 1880s," *Journal of Medical Biography* (printed issue forthcoming; on-line pre-prints made available on May 29, 2015) and *idem*, "Louis Pasteur (1822–1895), His friendships with the Artists Max Claudet (1840–1893) and Paul Dubois (1829–1905), and His Public Image in the 1870s and 1880s," *Journal of Medical Biography* (printed issue forthcoming; on-line pre-prints made available on May 29, 2015).

<sup>6</sup> John Harley Warner and James M. Edmonson, *Dissection: Photographs of a Rite of Passage in American Medicine 1880-1930* (New York: Blast Books, 2009), p. 193.

<sup>7</sup> James M. Edmonson, *Nineteenth Century Surgical Instruments: A Catalogue of the Gustav Weber Collection at the Howard Dittrick Museum of Historical Medicine* (Cleveland: Cleveland Health Sciences Library, 1986).

<sup>8</sup> Note that while the museum has corrected the identification in its online holdings, the French Wikipédia article on Bertrand still shows this painting as a likeness of Paré.

<sup>9</sup> Maurits Biesbrouck, Luc Missotten, and Orner Steeno, "De Vesalius-schilderijen van E.J.C. Hamman (1819-1888)," in *Heel-meesters: Befaamde artsen en figuren uit de geschiedenis van de geneeskunde* (Cahiers Geschiedenis van de Geneeskunde en Gezondheidszorg, No. 2), Antwerp: Garant, 2014, pp. 19-39.

<sup>10</sup> Bert Hansen, *Picturing Medical Progress from Pasteur to Polio: A History of Mass Media Images and Popular Attitudes in America* (Rutgers University Press, 2009).

## DONOR INFORMATION ERRATA

### FRIENDS OF THE OSLER LIBRARY

The library gratefully acknowledges the support it has received from the many Friends who responded to our last Annual Appeal for funds and other requests for the 2015-2016 academic year. Just under 200 people contributed a total of \$251,899, which allowed us to undertake a number of initiatives and make important acquisitions.

We heartily thank all our Friends who sustain the Osler Library. Below is a list of those who have given us permission to print their names.

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Thank you all for your generous support!

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Gail Yenta Beck and  
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## IN MEMORIUM

### MICHAEL BLISS, 1941-2017

It was with great sadness that we learned of the passing of the great Canadian historian Michael Bliss. Professor Bliss was a cherished member of the Osler Library Board of Curators. One of the most accomplished medical historians of his time, his contributions to the field will no doubt live on to be read by generations of doctors, historians, and students. He will be missed by all who knew him.

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The Osler Library has a generous Friends group of supporters chaired by Dr. Richard Cruess and interested in preserving and promoting the history of medicine and the life and legacy of Sir William Osler. Funds donated by the Friends are used to purchase rare and new books and journals, conserve and restore rare and unique items in our collections, and support our pedagogical and outreach efforts.

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### Friends Of The Osler Library

McGill University, McIntyre Medical Sciences Building  
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