Disciplining the Author: A Look at the Author-Printer Relationship in America

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ABSTRACT

The European tradition of printers' manuals initiated in the early seventeenth century was vigorously perpetuated in the United States throughout the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Although first intended for the print shop, these manuals also aimed at teaching authors the mechanics of printing, in order to maintain a valuable partnership between printer and author. At the turn of the twentieth century, these texts, along with readers' and publishers' guidebooks, constructed a technical, professional and ideological discourse on bookmaking. This analysis of some eighteen volumes published between 1870 and 1918 focuses on the tensions between the printing house and the author, largely induced by the acceleration of mechanical tasks. It thus attempts to highlight the specificities of a discourse on bookmaking that reflects both how printers were coming to terms with mechanisation (or the threat thereof), and how they required the author's contribution in an effort, perhaps, to ascertain the artistic and intellectual dimension of printing.

The tradition of printers' manuals, or printers' grammars, self-reflective texts about books that methodically organised the knowledge and shaped the science of printing beginning in the seventeenth century, is a long one. While German treatises on typography could be found as early as 1608 in Leipzig, the acknowledged pioneers in printers' manuals in the Anglo-American tradition are certainly Joseph Moxon's 1677 *Mechanick Exercises*, followed by Joseph Smith's 1755 *Printer's Grammar*. American nineteenth-century manuals, starting with Cornelius Van

Winkle's 1818 *The Printer's Guide*, are undeniably indebted both to Moxon and Smith – sometimes lifting entire passages from the latter[1].

Who were these books intended for? Some manuals clearly indicate their intended reader: while some were actual manuals for printers' apprentices, others yet were intended for authors, so that they might become more familiar with the world of printing, and gradually correct some of their mistakes in dealing with printers[2]. The sum of highly technical pages in most of these texts suggests that the bulk of their readership was comprised of agents of the trade, compositors, proof-readers, typographers in the making, but this remains a hypothesis. Lisa Maruca claims that the seventeenth- and early eighteenth-century texts were in fact intended for 'superior minds' who, through familiarisation with the specific technology, might in turn improve the 'systems of manufacture' (326). As a scholar in book history, I agree with Maruca's rejection of the idea that such texts can function 'as transparent windows onto the world of professional printing', yet I hold these as particularly valuable inasmuch as they construct a self-conscious discourse on the art, craft, or science, of printing.

Although still scarce in the first half of the nineteenth century, when English manuals continued to dominate the American market, the American production of printers and publishers' prescriptive texts increased in the later years of the century[3]. The analysis of some eighteen texts, including printers' manuals and other 'books about books', namely publishers' style guides and house reader's manuals, published between 1870 and 1918, reflects a particular discourse on bookmaking and the materialisation of texts by professionals of the trade. This article attempts

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1. In 1978 John Bidwell unearthed a manual published one year prior to Van Winkle's; as it is mostly constituted of passages from the English Caleb Stower's *Printer's Grammar*, I here give precedence to Van Winkle. For bibliographies of these manuals, see Gaskell, Barber and Warrilow, 'An Annotated List of Printers' Manuals to 1850'; Bigmore and Wyman, *A Bibliography of Printing*; Wroth, 'Corpus Typographicum'; Davis, 'The Art of Printing'.

2. See, for example, the preface to *The Author's Printing and Publishing Assistant*.

3. Looking at the publication dates of the most significant manuals, one notes an average of a two- to three-year span between publications, starting in 1867 with the first edition of Thomas MacKellar's *Printer's Grammar* (reissued in 1870, 1871, 1878, 1878, 1889, etc.). The publication dates for the most significant manuals in the first half of the nineteenth century are 1818 (Van Winkle), 1824 (John Johnson), 1837 and 1845 (Thomas F. Adams), and 1855 (Abbott).

to show that these texts tell the story of the professionalisation of the book trade, including that of the professionalisation of the author, in his relation to the printer. Printed in the Gilded Age and the Progressive Era, they reflect the standards in American printing in an age of intense industrialisation and capitalism, against the backdrop of the vogue of fine printing. Just as the worker/overseer relations in factories were dislocated by mechanisation, incorporation and an increased workpace, print shops were also threatened by the disruption of the labourer/master relation. Rather than focus on a diffuse anti-machinery sentiment, I have tried to see how in this discourse the 'intellectual' agents of the printing trade – namely master printers, compositors and proof-readers – were in fact striving to come to terms with mechanisation. Because American manuals and style guides are so firmly rooted in the English tradition, the present study could not be complete without some examination of earlier, as well as contemporary, English texts. A comparison with some of the earlier manuals will highlight many similarities, and sometimes, undeniable cases of plagiarism; however, I contend that the discourse of the late nineteenth century reflects concerns and worries proper to an age of mass manufacturing, when printers felt threatened of losing their status.

