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OPERA OMNIA: THE PRODUCTION OF CULTURAL AUTHORITY

ABSTRACT

This essay argues for a more reflexive understanding of collected works in the history of science, and the history of the book more broadly. It touches upon a large number of cases, which show that the significance of collected editions is not understood when they are considered purely as purveyors of editorially purified texts. They can be monuments of national pride, an attempt by a publisher or editor to increase his status, or typographical reference objects. By introducing the juxtaposition of opera and opuscula the paper also argues that the special status of collected works is best understood as a phenomenon of post-Gutenberg print culture.

1. INTRODUCTION

We know much more than we know. We understand much more about books than we can explain. Years, generations among books have taught us many things about their significance, about the implications of their exterior appearance. Yes, you need to know the letters, but beyond the letters, there lies a different alphabet of significance. Those who plan to replace printed publications with electronic documents severely underestimate the extent to which, when it comes to books, we all judge by appearances. Nor are these judgments necessarily misleading. Before we read a book, we look at it. And while we read it, we see more than only letters and words. Don MacKenzie has recently reported on an almost Platonic experiment he undertook with his students.[1] He handed them a book without a word printed in it, and it took them only a very short time to identify the decade when it would have been printed, its potential subject matter, and perhaps even the size of the edition depending on the kind of paper being used. Format, the varieties of binding, the size, the quality and color of the paper, all this allows us to read a book before we have read the first word.

Much of this knowledge about books is anecdotal or intuitive. It helps us find our way in a book-shop or in a library, but there is little conscious awareness of it. An antiquarian bookseller will be much better equipped to judge a book from its covers than a literary scholar who often is interested in the text only. In what follows I would like to advance the understanding of what it means to know a book before opening it.

Collected works represent one important area in which such a raw and spontaneous bibliographical knowledge occurs. *Opera Omnia*, the number of volumes, their all-important size, the "festive" nature of presentation and print, all this speaks to us

K. Chemla (ed.), History of Science, History of Text, 81–94.

with an alluringly simple immediacy and tells us something about the author and his supposed standing, his authority in short. But when we try to explain these meaningful perceptions, we quickly run into problems. While we all have an intuitive understanding of the cultural (and political) aspirations associated with the creation of collected works, we encounter an almost total silence when we try to lay bare the cultural semantics of this genre of print. Go through the standard bibliographies or reference works in order to locate the scholarly work which has been done in this area and you will invariably draw a blank. Of the few titles a search will bring up, most refer to the collected papers of bibliographers themselves. Indeed, if my own bibliographical attempts are anything to go by, very little has been published.[2] This is indeed strange. Even on a very superficial scanning of the typographical universe, be it with regard to literary or to scientific *oeuvres*, the phenomenon of Collected Works appears to be very prominent indeed. While they stand out among the multitude of books, they seem to be virtually invisible to the scholars of print: The knowledge of the grammar that governs collected works is never made explicit. All great authors speak to us from the elevated pedestal of their collected works. Students are taught to quote from these editions, libraries feel obliged to buy them, authors are eager to have their own writings collected in one, and publishers apply for support from third parties when they undertake them. Of all the books that have been printed, those collected editions enjoy an additional and special privilege of permanence and of importance. That is why reprint-publishers find it so profitable to reprint them. Librarians reflect this status in their cataloging rules which make special provisions for filing them: Collected Works come first, and this position is indeed a fit expression of their prominence. But in bibliographical research, they come last, if they come at all. Why should Collected Works receive such a careless handling by the bibliographic community? Children's books, certainly less important one may think, have been the object of many studies, ephemera and miniature books are all very well catered for by book historians, even unfinished books have been thoroughly researched. One reason why collected works have remained in the shadow for so long could be the general orientation of modern historical bibliography, which tends to focus on the single book, the original event of a first edition, which can be assigned a precise date.[3] Collected works do not fall into this class; for the bibliographer they are secondary, they are reprint-phenomena, removed from the scene of original publication. In what follows, I shall try to unravel the alphabet of print by making this genre of re-print my starting-point.

