

**Milton and the Book Arts:
An Exhibition of Rare and Fine
Editions
in the
Rare Book & Manuscript Library,
University of Illinois Library
November 6 — December 19, 2008**
PUBLISHED WITH SUPPORT FROM THE ROBERT
B. DOWNS PUBLICATION FUND

THE JOHN MILTON COLLECTION at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign is a remarkable storehouse of works by and about the great English poet. It seems right to celebrate the 400th anniversary of Milton's birth with a review of the place of honor he holds in our Library.

Harris F. Fletcher joined the Department of English at the University of Illinois in 1926, and soon began his close involvement with the Library to acquire primary material for the study of Milton. When Fletcher arrived, there were, in fact, no first editions of Milton's work in the Library; but that was soon to change. Between 1928 and 1955, under Fletcher's guidance and with the full support of Library director Robert B. Downs, the Library was to acquire copies—often multiple copies—of all the works by Milton that were published in his lifetime. In addition, a program of acquisition was undertaken to acquire as much contemporary material as possible to put Milton's writings in context. Consequently the Library possesses a rich collection of seventeenth-century literature, history, theology, science, exploration and geography.

Some first editions of Milton's writings were more easily collected than others. Fletcher acquired copies as they became available, so that condition was not the



prime criterion. Among the rarest of Milton's works, *Of Education* and *Areopagitica* were both originally issued as modest pamphlets in 1644; and *A Maske* (1637), was also modestly produced, all belying the importance they have for scholars today. Fletcher was very proud that these titles were represented in the Illinois collection by copies in fine condition—perhaps the best extant.

The Milton collection not only grew in the number of separate titles added. It also attained depth. Multiple copies were purchased so that, according to Fletcher, scholars might “settle any textual problem which may arise” in the study of Milton. The first edition of *Paradise Lost*, for example, is present in 14 copies. Among these, Fletcher was able to point out the various states they exhibited, and the development of the apparatus that framed the text. The same multiplicity of representation is true for other titles by Milton, and not only for those works published during his lifetime. The Illinois collection has a large number of copies of Baskerville's Milton, an important milestone in the typographer's development.

The Library collects not only separately published first editions of Milton's works, but also copies of works in which his writings appeared. The most famous of these is surely his sonnet *On Shakespeare*, which appeared in the Second Folio (1632), his first work to be published. The collection is also rich in association copies, such as Milton's well-annotated copy of the Greek poet Lycophron.

The collection Fletcher built was also designed to follow the changing perception and study of Milton's work over time. Translations were acquired, as were imitations, parodies, and critical works. Works including almost any kind of reference to Milton, substantial or otherwise, were fair game. More than 3000 editions of Milton's works were collected, regardless of their textual authority. The Library continues to add works of these kinds to its collections whenever possible.

Milton's works were often adapted in various ways. The mask that came to be known as *Comus*, for example, was regularly performed in the 18th and 19th centuries in modified forms. New characters were added, such as Euphrosyne, and new music was composed to accompany the songs. Composers such as Handel drew on Milton's works as subjects for oratorios and song cycles. The Library has copies of most of these musical adaptations and scores, and also collects playbills referring to productions of staged works inspired by Milton.

Because his poetry was so popular and his works so much studied, the market for Milton's books was extremely varied. Volumes for personal reading and showy gift books; multi-volume sets and pocket editions; illustrated volumes and volumes filled with learned notes and glosses, and so on, all presented themselves. It thus becomes possible to see the history of publishing and the book arts exemplified in our shelves of Miltoniana.

Milton's poems were often used as vehicles for the self-conscious employment of the book arts. The Arts-and-Crafts Movement pioneered by William Morris encouraged the establishment of a number of private presses committed to developing the arts of the book. In our exhibit, we will see examples of such well-known imprints as the Vale Press, the Doves Press, the Eragny Press, and the lesser-known Nene Press.

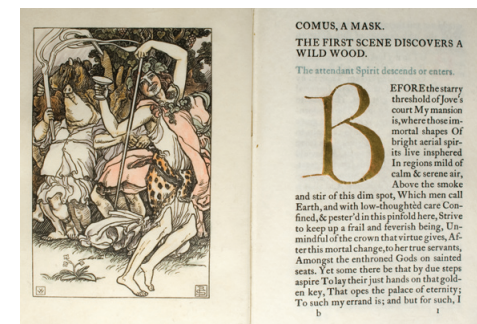
The exhibit also traces the tradition of illustrating Milton's poems, beginning with the first edition “adorn'd with sculptures”, that of 1688. John Baptist Medina's image of Satan calling forth his legions from the Lake of Fire is the first book illustration of a scene from *Paradise Lost*. Francis Hayman's illustrations from 1749 were often imitated: the first color illustrations of Milton's poems, painted by Frederic-Jean Schall for the first French translation of *Paradise Lost* (1792) were based on Hayman's designs. Later illustrators, such as Charles Ricketts, Arthur Rackham and Bernard Meninsky, among many others, all realized Milton's scenes and characters in various lights and using different processes.