This article first attempts to apprehend the conception of the ideal physical form of texts that emerges in this discourse, before reflecting on the meaning of specific terms – art, craft, trade and science – that were alternately used to define, and perhaps dignify, bookmaking. Ultimately, it will look at the recurrent motif of a necessary, yet dysfunctional partnership between the printing office and the author.

The conception of the book as printed artefact

Four common and interdependent standards can be distinguished in this selection of texts, regarding the general conception of the book as a material object: adequation between form and content, harmony and unity, simplicity of dress, and legibility.

If the text was sometimes likened to the 'soul' or 'spiritual substance' (Koopman 9) of the book, the material form of the book was, implicitly, likened to a monument. In his 1893 essay on 'The Ideal Book', William Morris spoke of an 'architecturally good' book (3), whose form necessarily entailed principles of harmony, in order for some organic unity between text and material form to be achieved. American printer and printing historian Theodore Low DeVinne admired the 'completeness' of Morris' books, attributing it to the fact that

> Morris was the only controlling force. No author, no publisher, printer or

> binder, was permitted to alter his purpose in the slightest […]. The result of this energy was a book that showed completeness, with a unity not to be had when the book has been the joint work of many men, even when all are able or expert. (*Treatise on Title Pages* 390)

He thus suggested that the diversity both of operations that went into the transformation of manuscripts into books, and of the agents working towards the making of a book, could in a sense be detrimental to the desired unity. If the days of the printer-publisher were over by the late nineteenth century, 'harmony' was sometimes used to justify the current business practices, more specifically the vertical integration of book manufacturing. In 1911, the Plimpton Press made such a case in their yearbook, recalling the perfection of books made by classic printer-publishers, as they represented 'a single idea from cover to cover' (60), and contending that they were able to reproduce these conditions, through their system of 'complete manufacture including composition, electrotyping, designing, illustrating, engraving, presswork, paper, binding, and deliveries' (62).

As they strove for harmony and unity, printers and booklovers alike shared the notion that the text should be enshrined in a corresponding material form. In a critical analysis of William Morris included in his 1902 *Treatise on Title Pages*, DeVinne asserted that

> [t]he dress of a book should be adapted to its purpose, and be controlled by the same rules of propriety that regulates the dress of a man […]. The book intended to catch the eye of the listless may have a fantastic cover and title page, but the book for a student or thinker should have a title page severe in its simplicity. (440)

DeVinne's preeminence as a master printer for *The Century* and several publishers was undeniable at the turn of the twentieth century, and surely his opinion set standards in the profession. Judging from this quotation, one guesses that he preferred, for US printers of 'plain books', simplicity of dress to the fantastic decorations intended for a 'lesser' reader. This can be interpreted as a reaction to the aesthetic standards set by Morris and his Kelmscott Press, and as an expression of DeVinne's distaste for fine printing and ornamental books. Along with the 'traditionalists', he called printers to 'reclaim mastery of their tools' (Benton 159). Although DeVinne acknowledged the importance of Morris, and the adequation of his gothic typography to the reprinting of medieval texts, he could not abide the vulgar imitations that brought American printers to adopt the Jenson or Caslon type for 'unworthy' texts. In his 1893 essay, Morris himself had underscored the adequation of form and content, explaining that for the plain book, the only ornament 'is the necessary and essential

beauty which arises out of the fitness of a piece of craftsmanship for the use which it is made for' (Morris, *The Art and Craft of Printing* 7).

Between the 1880s and the 1920s, simplicity, sobriety and honesty were thus highly praised by American printers, as well as librarians. While this emphasis on the virtue of simplicity can be interpreted as a salutary reaction to the excesses of the Gilded Age, it may also have served to remind the labourers of the printing trade of their place, compelling them to always defer to the text – and consequently, respect the division of labour in the printing office. Again, in his 1904 volume on *Modern Methods of Book Composition*, DeVinne listed the rules for acceptable 'attractions':

> Engraved illustrations to explain the text, headbands and tail-pieces of harmonious design that close the staring gaps of chapter breaks and vary the monotony of print, here and there letters or lines in a bright red, are some of the few permissible attractions; but after all has been done by the type-founder, paper-maker, designer, and printer, the great value of the book is not in type or decoration, but in what the author has written. (viii)

In other words, as he had intimated to composers in his *Treatise on Title Pages*,

> [m]atter should not give way to manner […]. The compositor should never forget that his work is always secondary; he sets up a title page not to show his own skill or exemplify the printer's rules, but to show expressed thought in the directed manner. (441)

And he finally declared that '[i]ntermeddling with the main purpose of the book by artists or mechanics is a positive offence' (444).

