

**RE-IMPOSITION WITH UNCHANGED SIGNATURES:
THE OXFORD *BION AND MOSCHUS*, 1748**

PARTICULARLY IN THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY certain settings of type may be encountered in two or more arrangements,¹ arrangements which result from breaking up the formes after one run and re-imposing the type-pages for a second run. In certain circumstances the type-pages remain intact; in others re-distribution of lines between pages may be necessary. Re-imposition of a kind is involved when a volume is issued on two sizes of paper, for the forme will generally need disturbing in order to make adjustments in the furniture. However, the particular kind of re-imposition I am concerned with is that which involves the re-arrangement of type-pages *between* formes. The most common reason for re-imposition is an intention to publish a work in two formats, e.g. in quarto and octavo,² but a further reason – the one I am specifically concerned with here – is the intention to publish a bi-lingual work (a) with the two languages on facing pages throughout, and (b) with one language only, or with one language preceding the other in its entirety.

A convenient example of all three kinds of re-imposition – exhibiting two sizes of paper, two formats and two language sequences – is afforded by the edition of Æschylus published by Robert Foulis in Glasgow in 1746, which exists in four arrangements:

- (i) 2 volumes, foolscap 8° in fours, Greek and Latin on facing pages, each volume paginated separately;
- (ii) as (i) but pot 8°;
- (iii) 2 volumes, pot 4° in twos, Greek and Latin on facing pages, pagination continuous;
- (iv) 1 volume, foolscap 4° in twos, Greek only.³

In cases other than the mere change in paper (as between (i) and (ii) above) it is clear that *in general* re-imposition will affect the make-up of the new volume, and therefore that the new volume will be differently signed. For example (i) and (iii) above collate respectively:

I: a⁴ b² A–₂R⁴ ₂S₁; II: π₁ A–₂O⁴

I: a² b–c² A–₄L² ₄M₁; II: π₁ ₂π₁ ₄N–₇Q² ₇R₁.

It would appear to be axiomatic that if the signatures are to serve as a guide to the binder in folding and sewing they must be changed whenever re-imposition affects the make-up. Residual signatures from prior impositions are certainly to be found, but never – in my experience – on the first leaf of a gathering: i.e. though the process might be imperfectly carried out on occasion, the binder would seldom have been in doubt about the printer's intention.

However, one work has come to my notice in which re-imposition has *not* been accompanied by new signatures, with results that can only be described as a binder's nightmare – and, incidentally, as a descriptive bibliographer's. It is:

ΒΙΩΝΟΣ ΤΟΥ ΣΜΥΡΝΑΙΟΥ, ΚΑΙ ΜΟΣΧΟΥ ΤΟΥ
ΣΥΡΑΚΟΣΙΟΥ, ΤΑ ΣΩΖΟΜΕΝΑ. Bionis Smyrnæi, et
Moschi Syracusani, quæ supersunt. Notis Johannis Heskin.
Oxonii, E Typographeo Clarendoniano, prostant venales apud
Johan. Barrett, bibliop. MDCCXLVIII. (Carter,⁴ 1748 no. 3)

There are two exemplars of this edition recorded in Australia: in the University of Tasmania Library,⁵ and in the Poynton Collection in the University of Melbourne Library. The Tasmanian exemplar has the earlier arrangement, with Greek and Latin on facing pages; the Melbourne the later, with Greek preceding Latin.

The Tasmanian collates: 8° , π^4 A-2A⁴ 2B² (in the years around 1748 octavos are almost exclusively gathered in fours in Oxford books). The contents are: π pre-fatory matter; A₁^r-D₂^r *Idylls* of Bion; D₂^v blank; D₃^r-M₁^r *Idylls* of Moschus; M₁^v blank; M₂^r-2B₂^r notes (in Latin); 2B₂^v errata. The Greek and Latin pages run normally⁶ to M₁^r except that C₁^r-C₂^v are four consecutive pages of Greek, numbered 9 to 12, since *Idyll VII* of Bion is reproduced in the Greek in two texts,⁷ in the Latin in one – i.e. instead of C₁ and C₃ being Greek, C₂ and C₄ Latin, C₁, C₂ and C₄ are Greek, C₃ Latin (pages 9 and 10 are omitted in the Latin pagination). True, this early break in the regular 2+2 pattern complicates the business of re-imposing, but is certainly not the cause of the complexity exhibited by the Melbourne exemplar.

The Melbourne begins orthodoxly with four-leaf gatherings A₁. A₃. B₁. B₃ and C₁. C₂. C₄. D₂, but thereafter is bewildering, with gatherings ranging from singletons to ten leaves. The ten-leaf gathering includes the end of the Greek text and the beginning of the Latin, so that type-pages from the original gatherings A, B, I, K, L and M are re-assembled here, with leaves from A and I, A and K, B and I, and K and M conjugate, in this fashion:

I₁. I₃. K₁. K₃. L₁. L₃. M₁. A₂. A₄. B₂.