2. THE BEST TEXT

The first collected edition of Shakespeare's plays "Comedies, Histories and Tragedies," posthumously edited by Heminge and Condell in 1623, offers a good example for the way a collected edition is approached today. This interest is directed towards a specific editorial goal: to contribute to the establishment of a better text of Shakespeare's plays. If I can identify patterns in the work of a particular composer who set Shakespeare's text for this edition, then I can arrive at a better estimation of what the authorial MS might have looked like. More precisely, such a study of Shakespeare's collected plays is interested not in the folio of his plays as an event in the world of books, but as a stepping-stone

towards a new edition, presumably a new collected edition. Bibliographers study collected editions with the aim of producing better collected editions. If anything, this seems to be a somewhat limited perspective. Perhaps we should pause and think about what we are doing. Or rather, we should pause and think about what the editions themselves are doing.

This interest in the text as opposed to the event of the text is most evident in a very valuable publication which must be mentioned in this context: Waltraut Hagen's *Handbuch der Editionen*.[4] Frau Hagen is the editor of the supplementary volumes to Goethe's Collected Works which were published in the former GDR. In these volumes she has presented splendid source material regarding the publishing history of Goethe's writings during his lifetime. Working on Goethe, she is very much aware of the significance of the extended romance of publishing in which Goethe was involved during most of his career as a writer. She offers fascinating material on the complex negotiations which precede the creation of a number of his collected editions. But if we open the *Handbuch der Editionen*, which covers about 500 German language authors, most of this historical background suddenly disappears. The *Handbuch* presents a descriptive bibliography of the editions of the major authors in the German language. Rather than looking at the *Gesamtausgaben* as a cultural event, she considers them under seven categories (Text, Erläuterungen, Entstehungsgeschichte, Textgeschichte, Wirkungsgeschichte, Literaturhistorische Einschätzung, Register) and judges them according to their relative usefulness. This is a grand project of evaluation, often concluding with the formula: "A collected edition which could satisfy the demands of a modern student is not available." Indeed, for many authors this is a sorry state, and the *Handbuch* impresses its reader with the necessity to put more money and more editorial manpower into the production of collected editions. The reiterated demand for more and better collected editions projects the vision of a literary heritage in which all collected editions have been completed and a national literature has been constituted once and for all. Overestimating the importance of the literary heritage, and underestimating the historicity of any collected edition, this is a truly absurd vision. Chasing after editions which would deliver the best text, Hagen's work exhibits no sense of the intrinsic interest that is connected with collected works, even if they do no longer satisfy the refined philological requirements of the present. It is symptomatic that Hagen thinks of collected editions only in terms of their philological reliability, as best texts, and that she remains reluctant to appreciate them as historically situated cultural artifacts in themselves, as reprint events which document the reception of an author, the constitution of his *oeuvre*, and the production of authority. In her perspective, the *Gesamtausgabe* is the textual ideal which is exempt from history. For us, it is the typographical device which effects the conversion of an author into an authority. She wants to guide the reader to the edition with the best text, and she forgets all that in which a collected edition is more than the source of the best text.

The demand for collected editions has often been justified with reference to one reliable, authoritative text, to which the scholarly community could make reference, a firm basis without which scholarship seems unable to flourish. No doubt, many words have been set right by critical editors who found meaning where beforehand no one saw any, and improved it where it needed improvement. But any short review of the history of collected editions will reveal that this work has as much to do with scholarly ingenuity

and achievement, as with literary politics, with status, with power within academic disciplines. Editors play a central role in the history in which texts change their meanings in the hands and minds of their readers. While they like to think of themselves as the policemen of textual correctness, they are indeed the tyrants of textual manipulation, creating and re-creating not only texts, but authors too. The cultural advancement effected whenever a book is reprinted as part of a collected edition is the work of the editor and his collaborators. Every publication presents its text in a certain way, and each way of publication throws a certain light on the text. Publication is always "publication as": As a first edition, as paperback, as journal essay, published at the expense of the author, on laid paper, as the production of a certain publisher, as employing a certain typeface, as an anonymous publication, as carrying a certain dedication, as unauthorized publication, or as part of a collected edition, associated with the name of a certain editor, etc.

Competing collected editions erected upon the same corpus offer some indication of the influence of the editor, which goes far beyond creating the best text. At the same time it should be kept in mind that "the best text" is not an ideal which presents itself spontaneously, but that this notion of textual perfection itself depends upon the history of collected editions in which it has been cultivated as a practical goal. Is it not precisely the genre of collected editions that has planted *the idea of the best text* into our philological culture?

