

What is a book?

Opus mechanicum and authorial text

What is a book? This is the question that Kant raises in his 1797 *The Metaphysics of Morals*.¹ He answers by distinguishing between the two natures of a book. On the one hand, a book is an “*opus mechanicum*,” a material (“*körperlich*”) object that has been produced by a mechanical art and that can be reproduced by anyone who is in rightful possession of the text. On the other hand, a book is a text addressed to the public by its author or by the publisher who has received a mandate from its author to speak in the author’s name. Without such an authorial “*mandatum*,” a book is unauthorized and constitutes an act of piracy.

Participating in the eighteenth-century debate over the property rights of writers and publishers, Kant framed in legal and juridical terms the double nature of a book that had previously been expressed metaphorically. About 1680, Alonso Victor de Paredes, a compositor and printer in Seville and Madrid, turned upside down the classical metaphor that described the human body or face as a book by conceptualizing the book as a human being: “I compare a book to the making of a man.” Both book and man have a rational soul (“*ánima racional*”) and a body that should be elegant, handsome, and harmonious. The soul of the book is not only the text as it was imagined, written, or dictated by its author, the “*buena doctrina*”; it is this text as it has been given a suitable presentation [“*acertada disposición*”] by the publisher.² But if the physical body of the book is the work of pressmen and bookbinders, its soul is not the author’s invention alone since it is co-created by the printers, compositors, and proof-readers who take care of the punctuation, spelling, and layout of the text. For Paredes, as later for Don McKenzie, “form affects meaning” and the “substantive essence” of a work cannot be separated from the “accidentals” of the printed text.³

If a book could be compared to a man, it was because God created human nature in the same manner that a printer makes a book. In 1675, Melchor de Cabrera Nuñez de Guzman, a lawyer in the Royal Council of the King

of Spain, published a pamphlet which aimed to prove that printing was not a mechanical trade but a liberal art. It was because it was such an art that Cabrera recommended the renewal of the fiscal privileges and exemptions that had been granted to master printers, correctors, compositors, and pressmen.⁴ For Cabrera, mankind is one of the six books written by God. These books are the Heavens, compared to an immense chart of which the stars are the alphabet; the World, which is a universal library or “compendium” encompassing the entire Creation; the Book of Life in the form of a register containing all the names of Christ’s followers; Christ himself who is both the “*exemplar*” to be copied and an “*exemplum*” to be followed; and, the first book of all, the Virgin, whose creation was decided even before the creation of the World, in the Divine Mind. Man is the only book actually printed by God: “God put his image and seal on the press so that the copy would be true to its design” and “he desired to celebrate himself with a great number and variety of copies of his mysterious Original.”

For Paredes describing his art, for Cabrera justifying printers’ privileges, and for Don Quixote visiting a printing-shop in Barcelona, textual production is a material process that involves specific places, machines, and workers. Between “the author’s genius and the capacity of the reader,” as Moxon wrote,⁵ a multiplicity of technical operations define a process in which the materiality of the text and the textuality of the material form cannot be separated.⁶ But even if many or most books that were printed were by dead authors, it was the problem of living writers that Paredes, Cabrera, and Moxon addressed. Paredes underlined the fact that the corrector “must understand the author’s intention in the text he sends to the printing-house, not only for marking the right punctuation [*la apuntuación legítima*], but also for checking if the author made some mistake [*descuido*] so as to advise him.” But for Cabrera, it was less that an author’s intentions had to be understood than that his careless errors required correction. Cabrera emphasizes that compositors “must take care of question marks, exclamation marks and parentheses because often the writer’s expression will become confused if these elements, which are necessary and important for the intelligibility and comprehension of what is written, are missing, and because if they are absent, the meaning is transformed.” In 1608, Hieronymus Hornschuch described a similar problem in his *Orthotypographia*, when he bitterly complained about the negligence of authors who give printers “faulty manuscripts, which cannot be read except with extreme difficulty.” “Therefore,” wrote Hornschuch, “I should like, not so much in the name of the correctors as of the printers, earnestly to advise and request all those who ever intend to publish anything in print to present it in such a way that the question need never be asked in the printer’s office which the comic slave [in Plautus’s *Pseudolus*] asked: ‘Do hens too have hands?’” Inverting the usual

distribution of roles, Hornschuch enjoins the author to imitate the printer's attention to punctuation: "Almost most important of all, let [the author] punctuate his writing. For every day many mistakes are made by people on account of this; and in poetry nothing is more tiresome or blameworthy than the number of people who leave out punctuation marks . . . Moreover, correct punctuation produces true elegance and leads more than anything else to a clear understanding of the subject-matter, whereas inconsistent punctuation is the product of a disorderly mind." The author is consequently told to send to the printing house not his "actual rough copy" but a copy "re-written as neatly as possible either by himself or his amanuensis on firm, non-absorbent paper, and checked again with the utmost care."⁷

Such reciprocal relations between writer and printer are absent from Kant's account of the authorial book. And in 1791, Johann Gottlieb Fichte redefined the book not on the basis of its materiality but, to the contrary, on its existence as a text. He framed a distinction, not only between the physical ("körperlich") and ideal ("geistig") aspects of a book, but also, within the text itself, between the ideas and the form given to them by the author. The ideas are the material ("materiell") aspect of the work, its content. Universal by their nature, ideas cannot be personal property. Ownership, he argued, can only derive from the form in which the ideas are expressed: "each individual has his own manner of thinking, his own way of forming concepts and connecting them . . . Hence, each writer must give his thoughts a specific form, and he can give them no other form than his own because he has no other. But neither should he be willing to hand over this form in making his thoughts public, for no one can appropriate his thoughts without thereby altering their form. The latter thus remains his exclusive property in perpetuity."⁸ It was only by separating authorial style from any materiality, whether the materiality of the printed book or the "materiell" ideas, that a text could be conceptualized as individual property and owned as real estate.

