

# Dating Two Bindings by Master Binder, Leonard Mouteney on Mosher Press Vellum Books

Early April 2019 I came across two pictures of a Leonard Mouteney binding presented on Instagram. The pictures were posted by the San Francisco Public Library—Book Arts & Special Collection, and showed their holding of a two-volume vellum printed set of *Marius the Epicurean* (Mosher, 1900). Fig.1 The bindings caught my eye because I had not encountered the holding of this #4 vellum-printed set before. Likewise, I had not seen the Leonard Mouteney binding, the leather and dark blue moiré silk “endpapers” which closely resembled my own copy of a Mouteney binding on *The Germ* (Mosher, 1899) also printed on vellum. Figs 3&4 I contacted the library and got a lovely response from Andrea V. Grimes, Program Manager for the Book Arts & Special Collection / San Francisco History Center of the San Francisco Public Library (hereafter signified by SFPL). Our email correspondence led to my receiving eleven photographs of their *Marius* which allowed me to more fully compare with *The Germ*. The tools used were not the same, but as mentioned above, the leather’s color and

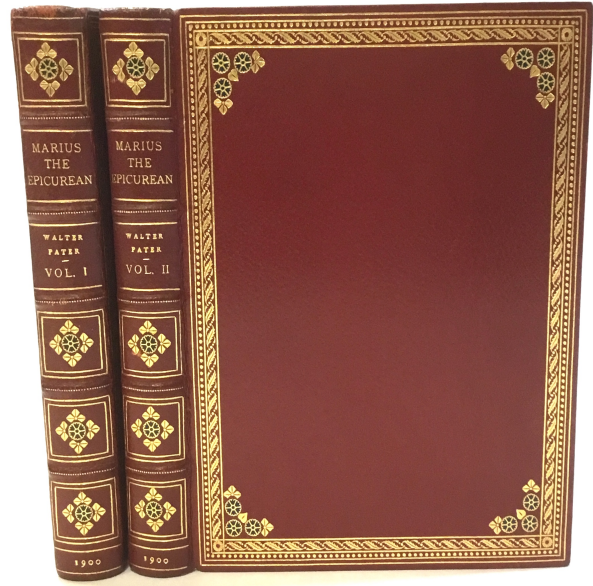


Figure 1 *Marius the Epicurean* by Walter Pater (Portland, ME: Thomas B. Mosher, 1900). / The Robert Grabhorn Collection on the History of Printing & the Development of the Book / Marjorie G. & Carl W. Stern Book Arts & Special Collections Center San Francisco Public Library

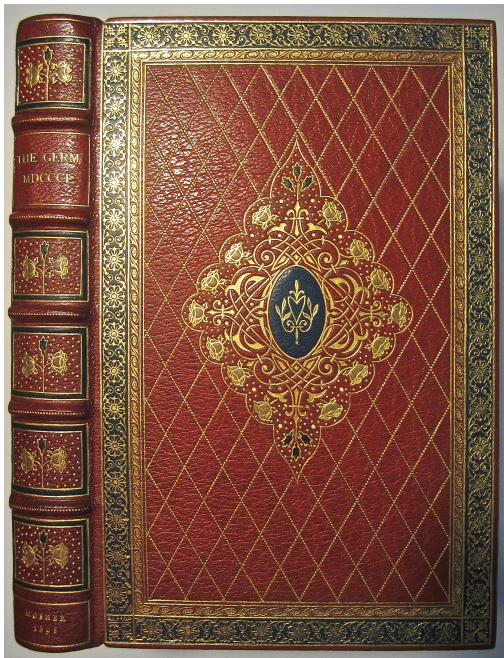


Figure 2 *The Germ* in the Bishop Collection

type of grain are roughly similar, as are the silk endpapers. Furthermore, the gilt-stamped binder signature was the same: **MOUNTENEY, BINDER**. The inner hinges of both titles are leather, the raised bands are similarly constructed, and both books displayed the fine tooling of Mouteney, although *The Germ*’s tooling is more elaborate. Fig. 2 Another comparison, and it was this that caused me to do more research, was that both vellum books were copies #4 of 4. How did that come to be? Both #4 of 4 copies only, and both bound by Mouteney seemingly at the same time. Then the identity of the vellum books struck me all at once, and my job was to confirm what I surmised. The rest of this article explains how I came to certain conclusions which allowed me to date not just the two-volume *Marius* bindings, but likewise my copy of Mouteney’s binding on *The Germ*. If the SFPL’s copy of *Marius* instigated my research juices, it was my assiduously kept census records of Mosher’s vellum copies, along with the primary material in the Mosher Collection (in this case sales catalogues), that provided the groundwork to check against my surmisal of where the vellum copies originated for Mouteney’s use in providing his bindings.