ALVAN BREGMAN
Curator of Rare Books

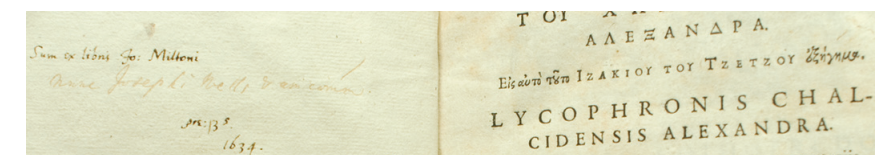
List of Works Exhibited

1. “On Shakespeare”, in *Mr. William Shakespeares comedies, histories, and tragedies*, The 2nd impression. London: Printed by Tho. Cotes, for Robert Allot, 1632. IUQ 00002. The first appearance in print of a poem by John Milton. A good start!
2. *Comus; a masque*. By Milton. Taken from the manager's book, at the Theatre-Royal, Covent Garden. London: Printed for the proprietors, and sold by Rachel Randall, 1787. 821 M64L15 1787. The frontispiece shows Margaret Martyr (d. 1807) as Euphrosyne.
3. Playbill for a production of *Comus* in 1795, which also featured Mrs. Martyr.

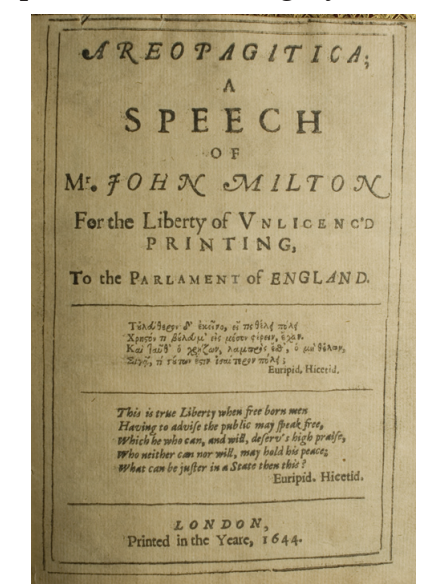
4. *Comus, a mask*. [London: Edward Arnold; New York: Samuel Buckley & Co., 1901]. “Printed under the care of C.R. Ashbee, at the Essex House Press, with a wood block frontispiece by Reginald Savage...” With written and gilded letters by Florence Kingsford. There is a blind-stamped design on the front cover, with the motto, “Soul is Form”. No. 49 of 150 copies, printed on vellum. 821 M64L15 1901. Wickenheiser 260.



5. *L'Allegro, il Penseroso ed il Moderato: The words taken from Milton; set to musick by Mr. Handel*. London: Printed for I. Walsh, [1741]. Q.784.2 H19al 1741. Wickenheiser 343. First performed in 1740, with a libretto by Charles Jennens, who added “Il Moderato” at Handel's request. Songs by “L'allegro” (Signora Fraccesina) and “Il penseroso” (Mr. Beard) alternate until “Il moderato” (Mr. Savage) appears late in the score. The score, engraved throughout, ends with a duet between the two main characters.

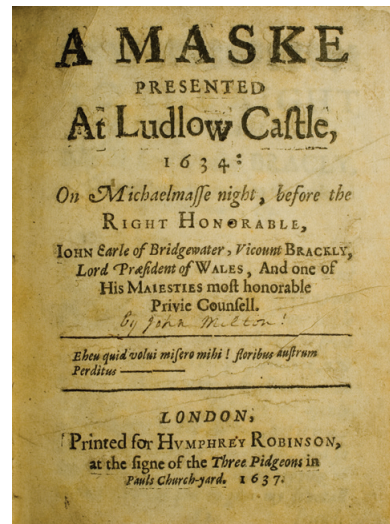


6. *Lycophron, Alexandra*. [Geneva]: Excudebat Paulus Stephanus [i.e., Paul Estienne], 1601. 881 L7 1601. The University of Illinois is proud to have two of the ten or so books indisputably known to have been owned by John Milton. This copy is annotated in more than 60 places in Milton's hand, mainly in Greek, in response to the text he was studying. Here we display the title-page with Milton's ownership inscription on the facing fly-leaf.