Changing definitions of the "authorial text" in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries changed the material forms that scholars and editors privileged. In the early seventeenth century, the works of Shakespeare and Cervantes were defined by the collaborative practices of writers, scribes, compositors, and correctors. No one collected the "authorial" manuscripts of *Hamlet* or *Don Quixote*, because such drafts were only the starting place for a printed and bound book. It is a mere accident of history that Shakespeare's authorial hand may survive in *The Book of Sir Thomas More*, a theatrical script containing at least six different hands. The hand of Shakespeare, if it is his, is the hand of a reviser, bringing an old play up to date. And why would one be interested in preserving a rough draft with lines such as the following:

all Shreiuë moor moor more Shreue moore⁹

Such a form of writing required the intervention of other professionals, then as now, to add punctuation, regularize capitalization and, in the process, decide whether “more/more/moore” are different words or versions of the same word, whether the word[s] is a common or a proper noun (“more” or “[Sir Thomas] More”), and whether to set the word[s] in print as “more, more, more,” “more More, more,” “More, More, More” or any one of a number of possible formulations. In the Renaissance, whatever the appeals on title pages to the “True Originall Copies,” the printed book displaced the scribal copy, which itself displaced the writer’s rough draft.¹⁰

But in the new regime of authorship that was formulated by Kant and Fichte, the printed book lay at the furthest remove from the authority invested in the originality of a writer’s “style.” While that style was theoretically prior to any specific form of materialization, it was increasingly sought in the author’s own hand as it was preserved in his manuscripts. The archive of authorial manuscripts at the University of Texas would have been impossible – or perhaps we should rather say, pointless – before 1750. But during the eighteenth century, autograph drafts with erasures, corrections, alterations, and annotations began to be collected and preserved. In France, such manuscripts exist for Rousseau’s *Nouvelle Héloïse*, Diderot’s *La religieuse*, Laclos’ *Les liaisons dangereuses*, Bernardin de Saint-Pierre’s *Paul et Virginie*, and they include the twelve-meter roll of Sade’s *Cent vingt journées de Sodome*. And authors self-consciously began to preserve their own manuscripts: Rousseau wanted to leave his *Dialogues ou Rousseau juge de Jean Jacques* to Notre-Dame but, finding the cathedral gates closed, he gave it to Condillac instead. He went on to make three other autograph copies of the *Dialogues*.

Before the mid-eighteenth century, authorial manuscripts were preserved only for exceptional reasons. Brantôme left the seven manuscript volumes of his *Livre des dames* to his heirs so that they could publish them after his death. The fragments of Pascal’s defense of Christianity were similarly gathered, transcribed, and put into order by the Messieurs de Port-Royal for a posthumous edition, the *Pensées* of 1669–70. And Montaigne’s autograph manuscript survives but only in the form of additions, and additions to additions, written in the wide margins of a luxury quarto of the 1588 edition of his own *Essais* (known today as the “*exemplaire de Bordeaux*”). Montaigne’s manuscript survives because the bound volume survives, whereas none of the manuscript drafts that preceded the first printed edition have been preserved.¹¹

The preservation of authorial manuscripts in literary archives cannot be separated from the construction of philosophical, aesthetic, and juridical

categories that defined a new regime for the composition, publication, and appropriation of texts. The lawsuits in England following the 1710 Statute of Queen Anne created new relations between notions of individual authorship, originality, and copyright. Defenders of the traditional rights of London booksellers and printers, which had been undermined by the 1710 legislation limiting copyright to fourteen years, argued that ownership of the authorial manuscript implied a patrimonial right once the publisher had acquired it from the author. Hence, the author must now be attributed with a novel right: the ownership of his own composition.