If we start to reflect upon the uses to which collected works were put in the past, then we might recognize that the scholarly editions of our own time are possibly much less of an objective philological enterprise than we like to believe. Historicizing collected editions, focusing on the vanity and the pride which they can articulate so powerfully, reading the heterogeneous cultural messages they can take on, that could force on us the insight that more is here at stake than a timeless, a historical act of philological expertise. For instance, it would allow us to read collected editions as political, in particular as national events.

My first example is the French philosopher Malebranche. What happened with his works seems a freak case, but represents rather well the diverse cultural values which over determine the business of Collected Works. At the meeting of the *Académie de Sciences* in Paris on March 3, 1917, the proposal by Monsieur Boutroux was accepted to publish a collected edition of the writings of Malebranche. The reason for this proposal: Such an edition, says Mr Boutroux, would be "la meilleure réponse à la critique que Wundt a faite aux Français de n'avoir pas la tête métaphysique."[5] Here the collection of the writings of an author is nothing less than the opening of an editorial theater of war. With this edition, a certain group of French academics wanted to counter the humiliating allegation of a German philosopher who denied that they had "a metaphysical mind".

Philology, hunting after the "best text", seemed far removed from politics and war. The case of Malebranche is an indication that even editorial work on a philosophical *oeuvre* can become part of a dispute which mirrors the political and military conflict between Germany and France. A historicizing reflection of collected works, which focuses on their import as cultural events, will help us to question the notion of neutral philological work.

Seemingly innocent gestures such as a teacher's advice to the student to always quote from collected editions offer a glimpse of their academic importance. But such advice,

if looked at more closely, is far from innocent. It is based on a set of ideas about what the literary text is, where to go for the best version, and finally on the idea that such a best version can be created, a text purified from the accidents of its own time. One way to contextualize the notion of the pure text is offered by a legal perspective. The law of most countries affords special treatment for collected editions. The law focuses on collected works as being made up of independently published texts, and raises the question how a collected edition differs from a sum of single editions. This locates the problem of a collected edition in the relationship between author and publisher and their agreements. If a publisher holds the rights over every single title the author has written, he still lacks the additional right to undertake a collected edition.[6] He must seek this additional agreement from the author before he can bring out a collected edition. This possibly is why a German edition of the plays of Bernard Shaw in fourteen volumes is being advertised by Suhrkamp with the odd condition: "Die Bände sind nur einzeln lieferbar." The law insists that even if the publisher only inserts a half title or adds a numbering to the spine, he must obtain the explicit authorization to do so. The legal system recognizes a difference here for which it is rather difficult to find a justification within the traditional universe of philology. If the text is the same, if the text is precisely the same, word for word, letter for letter, why should it be a different publication? Why should it be a different event? Evidently, in the realm of print something can happen to texts which cannot be explained if we look at the text only, if we only look at its words and letters. Collected works are an interesting case where the conditions of publication can affect a text without affecting its words.

3. "... *EVERYMAN, THAT PRINTS, ADVENTURES*"[7]

To better understand this non-textual level of publication, we will have to give a passing glance at the system of typographical reproduction of texts. Printing is more than communicating a text to readers. Printing is an adventure of communication with definite social implications. In Britain in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Century, an author of social standing would always feel the need to justify his (ad-)venturing into print. To have one's works printed was thought inappropriate by some, because the world of print was perceived to annihilate social distinction. Print means the reign of hacks and reading maids, as Swift often complained. On the cart of the book merchant, the hack writer and the Lord were suddenly, and very inappropriately, equals. In some circles, this might have lead to what has been called "the stigma of print".[8] In Seventeenth Century Britain, for example, we have many cases of authors protesting that they did not really want to have their book published. They affirm to have been forced into publication by a unscrupulous publisher who had laid his hands on a manuscript which was meant to circulate privately only among friends. Book production, even though it is always also the production of distinction and of differences, does contain egalitarian elements which become more pronounced when the mass of books increases, when authorship loses its distinction, and books penetrate all levels of the social fabric. Collected Works are situated precisely in this context. They offer a mode of publication which counteracts the egalitarian implications of print. Collected Works allow to draw a sharp distinction in the realm of books, they represent a bibliographical distinction which reliably reflects social

distinction. They divide the anonymous literary foot soldier, the hack, from the heroes of writing, those whom we call the classical authors. *Opera Omnia* create a divide among all books in general: A few and important *Opera Omnia* on the one hand, and the multitude of mere *Opuscula* on the other hand.