Simplicity was to enhance the legibility of the book – an obvious, yet oft-emphasised goal for compositors and printers. Legibility depends on the size of pages, of the margins, the careful placing of the text onto the page, and, naturally, the choice of type. Printers and compositors found their meticulousness and preoccupation with legibility sustained by scientific research, such as E. C. Sanford's 1888 study on 'The Relative Legibility of the Small Letters', Edmund Burke Huey's 1908 *Psychology and Pedagogy of Reading*, or Barbara Elizabeth Roethlein's 1911 study on 'The Relative Legibility of Different Faces of Printing Types', cited by typographer Frederick Goudy. Roethlein's study of twenty-six typefaces conclusively listed in terms of legibility, the six best – i.e. most legible – types, and the six worst – among which was DeVinne n° 2.

Such studies participated in the debate of the times focusing on typography, which had become the stake of a competition between fine printers and 'commercial printers', as well as between English and

American printers. In the 1880s and 1890s much attention was paid to the materiality of books as an important element of literary culture, and many typographers acknowledged the significant absence of 'good' American printers and typographers. A former printer and head of the University Press in Cambridge, Massachusetts, William Dana Orcutt insisted in 1914 that much impetus for good printing in America had been provided by Morris and the Kelmscott Press, for 'previous to that time American printing showed no originality' (quoted in Holme 259).

Art, craft, trade or science?

Simplicity, harmony and proportion were thus required to make the book what booklovers, readers and librarians, believed it should be, 'a thing of beauty', in turn emphasising the aesthetic conception of bookmaking. Yet the printers' discourse was somewhat ambivalent, oftentimes combining different terms to define bookmaking. DeVinne himself seems to hesitate in his introduction to Hitchcock's book on 'The Building of a Book', pointing out 'how many different arts, crafts and sciences are required in the construction of a well-made book' (quoted in Hitchcock 2). While he seems to have been content with bookmaking as a craft, on the other hand, Dana Orcutt, first president of the Boston Society of Printers[4], was intent on underlining the artistic dimension of bookmaking, lamenting the fact that 'printing has been considered too much as a craft, and too little as an art' ('Address' 1-2).

Art, craft, trade and science were all recurrent terms applied to bookmaking, and are actually difficult to neatly distinguish or oppose, for all involve both skills and knowledge. Bookmaking was certainly a trade, as well as a practice – and a commercial one at that. According to the *OED*, to a certain extent, the notion of science encompassed both that of trade and craft, but remained in contradistinction from art, being founded on theoretic truth and sets of principles, while art, if it be defined from a practical perspective, relies more on traditions, but also involves creativity. The use of the terms 'craft' and 'art' reflects the changes brought to printing – in effect, to bookmaking – in the preceding decades of the industrial age (1840-1880). Michael Winship has stated that by 1880, 'craft conditions were increasingly [becoming] a vestigial survival in the new industrial setting' (69); by the end of the century,

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4. Orcutt left the University Press in Cambridge, Massachusetts, in 1910, and worked for the Plimpton Press in Norwood, Massachusetts. The Boston Society of Printers was founded in 1905.

mechanisation had brought for printers 'deep anxieties about the relative power of human printers and the new machines with which they worked' (Benton 151). To some extent, the realisation of this evolution might have led to a defensive attitude on the part of the printers, as they strove to retain craftsmanship, and their status, all the while defining their 'art' almost in scientific terms.

In effect the printers' manuals certainly developed a science of bookmaking, in a manner prescribed and theorised most famously by Alfred Winslow Taylor in his now famous *Principles of Scientific Management* (1911). Even before the wave of technical and scientific book production of the first half of the twentieth century, these texts indeed sought to classify and synthesise knowledge, as well as draw clear rules which ultimately would contribute to the workman's daily efficacy.