Defined by the fundamental and perpetual identity given to it by its author's mind and hand, the literary work could now transcend any possible material embodiment. According to Blackstone,

The identity of a literary composition consists intirely in the *sentiment* and the *language*; the same conceptions, cloathed in the same words, must necessarily be the same composition: and whatever method be taken of conveying that composition to the ear or the eye of another, by recital, by writing, or by printing, in any number of copies or at any period of time, it is always the identical work of the author which is so conveyed; and no other man can have a right to convey or transfer it without his consent, either tacitly or expressly given.¹²

For Diderot, every work is the legitimate property of its author because a work of literature is the irreducibly singular expression of that author's thoughts and feelings. As he put it in his *Mémoire sur le commerce de la librairie*: "What property can a man own if a work of the mind – the unique fruit of his upbringing, his studies, his evenings, his age, his researches, his observations; if his finest hours, the most beautiful moments of his life; if his own thoughts, the feelings of his heart, the most precious part of himself, that which does not perish, which makes him immortal – does not belong to him?"¹³ The "property" was the work as composed by its author in its immaterial existence, "invisible and untangible [sic]" in the words of William Enfield in 1774. The nearest that one could come to materializing such an immaterial work was the trace left by the author's hand.¹⁴

The autograph manuscript thus became the outward and visible sign of an inward, invisible state: the writer's genius. And if the autograph manuscripts did not exist, as in the case of Shakespeare, it was increasingly necessary to invent them. As a result, forging autograph manuscripts became a major enterprise. In February 1795, William Henry Ireland exhibited several recently discovered Shakespeare manuscripts. They included the autograph manuscripts of *King Lear* and of two unknown plays, *Henry II* and *Vortigern and Rowena* (performed once at Drury Lane Theatre on April 2); the letters exchanged by the poet and his patron, Southampton; a very Protestant

Profession of faith; and a letter addressed to Shakespeare by Queen Elizabeth. When the documents were published in December 1795 under the title of an *Authentic Account of the Shakespearian MSS.*, Edmond Malone was the first to expose Ireland's forgeries by comparing the handwriting and spelling of the forged documents to authentic ones. His meticulous exposure of the imposture was published with the significant title of *An Inquiry into the Authenticity of Certain Miscellanies Papers and Legal Instruments. Published Dec. 2 MDCCXCV, and Attributed to Shakespeare, Queen Elizabeth, and Henry, Earl of Southampton: Illustrated by Fac-similes of the Genuine Hand-writing of that Nobleman, and of Her Majesty; A New Fac-simile of the Handwriting of Shakespeare, Never before Exhibited; and Other Authentick Documents.*¹⁵

"Genuine Hand-writing" was the necessary material trace of an immaterial genius. Where Dante had imagined the writer's scattered traces finally materialized in the form of a bound book, the new regime saw the material book as a more or less corrupted form. The editor's job was to look *through* or *behind* the book so as to discover the scattered traces prior to their "contamination" by previous editors, publishers, compositors, correctors, and binders. A unique hand, contained in unique manuscripts, could now displace the multiple scribal or printed books that are the only ways through which the works of Dante, Cervantes, and Shakespeare have survived.

Scattered and gathered leaves

In the third book of the *Aeneid*, Virgil wrote about the failure of historical memory when, with nothing to bind them together, the leaves of the Sibyl's verses were scattered by the wind:

What she commits to Leafs, in order laid,
Before the Caverns Entrance are display'd:
Unmov'd they lie, but if a Blast of Wind
Without, or Vapours issue from behind,
The Leafs are born aloft in liquid Air,
And she resumes no more her Museful Care:
Nor gathers from the Rocks her scatter'd Verse;
Nor sets in order what the Winds disperse.¹⁶

The Sibyl's scattered leaves were a recurring topos from Late Antiquity. Petrarch imagined his *Rime Sparse*, or scattered rhymes, as similarly cast to the winds of fortune, even as he helped to establish new forms of the book in which they would be gathered together as the materials of immortality.

But Virgil's account of the Sibyl's leaves had taken on a radically new meaning by the time that Petrarch was writing. For Virgil, the Sibyl's leaves

could not be the leaves of a book for the simple reason that the “books” he read and on which his own poem was preserved were scrolls. Although scrolls are glued together in segments (*membrana*), they do not have leaves. *Folium*, a leaf, only took on the new meaning of the leaf of a book in the fourth century CE – by which time the codex was rapidly becoming the dominant material support for pagan texts, as it had been for Christians from the beginning of the second century, if not earlier. Far from being a dead metaphor, the Sibyl’s leaves could now be reinterpreted as the constituent elements of a book. The leaves of parchment or paper on which an author wrote might indeed be literally scattered. But the *folia* or leaves could be gathered together and preserved in what would later be called a *folio* – the form of book that would best preserve a work for posterity. Just as the limbs of Shakespeare’s scattered body were brought together in the First Folio, the textual leaves that time had scattered could be brought together in the material form of a book.

Dante made the gathering of scattered leaves the telos of his *Commedia*, conceiving of Paradise itself as being organized like a book. Paradise so overwhelms him that his “memory fails”; indeed his “vision almost wholly fades away” just as, “in the wind, on the light leaves, the Sibyl’s oracles were lost” [*così al vento ne le foglie levil si perdea la sentenza di Sibilla*]. But all is not lost. For in Paradise, Dante sees “gathered together, bound by love into a single volume, leaves that lie scattered through the universe”:

Nel suo profondo vidi che s’interna
legato con amore in un volume,
ciò che per l’universo si squaderna.¹⁷

Paradise is preserved, as Dante’s poem about it will be, because the “scattered” leaves have been “gathered together” and bound. According to Boccaccio, Dante published his poem in a series of pamphlets [*quadernetti*] of six to eight cantos but the final pamphlet was unpublished at his death. If Dante wrote about a gathering together of scattered fragments in Paradise, the gathering together of his own leaves was a dream that had not yet come true. Perhaps the very precariousness of his poetic gatherings led him to envisage Paradise all the more powerfully as a bound book. Dante’s word for binding together, *legato*, is derived from the Latin *legere*, which means both to gather and to read. Gathered together, the leaves that had previously been scattered become legible or readable.