I would argue that collected works, as they effect such a hierarchical division, are best understood as a typographical genre. Before print, e.g. for the classical authors of Greece and Rome, we possess many tantalizing catalogues which list the works of one author that were once known or ascribed to him, and also some instances of actual editorial collecting. Any such collections confers distinction, but the full rhetorical impact of *Opera Omnia* will only be found after Gutenberg, in the domain of print. After Gutenberg it is no longer the shortage of texts and their doubtful survival, but the excess of publications, which governs the significance of collected editions. They now address the delicate danger of a symbolic loss of status in the sheer mass of texts considered insignificant and a-canonical. The distinction between *Opera Omnia* and *Opuscula* has its place in the business of print, or, to be more precise, collecting works is an activity which takes place in the world of re-printing.

Re-printing is indeed a fundamental structure of the typographical universe, and it is much more characteristic for the medium than the first printing which has such a wide following among the collectors of first editions. Re-printing a book offers many clear advantages for a publisher, and the law of copyright has sought to regulate these. The re-print publisher caters to a well-tested market, he can copy the editorial labor of his predecessor without having to pay for it, and he might even, with little a effort, improve on the work he is copying. Collected Works are a special case of reprinting, in which the author is the dominant principle of selection.

While collected works fit tightly into the economical structures of printing, they are of course much more than only a successful marketing strategy in the business of publishing. They are the books with the greatest status, not least because of the precedent of the classical authors, for which considerable effort has been spent on constituting such texts. Collected works are the mode of publishing the classics, and whenever a modern author is thought to achieve a comparable status in his own time, a complete edition would become due. *Opera Omnia* therefore mark the highest state of any writerly existence. Who would want to bestow *Opuscula* to posterity when he or she could possibly leave the world a veritable *Opus*? Sadly, there has not yet been invented a way to write a collected edition. The production of such an edition takes more than the sharp pen and the quick mind of an author. Books can be written, but collected works must be edited. Collected works, just as social status and rank, are not a purely authorial or subjective production.[9] They involve literary status, which, like social status, is conferred in a network of acknowledgement and collaboration as the result of complex negotiations. Status cannot be produced by the mere work of pen and eraser, even if this is a necessary precondition. The additional role of the editor is crucial for such collections, and it is just as important that most of the *oeuvre* has been published beforehand in different form. The function of the editor can be assumed by a student of the master, it can be the son or the mother, or it can even be the personal doctor, as in the case of Grillparzer. It can be a philologist, a publisher, "ein Verein von Freunden des Verewigten" in the case of Hegel, members of the family for Lichtenberg and finally, since the Nineteenth Century, national institutions such as

scientific academies. And as national institutions tend to publish national authors, the whole business of collected editions becomes deeply entangled in nationalistic issues, contributing significantly to the production of national consciousness.[10]

The context of Collected Works is the expansive and ever growing sea of printed books. If Gutenberg's machine has, in the long run, led to a devaluation of the book by sheer numbers, then the multi-volume collected editions of our (would-be) best authors attempt to counter this loss of authority. In this context of plenty, where every single book is quickly lost in a large ocean of books or remainders, they fight for cultural survival. And how do they do it? They use the magic word on the title, and they are produced in a consistent manner. Works are not printed in bigger type, not printed on better paper, not bound in a special way, but they are standardized. Standardization is the magic wand which can turn books into works. It belongs to the exterior of the book, to the book-physics. It covers the identical design for the spine, in the more desperate cases it might include a design of the spines which unites the composite volumes into a greater unit. Standardization also implies the same height of the spine, and possibly even the same thickness of the single volumes. Well, you might think, who but a mad book-designer would insist on the identical thickness of the single volumes in a collected edition? Among others, Goethe insisted on it, and Goethe certainly was not a mad book-designer. 1786, in a letter to Goeschen with whom he negotiated a new edition of his works to date, Goethe writes:

> "Es wäre sehr zu wünschen, daß alle Bände einerley Bogenzahl hätten. Ich glaube daß jeder Band bequem ein Alphabet füllen wird, beym Werther kommts auf die erste Anlage an, was für Lettern man nehme, und wie man das Ganze eintheilen will. Die übrigen dramatischen Schriften kann man ohne dies mehr oder weniger ausdehnen oder zusammenrücken."[11]

On Goethe's authority, collected works are not only about the text, they are also about the thickness of the single volumes. Collected works are a mode of re-presentation, they present the author and his status, and volumes of the same size are apparently better adapted for this task of representation.