The tasks of printing

The description of bookmaking in these texts constantly and repeatedly testifies to the already old practice of subdivision of work. Put simply by Lawton Walton, 'the manufacture of a book consists primarily of the processes of typography, or type composition, or the setting up of type […] photo-engraving […] designing – diecutting – and binding, all of which are involved in transforming a manuscript into the completed book as it reaches the reader' (quoted in Hitchcock 24). The very number of processes does not itself mirror the number of workers, both male and female, involved in these tasks. Many of the best presses had developed highly intricate systems of proof-reading, as exemplified in the Norwood Press's specimen book for 1916, involving a first reader and a copy-holder, a reviser, and a 'corps' of final readers. Most authors and readers were certainly not aware of the fact that texts were composed not by one but by several composers, which made it all the more delicate to achieve the unity and uniformity so desired. As DeVinne stated, '[i]t is another mistake to assume that the work of composition is always done by one compositor, who can and will correct errors with uniformity. A long manuscript is always set by many compositors' (*Correct Composition* 329).

Most of these manuals thus experimented with a form of task system which was certainly not new in the United States[5]. Again, one needs only to peruse their table of contents to understand the classification of operations into 'mechanic exercises', intellectual tasks and more artistic

5. The task system had spread onto certain Southern plantations during the slavery era.

operations. While presswork and machine feeding are classified in the first category, proof-reading and composing fall into the second, and the 'finishers' of bindings into the third. Indeed, as William S. Pretzer has shown, as early as the 1820s,

> [t]he separation of composing, imposing, and printing into different skills performed by different individuals in the larger offices allowed employers to pay for only the single skill a worker possessed rather than to encourage the 'all-round' printer. Technology contributed to, but it did not cause, a number of changes: the separation between employer and worker, increased capital requirements, reduced upward mobility, more complete division of labor, a flood of underemployed compositors, and increasing profit rates. (94)

One might actually argue that the division of work dated back to the years following the very advent of printing. As Elizabeth Eisenstein has shown, '[t]he advent of printing led to the creation of a new kind of shop structure; to a regrouping which entailed closer contacts among diversely skilled-workers and encouraged new forms of cross-cultural interchange' (23). Yet the cross-cultural interchange of the Renaissance was sharply declining at the turn of the twentieth century, as printing shops generally equated one job with one skill.

However, many printers seem to have resented the reducing of bookmaking to mere mechanics, and were intent on demonstrating that many of the necessary tasks actually required intelligence, and even refined education. DeVinne's irony is quite perceptible in the following statement:

> Publishers decided long ago that the composition of books is so largely mechanical that it can be done well enough (after its correction by a reader) by men of limited experience and ability, or even by boys or girls. The pay offered is small; the piece-compositor on book-work does not earn, even at the prices authorised by the trade-unions, as much as journeymen mechanics in other trades. (*Correct Composition* 354)

DeVinne, again, claimed that the mechanisation of the trade had not, contrary to popular belief, 'relieved the drudgery of monotonous manual labor', but instead, made 'craftsmanship' all the more difficult (quoted in Hitchcock 2). As for the reputed Boston Riverside Press, in 1911 they claimed that 'nearly every branch of the work requires a high degree of intelligence and education' (Brochure 22), and this was certainly true for proof-reading, for which men and women of high intelligence and almost universal skills were needed.

The work of proof-readers, according to the authors of these manuals

and style guides, was repeatedly taken for granted by authors, and sometimes by printers themselves, who persisted in considering it purely mechanical. The importance of their, and the compositors', tasks, is suggested in Thomas MacKellar's 1893 edition of *The American Printer*: 'Undeniable as is the fact that a book marred by typographical errors and grammatical blemishes is a scandal to the profession, it must be admitted that a careful, steady, and competent reader is indispensable in every printing office' (200). This entailed great competence and knowledge on the part of these labourers, as assessed in Pasko's 1894 *American Dictionary of Printing and Bookmaking*:

> [Proof-readers'] studies should have been the same as those of the compositor, but they should also acquire a very careful knowledge of grammar, punctuation and orthography. Much current reading is indispensable. It is well to know French, German, Latin and Greek, but these are not necessary […]. A knowledge of history, biology and geography is very valuable. (469)

The scope of proof-readers' tasks was an object of concern to printers, who attempted to circumscribe them as neatly as possible. In effect, proof-readers are go-betweens, acting as mediators between the compositor to whom they hand the copy, and the author; yet ironically 'the world is little aware how greatly many authors are indebted to a competent proof-reader' (MacKellar 201). Running through these manuals is the idea that proof-readers, invaluable and underestimated assets to bookmaking, should restrict themselves to closely following copy, and constantly 'query' the author regarding uncertainties or inconsistencies in spelling, grammar or other points. For, if

> […] the correction of authors' errors is an important part of the reader's duty, yet he should be very careful not to make corrections where there is a possibility that the writer wants just what he has written […]. The proof-reader should not be held responsible for the grammar or diction of what he reads, except in the plainest instances. (Teall 50)

The recommendation of strict copy following had been initiated by Moxon himself. Yet as early as 1755, John Smith's *Printer's Grammar* left much liberty to 'correctors' in dealing with 'accidentals' without conferring with the author. This 'breaching' of printing practices had gone on throughout the nineteenth century, and it had indeed become necessary to follow consistent rules in querying.