Equally specific is the word that Dante uses to describe the scattering that precedes the gathering: *squaderna*. The verb *squaderna* suggests the active process of ungathering the quires [*quaderni*] out of which a bound book [*volume*] is composed. A *quaderno* was literally the four sheets of parchment or paper that, folded together, make a folio gathering of eight

leaves or sixteen pages – either a small pamphlet or one of the units out of which a book is composed. The prefix “s” in *squaderna* negates the meaning of “*quaderna*,” like the prefix “un-” in English. “Unquadernoed,” not even held together by the provisional sewing that creates a pamphlet, the separate leaves will be scattered by the wind unless they are brought together *in un volume*, “in a single volume.”

One way of defining an author is as someone who is bound with him or herself. Such binding of oneself with oneself was only occasionally negotiated by a living author in Medieval and Renaissance Europe. Petrarch undoubtedly thought of himself as an author, but his *I Trionfi* circulated at first in miscellanies as often as in a single volume. During the second half of the fourteenth century, however, 63 percent of the 248 surviving manuscripts of *I Trionfi* appeared in volumes containing only Petrarch’s work and the percentage increased to 74 percent of 78 manuscripts in the fifteenth century.¹⁸ The material “authoring” of Petrarch as a canonical figure was as much the work of readers, editors, and booksellers after his death as of his own literary project. In the manuscript publication of Dante, Petrarch, and Boccaccio in Italy and of Christine de Pizan and René d’Anjou in France, a select group of vernacular writers were canonized by bringing together in book form a text or series of texts under the proper name of a single author.¹⁹

When Antonio Gramsci named his prison notebooks *Quaderni*, he was registering the distance between the tenuous status of his writing – provisional, revisable, subject to additions and subtractions – and the authorial book.²⁰ In the twentieth century, *quaderni* took on a new significance as the material form of what Deleuze and Guattari call a “minor literature”²¹ – a literature that resisted the monumentalizing pretensions of the classical and that took as its preferred forms the notebook, the diary, letters, essays, fragments – the material forms that Kafka left to posterity with the instructions that they should be burned. But by the twentieth century, even Kafka, whatever his hesitations and resistances, had already been bound in a volume (although not together with himself) before he died. For Dante, by contrast, the gathering of his work was not the preordained destiny of authorship. He had to work to establish the conditions in which his *quaderni* would be preserved from the winds of time that had scattered the Sibyl’s leaves.

Books versus pamphlets

In 1623, the editors of the First Folio of Shakespeare’s plays brought together the “remains” of Shakespeare in a single large volume so as to repair the author’s body, his corpus. Before they gathered up his scattered limbs into a bound book, Shakespeare had survived, they claimed, only in “diuerse stolne, and surreptitious copies, maimed, and deformed.” They were now

preserving Shakespeare's "owne writings," "offer'd to [the reader's] view cur'd, and perfect of their limbes."²² It was, of course, in Heminges's and Condell's interest to emphasize just how bad all previous editions of Shakespeare had been. But one thing they were certainly right about: the pamphlets that were the material form in which Shakespeare circulated during his lifetime were peculiarly subject to the ravages of time. Their leaves were literally scattered, title pages and final quires coming free from the rough stab-stitching that only temporarily held them together. These pamphlets were indeed "maimed, and deformed." The First Folio "cur'd" Shakespeare's limbs by securely sewing the folded sheets of his plays, quire by quire, onto cords and protecting them with wooden boards, covered in calfskin.

The book form has played a particularly important role in materializing authorship. It is difficult to think of a more famous author today than Shakespeare. One can buy his texts, collected or in individual volumes, in an extraordinary variety of bindings. Yet in his own lifetime, Shakespeare did not write a single text that was designed to be bound as a book. His poems were written as pamphlets, his plays for performance and secondarily for publication as pamphlets. Dedicating *The Rape of Lucrece* to the Earl of Southampton, Shakespeare wrote: "The love I dedicate to your Lordship is without end: wherof this Pamphlet without beginning is but a superfluous Moity."²³ Shakespeare's love may be "without end"; his "Pamphlet" is not, as the fate of most of the copies (and even of whole editions) of his pamphlets shows. That his poems and plays were usually sold as pamphlets is shown both by the loss of all but a few copies and by the fact that many of those remaining copies are defective. But there is more concrete evidence that Shakespeare's plays were only exceptionally sold as bound books. If one looks carefully at the surviving quartos, elegantly bound later when they had become a valuable collector's item, one can find in copy after copy the tell-tale traces, often disguised by later repairers, of small holes, stabbed through the leaves a centimeter or two in from the gutter. These holes show that the plays were first sold stab-stitched as pamphlets.