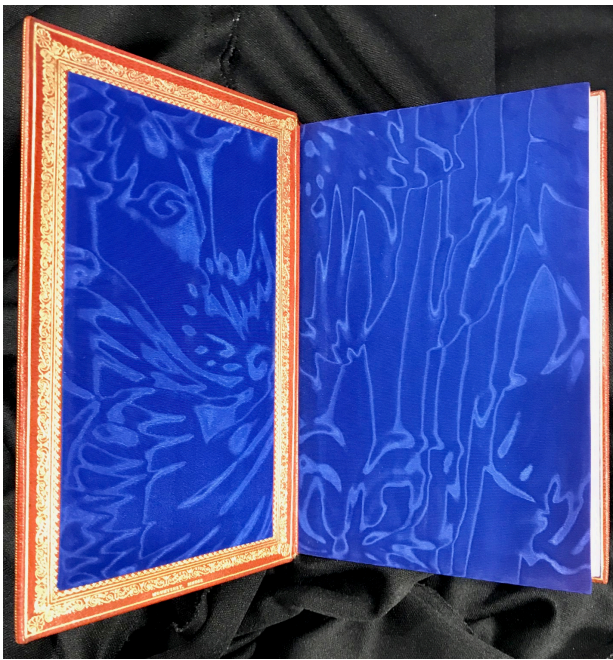


Figure 3 Moiré silk endpapers in *The Germ*



Figure 4 Moiré silk endpapers in *Marius the Epicurean*

My solving the dates of the Mounteney bindings partly hinged on a census chart I've kept updated for years. It's called the "Comparison of Vellum Printed Books in Major Mosher Collections" which, of course, also records my own books printed by Mosher on vellum which presently numbers thirty-six. A persistent problem in identifying all copies printed is that in the auction catalogue of the "Library of the late Thomas Bird Mosher and Examples of His Own Publications—Many Printed on Vellum" (NY: Parke-Bernet Galleries, May 10 & 11, 1948) didn't identify which precise copy was Mosher's copy retained by him for his own personal collection. For example for *Marius the Epicurean*, the auction house's write-up for entry 270 only identified it as "ONE OF FOUR COPIES ON VELLUM, signed by Mosher."<sup>1</sup>

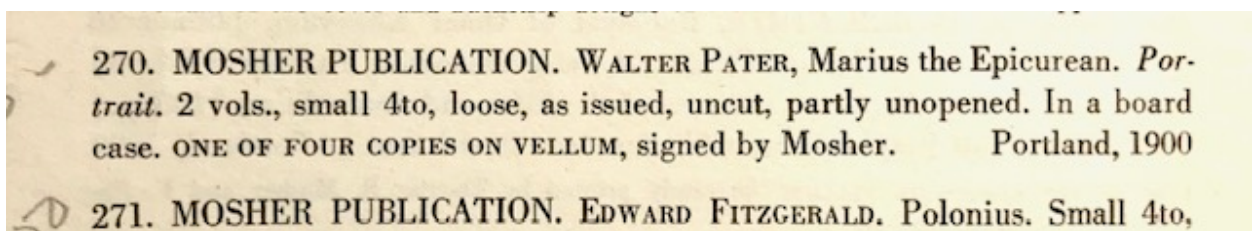


Figure 5 *Marius the Epicurean* entry from the auction catalogue of Mosher's own library

This is where my census of vellum copies came in handy. I've identified all the copies out there and there is only one that remained unaccounted for. Here's the relevant excerpt from the census:

# Census Extract A

## —1900—

	<u>TM</u>	<u>GC</u>	<u>HP</u>	<u>JQ</u>	<u>EG</u>	<u>NS</u>	<u>BC</u>
12. <i>Marius the Epicurean</i> . Volume I. 1900. (Quarto Series) 4to. Issued 4 copies on Roman vellum, signed by Mosher. Loose folded sheets, as issued, uncut, partly unopened, in board case. (B231) Henry William Poor's copy, bound at the Club Bindery, now at the Bancroft Library. The Cowden copy was bound by Toof in full lavender crushed levant morocco, elaborately tooled with a conventional floral design and line borders, gilt inside border, with doublure and end leaves of similar colored watered silk, gilt top, uncut, in an autumn leaf morocco case. Two volumes in one. This copy is now in the Bishop Collection. Copy No. 4 was bound by Leonard Mounteney and is now in the Book Arts & Special Collections at the San Francisco Public Library.	X	X #3	X #2	--	X #1	X #2	X #3
13. <i>Marius the Epicurean</i> . Volume II. 1900. (Quarto Series) 4to. Issued 4 copies on Roman vellum, signed by Mosher. Loose folded sheets, as issued, uncut, partly unopened, in board case. (B232) Henry William Poor's copy, bound at the Club Bindery, now at the Bancroft Library. As stated above, No. 4 is at the San Francisco Public Library. The whereabouts of Emilie Grigsby's copy is the only one whose presence has not yet been determined. When it sold in 1912, it was in "sheets, unstitched, uncut."	X	X #3	X #2	--	X #1	X #2	X #3