The external identity of the single volumes in a multi-volume edition is important. This can be gathered from an interesting case of abuse to which this criteria has given rise. In 1709, Nicholas Rowe published a edition of Shakespeare's plays in octavo, in 6 vols. He only published the plays, leaving out, for his own good reasons, presumably, Shakespeare's occasionally more frivolous and doubtful poetry, in particular the Sonnets. It took less than a year, and some literary operator, whose name has not yet been established with certainty, changed that. Not only did he publish an edition of the poetry Rowe left aside, he also published it in precisely the same format and design as Rowe's volumes, in effect adding an illegal, subversive seventh volume to Rowe's edition. This case of abuse shows very well, I believe, the kind of cultural conflicts connected with the genre of collected works. The anonymous editor of the seventh volume evidently has a precise agenda: He wanted to "create" a different Shakespeare than Rowe had in mind. At the same time he reminds us with appropriate force that a complete edition is often contested: not least because it is never really complete, and the decision what to leave out, the exclusion every collection effects, represents a significant cultural intention. Rowe's

partiality as editor is not a thing of past. Still today, the most revealing way to describe a collected edition is a list of what is not included in it. At the end of the Nineteenth Century, collected works of scientific papers adhere to the convention to leave out all polemical pieces. They were thought to be irrelevant and transient. But today's historian of science will be very interested in precisely these polemical exchanges, and will draw the lines of exclusion differently.

The production of Rowe's irregular seventh volume involved not much more than some moderate typographical expertise. As both the legal and the "illicit" part was sold unbound, it was not necessary to feign a similarity in the binding. This would make such a project slightly more difficult today. Only in the Nineteenth Century does the publisher take full possession of the spine and uses it to design the book and hence to design the association of a series of books. At that moment the uniformity of collected works reaches a new stage. Given the fact that today the production of such an edition often takes many years, this demand for uniformity can indeed pose serious problems. Efforts are made to secure an identical appearance for volumes that are published as far as 30 or 40 years apart: history arrested. If the book historian looks at the *Opera* of Christiaan Huygens, published by the *Société Hollandaise des Sciences* between 1882 and 1950, he is struck by the effort that must have gone into creating the appearance of timelessness during the extended period of publication. And times of great difficulties these were: All the volumes have the same, exquisite paper, even those published in the years 1937, 1940 and in 1944. The high quality of this paper gives us a revealing indication of the effort which must have gone into the deliberate *construction* of the timelessness of these volumes. Examine the volume published 1944 for traces of its time, and you will find none. A perfectly timeless book has been created. By the testimony of its uniformity, this edition has been produced as valid for all times, a classic, untouched by such minor disturbances as two world wars. The work which has gone into the creation of an edition which remains uniform between 1882 and 1950 throws new light on the philological dream according to which collected works are devoid of history. (Hagen's Handbuch) The case of Huygens helps us to understand that this assertion of timelessness is not a natural attribute of collected editions, but something which must be produced against the adversity of the times. It is precisely the tendency of these editions to create an impression of their a-historical standard. I should think it is time to question this timelessness, and to historicize them.

4. PUBLISHING AND PUBLISHERS

From the beginning, collected editions have been adventures in publishing. Financial, philological, political and typographical requirements must be fulfilled for them to succeed. As their production required a greater investment in paper, they soon became the specialty of the great European publishers. Aldus Manutius in Venice found the format of collected works so appealing, that he even published collections of texts by different authors in this format: His collection of the writings of the Greek rhetors and that of the ancient astronomers are examples of this.

