

PRESS FIGURES AND FORMAT

THAT THERE IS A DEFINITE RELATIONSHIP in any volume between its press figures and its format is, on reflection, an obvious truth; and yet very little ever seems to have been made of this relationship in bibliographical analysis. Certainly, as far as I have been able to determine, there has been no explicit statement that in any volume which contains press figures the press figures may constitute a means of determining the format of the volume. The closest I have found is in W.B. Todd's comments on Stower's imposition scheme for 'Two Quarters of a Common Octavo':¹

The question of differentiating the quarter-sheet [of octavo] from a folio is easily decided by its size, the position of its watermark if it has one, or if it does not, again by printers' marks [i.e. press figures]. For these, we will agree, can occur in this imposition only once for every two gatherings.²

Understandably Todd was unable to provide an example of an octavo in twos; none the less, he clearly appreciated the potential value of press figures in recognizing such an animal.

My own enlightenment, however, derives not from Todd but from the demonstration in these pages by Annemie Gilbert and Sylvia Ransom³ that certain volumes of the second half of the eighteenth century gathered in sixes are incontrovertibly eighteenmos. Their demonstration provided the means to resolve a problem for which I had not been able to find a solution: how to account for the particular disposition of press figures in volumes of the period, a disposition which appeared to be random. In essence the disposition of the press figures can be accounted for by the imposition scheme used to print the sheets — i.e. the press figures can be accounted for by the format of the volume. What I wish to illustrate is the converse; that on the basis of the disposition of the press figures it may be possible to determine the format of a volume which might not readily be determined by the more usual means. This capacity is valuable especially when faced with volumes printed on wove paper lacking watermarks, and more especially with small volumes gathered in sixes — i.e. in those instances where the evidence of paper is insufficient and where the size and shape of the leaf and the number of leaves in a gathering provide no clues. Such volumes are commonplace in the last decades of the eighteenth century and the early decades of the nineteenth, so that any technique for establishing format for them has wide application. I do not wish to overestimate the power of press figures in determining format — and various limitations will be adverted to below; however, I would like to offer a number of illustrations in the hope that they may provide assistance to others faced with the problem of determining format for otherwise intractable volumes.

The Gilbert/Ransom demonstration rests essentially on the capacity to determine — in their volumes on the basis of uncut edges, tranchefiles, chain lines and

watermarks — how many gatherings were produced from a single sheet. Once the evidence of paper has been used to isolate those gatherings which were imposed and printed together, it then becomes possible to recognize other elements which are peculiar to the forme (rather than to the sheet, gathering, leaf or page), such as the skeleton, the state of correction of the text, and the press figure. Apart from the occasional (accidental?) double figuring, or cancellation which produces a fortuitous double figuring, there can never be more than one press figure per forme, so that paper and press figures can be used as a check on each other in determining format or — where the evidence of paper is inadequate — press figures may be used alone.

To illustrate the relationship of press figures and format the straightforward example described by Gilbert and Ransom may be employed. The *Prolegomena to the dramattick writings of Will. Shakespere* (London: printed for, and under the direction of, John Bell, British Library, Strand. 1788) is on laid paper (with the exception of one sheet on wove, comprising gatherings Q-S), collating [A]² B-3A⁶ 3B². The record of press figures is:

3 B4^v F6^r H6^r M4^v O6^v Q4^v X6^v Y4^v 2B6^v 2F4^r 2K6^v 2N6^v 2Q4^v 2T1^v
 2U1^v 3A1^v
 4 C3^v F4^r H4^r M4^r N1^v S3^v T6^r 2B6^r 2G4^v 2I4^v 2M4^v 2Q3^v 2R3^v 2X3^v 3A4^r

As Gilbert and Ransom have shown on the basis of the paper A(?)BC, D-F, G-I, K-M, N-P, Q-S, T-X, Y-2A, 2B-2D, 2E-2G, 2H-2K, 2L-2N, 2O-2Q, 2R-2T, 2U-2Y, 2Z-3B(?) were printed together, three gatherings per sheet. Far from being random, the press figures are perfectly regular, appearing twice per three gatherings (and therefore twice per sheet or once per forme), with the sole exception of Y-2A, where one forme is unfigured.

