

Percy Bysshe Shelley's 1819 *The Cenci*
Book Evaluation & Bibliographic Research

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Overview

Methodology

This paper is a bibliographical study of one first edition of Percy Bysshe Shelley's drama *The Cenci*, held in the Rare Book Collection of the New York Public Library. Its call number is *KL (Shelley, P.B. *Cenci*. 1819). I viewed this copy in the Rare Book Room of NYPL on two occasions. The New York Public Library holds three additional copies of the first edition of *The Cenci* in its Pforzheimer Collection, which I viewed briefly for a few hours on one afternoon as well.

My experience in both rooms was positive, and I particularly appreciated the openness of library staff's attitudes towards photographing the materials. One difference between the two research areas is that the Pforzheimer Collection does not collect data on how many photographs of an object its researchers take, while the Rare Book Room requests researchers to fill out a form. Although I understood logically that the form was not meant to limit me, I couldn't help wondering whether I was taking too many photos, which engendered a slight sense of anxiety in the Rare Book Room the first time I visited.

I am particularly indebted to Charles Carter for his help with materials in the Pforzheimer Collection. Although I was only able to stop by for a brief period, he took an interest in my project, found additional references relating to my questions about watermarks, and suggested further avenues for research that I was unfortunately unable to pursue in the time allotted. Employees of the Rare Book Room were also kind and helpful.

Background

The book specifically described in this paper is a first edition copy of Percy Bysshe Shelley's *The Cenci*, a play based loosely on the history and enduring legends surrounding the Cenci family.

As Shelley tells it, the tragic story centers on Beatrice Cenci, a beautiful Roman noblewoman whose mother is dead, and whose father, Count Francesco Cenci, is known to be unrepentantly evil, yet suffers no consequences aside from paying indulgences to the Church. Beatrice is thus constantly subject to his abuse, which includes incestuous rape, with no recourse. She colludes with her stepmother Lucretia and brother Giacomo to have the Count killed. Two servants, Olimpio and Marzio, strangle him and toss his body off a balcony to make it look as if he fell. However, the cover-up is too suspicious, confessions are extracted by torture, and the youngest Cenci brother, Bernardo, fails to convince the Pope to be lenient considering the crimes to which the murdered patriarch subjected his family. Beatrice, Giacomo, and Lucretia are led to their deaths as a penalty.

Percy Bysshe and Mary Shelley learned the basis for this story while living in Livorno, Italy. Mary's letters relate that their friends John and Maria Gisborne introduced them to a manuscript called "History of the Cenci family" in 1818 (cited by Rossington, 2014, p. 713). A year later "possibly through the conversazioni in the salon of Signora Marianna Candida Dionigi whom they saw regularly" (Ibid.) in Rome, the Shelleys' interest in the subject was piqued again. Together with Dionigi, on April 22, the Shelleys visited Palazzo Colonna and viewed a portrait believed to represent Beatrice Cenci, attributed to the high Baroque painter Guido Reni. Less than two weeks later, the Shelleys

and Mary's stepsister Claire Clairmont visited the Palazzo Cenci, and by May 14, according to Mary's *Journal*, Percy Bysshe was at work on his version of the story (Ibid.).

The summer of 1819 was also marked by personal tragedy for the Shelleys. Their three-year-old son William died of malaria, and then they returned to Livorno, moving into the nearby Villa Valsovano. Shelley rapidly completed the play, while simultaneously composing *Prometheus Unbound* ("precisely between the writing of the third and the fourth act," per Marino, 2010, p. 145). He dedicated it to Leigh Hunt, and noted in a letter to him that the new work would be "totally different from any thing you might conjecture I should write" (1819, August 15; in Shelley, 1840). Indeed, as Elisabetta Marino makes clear, "it is the *only* complete play that Shelley ever wrote and even wished to stage, besides being *his only* work that leaves the realms of the metaphorical, the mythological and the ideal to plunge the reader into history" (emphasis original, 2010, p. 145)

The portrait attributed by Guido was the primary catalyst for Shelley's inspiration to complete the tragedy, as he suggests in the detailed description of the portrait in the preface to the play. He had hoped to include an engraved copy of it in the publication, and even wrote to Amelia Curran, an amateur artist and the daughter of Irish statesman John Philpot Curran, about the cost, which was unfortunately greater than his means (Dowden, 1886, p. 279). The play was printed sans illustrations in Italy, in an edition of two hundred fifty copies, and shipped thence to Shelley's publisher in London, Charles Ollier, in the middle of October 1819, with instructions not to open the box immediately (Bates, 1908, p. 9).