So rare are these unbound pamphlets now that we have only seen a single example of a Shakespeare quarto that survives in its "original" state. Even that pamphlet is a composite, made up of a 1609 copy of *Pericles* and a 1606 copy of Samuel Daniel's *The Queene's Arcadia*. Given that the plays have different publishers (and printers), the pamphlet was probably made up by a bookseller trying to get rid of an unsold play by Daniel by adding it three years later to the hugely popular *Pericles*. From the perspective of 1623, it seems inevitable that Shakespeare-the-dramatist is "not of an age, but for all time." It is, after all, materially true. The Folger Library alone has more than eighty copies of the First Folio. Not surprisingly, given how many copies survive, the First Folio (and the millions of copies of the "works" that have succeeded it) conditions how we think about Shakespeare as an author.

By contrast, the first edition of *Venus and Adonis* (by far his most popular work in his lifetime) survives in a single copy in the Bodleian Library and the first edition of *The Passionate Pilgrim* only survives as a fragment, without a title page. Thus, it is only from the title page of the second edition that we learn that the poems in *The Passionate Pilgrim* are “by W. Shakespeare,” although only five of the twenty poems are now attributed to him. Unbound pamphlets are not the materials of immortality, whatever a writer’s claims.

Shakespeare may have wanted to be a literary author, as Lukas Erne has argued, but he did not succeed in materially becoming one during his lifetime either in terms of published books or in terms of collectors’ compilations.²⁴ It was only in 1619, three years after his death, that the first attempt was made to publish Shakespeare in the form of a bound volume. In that year, Thomas Pavier published ten “Shakespeare” quartos. Although each play had a separate title page (most of them with false information about printing and date of publication), the first three plays were printed with continuous signatures. It is clear that Pavier intended sell the ten plays bound together, even if he could also market them as separate titles.²⁵ While the 1619 “Shakespeare” volume is radically different from the 1623 “Shakespeare” of the First Folio, they both have as their organizing principle a single author: the professional playwright, William Shakespeare. Pavier’s project was, indeed, the first serious attempt to materialize Shakespeare as an author in the form of a bound book. Prior to Pavier, Shakespeare’s writing was published in the perishable and disposable form of pamphlets.

Inexpensive pamphlets, however, do not stand in any simple opposition to canonical books. Shakespeare’s canonization in the First Folio was by no means the end of Shakespeare the pamphleteer. To the contrary, publishers continued to produce Shakespearian pamphlets in the form of theatrical editions of individual plays. And while the First Folio was the beginning of an attempt to establish the authoritative works, single-play pamphlets and books produced radically new versions of Shakespeare, from Nahum Tate’s 1681 adaptation of *King Lear* to give it a happy ending to Richard Curtis’s *Skinhead Hamlet*, in which the hero’s dying words are “I’m fucked. The rest is fucking silence.”²⁶ From 1600, Shakespeare’s plays were being mined for detachable lines and speeches that circulated in printed and manuscript commonplace books.²⁷

The fragmentation of “works” into fragmentary selections was already common practice in the case of the canonical Bible. Throughout the late Middle Ages and the Renaissance, books of hours and psalters massively outsold Bibles. In 1643, the Bible was published in the form of a sixteen-page pamphlet: *The Souldiers Pocket Bible*. In addition to being cheap, this pamphlet had two other advantages, both of which were advertised on its title page: it “reduced [the Scriptures] to severall heads, and fitly applied [them] to the souldiers severall occasions, and so may supply the want

of *the whole Bible*”; and it was small and light enough for a soldier to “conveniently carry about him.”²⁸ In this case, it is the imagined *reader*, not any concept of a divine or inspired author, that determines both the textual selections and the material form of a canonical text. But it the case of the Bible and Shakespeare alike, the proliferating fragments repeatedly referred back to the canonical books that authorized them: “*the whole Bible*”; the First Folio or, later, *The Works of William Shakespeare*. But the material and ideological problems of constructing such canonical books is nowhere more manifest than in the case of the Bible.

Making the canonical book

How did the Bible become a canonical book in the first place? Most of the texts that compose the Hebrew Bible were recited orally long before they were written down and repeatedly redacted and rewritten. Yet “Bible,” the word that we now commonly use for both the Jewish and the Christian scriptures, first referred neither to the texts of the scriptures nor to their divine authorization. It is derived from the Greek *biblia*, the plural form of *biblion* (a diminutive form of *biblos*), meaning the inner bark of the papyrus reed. “Bible” thus referred to the material support on which any oral text could be transcribed. If *biblia* first referred to the sheets of papyrus, glued together to make up a scroll, the word was increasingly transferred from the material surface to the written scrolls. But it is important to stress that what we now call “the Bible” was, when first transliterated from Greek into Latin, a neuter plural: “scrolls.” Even in the fourth century CE, St. Jerome, whose *biblia* was in the form of codices, did not think of the scriptures in the singular. He referred to them as a *bibliotecha*, a word derived from the Greek for a container of scrolls and meaning, by extension, a library or collection of scrolls. But by the ninth century CE, *biblia* began to be used as a feminine singular to mean not “scrolls” or “books” but “the book.” The changes in the word’s meaning inscribe the history of a material technology. Before *biblia* was used in the singular, the Scriptures, previously written on multiple scrolls or divided up into small codices, had been gathered together into massive codices, known as pandects, single volumes that defined what did and, by exclusion, what did not count as divine scripture.²⁹

