Cancel Errata in *John Buncle, Junior, Gentleman*

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The preliminaries in the first volume of Thomas Cogan’s *John Buncle, Junior, Gentleman* (1776) contain a full-page cancel “Errata”: a cancellans listing fifteen corrections to the text. This “Errata” replaces a shorter errata text that listed only five corrections. A cancelled “Errata” is relatively unusual; full-page cancellation is even more so. While it appears likely that the care taken in preparing a list of printing errors would be reflected in printing that list, there is no reason to suppose that an errata list is, in fact, more likely to be free from compositor error than any other printed matter. However, since the errata is printed last, there is rarely either a reason to expand it or an opportunity to do so.

Nevertheless, cancelled “Errata” do occur. One example of such a cancelled errata occurs in John Crowne’s *Notes and Observations on the Empress of Morocco: Or, Some Few Errata’s to be Printed instead of the Sculptures with the Second Edition of that Play* (1674). In this volume there is an errata list at the end of a section titled “Errata’s in the Epistle.” The original five-line list of errors was extended, first (in press), to a ten-line list and then (post-impression) by a slip on which the title—aone—of the errata was cancelled. Where the original text simply had a title (“ERRATA”), the slip-cancellans contains a one-paragraph address to the reader starting “The Reader is desired to take notice” that a sheet of observations

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1 In this article I am concerned only with the first volume of *John Buncle*. A second volume was published in 1778. Like the first, it lacks a volume designation on the title-page, but the chapters continue the numbering from the first volume. The first volume concludes with “The End”—suggesting no further volumes would be forthcoming—whereas the second volume concludes with “End of Vol. II”—suggesting further volumes would be published. However, no other volumes appeared. I am indebted to Brian McMullin for the suggestions he made on reading an early draft of this article in 2010.

2 The text of this original errata—the cancellandum—is headed “The following Errata influence the Sense.”


4 According to Gerrard (ibid., 48), in some copies of Apollonius of Perga, *Locorum Planorum* (Glasgow: Rob. et And. Foulis, 1749), “a supplementary errata list” is pasted below the errata list at the end of the book.

was “lost in the Press” and that there are “many Errata’s not marked, which the Reader may discern not to be the Authors [sic].” While the extended errata offers a useful parallel for the erroneous errata in *John Buncle*, the slip-cancellans is merely a gloss for the errata, not an extension of it. (Moreover, it occurs in the middle of the work—not in the preliminaries—suggesting it was not printed last.)

While the extended errata in *John Buncle* is more than a little unusual in itself, my main interest in the cancelled errata list is as an example of full-page cancellation, specifically the difficulty it presents for the bibliographer in establishing and describing the collation. To explain the difficulty that this work presents the bibliographer, the volume must be described somewhat circuitously.

The book is imposed as a common whole-sheet duodecimo, in which each four-leaf offcut (two bifolia, nested one within the other) is gathered within the remaining eight leaves of the same sheet. The paper has horizontal chain lines, with a fleur-de-lis watermark visible in the copy described here on the outer edges of either ($11,12$ or $7,8$). Because printing occurred on sheets that had not been uniformly oriented, watermarks sometimes appear on the leaves where we expect them, but at other times on leaves where we might expect to find a countermark. A physical description of the main body of the text (only, for the present) can be given as follows: 280pp: 1–280; 140ll: B–M.

The final gathering (N) contains eight leaves; the preliminary gathering(s) contain—in total—four leaves, which might lead one to expect that the preliminary leaves were gathered in the same way as the offcuts to gatherings B to M. However, it is soon evident that the preliminary gathering(s) are not imposed in this usual way (see Figure 1) with two pairs of conjugate leaves nested one within the other (that is, imposed as a gathering [A], with A1.4 and A2.3 conjugate). Instead, it is clear from the alignment of chain-lines that the first and second leaves of the preliminaries are conjugate. The conjugacy of the first two leaves of the preliminaries might—in turn—lead one to expect that the preliminary leaves are imposed and gathered as successive, non-nesting gatherings (that is, imposed as two gatherings, π[A], with π1.2 and A1.2 conjugate; see Figure 2). However, it is evident that the preliminary gathering(s) are not imposed in this way either. The presence of one half of a watermark on the gutter margin of the third leaf, the other half of which is missing from the gutter margin of the fourth leaf, establishes that these two leaves are disjunct and were printed separately.