That the format of the *Prolegomena* can be determined on the basis of the press figures alone may be demonstrated from two further exemplars, one in the National Library of Australia (RB822.33) and the other in the British Library (11761.eee.1). The former is apparently a reissue, with a six-leaf preliminary gathering (p2^r being a title page to 'Volume the first', dated 1793) and an added title leaf to 'Volume the second' (also dated 1793) placed before 2C3. The latter lacks the preliminary gathering but ends at 2C2, thus corresponding with 'Volume the first' of 1793. I have not attempted to determine whether all three exemplars are in fact from the same edition, and use this illustration merely to show the possibilities of using press figures to determine format. The point of interest is that though all three exemplars have the same press figures, only the Monash is on laid paper — i.e. it alone is demonstrably an eighteenmo. Since the press figures are the same for all three I infer that the National Library of Australia and the British Library exemplars are also eighteenmos, the nature of the paper being irrelevant. Only these three exemplars have been examined and so no exemplar entirely on wove paper and dated 1788 (and unquestionably not derived from a 1793 re-issue, as the British Library exemplar may be) can be introduced into the argument. So it is possible that the formes could have been re-imposed (in 1788 or

1793) — e.g. as a twelvemo or twenty-fourmo in sixes — without the press figures being changed or removed, because they had served whatever function they had been inserted to serve and it was not deemed worth the effort to remove them. Lacking the evidence of deckles and cut edges in an uncut exemplar — in any volume under scrutiny, not just the *Prolegomena* — perhaps one can never be sure that the formes of the volume in hand have not been re-imposed and therefore that the press figures are at odds with the true format. However, any such fear should not preclude an exploration of the relationship between press figures and format, re-imposition with unchanged press figures being, I would guess, a rare occurrence.

The relationship between press figures and format may be expressed as a ratio. If a volume is fully figured and if it is made up of gatherings each of which is a whole sheet, the number of figures will be twice the number of gatherings, since each gathering/sheet will have a figure in both outer and inner forme. If each gathering comprises a half-sheet, the number of figures will be equal to the number of gatherings. If each gathering comprises a third of a sheet, the number of figures will be two thirds the number of gatherings. And if each gathering comprises a quarter of a sheet, the number of figures will be one half the number of gatherings. For example, in volumes gathered in sixes (which are so common in the second half of the eighteenth century) the following equations can be made:

ratio of press figures to gatherings 1:1, format 12°

ratio of press figures to gatherings 2:3, format 18°

ratio of press figures to gatherings 1:2, format 24°

Perfect demonstration is afforded by Cooke's edition of *The Poetical works of Edmund Waller* (1796?; State Library of Victoria s821.44f), which is printed on wove paper without watermarks, collates a-c⁶ B-Q⁶, and has these press figures:

1 a6^v B6^v E6^v K4^r P4^v

4 b1^v D6^v E1^v I1^v L6^v O6^v

5 N1^v

Twelve press figures:eighteen gatherings = 2:3 = an eighteenmo.

One qualification which must immediately be allowed is that many volumes — probably the great majority — which are figured are not in fact *fully* figured: only four of Povey's 111 octavos are fully figured, for example.⁴ But the relationship between press figures and format does not depend on the volume being fully figured. Certainly it will be impossible to use the press figures to determine format when they are few and scattered, though there are instances where the press figures are few but confined to a sequence of gatherings, in which case the sequence may be extensive enough to represent the volume as a whole. Most other instances of under-figuring can probably be resolved by assuming that an intermediate ratio is to be taken as being the higher (i.e. 1:1 rather than 2:3, 2:3 rather than 1:2), in the likelihood that some formes will be unfigured (by oversight or by the figure being pulled in the course of printing, an accident which

may be demonstrable by recourse to other exemplars of the same edition) rather than some formes figured twice. One problem might be where a twelvemo in sixes has so many unfigured formes that the ratio of press figures to gatherings suggests that it is an eighteenmo or a twenty-fourmo. The problem, however, may be resolved by the actual disposition of the figures (see below), so that the problem may be only apparent after all. Another edition of the *Prolegomena to the dramattick writings of Will. Shakespere*, printed on wove paper without watermarks (University of Melbourne, BX823.33 AA.b), will serve as illustration. It was originally published in 1786 and re-issued in 1788 with: a 'Volume the first' title leaf and 6Q page: of subscribers ($\pi^2 \pi A-E^6$), plus an engraved portrait of the Prince of Wales and an engraved dedication, preceding the 1786 title leaf; and a 'Volume the second' title leaf preceding 2B5. Disregarding the 1788 material and a four-leaf insert, comprising Advertisement and Contents, after A1, the edition collates A-2Z⁶ 3A⁴ (-3A4). The record of press figures is:

- 1 S6^r T3^v
- 2 H4^r M4^r P3^v Q6^v T6^r 2A6^v 2B4^r 2I6^v 2N6^v 2Q6^v 2T6^r 2U1^v
- 3 A3^v D4^v G4^v M4^v 2B1^v 2E1^v 2H6^r 2L1^v 2P4^v 2T3^v 2U6^v
- 4 Y6^r 2G6^v

In the 46 full gatherings there are 27 press figures — i.e. a ratio greater than 1:2, so that the volume is almost certainly another eighteenmo in which 3 formes of the 15 complete sheets are unfigured, one in each of A-C, D-F and N-P. If on the other hand one were to assume that the volume is a twenty-fourmo one would be faced with a situation in which five formes were figured twice: one in R-U, 2B-2E and 2F-2I and both in 2S-2X. The case for eighteenmo is strong, though twelvemo is admittedly possible, with 19 of the 46 formes unfigured. (On the disposition of the figures in 2T/2U see below.)

But it is not merely the *ratio* of press figures to gatherings which is of value: the actual disposition of the figures is also valuable and may serve as a corrective in instances of undersigning. A simple demonstration is afforded by Cooke's edition of *The Poetical works of Elijah Fenton* (bound with the Waller discussed above). On wove paper, it collates A-M⁶ (this exemplar lacking M6) — i.e. 12 gatherings — and contains six press figures, giving a precise ratio of figures to gatherings of 1:2. On this information alone it would be 'reasonable' to conclude that the volume is a twenty-fourmo. But the record of press figures suggests otherwise:

- 1 D3^v I4^v K6^v
- 3 F4^v H6^v L1^v

Barring the imposition together of gatherings not in sequence — a procedure which it would be difficult to demonstrate — if the volume were a twenty-fourmo the three sheets would be composed of A-D, E-H and I-M, an arrangement which is open to the objection that the final sheet would contain three press figures. The extra figure can be most readily accommodated by disassociating gathering I from the sheet containing K-M, thus producing four sheets, each composed of

three gatherings — A-C, D-F, G-I, K-M — with the first gathering being unfigured. That we have here yet another eighteenmo can in fact be verified by the paper, which, though wove, contains the date '1794' as a cornermark in A1,3 C4,6; D1,3, F4,6; G1,3 I4,6 (K-M is on a different paper in which '1793' occurs in K1 and possibly in the missing M6) — i.e. the evidence of the paper confirms the conclusion drawn from the press figures alone that the volume is an eighteenmo. The readiness with which conclusions drawn from the number and disposition of press figures can be verified by the evidence of paper does, I suggest, lend credence to conclusions for which the evidence of paper does not exist.

It must be conceded that the disposition of the press figures may be inconclusive. For example Cooke's edition of *The Poetical works of Thomas Tickell* (1796?; National Library of Australia, DNS8873) — on the evidence of paper and press figures — could be a twelvemo, an eighteenmo or a twenty-fourmo. The volume is on wove paper without watermarks; it collates A⁶ (-A6) B-M⁶ — i.e. 12 gatherings; and the record of press figures is:

1 A2^v H6^r
3 C1^r E1^r I1^r

The ratio of 5:12 suggests twenty-fourmo, with gatherings grouped A-D, E-H, I-M, one forme of the last sheet being unfigured. Such a conclusion is consistent with the disposition of the press figures. But also consistent would be a suggestion of eighteenmo, with gatherings grouped A-C, D-F, G-I, K-M, three formes being unfigured; or twelvemo, with gatherings grouped AB, CD, EF, GH, IK, LM, seven formes being unfigured.