The significance of the proof-readers' and the copyholder's jobs derives from the general goal pursued by printers: that the book should be free of blemishes, and perfect in its uniformity, both physical and textual.

Yet this came at a cost, which, in 1894, was estimated as varying from 15% to 50% of the cost of composition[6]. However, proof-reading could not be scientifically measured in terms of time, and so could not be made to fit into any scientific type of management.

A partnership: professionalism required

As one looks into the specific task of proof-readers, one is necessarily brought to reflect on the relation between printing office and author: while on the one hand 'respect of the author's intention' seems to have been a watchword, and great care was taken to *serve* the text, as shown by Megan Benton's metaphor of the slave, the author's responsibility in the final materialisation of his text is also very much underscored, so much so that we may speak of a partnership. At the same time, the relationship as suggested in the various manuals was also one of competition, as if printers rivalled with authors as they carried out their intellectual tasks. What exactly did printers have in mind when they required, or perhaps reluctantly acknowledged, the cooperation of authors?

Significantly, one leitmotiv throughout these manuals is the author's general lack of knowledge of – and concern with – the 'mechanics of bookmaking'. G. P. Putnam's 1897 *Authors and Publishers, A Manual of Suggestions for Beginners in Literature* insisted on the '[d]esirability that those who prepare manuscripts for the press should, before placing their material in the printer's hands, obtain some little familiarity with the mechanical operations of bookmaking' (235). Some fifteen years later, Orcutt continued to lament the fact that, if

> some authors have a general idea of how a book is manufactured, […] more have none. Even in the case of experienced writers, every printing-office could tell surprising stories to illustrate the unreasonableness born of a lack of knowledge of the ordinary mechanics of manufacture, or of a confidence born of too little knowledge. And unreasonableness on the part of the author means extra and unnecessary expense either to the printer or to the publisher. (*The Author's Desk Book* 30)

Still, he contended that printers would 'gladly give [the author] every opportunity to familiarise himself with the mechanical processes', as '[t]his knowledge, together with a study of those elements which go into the manufacture of a book, would enable the author to avoid *needless cost*, or to incur intelligently such *extra expense* as became vitally necessary' (Orcutt, *The Author's Desk Book* 67, italics mine). Judging from the tone

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6. On this subject, see Pasko.

of certain manuals, it is unlikely that all printers would 'gladly' have opened their doors to authors whom they too often considered negligent.

Elizabeth Eisenstein has contrasted the attitude of the professional author with that of the writer in the eighteenth century: while in the age of Benjamin Franklin, many authors were familiar with printing and actually 'composed their texts with a composing stick in their hand' (100-01), nineteenth-century authors were remote from the 'workshops' and 'readers', and tended to develop a nostalgia for 'scribal culture', worried as they were about the vulgarisation of taste (104). In other words, they had no time to waste becoming familiar with the printing shop. This of course was not true of all authors, and some – such as Walt Whitman or William Dean Howells, who had both trained as printers at an early age – had even gained first-hand knowledge of printing and bookmaking.

But for one Howells, how many actually paid attention to the materialisation of their texts? If we acknowledge that with the rise of professional authorship in Gilded Age and Progressive America, preoccupations of authors with sales was becoming paramount, then the latter might also have considered the costs of bookmaking. For indeed, the requested printer-author co-operation resulted more from the need to cut costs, than from frustration on the part of workmen for not being acknowledged as doing a service to the authors. The issue of expenses incurred by the author's careless reading and preparation of his copy is to be found in earlier manuals: in 1818 already, Van Winkle had outlined the cost of 'time lost by alteration from copy', i.e. 15 cents an hour, and in 1839, Frederick Saunders, the author of *The Author's Printing and Publishing Assistant*, a book specifically aimed at writers, cautioned the latter against their ignorance of the 'Expenses of Correcting', which entailed an enhanced price of the printing. Nevertheless, the phrase 'time is money' did not echo as strongly as it did at the turn of the twentieth century.