Collected editions imply cultural or political assertions, and as such they have been the object of political control. A publisher would often attempt to secure a privilege

which could protect the work for a certain period from being reprinted. More significant is the role of these publishing ventures in the self-affirmation of a cultural program: One example of this is Janus Gruter's involvement in the edition of Plautus, which was turned into a something like a political manifesto of the "geistigen Pfalz".[12] Heidelberg was a center of Protestantism, and the editions of classical authors produced there have a definite political significance in the context of the 30 Years War. The Protestant parties were very suspicious that editions published in Rome or under Roman supervision were being tampered with Patrick Young, the librarian of Charles I, explicitly spoke of "the Corruption of Scripture by Prelates of the Church of Rome".[13] In this context, the editions of the collected writings of the early Church Fathers had a definite political import, which is closely intertwined with the notion of the best text.

But these political implications are never simple and pure. In the case of Commelin's editions from Heidelberg,[14] or, even more evident, the massive Chrysostomos in eight volumes published by Henry Savile in Eton in 1610–1613, and dedicated to the King, these are also assertive gestures which place the publisher or the editor in the foreground. Savile had lost his only son and had decided to invest his wealth in this edition. He acquired a new Greek typeface in Paris, spend much time on studying the text of the surviving manuscripts, and succeeded to expend a considerable part of his estate on this lavishly produced edition. This edition not only offered a "Protestant" text of Chrysostomos, it also underpinned Savile's claim as a Renaissance humanist, and at the same time it was meant to prove the ability of England to produce great books. Only a collected edition can do all these things at the same time.

On the other side of the struggle of the early Seventeenth Century, the Jesuits too were active and maintained their own publication program. Again, it is not only the publication of small pamphlets or single books which carries their point, but also and importantly the *Opera Omnia*. When Heidelberg attempted to present Plautus as a Protestant author, then the Jesuits went for the five volume *Opera Mathematica* of Christoph Clavius, a Jesuit from Bamberg, published in Mainz in 1611/12. It would be quite naive to assess such an edition merely under the perspective of its offering the best text, even if that is what the editions explicitly maintain about themselves: "Ab auctore nunc denuo correcta & plurissimis locis aucta". Collected editions are never far from the center of the cultural battles of their time.

Political parties or cultural programs love to deal in collected works, and the presence of such an edition, just as its absence, is a very sensitive indicator of the political landscape. But this is not to say that such political intentions could exhaustively explain such editions. The situation is often much more complex. Within the political or cultural position the publisher or editor himself starts to develop his own agenda: For one publisher it is proof of his own status when he sponsors such an edition, whereas another publisher might finance a collected edition because he can turn it into a reference-object for a new typeface which he wants to promote. This is precisely what happened to Goethe, who auctioned the rights of one of his early collected editions to Unger, who was very keen to bring it out because it offered him a chance to advertise his newly developed Unger Fraktur type through the *oeuvre* of a literary lion. Goethe's very words turn into an extended type specimen: "Probe einer neuen Art deutscher Lettern".[15] For Unger, the collected edition of Goethe's writings is significant with reference to his own publishing and typesetting

enterprise. In Cambridge, between 1880 and 1920, collected works serve a similar goal: When the University Press publishes an imposing series of collected editions in physics and mathematics it effectively sheds the image of a bible and text-book printing house and assumes the status of an international academic press.[16]

6. AUTHOR

These are just a few examples of how publishers can hijack this mode of publication for their own purposes. The authors too become involved in the publication of collected works and connect their own intentions with this genre. Authors have been keenly interested in collected works. They were at all times very much aware of the elevated status of this mode of publication: Max Beerbohm's collection ironically entitled *Works* (1896), published when he was 24 years old, later expanded to *Works and More*, is just one indication of this. Collected Works are the paradise of authorship. They would finally justify all the authorial labors, they could prove to the world that their writings are indeed worthy to be kept for all times. With surprising frankness, prefaces inform us again and again that they consider such a collected edition as a valid means to assert the standing of the author, to bring him into the prominence he deserves, to finally set the record straight. Authors attempt to be their own editors and try to utilize these editions as a tool of self-fashioning. For Goethe's literary self-fashioning it was important that all volumes should have the same thickness, and Congreve believes that a sloppy presentation of his writings in print would even violate his rights as a man. He states: "It will hardly be denie'd that it is [. . .] a Right which every man owes to himself, to endeavor that what he has written may appear with as few faults as he is capable of avoiding."[17] If the presentation in print becomes a matter of "a Right which every man owes to himself," then the presentation of the author includes much more than words on the page: it encompasses a portrait, it includes fac-similes of his handwriting, perhaps even a colored engraving of the burial site of the author.