### COLOR & ABBREVIATION CODE

**TM** = Thomas Bird Mosher / **GC** = Mrs. Gertrude Cowdin / **HP** = Henry William Poor / **JQ** = John Quinn

**EG** = Emilie Grigsby / **NS** = Norman Strouse / **BC** = Bishop Collection

Now I could have figured out which number was Mosher's vellum copy based on the information in the census. Copy No. 1 was Emily B. Grigsby's copy, in sheets. Copy #2 was Henry William Poor's copy he had bound in Club Binding which later on was bought by Norman H. Strouse. Copy #3 was Mrs. Gertrude Cowdin's copy in a prize Toof/Zahn binding eventually to making its way into the Bishop Collection. So out of the only four copies printed, copies 1-3 were fully accounted for, leaving only one, Copy No. 4, to be Mosher's own copy. But what was *new* information to me was that SFPL not only had the Copy No. 4 but additionally that it was in a Mounteney binding! That *new* information led me to properly date not only that binding, but my own copy of a Mounteney binding on *The Germ*.

Now Mosher's copy of *Marius* was sold at the Parke-Bernet Galleries (hereafter P-B cat.) sale of 1948, and copy No. 4 is the copy at the SFPL. The P-B auction catalogue indicates that Mosher's copy was "loose, as issued, uncut, partly unopened. In a board case. ONE OF FOUR COPIES ON VELLUM, signed by Mosher." So, this HAD to be the copy that Leonard Mounteney used to put into his two-volume set of bindings. That means the work had to have been done after May 1948 or probably shortly thereafter, most probably the binding's dating can be affixed as 1948/49. That clearly puts Mounteney at the Cuneo Fine Binding Studio of Milwaukee, Wisconsin (one of the Cuneo Press locations outside of Chicago).

I have a similar chart for Mosher's copies of *The Germ* printed on vellum, as is here supplied:

# Census Extract B

## —1898—

	<u>TM</u>	<u>GC</u>	<u>HP</u>	<u>JQ</u>	<u>EG</u>	<u>NS</u>	<u>BC</u>
01. <i>The Germ</i> . 1898. (Reprints of Privately Printed Books) 8vo. X X#3 X #2 X #1 X #4							
Issued 4 copies on Roman vellum bound in vellum wrappers, with proof on vellum, of the cover design used on the wrapper, signed by Mosher. In a March 21, 1898 letter to Emilie Grigsby of New York (University of San Francisco), Mosher mentions this "will be the first book ever so done in Maine, and quite likely the only one." (B132). The Henry William Poor copy, bound at the Club Bindery in blue morocco, is located at the Huntington Library. The Cowden copy was bound by Toof in full crushed green levant.							

### COLOR & ABBREVIATION CODE

**TM** = Thomas Bird Mosher / **GC** = Mrs. Gertrude Cowdin / **HP** = Henry William Poor / **JQ** = John Quinn

**EG** = Emilie Grigsby / **NS** = Norman Strouse / **BC** = Bishop Collection

Copy No. 1 was clearly owned by Emilie B. Grigsby (Mosher supplied her all with copies No. 1's of his vellum printed books up until the time she didn't collect anymore). When that sold from her library in 1912,<sup>2</sup> it was still in "sheets, unstitched, uncut":

