

PRAISE FOR *THE LOST GUTENBERG*

“A lively tale of historical innovation, the thrill of the bibliophile’s hunt, greed and betrayal.”

—*The New York Times Book Review*

“[E]ngrossing reading . . . a fascinating story that touches on the origin of books, the passion of collectors, the unseen world of rare-book dealers, and the lives of the super-rich, past and present. A great read for any book lover.”

—*Kirkus* (starred review)

“A gripping, well-researched account of the importance of books as cultural artifacts and of one particular work that transformed the world, as well as the lives of those who owned a copy, that will appeal especially to bibliophiles.”

—*Library Journal*

“The depth of Davis’s research cannot be understated. The writing in this book is straightforward and, at times, even heartbreaking, but outstanding reporting lies at its core. . . . *The Lost Gutenberg* pulls readers into a five-century saga, plunging them into the minds of those who desired the Bible and the prestige that came with it. This makes it a book about not only Number 45 and its owners but also a narrative that explores our collective obsession with art, technology, change, and history.”

—NPR

“You don’t need to be a bibliophile to relish this history of how one particular copy of the Gutenberg Bible—known as No. 45—passed from owner to owner in the 19th and 20th centuries before being acquired by Estelle Doheny. . . . Margaret Leslie Davis not only explains how Gutenberg printed his Bible but also details its afterlife in various private libraries and sale rooms. Though one of America’s preeminent collectors, Doheny still needed three chances before she was able to acquire her own Gutenberg. When she finally did in 1950, she was virtually blind.”

—*The Washington Post*

“An addictive and engaging look at the ‘competitive, catty, and slightly angst-ridden’ heart of the world of book collecting . . . *The Lost Gutenberg* reads like a comedy of manners starring the cast of an Ayn Rand novel. . . . It’s improbable and riveting.”

—*Houston Chronicle*

“A fascinating read for anyone who cares about books.”

—*Minneapolis Star Tribune*

“Book collecting might seem a preoccupation of a limited cadre of obsessive, pedantic academic wannabes, but Davis makes bibliographic history utterly page-turning and absorbing, with intrigues, devastating tragedies, vast fortunes, embezzlement, a seductively voiced telephone operator, the Teapot Dome scandal, murder-suicide, earthquake, and even Worcestershire sauce. Davis’s brilliantly told story features outsize characters but focuses primarily on Estelle Doheny, the Los Angeles purchaser of Number 45, who, in one further irony, held in her hands this long-sought volume only after she had turned nearly blind.”

—*Booklist* (starred review)

“Heartbreak of the \$100 million blockbuster: Six centuries old, it’s the best-preserved Gutenberg Bible in the world. And its extraordinary history is a thrilling page-turner.”

—*Daily Mail* (UK)

“What’s truly surprising about *The Lost Gutenberg* is that Davis makes the 500-year journey of this one book more exciting than any spy novel. For the imaginative Hollywood producer, this book’s life story could provide the basis for a richly enjoyable big-budget blockbuster. The action travels across centuries and moves from England to Los Angeles to Tokyo, bringing together the avaricious, duplicitous and deeply religious, all driven by the same desire: to own a copy of one of the most famous books in the world.”

—*Catholic Herald* (UK)

“A fluently told, well-executed history . . . This is, at heart, and with heart, an entertaining and insightful human story of obsession about books, and a telling examination of what inspires those who catch the collecting bug.”

—*The Daily Telegraph* (UK)

“Stories about rare objects changing hands among collectors have become a distinct subgenre of historical nonfiction. . . . But it’ll be a challenge to find a better example this year than this riveting story about a single copy of the Gutenberg Bible, one of the most valuable books on earth.”

—*The Week*

“[Take] a break from politics and war this year with this fascinating story tracing a rare copy of the Gutenberg Bible on its unlikely journey around the world.”

—*New York magazine*

“Gutenberg Number 45 is a historical artefact of great interest and monetary value. It is a souvenir from a crucial turning point in the history of the human family.”

—*The Sydney Morning Herald*

“*The Lost Gutenberg* by Margaret Leslie Davis weaves a fascinating tale of the 500-year journey of one of these Bibles from owner to owner, including Estelle Doheny of Los Angeles, widow of an oil tycoon who achieved her lifelong dream of owning a Gutenberg Bible in 1950. The book reads like a detective novel, but is really a love story professing the far-reaching and personal impact of the Bible.”