Collected works being initially the medium of the classical authors, they would of course offer an interesting battle-ground for the *Querelle des Anciens et des Modernes*. Already in the Renaissance, authors would dare to imitate the form reserved for the great classics and begin to arrange the publication of their writings into a consistent order, very much aware of the precedents. Bacon, for instance, has arranged his various writings in a way that emphasized their systematic interconnection. With a few words on the title page he transforms independently published treatises (*De Ventis*, 1622; *Historia Vitae and Mortis*, 1623) into parts of his *Instauratio Magna*. Bacon was very concerned to establish such a bibliographical unity for his works, but his problem was that he seems to have changed his mind about the title and structure of that one work, of which all his publications should be parts. This attempt at bibliographical unification is specially striking because in his own writings, Bacon is of course the most outspoken critic of book-learning. But in manipulating the unity of his own works, he was very well aware that the order of books is not as irrelevant as his criticism of a book-culture implied.

Authors, too, are generally very much aware that such editions offer more than the best text. Horace Walpole, for instance, started to publish a collected edition of his writings

with a clear idea in mind how this collection, by exclusion, can constitute his works. Walpole writes in 1768: "As I have been an author in various ways and in various forms, somebody or other might think of collecting my works. To prevent this, and at the same time to avoid having pieces attributed to me which I never wrote, and to condemn, by suppressing as far as I can, some which do not deserve publication, I have determined to leave this collection behind me." (1768)

Just as in any form of contextualization, a collection of writings affects their meaning. When Ben Jonson published his plays in a large folio volume, consciously transgressing the convention which confined plays to the more humble quarto format, he boldly calls the volume his *Works* on the title page. In doing so, Jonson is not only pretentious or arrogant. Rather, he is making use of the great cultural potential of *Collected Works* for his own status as *poeta laureatus*. And his contemporaries understood very well, how daring this gesture was. Writes one of his writer-colleagues: "Where does the mystery lurke, What others call a play, you call a worke."[18]

7. *RETOUR AU TEXTE*

I hope these examples lend credibility to my claim that *Collected Works* are a culturally over-determined form of publication which offers much more than a reliable text. What, one wonders, gave rise to the forced naiveté which lead some contemporary scholars to consider these publishing events purely in relation to the philological quality of their text, and without regard to the subtle changes in the meaning of the texts which are produced by their unification and standardization, and by their consequent monumentalization. If we look at the collected works which have been produced since the Nineteenth Century, the reductive philological perspective appears even more problematic and even more restricted. Since about 1850, this collected works of major European authors appear as *Nationalausgaben*, *édition nationale, edizione nazionale*. They enjoy the support of national academies, they flourish under royal protection, and their editors work in the firm and sincere belief that they perform nothing less than a national duty: "pour la Science et la gloire du pays",[19] we read in one mathematical collection of 1882. These national editions are the background for the war-edition of Malebranche mentioned above. As the great writers become national heroes, their editions become national events. Jacob Grimm, lamenting the fact that Schiller has not been honored with a fitting edition, explicitly speaks of the duty a nation has with regard to its greatest sons ("gleichsam eine schuld abtragend"). In the face of this all-pervasive nationalism in the publication of collected works, it does indeed take a lot of nerve, or ignorance, to approach collected works merely as containers of the best text.

In conclusion I want to re-examine the assertion that collected editions deliver the best text for still another angle. After the heterogeneous intentions and cultural values which can invade a collected edition, I shall now look at the text itself. I shall ask: How does the uniformity and extension of these editions affect their texts? How does the collected edition influence the uses a reader may make of these texts?

