

J. D. Fleeman, *A Bibliography of the Works of Samuel Johnson*,
50.3R/21, 26, 27 (*The Rambler*, Hodges's edition)

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Johnson's *Rambler* essays have been collected and published in volume form numerous times following their first appearance as 208 twice-weekly numbers, 20 March 1750 to 14 March 1752. Among these collected versions are three that are identified as "Hodges's edition" (entries 50.3R/21, 26 and 27) in J. D. Fleeman's *Bibliography of the Works of Samuel Johnson* (2000).¹ The identification is made on the grounds that J. Hodges is the first of the seven booksellers named in the imprint of 50.3R/21 (published in London in 1791). Hodges's edition comprises four octavo volumes gathered in fours. In entry 50.3R/21 it is noted that "This impression was reissued or reimpressed on at least two, perhaps three subsequent occasions,"² while 50.3R/26 (London, 1794) is described as "a reimpression ... with cancelled tt [titles]," being "identical with that of ... 50.3R/27 [Edinburgh, 1794], though with variant press-figures."

I have not seen any of the above items, but, on the basis of the information recorded in the Fleeman entries, the relationship of the three may be established, though perhaps in the event awaiting confirmation from an examination of surviving copies.

Fleeman provides the "external" or "documentary" evidence for establishing the relationship in his note on the paper of 50.3R/27:

There were two paper stocks used in this edn. as appears from Constable's sale of the Quire stock of John Fairbairn of Edinburgh (1809; E: MS Acc. 5000, no. 1389):

Johnson's Rambler 4 vols. 12mo.	[Trade £] 0.4.0	[retail £] 0.5.0
	fine 0.5.0	0.6.0

showing also that this was a slow seller.

The control copy (Hyde) is uncut: 8½ × 5¾ in., i.e. Demy paper. Though trimmed, other copies (and issues) are smaller at 7½ × 5 in., i.e. Crown paper.³

There can be little doubt that 50.3R/21, 26 and 27 belong to the same edition, the last two being *reissues* (not reimpressions) with cancel title leaves; hence all three (not just 50.3R/27) could be expected to have been issued in two sizes of paper.

¹ J. D. Fleeman, *A Bibliography of the Works of Samuel Johnson, Treating his Published Works from the Beginnings to 1984*, prepared for publication by James McLaverty, 2 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2000).

² The third of these, 50.3R/37, is a New York "edition" of 1800, identified by ESTC as a further reissue, but since it was not examined by Fleeman there is insufficient detail recorded to assess this categorisation; I have consequently ignored it.

³ The sale entry lists the sheets as 12mo, but I assume that this is a book-trade description of what is bibliographically a [small] 8vo.

Confirmatory evidence of the existence within the total edition of two basic issues (whatever the size of the sheets on which they were printed) is afforded by the records of press figures, which are a mixture of arabic numerals, capital letters and typographic symbols. The arabic numerals are unexceptionable: they range from 1 to 3, implying a complement of three presses in the house of whoever printed the edition. The three instances of a capital letter in vol. 1 (E twice, T once) are presumably an alternative to the arabic numerals and may well be the initials of the surname of two pressmen.⁴ More significant in the present context are the typographic symbols: in 50.3R/26 the symbol † throughout, but with six instances of ‡ and a single *—the last two I take to have the same import as †.

The key to the interpretation of the typographical symbols is that, with an understandable exception,⁵ they occur on \$1^r only, on which basis they are in fact *not* press figures but paper-quality marks—i.e. they are marks serving to distinguish one issue from another from within an edition when two (or more) issues are produced, distinguished one from the other by being printed throughout on discrete papers; the marks appear in the direction line on the first page of every gathering as an aid to the warehouseman and the binder in assembling and binding copies made up of a uniform quality of paper.⁶ In the case of Hodges's *Rambler* attention is drawn (in the note to 50.3R/27) to a difference in size, though the essential difference may well be rather one of quality. Both 50.3R/21 and 26⁷ are described as "La[rge] post (uncut: 8¼ × 5¼ in.)," as opposed to the trimmed "Crown" of 27, but the two papers can produce cut leaves in octavo of much the same dimensions, and in any case nothing depends on their precise identification.⁸

A further clue to the nature of the two issues is afforded by another note in 50.3R/27, that "All the sheets figured with '†' are on wove paper." Entry 50.3R/21, which is predominantly *without* typographic symbols, is described as on laid paper, and 26, which is predominantly *with* typographic symbols, is described as on wove paper. In other words Hodges's edition (in its totality of original and reissues) comprises two issues: one on wove paper, the other on laid, the former being identified by a typographic symbol in the direction line of \$1^r.

That the nature of the typographic symbols was not understood is due no doubt to the fact that 50.3R/21 is a mixed set: in that it has typographic symbols, vol. 1

⁴ See Keith I. D. Maslen, "Press' Letters: Samuel Aris 1730–32," *Studies in Bibliography* 23 (1970): 119–26; reprinted, with revisions, in *An Early Printing House at Work: Studies in the Bowyer Ledgers* (New York: The Bibliographical Society of America, 1993), 65–71.

⁵ There is a solitary instance—vol. 3, gathering I—where the paper-quality mark is found in the page adjacent in the forme, I4^v.

⁶ See B. J. McMullin, "Paper-Quality Marks and the Oxford Bible Press, 1682–1717," *The Library*, 6th ser., 6 (1984): 39–49. The use of paper-quality marks continued well into the nineteenth century, to be found, for example, in the eighth edition of Sir Walter Scott's *Waverley* (1821).

⁷ An uncut octavo leaf from a sheet of Crown of *standard* dimensions would measure 7½ × 5 in.

⁸ In descriptive bibliography the dimensions of the leaf, rather than the sheet name inferred from those dimensions, is the more important; happily, Fleeman provides both.

must be on wove paper, whereas vols. 2–4 are on laid.⁹ By contrast, 50.3R/26 is from the wove issue throughout, 27 (with the exception of three gatherings) on the laid.

As is the case with any substantial publication on two or more discrete papers, distinguished by paper-quality marks, in addition to the simple misbindings there are likely to be occasional discrepancies: the “wrong” paper with the mark or the “right” paper without the mark—the apparent anomalies here, in the absence of a gathering-by-gathering account of the paper, may be either. And there are variations in press figures, which are not necessarily remarkable; however, once the paper-quality marks are detached from the record, the variations in press figures are seen to be few and the essential nature of the edition confirmed, in so far as is possible on the evidence of the entries alone.

(A more straightforward demonstration of the presence of paper-quality marks in Johnson items is afforded by 50.3R/11, *The Rambler*, “eighth edition” [third Edinburgh edition], 1772 and 52.11Ad/11, *The Adventurer*, Long’s edition, 1777, each in four volumes. Neither has press figures, but both have been noted by Fleeman (a) *without* typographical symbols and (b) *with* typographical symbols throughout on \$1^r. And in neither entry is there any indication that two issues are comprehended, distinguishable by their paper: both publications are reported (on the basis of the control copy?) as on laid paper watermarked “fleur-de-lys + IV,” but the presence of paper-quality marks suggests that other copies will vary, if not in watermark then in quality—maybe (b) copies will be on wove paper. Whatever the distinction, the recognition of paper-quality marks for what they are adds to an understanding of the practices of the trade in the “long” eighteenth century.)

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⁹ I assume that Fleeman’s “laid” is based on the paper of vols. 2–4.