—*The Book Minute*, **Museum of the Bible**

“*The Lost Gutenberg* is a riveting account of a book, the people who had to own it, the history of printing, and the history of book collecting. In Margaret Leslie Davis’s careful hands, it is also a wonderful read, informative and exciting.”

—*Scintilla*

“Davis records the history of this book with enthusiasm and attention to detail—qualities that can also be attributed to many of the book’s hunters and custodians over the years. ‘Hunter’ is a particularly apt term here since, as Davis shows, this Gutenberg Bible and its surviving siblings have become some of the most sought-after books produced in the West, inspiring lifelong searches and intense rivalries and commanding eye-watering prices at auction. . . . The value of rare books—personal, cultural and financial—are recurring themes. Davis reminds us that books have long been objects of desire but shows that their perceived value is connected to a constantly shifting social and economic context. The tales of frenzied aristocratic bibliomania occur during what she calls the ‘Imperial Century,’ when the prices were high and the reputational stakes higher.”

—*History Today*

“A gripping exploration of the life of the world’s oldest and most famous printed book, the Gutenberg Bible . . . The real talent of Davis is in producing a detailed, highly readable narrative which places this incredibly rare book within its cultural and historical context and in melding this with the lives of its owners which has resulted in a fascinating narrative where we can vicariously experience the thrill of the hunt and the obsession of collectors.”

—*Glam Adelaide* (**Australia**)

“This is an absolutely fascinating book, beautifully and engagingly narrated and populated with marvelous eccentric characters who thought nothing of spending a fortune on a book. It is also the story of how rare books have now become extremely valuable commodities but, thanks to modern technology, their secrets and beauty are readily available to us all.”

—*Good Reading Magazine* (**Australia**)

“Author Margaret Leslie Davis has struck upon a fantastic idea: tracing one copy of the Gutenberg Bible through its various owners, with some wonderfully bizarre tales involving Worcestershire sauce and plutonium isolation thrown in for good measure. Hers is a tale of triumph and betrayal; as a profile of Doheny alone, Davis’s book is worth the price of admission. . . . Her reporting is spot-on, and her style is lively and engaging. . . . An admirable achievement.”

—*Fine Books & Collections*

“Bibliophiles love books, and none more than the book collector’s dream of dreams, a Gutenberg Bible. Davis tells not just with skill but also with sympathy and even love. A richly informative but finally a deeply moving story.”

—**Jack Miles, Pulitzer Prize-winning author of *God: A Biography***

“Margaret Leslie Davis’s *The Lost Gutenberg* is a fascinating and apt successor to her *Mona Lisa in Camelot*, for the Gutenberg Bible is to the book arts what the Mona Lisa is to painting—a Holy Grail and epitome of the art it embodies. Davis writes of the succession of owners of a particular copy of Gutenberg’s masterpiece, Number 45. She gives a haunting and at times heartbreaking account of the way a material object can acquire a mystical resonance and affect different people and lives across centuries.”

—**Victoria Steele, former Brooke Russell Astor Director of Collections, New York Public Library**

“The fascinating story of how one Gutenberg Bible traveled through two centuries and how one woman, the legendary Los Angeles book collector Estelle Doheny, pursued, purchased, and cherished it. This tale, written for both ardent bibliophiles and those seeking an engaging historical narrative, includes a sad episode of betrayal, exciting nuclear discoveries, and the arrival of Gutenberg into the digital age.”

—**Alan Jutzi, former Avery Curator of Rare Books, The Huntington Library, Art Museum, and Botanical Gardens**

“*The Lost Gutenberg* has two protagonists: a singularly beautiful copy of the Gutenberg Bible—known as #45—and the California heiress who emerged from scandal to chase it. Along the way, Davis takes in the larger-than-life stories of the aristocrats, libertines, billionaires, and bibliomaniacs who all competed to own this unique piece of literary history. A fascinating exploration of the shifting value we place on rare books, and the shifting wealth and power of those who hunt them.”

—**Michael Blanding, *New York Times* bestselling author of *The Map Thief: The Gripping Story of an Esteemed Rare-Map Dealer Who Made Millions Stealing Priceless Maps***