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7 The watermark appears on the outer edges of leaves 11 and 12 (gatherings BIL) or 7 and 8 (gatherings EFGHKMN).

8 Gaskell, *A New Introduction to Bibliography*, [99], fig. 57, has been modified here to create my Figures 1–2. For reasons that will become clear, in my figures the leaves have been re-signed and re-numbered and the locations of the watermark and countermark have been reversed.
replacement errata). The original errata appears on 6; the replacement errata appears on 8, so that the two are errata on the versos of successive leaves. The “Directions” to the bookbinder on page 7 are: “Paste the Errata on the Back hereof over the former one.” That is, paste pages 6 and 7 together, obscuring both the original errata and the instruction to the binder to do the pasting. As soon as the binder has followed these printed instructions, the preliminaries to the ideal copy appear to consist of three leaves, not four, or six pages, not eight.

In the copy examined and described here, the bookbinder has indeed pasted the two leaves together, but a curious reader has subsequently separated them again. As a consequence, the surface of each page has patches of dried paste, with small strips of paper attached, and corresponding spots where the surface of the page opposite has been torn free. The same appears to be the case with the copies at the British Library [G.17720] and Oxford University English Faculty Library

9 Author’s collection, Melbourne.
[XL26.75], but not with the copy at the University of Michigan [RBR PR3349. C26J65], where the leaves remain glued together.\(^\text{10}\)

If the cancellation itself is disregarded for a moment and the adhered, non-conjugate, cancellandum and cancellans treated as a single leaf, as the Fredson Bowers/Phillip Gaskell formulary requires, the collation formula for this volume could be either \(\pi^2 [A]1 B–M^{12} N^8\) or—possibly—\([A]^2 (A2+\chi1) B–M^{12} N^8\). If the printer had reprinted the errata leaf, excised the erroneous errata leaf, and replaced it in the usual fashion, the collation formula would either remain \(\pi^2 [A]1 B–M^{12} N^8\) (\(A1\) being a singleton in both cases) or become \([A]^2 (A2+\chi1) B–M^{12} N^8\). However, these formulas do not adequately account for the full-page page cancellation, the former offering no evidence of cancellation and the “±” symbol in the latter misleadingly suggesting that the whole leaf was excised, rather than one leaf being pasted over another.

In 1982, Brian McMullin proposed a solution to the problem of how to denote full-page cancels which, if applied here, would result in the following collation formula: \(\pi^2 [A]1 (\pm A1^\nu) B–M^{12} N^8\). The problem with this formula is that it could be interpreted to imply that \(A1\) has been split in two and one face (one page) has been removed and replaced. (A difficult, but not impossible, process.) Moreover, whether the preliminaries are described as \(\pi^2 [A]1\) or \(\pi^2 [A]1 (\pm A1^\nu)\), it is somewhat cumbersome (and could certainly be confusing) to make reference to the four pages on \(A1\)—those on the original \(A1\) (the cancellandum), and those on the replacement \(A1\) (the cancellans). According to Bowers, the reference notation in this case is \(A1\) for the cancellandum and \(A(A1)\) for the cancellans.\(^\text{11}\) If so, the original page 8—the new page 6—is \(A(A1)^\nu\) and the original page 6—the page within the single imaginary leaf created by gluing two leaves together and treating them as if they were one sheet of paper—\(A1^\nu\). As Bowers states, however, “a reader who cannot see the formula,” in such a situation, “may be put to some strain.” He continues:

Differentiation of F4 as ‘original F4’, [and] … ‘cancellans F(F4)’, is often useful in general writing. Yet if such leaves cannot be immediately contrasted in a manner to make their difference clear to a reader, reference in general writing to F4 or even to ‘original F4’ may still be confusing to him, and there would seem nothing for it but to add some kind of description … Cancellanda leaves are theoretically

\(^{10}\) The British Library copy is included in *The Eighteenth Century* microfilm series (reel 9195, no. 3), and is now available on ECCO. The copies at the English Faculty Library and the University of Michigan library are available online via Google Books (http://books.google.com.au/books?id=lyYJAAAAAQAJ [digitized 11 July 2007] and http://books.google.com.au/books?id=700AAAAMAAJ [digitized 22 May 2007]).

differentiated as R4 from cancellans R(R4), but would be most clearly referred to as ‘cancellandum R4’ and ‘cancellans R(R4).’

