

BIBLIOGRAPHICAL NOTES

No. 1 The Imposition of the Nosche/Athias Eighteenmo Bibles

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David Paisey has recently drawn attention to the existence in the hand-press period of formats 'of daunting intricacy', a few of which can be observed in practice but most of which are possibly confined to the pages of the printer's grammars – i.e. it may have been technically feasible to impose in 6mo or 72mo, but the evidence of surviving books suggests that some of the more exotic formats, such as these, were never put into practice.¹ Paisey quotes John Smith's disapproving note of 1755, which appears to confirm this conclusion:

More irregular sizes we have not thought fit to introduce; else we might have drawn out schemes for imposing six's, 10's, 14's, 20's, 28's, 30's, 40's, 42's, 50's, 56's, 60's, 80's, 100's and 112's; these, and several more, being sizes that have been found out not so much for use as out of fancy, to shew the possibility of folding a sheet of paper into so many various forms.²

Nonetheless, as Paisey illustrates, at least the decimo was in fact put into practice, in four seventeenth-century Venetian editions of Noel de Berlaimont's *Colloquia*.³

Though Paisey is concerned primarily with format, his discussion inevitably touches also on matters of imposition, and his question about the reasons for using unusual formats might be broadened to ask a related question: Why, within *common* formats, were unusual imposition schemes (even ones 'of daunting intricacy') used? By the late eighteenth century the eighteenmo was a common format, but why, for example, would one want to impose an eighteenmo in such a way as to produce two gatherings of eight leaves (as in Savage's scheme no.70⁴), a procedure which also involves the transposition of four pages before working off the reiteration forme? Likewise, what would be the purpose (unless it was a matter of ignorance) of imposing an eighteenmo in half sheets, thus producing gatherings of nine leaves, with the

1. David Paisey, 'Decimo: reflections on some rare formats', in Denis V. Reidy (ed.), *The Italian Book: studies presented to Dennis E. Rhodes on his 70th birthday* (London: British Library, 1993), pp.161-74.
2. John Smith, *The Printer's Grammar* (London: for the editor; and sold by W. Owen; and by M. Cooper, 1755), p.257.
3. See also B.J. McMullin, 'Paisey's Oblong Decimo', *Bibliographical Society of Australia and New Zealand Bulletin*, forthcoming.
4. William Savage, *A Dictionary of the Art of Printing* (London: Longman, Brown, Green, and Longmans, 1841), p.357.

inevitable singleton (or even three)?⁵ Or again why impose an eighteenmo for gathering in alternating eights, fours and sixes, as in two seventeenth-century French testaments printed in Rouen?⁶

The purpose of this present note is to illustrate yet another imposition scheme for an eighteenmo, one – like Paisey's decimo – not to be found in any extant contemporary printer's grammar. The scheme to be illustrated is of interest not merely because it *is* unusual: it prompts a suggestion that unusual imposition schemes may be peculiar to particular places or printing houses – like the Rouen testaments – and therefore that they may serve to identify the true printers of volumes produced anonymously or pseudonymously.

The scheme in question was employed for printing a series of four editions of the English Bible, according to their title pages produced by Roger Daniel in Cambridge in 1648 but almost certainly produced by Joachim Nosche and Joseph Athias in Amsterdam later in the century. The history and relationships of these four editions have been described elsewhere,⁷ though room was not available there to illustrate the imposition scheme. The scheme has been reconstructed from an examination of forty copies, representing all four editions, on the basis of the position of the watermark (in \$6 or \$17) and the survival in lightly-cut copies of the occasional deckle and the more frequent printed rules designed to guide the binder in cutting the sheet preparatory to folding (at the head of \$7-12 or at the foot of \$2 3 6 13 16 17, depending on where precisely the cut was made). The earliest manual in which this scheme is to be found appears to be the *Mecanismo del arte de la imprenta para facilidad de los operarios que le exerzan* (Madrid, imprenta de la Compañía, 1811) by Juan José Sigüenza y Vera, 'discipulo de Ibarra'; here the eighteenmo is described as little used, being confined to volumes with long, narrow pages. As with Paisey's decimos, not too much should perhaps be made of the silence of the earlier extant manuals, particularly as the scheme, as it affects the binder, is essentially straightforward: (a) the cut-off, comprising \$7-12, is removed and folded in concertina fashion to produce three conjugate pairs, comprising the insert; (b) the remaining two-thirds of the sheet is folded once parallel to the longer side and then in concertina fashion in the same way as the cut-off to provide six conjugate pairs, into the centre of which the cut-off is inserted. In

5. See Brian Hubber, 'Eighteenmo in Nines: an experimental technique', *Bibliographical Society of Australia and New Zealand Bulletin*, 7(1983), 183-6. His example, a London edition of Leusden's Psalms in Hebrew and Latin printed by Samuel Palmer in 1726 (when the eighteenmo was something of a novelty), exhibits an additional complexity in changing imposition scheme in mid-stream, from three pairs and three singletons to four pairs and one singleton.
6. See Bettye Thomas Chambers, *Bibliography of French Bibles II Seventeenth Century French-Language Editions of the Scriptures* (Genève: Librairie Droz, 1994), nos.1530 and 1615 (in fact the latter may have been printed in Paris, 'Rouen' having been stamped on the title page by hand); see also B.J. McMullin, 'French-Language Bibles in the Seventeenth Century', *Bibliographical Society of Australia and New Zealand Bulletin*, 19(1993), 195-208 (p.198 and fn.6).
7. B.J. McMullin, 'Joseph Athias and the early history of stereotyping', *Quaerendo*, 23(1993), 184-207.

fact Sigüenza y Vera envisages more cutting than folding – producing ‘tres tercios, y tres dobleces’ – which would certainly reduce the likelihood of creasing and possibly improve the alignment of facing pages in the bound volume; instead of a concertina fold the leaves in the cut-off are reduced to pairs by cutting, those in the remaining two-thirds to three groups of four leaves, each of which is then folded twice. Whatever the potential advantages of Sigüenza y Vera’s procedure, one cannot but think that it would slow down significantly the process of binding, with six fragments of a sheet, rather than two, to keep track of.

Though the silence of contemporary manuals has been discounted there is nonetheless evidence to suggest that the scheme was novel to Nosche, to the extent that his workmen needed guidance in orienting the forme when perfecting the sheet. This at least is the only obvious explanation for the insertion of a dagger or double dagger before the signature on \$7 and \$10 in the first edition in the sequence of four (and an associated edition of the metrical Psalms): since \$7^r and \$10^r occupy the same position in opposite formes it seems likely that they were inserted as a safeguard to ensure that the reiteration forme was placed on the bed properly – in Sigüenza y Vera’s illustration, with \$7^r and \$10^r at the puller’s far right.

In this particular case the specific imposition scheme and the dagger/double dagger have been used to associate the English-language bibles with Nosche and Athias in Amsterdam, rather than with Daniel in Cambridge. It may well be that the isolation of peculiarities in imposition or in make-up in general will in other instances too serve a similar purpose.

(The accompanying illustrations follow Sigüenza in regarding the inner forme as the white-paper forme.)

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	6V 17		11V 21		2V 13
	9V 11		11V 21		2V 3
27 A14	10	7 A4	30	35 A18	2

White-paper Forme

	A12 23		A8 15		A10 19
	A17 33		A3 5		A13 25
1 A1	96	29 A15	8	9 A5	28

Reteration Forme