

# Merton's Books

By Patricia A. Burton

Pages, cobweb edges a signature of the paper's making  
 fonts, hand-carved with precision just for this one use  
 hand-made prints, numbered signings:  
 one of five hundred, one of one hundred and fifty, one of (God help us) twenty-five.  
 Don't drop it, breathe carefully: library eyes watch you.  
 Time is not on your side.

Battered mimeographs from rickety typewriters,  
 soggy paper, bled-through ink,  
 typos, snarled comb binding,  
 faint purple hectographs smelling of the ghost of alcohol,  
 page numbering nonexistent or wobbly  
 jhs  
 some signed +Tom.

These only for the most careful of collectors,  
 the rarest of libraries.

My own, for this moment only, the most modest,  
 bearing equal signs of love and neglect from former owners,  
 a gallery of casualties:  
 bodies acid-faded from sitting too long on sunlit shelves  
 feathery chipped jackets enclosed too late in book dealers' mylar  
 double-dented boards bearing witness to valorous service as window prop  
 subsequent water stains from sudden turns of weather  
 or unwisely accompanying the reader into the bath  
 freckles of brown paint recording a history of nearby hasty unshrouded renovations.




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**Patricia A. Burton** is a Merton bibliographer who lives in Toronto. She has compiled *An Index to the Letters of Thomas Merton*, *The Merton Seasonal Index*, *A Merton "Vade Mecum"* and (with Marquita Breit and Paul M. Pearson) *About Merton*. She received the "Louie" Award from the ITMS for her work in 2003.

**Patricia A. Burton**

Owner's book plate on flyleaf (who was Virne Johnston?)

Christmas gift (price clipped)

St. Joseph's Morrow Park School Library

some slight wear on spine

"To John, a brother in recovery"

no dj

Carondelet House of Renewal

some small pencil marks

bumped

foxed

spine cocked

tanned

the brownness of age

the grayness of handling

the passage of time.

None of the unattainable beauties,

none of the tight, trapped, touch-starved perfection of the unread.