In 1907, Frank Vizetelly put things bluntly when he warned, '[t]ime saved is money saved to the author' (60). Alterations demanded by the author in proof took time, thus were costly; additional costs were incurred by an author taking too much time reading over the proofs, as this caused the bookmaking process to stall; asking for additional proofs was also costly. The main issue being that in a printing office no exact estimation of the cost of making a book could actually be provided in advance, in spite of considerable studies carried out by the Typoethetae – the association of master printers – or other printing clubs[7]. How then, might

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7. See Kimball, *Composing Room Management*.

authors participate in cost reduction, and burnish their image in the eye of the printers?

The operative motto might have been, to borrow from DeVinne's *Treatise on Title-Pages*, '[w]hat he cannot safely undertake should not be attempted by the author'. William Stone Booth put it more diplomatically:

> There is hardly a step either in the manufacture or in the publishing of a book in which the publisher cannot be aided by the author. The height, the thickness, the cover, the kind of paper, etc. involve many technical and commercial questions, and, in a large measure, must be left to the publisher's good judgment. The author's wishes are always treated with due respect. (40-41)

Under the famously genteel tone of Boston's Riverside Press, Booth nevertheless made it clear that the author should not meddle in any of the technical aspects of bookmaking. In any case, it seems that authors' taste was often regarded as poor by the publishing profession, explaining why they should be kept away from all manufacturing and artistic considerations. As editor and etymologist Frank H. Vizetelly explained in 1907,

> [i]n [manufacturing] as in the foregoing, the author may fittingly offer suggestions, but should be ready to modify them if called on to do so for some good cause. He must at all times be willing to yield his idiosyncrasies when told they are not to his interest. […] In matters of typography an author's tastes, if they be normal, should be considered; but in this respect, as in all others on which the success of his book depends, he should be ready to abandon whims for the more practical advice and the experience of his publisher. (99-100)

While the author retained the last say, his taste was seen as a potential obstacle to the realisation of a successful book, and he ignored the printer's suggestions at his peril:

> The author has the right to overrule every typographic method that may be suggested by the printer, and when he does so overrule his decision should be obeyed without question, even when the author follows the fashions of advertisers and job-printers, and insists on typography in the worst taste. (DeVinne, *Correct Composition* 332)

Whims, idiosyncrasies and poor taste set aside, what could the author do to help in the materialising of his text? The following extract, addressed to authors, aptly represents the first of four main tasks; taken from an epitaph supposedly penned by a typographer, it conveys a sense of the complaints of printers regarding authors: 'Reflect, when next you wield your potent quills, / And spare the printer all these dreaded ills; /

Revise, transcribe and make your copy right, / Thus save his labor and his previous sight!' (quoted in Adams 187-88). The author was indeed responsible for preparing his manuscript, or copy, and for presenting one as perfect as possible to be composed, then proof-read. All the manuals, as if copying off the same paragraph, insist on this essential and fundamental operation: not only should the author check quotations, give full sources, follow consistent spelling and grammar, he should also send in legible copy. Legibility was perhaps the first grievance of printers, especially before the advent of typewriting in the 1880s, as this pre-requirement would ultimately save the proof-reader and composer time and, therefore, money.

Reprinted in several manuals, DeVinne's opinion on this subject in the early 1890s certainly set the tone, suggesting that authors were decidedly *not* keeping up their end of the partnership:

> We have magnificent machinery, we have everything that is necessary for the promotion of sound literature. We are called upon to exercise the very best of our skill and industry to get out good books quickly and cheaply. What is the writer doing, for us? Is he making his copy any better? Do you get any clearer manuscript than you used to? So far as handwriting is concerned, I should say no. What we get through the typewriter is better. The copy which the author furnishes has not kept pace with the improvement in machinery. Yet at the same time the printer is asked to do his work better and quicker than before. (quoted in *The Bookworm* 285)[8]

Furthermore, many printers found that 'instances' of 'wrong punctuation and grammar' were 'not rare' (MacKellar 183), the author again relying too much on the printing house staff for corrections. On the other hand, previous manuals such as Adams's, following Joseph Smith, had sometimes thought it best for authors to actually leave punctuation and orthography to the compositor, which saved the latter time. As prolific an author as Harriet Beecher Stowe unabashedly admitted that her manuscripts were 'always left to the printers for punctuation […]': 'I have no time for copying', she declared, and actually prided herself on having 'no responsibility for any' of the 'absurdities' of punctuation (quoted in Fields 285, 313).