If we move from the semantic transformations of “*biblia*” (from papyrus to scrolls to scriptures to “the Bible”) and turn to how the scriptural texts, once selected, were organized, we see yet again the importance of the material form in the shaping and defining of Scripture. Before the massive scroll of the Pentateuch was made, each “book” of the Scriptures usually corresponded to a single scroll. If the texts were too long to fit onto a single scroll, they would be written on two scrolls. Hence First Samuel and

Second Samuel; First Kings and Second Kings; First Chronicles and Second Chronicles. The division between the two scrolls, while it could be given a textual significance, was the result of a simple material necessity. Vice versa, if the texts were very short, it made sense to copy several onto a single scroll. Hence, the Twelve Minor (i.e. “short”) Prophets, contained on a single scroll. (The first such scroll of the Twelve Prophets at Qumran dates from the mid-second century BCE.) Given that most of the biblical books of the Bible do not follow on from each other textually, as do, for instance, the consecutive books (i.e. scrolls) of the *Iliad*, the *sequence* of the scrolls is not at all clear, and there was considerable Rabbinic debate about the different ways in which the “Writings” could be ordered, long after the Pentateuch scroll had given a definitive order to the first five books of the Bible.

In a codex that contains the whole Christian Bible, on the other hand, the sequence in which the books were ordered had striking ideological effects. Perhaps the most obvious example of this is the distinction between Catholic and Protestant Bibles. In the latter, fourteen books or parts of books that had been scattered through the Catholic Old Testament were extracted and either omitted altogether or cordoned off between the Old and the New Testaments as the Apocrypha. Even when it is not a question of what is included and excluded, the sequence of books is strikingly different in different versions of the Bible. St. Jerome’s Bible, like the King James Bible, separates out the “apocrypha.” But the sequence of books in the two Bibles is different: Esther is the seventeenth of thirty-nine Old Testament books in the King James Bible; it is the last book of the Old Testament in St. Jerome’s version. Far more striking is the different positions of the Apocalypse (Revelation) in the two Bibles. To Protestants (and, indeed, to most later Catholics), it was “obvious” that the Bible began with the beginning of the world (Genesis) and ended with the end of the world (Revelation). But although Jerome began with Genesis, his Bible ended with St. Paul’s Epistle to the Hebrews, since he put all the Pauline epistles after Revelation. Although the sequencing of the Jewish scriptures was a topic of debate long before the invention of the codex, the material form of the latter gave a new theological significance to the sequences of the biblical books, which, when written on multiple scrolls, were always potentially miscellaneous in their ordering. Above all, the pandect, whether as a massive sixth-century codex or as a thirteenth-century complete pocket Bible, gave a new material sense of the Christian Bible as a single canonical work.

Conclusion

What is a book? In this essay, we have moved between analyzing the ways in which material books construct literary works and the ways in which

literary works are transformed into a variety of material forms. At the same time, we have emphasized that the book, understood as a codex, is related in multiple and complex ways to the formation of what Michel Foucault calls the “author function.” The cult of the author and of aesthetic “originality” presuppose that authors make books by writing their own works. So it is important to recall that the opposite is often the case: books create authors when scribes, editors, or publishers bring together a range of texts under an authorial name. Moses, once he had been posited as the author of the Pentateuch, was retrospectively defined by those very texts. On the other hand the name of an author (Cervantes) or a title (*Don Quixote*) can, as we have seen, be attached to an endless variety of different material forms.

Genetic criticism is only made possible by the existence of the different stages of the authorial process: outlines and sketches of the work, notes and documents, drafts, corrected proofs. However, the literary archive is itself being transformed by digital photography and the internet. The unique authorial drafts of Walt Whitman’s *Leaves of Grass*, scattered in unique geographical locations from the Huntington Library in California to the University of Pennsylvania to the British Library in London are now gathered together electronically in the Whitman Archive, and can be seen and read by anyone who has access to a computer and the internet. At the same time, genetic critics have begun to show how such archives testify to the multiple hands and agencies that go into the composition of a text. Sometimes, different agencies can be the work of a single hand. The Whitman Archive reveals the poet as compositor, marking up one manuscript for the printer in red ink with instructions to “# leave a blank space,” “indent 3 ems,” use a “one em dash” and a “2 line A.”³⁰ And three separate copies of the printed proofs of Whitman’s “Shakspeare-Bacon’s Cipher” show the author as corrector, in each copy emending “anhor” to “author” in purple crayon. The Dickinson Electronic Archive shows the different hands that entered into the composition and correction of Dickinson’s poems, and it includes the critique of one of Emily’s poems by her sister-in-law Sue that prompted Emily to compose at least two completely new versions of a single stanza.³¹

If the literary archive emerged to enshrine the single hand of the author, the electronic archive is increasingly being used to explore the range of hands that transform a text as it moves from notes to rough draft, from rough draft to printer’s copy, from newspaper or magazine to book. As we have tried to show, the codex has always been only one of the material forms in which texts circulated. But digital technology opens up new possibilities of polyphonic and palimpsestic writing, freed from any proper name or any unified concept of “the work.” To understand the new digital technology, we need to interrogate or abandon the classical definitions of the literary work,

which were themselves the basis for specific forms of intellectual property. At the same time, the book, in the material form of a codex, is revealed as only one of the many material forms that structure how we write and how we read.