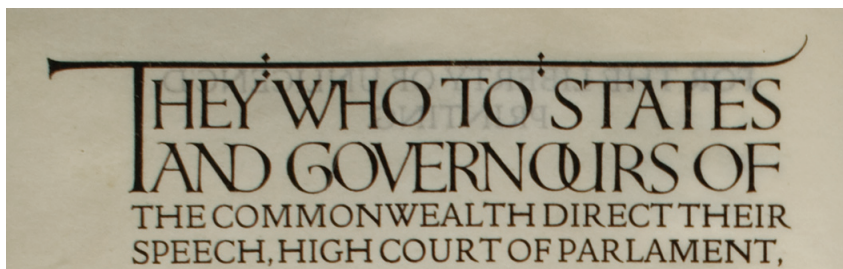


7. *Areopagitica: A speech of Mr. John Milton for the liberty of unlicenc'd printing to the Parliament of England*. London: [s.n.], 1644. 821 M64N6. Wickenheiser 6. A near-perfect copy of a rare and ephemeral pamphlet: a high-point in the history of free expression.

8. *A maske presented at Ludlow Castle, 1634.* London: Printed for Humphrey Robinson, 1637. 821 M64L15 1637. Perhaps the rarest of all Milton first editions.



9. *Areopagitica.* Hammersmith: Printed at the Doves Press by T.J. Cobden-Sanderson and Emery Walker, 1907]. 821 M64N6 1907A. Wickenheiser 31 (paper). One of 25 copies printed on vellum. Full blue morocco with gilt-stamped box ruling; signed "The Doves Bindery 19 C-S 17". T.J. Cobden-Sanderson, a bookbinder associated with William Morris, opened his Doves Bindery in 1894 and subsequently became interested in type design and other aspects of the



printing arts. In 1900, he established the Doves Press in partnership with Emery Walker. Using a new type face based on Jenson, the books they produced were purely typographic in character. (cf. Cave, pp. 145-148).

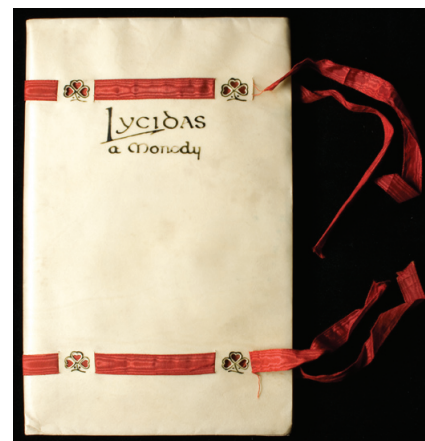
10. *Areopagitica.* London: Sold by the Eragny Press, and New York: John Lane, 1903. with: *Prospectus.* 821 M64N6 1903. Wickenheiser 28. This edition was originally limited to 226 copies on paper and 10 on vellum, but a fire at the printer, Leighton, Son and Hodge, destroyed most of the edition, so that only 38 paper copies survived, of which this copy is one. The Library also has a copy of the subsequent issue of March 1904.



Lucien Pisarro (1863-1944) was

the son of the impressionist painter, Camille Pisarro. Lucien, a painter and wood-engraver, moved to London in 1890 and in 1894 founded the Eragny Press with his wife, Esther Bensusan. In keeping with the Arts-and-Crafts movement inspired by William Morris, and the scanty profits they generated, Lucien and Esther did almost all the design, illustration and production of their books. The Eragny Press ceased operation in 1914. (cf. Getz, pp. 17-38).

11. *Lycidas-- a monody.* "Printed and published by Herbert Dulley, at the Nene Press, Wellingborough, and completed on the 23rd day of December, 1904". 821 M64L16 1904. Bound in vellum; tied with red ribbons.



This volume, a product of the little-known Nene Press, is perhaps the most authentic example of the arts-and-craft tradition exhibited here, since it is the work of a provincial craftsman.

12. *Milton. Early Poems.* [London: Printed by the Ballantyne Press, 1896]. Mark of the Vale Press on p. [cv]. "The decorations are designed and cut on the wood by Charles Ricketts." 821 M64L 1896. Wickenheiser 308.