The last suggestion highlights another limitation of using press figures to determine format. Savage's account of 'working with a figure' (quoted and amplified by Povey, pp.251-2 and 256-7) shows that it was acceptable practice to figure only one forme of the sheet when both formes were worked off at the same press: '... but when the same press works both forms of a sheet, it is not necessary to have a figure in more than one form'. That such a practice was being followed can often be inferred from the observation in volumes whose format is certain that whenever both formes of a sheet are figured the figures are different — this appears to be the practice of William Strahan, for example, and may perhaps be regarded as the norm. The lack of figuring in particular formes noted in the preceding pages may well be due to nothing more than that the reiteration forme was printed by the same press which printed the white-paper forme. (Others of course can be accounted for only by reference to the 'anonymous press' theory — i.e. particularly where neither forme is figured.) Thus a case might be made for regarding the Tickell as lacking only one figure (in LM), each sheet being perfected at the same press at which the white-paper forme was printed.

What we need to be able to determine is the number of *formes* which make up a volume: accepting the press figures as witnesses to the number of formes will not always produce convincing evidence.

One consequence of examining numbers of volumes of the second half of the eighteenth century gathered in sixes — whether on laid or wove paper — is the surprising realisation that so many of them are eighteenmos. That eighteenmos gathered other than in eighTEENS or alternating twelves and sixes have gone unrecognized is attributable in part to the view encouraged by McKerrow that eighteenmos were rare in English printing. The eighteenth century was certainly not his chief interest; none the less, he was able to write:⁵

There is one other possible folding which I may mention in passing, namely 18mo. . . I have not met with it in English printing, though schemes for it are given by Johnson.

Gaskell,⁶ on the other hand, does recognize that 'the commonest of the small formats [i.e. smaller than 12°] were 18° in 12s and 6s (or in 6s), and the two varieties of 24°, gathered in 8s or 12s', though the only imposition scheme he illustrates for the 18° is one for 12s and 6s, whereas the 18° in 6s is undoubtedly more common. Moreover, the attitude of the bibliographical handbooks towards formats smaller than twelvemo (and sixteenmo — but who can truthfully claim to have encountered more than a handful of genuine sixteenmos?) is defeatist, amounting to a statement that there are so many ways of imposing for small formats that it is impossible to give any rules of thumb for recognizing them, i.e. position of watermark, direction of chain lines or location of deckle and cut edges. In other words, bibliographers and cataloguers, apart from the most determined of paper-folders and -tearers, have had so little guidance in distinguishing small formats that it is no wonder that by and large they have had to make do with '12°' and '24°' to describe smallish volumes gathered in 6s or 12s, making the distinction — I assume — on the basis of size.

That numerous eighteenmos are masquerading as twelvemos in catalogues can be readily demonstrated. Both the British Library exemplars of the *Prolegomena* discussed above are described in the *General Catalogue* as twelvemos, as is the National Library of Australia exemplar in Cameron and Carroll (no. 1136).⁷ The Tickell volume also is described in Cameron and Carroll (no. 7602) as a twelvemo.

As a further demonstration of the possibilities inherent in a collation formula and a record of press figures I have chosen for examination the four entries from Kathleen Coleridge's Milton catalogue⁸ — nos. 218, 219, 220, 224 — which are gathered in sixes and have press figures. My choice is governed by the availability of the precise record of press figures, which allows me to proceed 'blind' in the absence of any evidence that could be derived from studying the paper; in no way do I wish to imply a diminution of Miss Coleridge's considerable achievement. On the basis of the press figures I conclude that 224 is indeed an eighteenmo, that 218 and 219 are also eighteenmos (not twelvemos), and that 220 may well be an eighteenmo, though my examination is inconclusive.

218: *The Poetical works, Edinburg: at the Apollo Press, by the Martins. 1776, 4 vols.*

vol.1, A-U⁶; vol.2, A-T⁶; vol.3, A-S⁶; vol.4, A-S⁶.