The reader not familiar with this unusual formulation would, it seems, be put to an even greater strain. However, alternatives, such as $\pi^2 [A]1 (A1^r+\chi^1)$ etc., which avoid suggesting one face of A1 has been replaced, still suggest that the new face is, itself, one half of a split page (the verso, only, of $\chi^1$). And, although referencing is simplified by identifying cancellandum and cancellans with different symbols (A and $\chi$), this formula—and variants such as $\pi^2 [A]1 (A1^r+\chi^1)$ etc.—incorrectly imply that the ideal copy of *John Buncle* has four, separate leaves before the body of the text. It may be that there is no entirely satisfactory way of resolving the conflicting demands of concise formulary and clear referencing in this situation.

As stated, full-page cancellation is relatively unusual, and the literature on it limited to three articles, two by scholars at Monash University. The use of a page cancel invites questions other than those of bibliographical notation. The cancellandum is a single leaf printed on both sides: the original errata is printed on the verso, and the Contents on the recto. The cancellans is also a single leaf printed on both sides: the replacement errata on the verso, the instructions to the binder on the recto. Since both the cancellandum and the cancellans are single leaves, printed on both sides, it is not clear why the printer didn’t simply reprint the leaf and remove the original in the usual way for a cancel. Why resort to pasting these two loose leaves together—a technique that singularly failed in three of the four copies examined—when the reprinting and substitution of the original errata leaf would have been a lot simpler? Indeed, why not print the extended list of errata on a small slip and paste it over the original errata list? Or, print just the additional errata on an even-smaller slip and paste it below the original errata list? Certainly, there is sufficient blank paper below the original errata to accommodate such a slip.

*John Buncle, Junior, Gentleman* commences with an interview between the fictional author—the hero of the story—and two booksellers. The hero takes his manuscript to each bookseller in turn. With the first bookseller he discusses “Title pages,” with the second “Editions.” The dialogue reported—concerning the lack of a catchy title for the author’s manuscript and the modest form in which it is to be published—are an amusing and revealing satire on publishing and bookselling in the 1770s. Later chapters cover “Dedications,” “Sentimental Writing” and so forth. In such a self-referential book, a book about the author’s attempts to get his

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12 Ibid., 263.
13 In addition to the articles by McMullin and Gerrard, cited above, the only additional reference I have located is a reply to McMullin’s article by John Harris, offering a few further examples. See John Harris, “Page Cancels,” *Factotum* 15 (October 1982): 10.
14 It is possible that ease of binding was a consideration, though the binder is presented with a singleton in either case. Moreover, if it were significantly easier to bind a page cancel using this method, it is likely that it would have been employed more often.
manuscript published, it is not impossible that the original “Errata” were part of the story, though the corrections in the errata appear to be just that—necessary typographical corrections.

However, it may be that Cogan—who gives sustained attention to book production in his fiction, particularly the appearance of the printed page—had a role in the decision to cancel the errata in this way. That is, that (the author’s) aesthetic considerations trumped (the printer’s) practical ones. Rather than disfiguring what is undoubtedly an otherwise elegantly printed volume with a clumsily applied slip-cancellans, or with an obvious and obtrusive stub from an excised cancellandum, Cogan insisted on a full-page cancellans. If Cogan hoped to deflect attention from the extension of his errata list in this way, he failed spectacularly. A reader’s suspicion that one page has been pasted over another—triggered by the faint shadow of concealed printing or the unusual feel of a thicker-than-usual page—is enough to draw attention to the cancelled errata. And the self-referential nature of the novel could lead readers to suspect that the hidden text contributes in some way to the fiction. If so—if the readers who carefully prised apart cancellandum and cancellans were hoping for a paratextual extension of the story, a sealed section familiar to modern magazine readers—they too would have been disappointed to discover an unremarkable, incomplete list of errors.

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The author and editor invite correspondence on matters raised in this note, particularly regarding reference notation for the preliminary leaves.