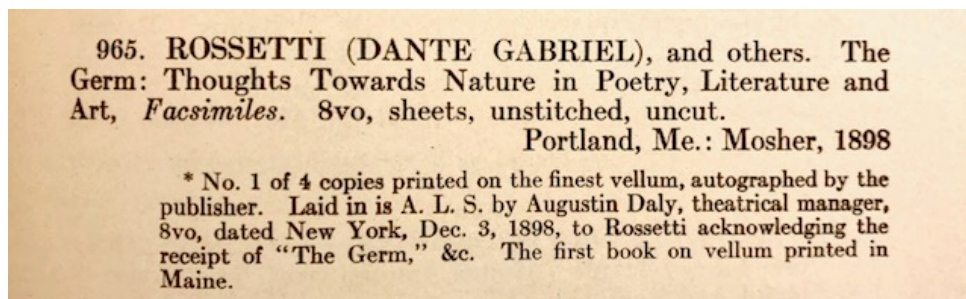


Figure 6 *The Germ* entry from the Emilie B. Grigsby auction catalogue

Copy Number 2 was owned by Henry William Poor who had it in a lovely Club binding. That copy went to The Huntington Library where it remains today. A vellum copy was owned by Gertrude Cowden and was elaborately bound by Toof/Zahn in "full crushed green levant, richly tooled in gilt with design of grapes and vine-leaves on back and sides, flowered inside borders, doublures of crushed brown levant with monogram 'DG' in centre [sic], by Toof, with slipcase of brown morocco" but the specific number of this copy is not supplied in the auction house's write-up which only indicates "One of only 4 copies printed on pure vellum and signed by the publisher."<sup>3</sup> Given that we have soundly shown that the *Marius* copy #4 was actually the copy sold at Mosher's 1948 sale, it is likewise with *The Germ* which, when sold, was in sheets. The Cowdin copy, in Toof/Zahn binding had to be Copy #3. So copies No. 1-3 have all been accounted for.



Copy No. 4 of *The Germ* in vellum at the 1948 Mosher sale (#260) was listed as in “sheets, as issued, uncut and unopened. In a board box. ONE OF FOUR COPIES ON VELLUM, signed by Mosher. With a proof on vellum of the cover design used on the wrapper.”

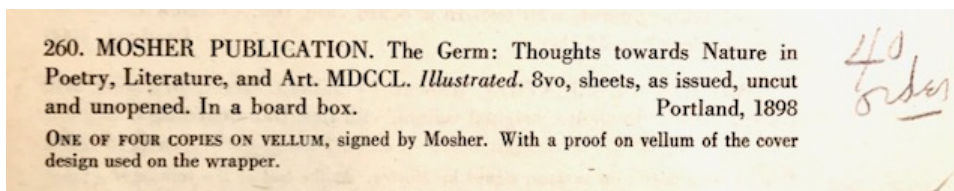


Figure 7 *The Germ* entry as it appears in the 1948 auction catalogue of Mosher's library

That had to be Copy #4 which is the copy in the Bishop Collection and indeed contains the proof on vellum of the front cover design. This has to be the copy bound by Mounteney either in 1948 or afterwards. So most likely, as with the *Marius*, it should be assigned the date of 1948/49. Again, that clearly puts Mounteney at the Cuneo Fine Binding Studio of Milwaukee, Wisconsin.

The fact that both the *Marius* and *The Germ* were purchased *in sheets* in May 1948, and all other copies of each vellum printed have received an accounting, these two titles have to be the volumes Mounteney placed into bindings, most likely in the 1948/49. Subsequent research of the Cuneo Fine Binding Studio archives (Northwestern University) would further embellish this article, and might possibly show that the bindings were applied a little later. Maybe it was Mounteney himself, or perhaps an intermediary who purchased the vellum sheets in May 1948. Nevertheless, both copies once owned by their publisher, Thomas Bird Mosher, made it to Mounteney for binding which explains the similarity in leather and the similarity of the rich blue moiré silk endpapers and other features. It is now certain that they were not and could not have been done before 1948.

From a personal, collector standpoint, I admit that I was at first a little deflated that *The Germ* in Mounteney binding wasn't contemporaneously completed within Mosher's lifetime or thereabouts, but it is a handsome, top caliber binding. Besides, that initial deflation is more than offset by my knowing that this was Thomas Bird Mosher's own copy! (sans Mounteney bindings). Likewise, the SFPL can boast that they have Mosher's copy of the *Marius* sheets in a handsome Mounteney binding of the same period. It's also gratifying that my long kept census of copies of the vellum books has helped to solve yet another the mystery which, until just a short while ago, remained unsolved and perplexing. To be sure, we still don't know for whom the bindings were done, and we can really only positively assert that the bindings could not have been done prior to 1948.

Philip R. Bishop  
15 April 2019

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> Entry pictured from priced copy of the “Library of the Late Thomas Bird Mosher...” catalogue.  
—Bishop Collection.

<sup>2</sup> Entry from the “Art and Literary Collections of Miss Emilie Grigsby of New York City” Part II—Books and Carbon Prints (New York, The Anderson Auction Company, beginning January 29, 1912), entry 965. —Bishop Collection.

<sup>3</sup> Entry from the priced copy of “Rare Books from the Library of the late Mrs. Gertrude Cowdin of New York” (NY: The Anderson Galleries, Inc., February 28/29, 1916), entry 166 (extends between pp. 21-22). —Bishop Collection.