Whether correctors and compositors should be entrusted with the mission of 'pointing' and spelling, the keyword was 'time'. By the late

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8. This pamphlet by DeVinne was partly reproduced in F. Horace Teall for the Inland Printer, 1899. Teall concurred: '[…] writers make much manuscript that is almost positively illegible, and are often careless in many details that should be closely attended to in the writing' (17).

nineteenth century, manuals deplored that compositors should spend much time correcting copy, and some advocated radical measures to compel the author to take greater care in the preparation of his manuscript. Authors' copies were seemingly so illegible that they had to be typewritten by the printer before being handed to the compositor. At the turn of the century, all the manuals demanded that copies be typewritten. Pasko warned authors of the consequences of negligence:

> […] some authors maintain that it is not to their advantage to take pains in the writing of their copy, as if it is first rate it will be put into the hands of apprentices and common workmen, and they will be sure to get bad proofs […]. Master printers should charge an extra price for illegible copy, or if very bad refuse to take it unless they can employ men by the week upon it. (115)

Every printer's manual actually included a chapter outlining the rules of American spelling as approved by both leading American dictionaries at the time, Worcester's and Webster's, as well as grammar. Differences between English and American rules and spelling were oftentimes noted. The author was definitely not to rely on the printing shop to correct his shortcomings, and yet there remained no doubt in printers' minds that 'the chief source of error is illegible or carelessly prepared manuscript, and to the author's slips of the pen must be added in these days the slips of the typewriter' (quoted in Hitchcock 79).

In addition to these almost obvious requirements, the author was also encouraged to be highly meticulous: most printers requested manuscripts written on one side only of uniform sized, quality paper, with each sheet containing the same number of lines. This enabled correctors and proof-readers to propose and ask questions on the reverse side of the manuscript. Still, one can only imagine the author's irritation on discovering these exacting, finicky rules asking that he fit his lofty and rambling thoughts in so tight a corset. This, however, was an important part of the printer-author collaboration, for it would ultimately 'facilitate the work of estimating the amount of matter and the cost of printing' (Putnam 236).

Word-count, considered together with the nature of the material, would eventually determine the type of paper, type, binding, and ultimately, the manufacturing cost – as well as the publication price. We should add that consequently, this operation also presumably helped the publisher to set the royalty rate – something no author could truly neglect.

Once the manuscript had been sent, flat, to the printer's office, it was to be composed, printed in galley-proofs, and these proofs read by a proof-reader – sometimes with the help of a 'reading boy' or 'copy

holder', who added to the number of agents working on a single book – and sent back to the author for verification. Once again, the responsibility and value of good proof-reading in the office could never be overemphasised: although generally unrecognised for his subtle position – the considerate diplomat between compositor and author, 'the latter being very irritable and the former frequently making mistakes' (Pasko 467) – the 'accomplished proof-reader' was to make careful, informed decisions, choosing when to correct, and when to query the author. Manuals very strictly and recurrently reminded their readers that correctors and proof-readers were to ascertain the validity of their doubts with authors; a few, like Adams, in the wake of Joseph Smith, diverged from this practice, deeming it unnecessary for correctors to 'postpone' revising (Adams 233)[9].

This suggests a form of close cooperation between proof-reader and author, one requiring some technical knowledge on the part of the latter. Not only should he answer all the queries indicated by 'Qy', but he should also learn the system of signs used in proof-reading, i.e. an average of over forty signs. Again, some printers deplored both what little time authors took to read the proofs, and conversely how much time they took, keeping the proofs for so long that the work of printing should be interrupted. This should not be taken as petty and unfounded recriminations on the part of printers, for evidence of this custom is to be found in the correspondences of at least two immense American authors, Mark Twain and Henry James. The horror of proof-reading clearly transpires in this 8 April 1884 letter from Twain to William Dean Howells, thanking him for his offer to read the proofs of 'Huck Finn':

> I cannot conceive of a rational man deliberately piling such an atrocious job upon himself […]. It will cost me a pang every time I think of it, but this anguish will be *eingebusst* to me in the joy and comfort I shall get out of the not having to read the *verfluchtete* proofs myself. […] *Herr*, I would not read the proof of one of my books for any fair and reasonable sum whatever, if I could get out of it. (Twain 441)

Twenty years later, Henry James – without the German, but adding delicious metaphors – would reveal the pressure of proof-reading and revising, illustrating frustration on both the side of the author, and that of the printers:

> The Nightmare of the Edition (of my Works!) is the real mot de l'énigme of all my long gaps and deliquencies these many months past my terror of

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9. On the question of correcting accidentals, see Jones, 'Victorian "Readers" and Modern Editors'.