Ricketts (1866-1931) established the Vale Press in 1896 and this was his second publication. The Press ceased operation in 1904, after Ricketts threw his type into the Thames, apparently to spite his business partner, William Hacon. As Cave explains (p. 150), Ricketts could not print at his Vale Press offices in Chelsea, so arranged to have his work done on machines kept at the Ballantyne Press. "From the designs of the watermarks on the paper (which was hand-made by Arnolds), through the types, decorations, wood-engravings, and the bindings, all was the work of Ricketts."

13a and 13b. *Comus, by John Milton;* illustrated by Arthur Rackham. London: W. Heinemann; New York, Doubleday, Page & Co., [1921]. Q. 821 M64L15 1921A. Wickenheiser 274.

Plates accompanied by guard sheets with descriptive letterpress. Presentation copy from Rackham to Mrs. Muriel Abramson, with a drawing of a satyr, a variation of the motif found on the title-page. The 24 color illustrations are mounted on brown stiff paper and protected by guard sheets with descriptive letterpress. There are also 37 black-and-white drawings integrated into the printed text.



14. *Comus.* Illustrated by Nicholas Parry (lithographs taken from the stone.) Market Drayton: Tern Press, 2003. Q. 821 M64L15 2003. Edition of 25. Bound in embossed red and gold floral patterned cloth; paper title label on front. Issued in maroon cloth slipcase.

15. *L'Allegro Il Penseroso.* Ill. by Bernard Meninsky. London: Allan Wingate, 1947. Q. 821M64L12 1947. Wickenheiser 431.

Long after the end of the fine press movement, artists and publishers continued to use Milton's poems as subjects for their art. Meninsky was born in the Ukraine, trained in Liverpool and later established himself in London.

16. *Paradise Lost, The fourth edition, adorn'd with sculptures.* London: Printed by Miles Flesher for Jacob Tonson, 1688. Q. 821 M64M1 1688 (Copy 5). Wickenheiser 607.

The reader of this, the first folio and the first illustrated edition of *Paradise Lost*, would have been struck by this remarkable image of Satan engraved by Michael Burghers after an anonymous design (ascribed to John Baptist Medina or Henry Aldrich). In contrast to the infinite darkness of John Martin's Hell, Medina's fallen angels writhe in a world of tormenting flame.

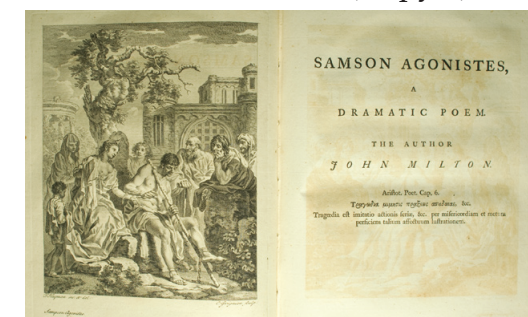


17. *Le Paradise Perdu,* Tr. Nicholas Francois Dupré de Saint-Maur. (Paris, Chez Defer de Maisonneuve, 1792). Q. 821 M64M1F 1792 (Volume 1, Copy 2). Wickenheiser 775.



The first colored illustrations of *PL*, and one of the earliest examples of color printing. The stipple-engraved plates were hand-colored for each separate impression, a taxing and time-consuming process. The engravings were made after canvasses painted specifically for this project by Frederic-Jean Schall (1752-1825). Schall in turn based his compositions on the well-known illustrations of Francis Hayman, dating from 1749 (cf. Furman).

18. *Paradise regain'd: a poem in four books: to which is added Samson Agonistes, and Poems upon several occasions.* A new edition, with notes of various authors by Thomas Newton. London: Printed for J. and R. Tonson and S. Draper, 1752. Ill. by Francis Hayman. Q. 821 M64M3 1752 (Copy 4). Wickenheiser 1549.



Francis Hayman was one of the leading engraver/book illustrators of the mid-18th century. Shown here is his frontispiece for *Samson Agonistes*.

19. *Paradise Lost.* Birmingham: Printed by John Baskerville for J. and R. Tonson in London, 1758. 821 M64M1² 1758. Wickenheiser 691. This is the large-paper quarto issue. Baskerville's great experiment in typographical invention and design, using Milton as the vehicle of his art. Baskerville was responsible for the type design and layout; the use of specially ordered hot-pressed paper; the composition of new inks, and exacting oversight of the press-work. In his *Preface* he expresses his hope that "this performance shall appear to persons of judgment and penetration, in the *Paper, Letter, Ink and Workmanship* to excel", as indeed it has done.

BROCHURE DESIGNED BY DENNIS SEARS