Press figures

vol.1: 1 on IKNQT6^V; 2 on ADS6^V; 3 on BF6^V; 4 on GMP6^V; none in CEHLORU.

vol.2: 1 on DEHLO6^V, S1^V; 2 on ABGKNQS6^V; none in CFIMPRT.

vol.3: 1 on AGMNQ6^V; 2 on CFIKO6^V; none in BDEHLPRS.

vol.4: 1 on AD6^V, H1^V; 2 on BFI6^V; 3 on MPR6^V; 4 on KNQ6^V; none in CEGLOS.

In the total work the ratio of press figures to gatherings is 48:75, which in itself (just under 2:3) suggests an eighteenmo in which two gatherings are unfigured. The sequence of figured (F) and unfigured (U) gatherings — generally FUFFUFFUFFUFFUF etc. — suggests an imposition scheme in which two figured gatherings flanked an unfigured (FUF/FUF) as in the 'Sheet of eighteens with three signatures, as three half sheets of twelves' illustrated by Gilbert and Ransom, rather than a twelvemo running FU/FF/UF etc. I suggest that the four volumes are eighteenmos — i.e. three gatherings to a sheet; that gathering A of vol. 2 was probably imposed with gatherings T and U of vol. 1; and that one forme is unfigured in the sequences D-F and Q-S of vol. 3.

219: *The Poetical works, Edinburg: at the Apollo Press, by the Martins. 1779, 4 vols.*

vol.1, A-U⁶; vol.2, A-T⁶; vol.3, A-S⁶; vol.4, A-S⁶.

Press figures

vol.1: 1 on C3^V, FP6^V; 2 on A3^V, DN6^V; 3 on M6^V; 4 on KT6^V; 5 on IS6^V; 6 on GQ6^V; none in BEHLORU.

vol.2: 1 on FMS6^V; 2 on DKQ6^V; 3 on CP6^V, T2^V; 4 on AN6^V; 5 on I6^V; 6 on G6^V; none in BEHLOR.

vol.3: 1 on FIMP6^V; 2 on DGKN6^V; 3 on CR6^V; 4 on AQ6^V; none in BEHLOS.

vol.4: 1 on FP6^V, Q4^V; 2 on DNQ6^V; 3 on M6^V; 4 on K6^V; 5 on CI6^V; 6 on A6^V, I4^V; none in BEGHLORS.

Here the ratio is a perfect 50:75 (2:3), and the sequence runs FUFFUFFUF FUF again — i.e. it is an eighteenmo, three gatherings to a sheet. One point of interest is that the figuring in vol. 2 of A + C D + F etc. suggests that, unlike 218, gathering A of vol. 2 was not imposed with gatherings T and U of vol. 1.

220: *The Poetical works, London: under the direction of J. Bell. 1788 (vols. 2-4 '1778'), 4 vols.*

vol.1, A-T⁶ U⁴; vol.2, A-S⁶; vol.3, A-R⁶ S⁴; vol.4, A² B-S⁶.

Press figures

vol.1: 3 on IK4, FT4^v, Q6; 4 on T1, G1^v, D3^v, N4, A6^v; 5 on S4; none in BCEHLMOPRU.

vol.2: 3 on F3, N6^v; 4 on C4, K1, P3; none in ABDEG-ILMOQ-S.

vol.3: 3 on A3, G4, N6, P6^v; 4 on HO3, D4^v, R6^v; none in BCEFI-MQS.

vol.4: 3 on CIQ1^v, M3^v, H6; 4 on M6, GIR6^v; none in ABD-FKLN-PS.

This is a more difficult case and I have set out the figures in the following table in such a way as to make their disposition clear.⁹

Vol. 1, A-T6 U⁴

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	K	L	M	N	O	P	Q	R	S	T	U
3						4 ^v			4 ^r	4 ^r						6 ^r			4 ^v	
4	6 ^v			3 ^v			1 ^v							4 ^r						1 ^r
5																		4 ^r		

Vol.2, A-S⁶

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	K	L	M	N	O	P	Q	R	S
3						3 ^r							6 ^v					
4			4 ^r							1 ^r					3 ^r			

Vol.3, A-R6 S⁴

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	K	L	M	N	O	P	Q	R	S
3	3 ^r						4 ^r						6 ^r		6 ^v			
4				4 ^v				3 ^r						3 ^r			6 ^v	