> not keeping sufficiently ahead in doing my part of it (all the revising, rewriting, retouching, Preface-making and proof-correcting) has so paralysed me as a panic fear that I have let other decencies go to the wall. The printers and publishers tread on my heels, and I feel their hot breath behind me whereby I keep at it in order not to be overtaken. (Letter to Henry James, Jr., 3 April 1908, quoted in James 96)

Anguish and terror notwithstanding, as Orcutt reminded his readers in 1914, time was money: '[i]f the author retains his proof longer than is necessary to read and correct it, this delay frequently forces the printer to work over-time to meet publication-day; this over-time work is charged for at double price' (*The Author's Desk Book* 67). Queries left unanswered were decidedly the author's responsibility, not the proof-reader's or the compositor's.

At any rate, changes to the proofs had to be kept to a minimum, for these incurred 'extra costs'. Judging from the frequent repetition of this leitmotiv, 'extra costs' were certainly a major concern for printers – and should have been one for authors as well. The very printing of proofs was costly. But surely the 'most costly item – the item that eats up the profits – is that charged to authors' corrections', as Frank Vizetelly warned in the opening line of his preface (iii), which again explains why authors should present perfect copy to the printers in the first place.

Although printers acknowledged that changes must be made in order to achieve 'a thing beautiful', the author was repeatedly blamed for occasioning costs that could never be estimated in advance. For Orcutt, there was no question that, if the cost of

> typography, electrotyping, engraving, designing, presswork, paper, and binding can be figured closely, […] the 'extras', resulting from the author's carelessness, lack of knowledge of the book's mechanics, or change of heart as the manuscript goes into type, in many cases so increase the cost beyond the publisher's expectations that the publication can only show a loss instead of a profit. (*The Author's Desk Book* 65)

In effect most publishers' contracts provided for such extra costs, either specifying that they were to be divided up equally between author and publisher, or a fixed sum proposed. Authors seem to have generally demanded far too many changes in proof – or, Heaven forbid, even in plate! – as a result of ignorance of the mechanics of bookmaking. Vizetelly explained that '[t]he time taken to make what may seem a trivial correction is often much longer than the author may expect, through its causing the overrunning of type, the remaking-up of a page, or other additional work' (10), and for this, the author must pay a fixed sum per hour. Some printers asked that the author, whenever changing something

in proof, strive to substitute for the emended parts the exact number of signs. Surely this was expected to deter authors from freely revising the proofs, sometimes even changing the names of characters. Worst of all was asking for changes in plates, as this occasioned higher extra costs, 'every change in "plate" proof entail[ing] the cutting of a hole in the plate and soldering in of a new piece of metal – an expensive process, and injurious to the plate' (Booth 50).

Conclusion

It should be remembered that these 'books about books' were intended as guidelines, setting standards not only for printers and their staff, but also for the actual material form of the books. Their prescriptive nature should not be overlooked: they cannot exactly reflect the reality of the printer-author relationship, yet they do provide an insight into the printers' perception of this relation.

On the one hand, we find that the texts extend the master/slave metaphor outlined by Megan Benton, emphasising the role of printers as servants to the text and the author, as they strove to enshrine the latter's thought in the most fitting dress. On the other hand, these texts sometimes read as long lists of grievances, varying in degree in their railing against the author, who on average seemed not to be keeping up his end of the partnership. All things considered, the authors' taking part in the materialisation of their texts was a sign of their professionalisation, underlining the fact that they were no longer pure, untouchable scribes sheltered in their ivory towers. In an age of mass production and scientific management, when the theories of Taylor and others were put into practice, authors were asked to participate in this rationalisation of the work of printing, through the learning of the mechanics of bookmaking.

Yet, underlying the discourse of American printers was the acknowledgement that the materialisation of texts through printing was not just a series of 'mechanic exercises', but a genuine art. By constantly emphasising the need to uphold standards of printing, these texts seem to convey the printers' reaction, if not fears, faced as they were with the intensified mechanisation of bookmaking at the turn of the twentieth century. Not a few certainly espoused, even confusedly, the idea of a 'decadence' of the printing press as expressed by English fine printer T. J. Cobden-Sanderson in his 1902 essay, *Ecce Mundus: Industrial Ideals and the Book Beautiful*.

In the introduction to a 2010 volume of essays on authors and printers (*L'Écrivain et l'Imprimeur*), French scholar Alain Riffaud suggested that

perhaps, turning bookmaking into the object of a written – and printed – discourse allows the reconfiguration of material constraints into an intellectual object. Certainly these American printers, torn between productivity and art, strove to maintain the dignity of their task, and by the same token, the cultural status of the written text.

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