Every collected edition offers a structured access to its corpus. It will have to order its texts in some way, and this order invariably affects the relative significance of the texts collected. Put something in an appendix and damn it, place it in the beginning and

praise it, or hide it in the middle somewhere. Instead of a purified, castigated text, a collected edition often offers an implicit biography of its author, by offering its texts in a chronological order. The texts present material for future historians, but in the way the material is arranged, a specific history is already implied. The authors themselves often engage in this kind of biographical edition. In an edition of the mathematical writings of Sylvester the preface reads: "The object aimed at, in these volumes, has been to present a faithful record of the course of the author's thought, without such additions as recent developments of the subjects treated of might have afforded . . . "[20] Often the author himself tells his readers that he refrained from even correcting his more serious mistakes, in order to leave the biographical record intact.

The order of the texts within a collected edition often creates difficult problems for the editor. Regardless which order is being adopted, it will inevitably affect the perception and thus the meaning of the texts. Which text is to be the first to open the collection? What criterion shall govern the division of the volumes? Is the chronological order defensible when it makes an edition into an implicit biography? Is the development of the author's mind indeed paramount?

Collected works standardize all texts of one author into one single format. They cancel the historical singularity of their original modes of publication, and they cancel the differences between the texts which make it up. They murder any texts and make them all look exactly the same, all sterilized to the same degree, free from the typographical accidents of history, and divorced from contemporary debates and contexts in which these writings were first produced and later re-used. By excluding these contexts, collected works erect "walls of accessibility" around the writings of one single author, and isolate him. Accessibility is a dialectical concept: Collected works make some writings accessible, but they do it in a manner that makes related writings less accessible.

Collected works employ a number of devices with which to make a homogenized and pasteurized mass of text accessible. The index organizes a very specific access to the whole *oeuvre*, but only according to the terms or names entered in the indices. The decisions in compiling such an index can effectively hide parts of the work. At the same time, such an index, as useful as it often is, consistently privileges certain approaches: It favors either a biographical approach, or a *begriffsgeschichtliche* perspective, for example an analysis of how an author changes his views about a certain question in the course of his life. The tool of the index has no use whatsoever for a study of contexts which extend beyond the writings of the author. The collected edition cancels all historical attributes of the book and transforms it into a timeless text. Its typographical modifications, its use of modern paper, its uniform format, all that excludes history, and creates a fictive unity for the writings thus collected.

Since Gutenberg, the typographical genre of the Opera Omnia has enjoyed a massive cultural prominence. It has established the cultural hierarchy between those who only publish books and those who have their Collected Works published. Once we have started to see collected works as historical productions which can alter texts without altering their words, we also realize how much more work in the multi-facetted history of this typographical genre remains to be done.

Plurabelle Books, Cambridge

NOTES

[1] McKenzie 1993.
[2] Cf. Bogeng 1920; Halporn 1989; Speiser 1990; Cahn 1997.
[3] This perspective is of course well coordinated with the demands of a market which primarily caters to collectors. A different tradition of bibliographical research is represented by Edward Arber (1836–1912), who had a much broader perspective, produced cheaper books (Arber Reprints), was less interested in literary heroes, and envisioned a cultural history of printed matter in which even the anonymous printer would finally be recognized as the true hero of literature (See Arber 1875, Preface).
[4] Hagen 1979.
[5] Cf. Roustan 1938.
[6] Sieger 1989.
[7] Donne 1622, A3r.
[8] Cf. Saunders 1951, Bennett 1965, 292; Traister 1990.
[9] It would be instructive to look at those authors who have tried to integrate their output into a systematic structure, and who attempted to design their own collected edition.
[10] And if two states claim the same author, they are each likely to fund their own editions, which is why we had two editions of Goethe's writings when we had two German states.
[11] Letter to Goeschen, 2 May 1786, quoted by Hagen 1990, 33: "It would be very desirable that all volumes have the same number of sheets. I trust that every volume will easily accommodate one sequence of signatures, but with regard to the *Werther* it all depends upon the initial design, the size of the letters, and how it is divided. The remaining dramatic writings are easily expanded or compacted [using typographical variation]."
[12] Forster 1967.
[13] This is the title of a book published by Young (Junius) in 1625.
[14] Mittler 1986, 425–435.
[15] Kraft 1970, 123.
[16] Cahn 1997.
[17] Cf. McKenzie 1981, 81–126.
[18] Brady 1991, 114.
[19] Cauchy 1882–1974, Ser 1, 1: vi.
[20] Sylvester 1904–1912, Vol 1, Preface.

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