Vol.4, A² B-S⁶

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	K	L	M	N	O	P	Q	R	S
3			1 ^v					6 ^r	1 ^v			3 ^v				1 ^v		
4							6 ^v		6 ^v			6 ^r					6 ^v	

Taking the four volumes as one unit, there are 33 press figures in $72\frac{2}{3}$ gatherings — i.e. just three fewer than the 36 which would produce a ratio of 1:2, thereby suggesting a twenty-fourmo. But when particular volumes or sequences of gatherings are looked at in isolation such a suggestion appears less certain. For example, there appears to be no way of dividing vol.1 into sequences of four

gatherings without creating one sequence with three figures. If A formed part of the first sheet then the sequences would be A-D, E-H, I-M, N-Q, R-U(?), the last containing the extra figure. Assuming one figure only per forme, S and T could not be part of the same sheet, implying therefore that — if indeed the volume *is* a twenty-fourmo — the sequences are AB + ?, C-F, G-K, L-O, P-S, TU + ?, which could well be the actual imposition scheme, since there are clear divisions in the contents at C and G (the text of *Paradise Lost* begins on G1^r); but now G-K has an extra figure. If, however, we make the break between S and T and at the same time note that S is the eighteenth gathering we have an alternative solution: sequences of three — A-C, D-F, G-I, K-M, N-P, Q-S, TU + ?. In other words, vol.1 looks very much like an eighteenmo, the figures always falling in the outer thirds of the sheet, as in the other (demonstrable) instances of eighteenmos, three formes being unfigured. The fact that there are two figures in T may imply that it (and U?) were imposed in a manner different from the remainder of the volume.

There are similar problems in vol.4: the six gatherings G-M, which contain in total six figures, cannot be arranged to produce sequences of four gatherings and two figures — G-K contains four figures, H-L three, and I-M four. In other words the volume — if imposed consistently, which is another condition which it would be difficult to demonstrate without an uncut exemplar — is not a twenty-fourmo. The figures, however, may be accounted for by the following sequences: F-H, I-L, M-O — i.e. an eighteenmo, though the disposition of the figures is different from that in vol.1.

The problem of the disposition of figures in vol.3 can now be accounted for by reference to vol.4. Assuming that no double figuring is involved, gatherings N, O and P cannot have formed part of the same sheet, whereas if A, B and C (eighteenmo) or A, B, C and D (twenty-fourmo) were imposed together one resulting sequence would be N-P (eighteenmo) or N-Q (twenty-fourmo). But working back from F-H in vol.4, and noting that vol.4 begins A² (and therefore was presumably imposed with S⁴ of vol.3), we arrive at these sequences: vol.4 C-E; vol.4 AB + vol.3 RS; vol.3 O-Q; vol.3 L-N etc. back to vol.3 B-D. In other words vol.3A appears not to have been imposed with any other gatherings from vol.3 but with R and S of vol.2. In turn this grouping suggests that T and U of vol.1 were imposed with A of vol.2, the remaining two leaves being used for some other purpose.

The press figures thus resolve the question of which gatherings at the beginnings and ends of volumes were imposed together. If the volumes *are* eighteenmos then these would appear to be the groupings:

- Vol.1 A-C, D-F, G-I, K-M, N-P, Q-S, TU + Vol.2 A
- Vol.2 B-D, E-G, H-K, L-N, O-Q, RS + Vol.3 A
- Vol.3 B-D, E-G, H-K, L-N, O-Q, RS + Vol.4 AB
- Vol.4 C-E, F-H, I-L, M-O, P-R, S + ?

to be so regular as to be indistinguishable one from another. A further means of resolving this particular problem might be to consider the pattern of figures in other Bell publications of the period, basing an informed guess about the Milton volumes on the likelihood that they conform to a general pattern — if one can be established.

224: *The Poetical Works*, London: printed for C. Cooke. [1796], 2 vols., the second volume apparently without figures.
vol.1, a-f6 B-2A⁶ 2B1; vol.2, A⁴ B-2B⁶.

Press figures

vol.1: 1 on I1v, eR6, aDGMQ6v; 4 on DEM1v, f3v H4, b4v, PU6, R6v; none in cdBCFKLNOSTX-2B.