David Kastan has recently characterized the view that a work transcends any possible material incarnation as “platonic,” in contrast to the “pragmatic” view that no text exists apart from the material forms and practices through which it is read or heard.³² These contradictory conceptions of the text divide both literary criticism and editorial practice, opposing those who attempt to restore the author’s immaterial intentions by repairing the “wounds” inflicted in the course of copying the work and setting it in type to those who argue that we must respect the irreducible diversity of a work’s historical states.

A similar tension between the immateriality of texts and the materiality of books characterizes the relations between readers and the texts that they appropriate. In a lecture delivered in 1978 on “*The Book*,” Jorge Luis Borges said: “One day I thought I would write a history of the book.” But he added: “I am not interested in the physical aspect of books . . . but in the various ways in which books have been considered.”³³ For Borges, then, the material form of a text is irrelevant; what counts is how a “book,” meaning the abstract literary work, regardless of its form, has been understood. Borges, in other words, took the “platonic” view. But when Borges dictated his autobiography to Norman Thomas di Giovanni, he spoke quite differently about one of the books that had shaped his life: *Don Quixote*. Now, he vividly recalls the specific object that he had held in his hands and read:

I still remember the red bindings with gilt titles of the Garnier edition. Eventually, after my father’s library was broken up and I read *Don Quixote* in another edition, I had the feeling that it was not the real *Don Quixote*. Later, a friend obtained for me a Garnier copy with the same engravings, the same footnotes and the same *errata*. For me, all these things were part of the book; in my mind, this was the real *Don Quixote*.³⁴

For Borges, the “real” *Don Quixote* took the irreducible material form of an illustrated edition that had been imported from France, the edition that he had read as a boy. The platonic view of the text is displaced by the visceral force of memory.

Borges’s contradictory views suggest the problem with any single answer to the question, “what is a book?” A work can be read only in some specific material form. Yet in the West, Neo-Platonism, Kantian aesthetics, and a new definition of literary property have all contributed to the construction of an ideal authorial text that is prior to any of the forms in which it is materialized. This ideal text, however, is only made possible by the invention

of literary archives – archives that dissolve the literary work in the form of a bound book into a multiplicity of fragmentary notes and drafts. The question that remains is whether the proliferating materials that are now brought together and made available through electronic archives will be used to recreate the platonic ideal of the authorial book or to explore the multiple human agencies and material forms that have shaped the literary text and will continue to reshape it in new and unforeseeable ways.

NOTES

- 1 Immanuel Kant, *The Metaphysics of Morals*, trans. Mary J. Gregor (Cambridge University Press, 1996).
- 2 Alonso Víctor de Paredes, *Institución y origen del arte de la imprenta y Regla generales para los componedores*, Edición y prólogo de Jaime Moll (Madrid: El Crotalón, 1984) [re-ed. Biblioteca Litterae, 2002], f. 44v.
- 3 D. F. McKenzie, *Making Meaning: 'Printers of the Mind' and Other Essays*, ed. Peter D. McDonald and Michael F. Suarez, S. J. (University of Massachusetts Press, 2002), particularly "Typography and Meaning: the Case of William Congreve," 198–236.
- 4 Melchor de Cabrera Nuñez de Guzman, *Discurso legal, histórico y político en prueba del origen, progressos, utilidad, nobleza y excelencias del Arte de la Imprenta* (Madrid, 1675).
- 5 Joseph Moxon, *Mechanick Exercises on the Whole Art of Printing* (1683–4), ed. Herbert Davis and Harry Carter (Oxford University Press, 1958), 311–12.
- 6 Margreta de Grazia and Peter Stallybrass, "The Materiality of the Shakespearian Text," *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 44.3 (1993), 255–83.
- 7 *Orthotypographia*, by Hieronymus Hornschuch: *A Facsimile with a Parallel Translation of the Earliest Printers Manual*. First published at Leipzig in 1608, ed. P. Gashell and P. Bradford. University Library Publications (Cambridge University Press, 1972), 29ff.
- 8 Johann Gottlieb Fichte, *Beweis der Unrechtmässigkeit der Büchernadrucks: Ein Raisonement und eine Parabel*, 1791. Fragments of Fichte's essay are translated and commented on by Martha Woodmansee, *The Author, Art, and the Market: Rereading the History of Aesthetics* (Columbia University Press, 1994), 51–3.
- 9 *The Book of Sir Thomas More*, ed. W. W. Greg (Oxford: The Malone Society, 1961), 75.
- 10 Scribal copies can include manuscripts made by an author for presentation or sale. For Thomas Middleton's role as a scribe in the manuscript circulation of *A Game at Chess*, see T. H. Howard-Hill, "The Author as Scribe or Reviser?: Middleton's Intentions in *A Game at Chess*," *TEXT*, 3 (1987), 305–18.
- 11 George Hoffmann, *Montaigne's Career* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998), 97–107.
- 12 William Blackstone, *Commentaries on the Laws of England* (Oxford, 1765–9), qtd. in Mark Rose, *Authors and Owners: The Invention of Copyright* (Harvard University Press, 1993), 89–90.
- 13 Denis Diderot, *Oeuvres complètes*, Vol. VIII, *Encyclopédie IV (Lettres M–Z)*. *Lettre sur le commerce de la librairie*, ed. John Lough and Jacques Proust (Paris: Hermann, 1976), 509–10.