In themselves the signatures can have been of no use to the binder, for in the Melbourne arrangement the type-pages were imposed in such a way that only singletons and pairs of leaves resulted, as opposed to the Tasmanian arrangement, which produced genuine half-sheet gatherings.⁸

The unchanged signatures present problems for the bibliographer too. Had there been a straightforward recombining of type-pages from adjacent gatherings – e.g. A+B, C+D etc – the collation formula could have been expressed in the form (AB)⁴ etc., on analogy with the device suggested by Greg for dealing with the gathering M₁. M₂. N₁. N₂ in Phineas Fletcher's *The Purple Island* (1633).⁹ The only recourse, it would seem to me, in representing the make-up of the Melbourne arrangement, is to abandon the actual signatures in favour of an arbitrary numerical sequence:¹⁰

1-3⁴ 4₁ 5⁸ 6¹⁰ 7-8⁶ 9₁ 10₁ 11⁴ 12⁴ (-12₁) 12-24⁴ 25²

The contents of the gatherings, in terms of the original signatures, are:

(1 = π)

2 : A₁. A₃. B₁. B₃

3 : C₁. C₂. C₄. D₂

4 : D₃

5 : E₁. E₃. F₁. F₃. G₁. G₃. H₁. H₃

6 : I₁. I₃. K₁. K₃. L₁. L₃. M₁. A₂. A₄. B₂

7 : B₄. C₃. D₁. D₄. E₂. E₄

8 : F₂. F₄. G₂. G₄. H₂. H₄

9 : I₂

10 : I₄

11 : K₂. K₄. L₂. L₄

12 : M₂. M₃. M₄

(13 - 25 = N - 2 B)

Gatherings 1, 13-25 are half-sheets common to both arrangements, and the only

difference in M is that M₁ has been removed from the half-sheet after being re-imposed as 6^r.

The unchanged signatures are certainly puzzling, being at odds with their presumed purpose. But equally puzzling is the make-up of the volume : gatherings 5–10 comprise 32 leaves, i.e. the equivalent of eight four-leaf gatherings (or four eight-leaf gatherings), a figure which makes the Melbourne arrangement so hard to understand. The binder may have used page numbers or, if this is a trade binding, had special instructions; and the descriptive bibliographer has a device for representing the make-up of the volume; but the reason for the particular arrangement defies explanation.¹¹

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1. I use the term 'arrangement', which has no established bibliographical signification, in order to avoid the ambiguity implicit in 'state' or 'form'.
2. Of course a change in format may on occasion not necessitate re-imposition between formes, e.g. in a quarto in fours re-imposed as an octavo in fours.
3. Number 71 in Philip Gaskell, *A Bibliography of the Foulis Press* (London, 1964). The Foulis brothers typically published Greek authors in a variety of arrangements: the *Iliad* of 1747 (number 84) may have existed in *seven* (two are inferred from the practice of the Press at this period).
4. Harry Carter, *A History of the Oxford University Press, Volume I, To the year 1780. With an appendix listing the titles of books printed there 1690–1780.* (Oxford, 1975).
5. I am grateful to Mr J.E. Scrivener, University Librarian, for allowing the volume to be sent to Melbourne for my examination.
6. The Greek and Latin alternate rectos and versos so that a typical gathering runs: B₁^r Greek p.5; B₁^v Greek p.6; B₂^r Latin p.6; B₂^v Latin p.7; B₃^r Greek p.7; B₃^v Greek p.8; B₄^r Latin p.8; B₄^v Latin p.9. (The alternative method of imposing bi-lingual texts results in one language occupying the rectos, the other the versos.)
7. First in the text of Fulvius Ursinus, and then emended from another manuscript, with additional emendations from the editor.
8. I have taken the meeting of chain lines 'over the top' as proof of half-sheets, and the failure to meet as proof of some other imposition scheme. None of the paper bears a watermark, so that nothing further about the Melbourne imposition seems to be determinable.
9. See the discussion in Fredson Bowers, *Principles of Bibliographical Description* (Princeton, 1949; reissued New York, 1962), pp.223–4.
10. Bowers (p.433) proposes the same solution for the 'Occasional book printed from plates [which] may be imposed and gathered according to a different system from that indicated by the signatures on the plates, like the first impression of *The Marble Faun* signed for 12's but gathered in 8's.'
11. In this context the fact that the one error in the text (the rest are in the notes) listed in the errata on 2B₂^v was not corrected during the re-arrangement hardly calls for comment. (Equally the re-imposition could have taken place before the volume was completed.)

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