The ratio of figures to gatherings, 17:29, appears to exclude twenty-fourmo and to favour eighteenmo. The disposition of figures in D and E (two in D, one in E) and in Q and R (one in Q, two in R) suggests that neither D and E nor Q and R were imposed together, and that the sequences are a-c d-f B-D E-G H-K L-N O-Q R-T U-Y Z2A + 2B1(?) — i.e. eighteenmo. In fact, if the incomplete triplet Z-2B is excluded, the ratio of figures to gatherings is an almost exact fit for eighteenmo, 17:27, only one of the formes of U-Y being unfigured. To confirm the case for eighteenmo, and to further illustrate the potential of press figures in determining format, the case for twelvemo might be considered. The ratio of figures to gatherings is also a perfect fit for twelvemo: 14:28 (disregarding 2A and 2B), assuming that the second forme was worked off at the same press which worked off the first forme and therefore was not figured, the three additional figures (in D, M and R) being accounted for by the second forme being worked off at the other press and therefore containing a different figure. However, on the face of it, the sequences in twelvemo would be: ab cd ef BC DE FG HI KL MN OP QR ST UX YZ 2A + 2B1(?). Such an arrangement would be open to the same objection as that against twenty-fourmo: that neither D and E nor Q and R were imposed together, since each pair would thereby contain three figures. In sum, the case for eighteenmo is very strong indeed.

I believe that the foregoing, even if it does not provide incontrovertible evidence for deriving the format of a volume from the press figures it contains, will provide hints which will be helpful in particular instances. May I suggest that a comprehensive study of volumes in sixes — whether on laid paper or on wove — would establish a useful analytical technique on a sound basis.

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The argument has led to the conclusion that the four volumes are eighteenmos in sixes, comprising 24+ sheets and with 15 formes unfigured. That said, however, it must be conceded that the case against twelvemo, comprising 36 sheets and with 39 formes unfigured, is not proved. Lest the reader should think that an uncut exemplar is of more value than the incidence of press figures, let it at this point be noted that it is not always possible to distinguish tears from deckles, particularly with thin paper. Theoretically, skeleton analysis should be able to resolve the uncertainty over format, but at this period skeletons are likely

NOTES

¹ See C. Stower, *The Printer's grammar; or, introduction to the art of printing: containing a concise history of the art, with the improvements in the practice of printing, for the last fifty years* (London, 1808; reissued in facsimile, 1965), p.173. The scheme produces two copies of two two-leaf gatherings by what is in essence a half-sheet imposition.

² W.B. Todd, 'Procedures for determining the identity and order of certain eighteenth-century editions' (Unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, University of Chicago, 1949), p.13. 'Printer's mark' appears to be peculiar to Todd; 'figure' is the term used by Stower (p.386) in what is considered to be the earliest reference to the phenomenon.

³ Annemie Gilbert and Sylvia Ransom, 'The Imposition of eighteenmos in sixes, with special reference to tranchefiles', *Bibliographical Society of Australia and New Zealand Bulletin* No.17 (Vol.4, No.4), November 1980, pp.269-75.

⁴ K. Povey, 'A Century of press-figures', *The Library* 14(1959), pp.251-73.

⁵ Ronald B. McKerrow, *An Introduction to bibliography for literary students* (Oxford, 1927 (1959)), p.173.

⁶ Philip Gaskell, *A New introduction to bibliography* (Oxford, 1972), p.107.

⁷ William J. Cameron and Diana J. Carroll (eds.), *Short title catalogue of books printed in the British Isles, the British Colonies and the United States of America and of English books printed elsewhere 1701-1800 held in libraries of the Australian Capital Territory* (Canberra, 1966), 2 vols. Item 1136 is complete, two 'volumes' constituting one bibliographical unit.

⁸ K.A. Coleridge, *A Descriptive catalogue of the Milton collection in the Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington, New Zealand describing works printed before 1801 held in the Library at December 1975* (Oxford, 1980).

⁹ Though of course I would not advocate this as a desirable method of recording figures, I think it fair to say that Miss Coleridge's method (followed here in the introduction to each discussion) — though economical of space — is, except for the record of unfigured sheets, particularly difficult to use without recasting.

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