- 14 William Enfield, *Observations on Literary Property* (London: Joseph Johnson, 1774), 11.
- 15 Samuel Schoenbaum, *Shakespeare's Lives* (Oxford University Press, 1970), 193–223, and Margreta de Grazia, *Shakespeare Verbatim: The Reproduction of Authenticity and the 1790 Apparatus* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991), 107–9.
- 16 John Dryden's translation of Virgil, *Aeneid*, 3.445–52 in *The Works of Virgil* (London: Jacob Tonson, 1697), 284.
- 17 Dante, *Paradiso*, in *The Divine Comedy*, ed. and trans. Charles S. Singleton (Princeton University Press, 1977), 33.55–66 and 33.85–7. Our account of this passage is deeply indebted to John Ahern, "Binding the Book: Hermeneutics and Manuscript Book Production in *Paradiso* 33," *PMLA*, 97.5 (October 1982), 800–9.
- 18 Gemma Guerrini, "Il Sistema di Comunicazione di un *Corpus* di Manoscritti Quattrocenteschi: *I Trionfi* del Petrarca," *Scrittura e Civiltà* 10 (1986), 121–97.
- 19 See Ahern, "Binding the Book," 800–9.
- 20 See Joseph A. Buttigieg, "Philology and Politics: Returning to the Text of Antonio Gramsci's *Prison Notebooks*," *boundary 2*, 21.2 (Summer 1994), 98–138.
- 21 Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *Kafka: Toward a Minor Literature*, trans. Dana Polan (University of Minnesota Press, 1985).
- 22 Mr. William Shakespeares Comedies, Histories, & Tragedies Published According to the True Originall Copies, (London: William Jaggard et al., 1623), sig. A3.
- 23 See Roger Chartier and Peter Stallybrass, "Reading and Authorship: The Circulation of Shakespeare 1590–1619," in *A Concise Companion to Shakespeare and the Text*, ed. Andrew Murphy (Oxford: Blackwell, 2007), 35–56.
- 24 See Lukas Erne, *Shakespeare as Literary Dramatist* (Cambridge University Press, 2003).
- 25 Andrew Murphy, *Shakespeare in Print: A History and Chronology of Shakespeare Publishing* (Cambridge University Press, 2003), 255–8.
- 26 Richard Curtis, *The Skinhead Hamlet*, <http://sub-zero.mit.edu/bakunin/hamlet.html>, accessed February 10, 2009.
- 27 See Chartier and Stallybrass, "Reading and Authorship."
- 28 *The Souldiers Pocket Bible: containing the most (if not all) those places contained in holy Scripture, which doe shew the qualifications of his inner man, that is a fit souldier to fight the Lords battels, both before he fight, in the fight, and after the fight; which Scriptures are reduced to severall heads, and fitly applyed to the souldiers severall occasions, and so may supply the want of the whole Bible, which a souldier cannot conveniently carry about him: and may bee also usefull for any Christian to meditate upon, now in this miserable time of warre* (London, G. C., 1643).
- 29 On the Bible as a codex, see Robert A. Kraft, "The Codex and Canon Consciousness," in *The Canon Debate*, ed. Lee Martin McDonald and James A. Sanders (Peabody, MA: Hendrikson, 2002), 229–33; Karel van der Toorn, *Scribal Culture and the Making of the Hebrew Bible* (Harvard University Press, 2007); Harry Y. Gamble, *Books and Readers in the Early Church: A History of Early Christian Texts* (Yale University Press, 1997); Anthony Grafton and Megan Williams, *Christianity and the Transformation of the Book: Origen, Eusebius, and the*

- Library of Caesarea* (Harvard University Press, 2006). "Scripture" itself at first meant simply material forms of inscription: *scriptura* or "writing."
- 30 Walt Whitman, proof copies of "Shakspeare-Bacon's Cipher," two at the Harry Ransom Humanities Research Center, University of Texas at Austin, and one at Temple University. See www.whitmanarchive.org/manuscripts/finding_aids/U_Texas and www.whitmanarchive.org/manuscripts/finding_aids/Temple. Accessed April 22, 2009.
- 31 See Martha Nell Smith and Lara Vetter, "Emily Dickinson Writing a Poem" at www.archive.emilydickinson.org/safe/index.html. Accessed April 22, 2009.
- 32 David Scott Kastan, *Shakespeare and the Book* (Cambridge University Press, 2000), 117–18.
- 33 Jorge Luis Borges, "El libro," in *Borges oral*, (Madrid: Alianza Editorial, 1998) 9–23, at 10.
- 34 Jorge Luis Borges with Norman Thomas de Giovanni, *Autobiographía 1899–1970* (Buenos Aires: El Ateneo, 1999), 26.