The inclusion of the portrait was far from the only one of Shelley's expectations for the play that went unmet. He hoped that before the text was made available to the public it would be performed on stage at Covent Garden, with Eliza O'Neill playing the role of Beatrice, and his identity as the author kept secret (Dowden, 1886, pp. 433-434). It was to this end that Ollier had been told not to open the box. But the play was rejected by Covent Garden and possibly also by Drury Lane. (The latter rejection is mentioned in letters from Mary Shelley to Miss Curran in January 1820 and from Percy Bysshe Shelley to Ollier in March 1820, cited by Dowden, 1886, p. 280; however, Bates believed that Shelley's mention of Drury Lane's rejection in a letter may only have been a mental mix-up, p. 9).

In March 1820 the book became available for purchase through Ollier, with the dedication and preface included. It received both positive and negative reviews--the former from Leigh Hunt, to whom it was dedicated, and the latter from, well, most others. A review in the *Literary Gazette* on April 1, 1820 stated that "the whole design, and every part of it, is a libel upon humanity" (cited by Bates, p. 12). Still, it is a marker of success that it is the only of Shelley's works to have gone into an authorized second edition in his lifetime. Shelley did not live to see the play performed. Its first performance was held on May 7, 1886, at the Grand Theatre, with the support of the Shelley Society and with Alma Murray in the leading role (White, 1922, p. 411).

Physical attributes

Format

The title page of the book this paper specifically describes reads as follows:

THE CENCI. | A TRAGEDY, | IN FIVE ACTS. | *By* PERCY B. SHELLEY. | [horizontal rule type ornament] | ITALY. | PRINTED FOR C. AND J. OLLIER. | VERE STREET, BOND STREET. | LONDON. | 1819. (See Figure 1 for a photograph of the title page.)

The description for the first edition of this title in New York Public Library's catalog is: xiv [i.e. xvi, first leaf blank], 104 p. ; 23 cm. (8vo in 4s). However, because the catalog record refers simultaneously to four distinct copies of this title held in the Pforzheimer Collection as well as to my (fifth) copy in the more general Rare Book Collection, it's important to be especially vigilant of any discrepancies. The measurements of the book vary slightly: this copy is shorter, measuring in at about 20.9 centimeters, and 13 centimeters wide. Boards are 3 millimeters, covering a text block one centimeter thick.

Dowden describes *The Cenci* as printed in "small quarto" (1886, p. 432) while Forman says "octavo volume, rather larger than demy, printed on half sheets of paper and folded in four" (1880, preface to *The Cenci*). Octavo seems to be the accepted format, as it is the description most commonly found in bibliographies and catalog records from auctions, dealers, and libraries. Since the book consists of gatherings of four leaves, and each leaf contains vertical chain lines, as well as a watermark that runs from the top center of the leaf into the inner margins, it stands to reason that the paper began as a whole sheet

with vertical chain lines, divided into half-sheets, which were then folded twice to form each quire. An octavo in fours it is, then.

The collation formula is in the “Notes” field of the NYPL catalog record, and describes the signatures as follows: π^4 $**^4$ [1]⁴ 2-13⁴. This matches what I see in this book; however, the first page in the initial unsigned quire (π) is missing, and has been replaced with two binder’s blanks that follow the flyleaf. The first of these contains a watermark at the bottom of the page, “MICHAL,” and the second has no watermarks. If it were a printer’s blank, it would include at the top of the page the watermarks described in greater detail in the description of the paper below. A full collation formula accurately reflecting this particular copy would be: 8°: π^4 $**^4$ [1]⁴ 2-13⁴ [first leaf of π missing]

π : The first quire, unsigned, consists of the blank leaf missing in this copy, the title page (blank on its verso), and dedication pages (two leaves, the first page unpaginated, the second and third paginated iv and v, and again a blank verso).

$**$: The beginning of the second quire is identified with two asterisks $**$ on the first page, and contains the entire Preface by Shelley, paginated vii through xiv, with a running headline reading “PREFACE” in small caps.

[1]: The fly-title marks the beginning of what would be the first numbered quire, 1; however, the number has not been printed, as a means of preserving the immaculate look of the printed title. The list of Dramatis Personae follows on the reverse of the fly-title, then begins the text of the play. The first page (unpaginated) repeats the title as well as the horizontal rule type ornament that appeared on the title page. (This only appears at the beginning of Act I, Scene I, and not at the beginning of the other acts of the play.)

2-13: The remaining quires follow a consistent pattern of being numbered at the bottom of the page every four leaves, ending with the end of the play, at page 104.

Pagination begins on page 4 and continues throughout the book until page 104, with the exception of blanks and pages introducing a new act. That is to say, page 21, page 35, 56, 57, 79, which are Act II, Act III, blank, Act IV, and Act V, respectively. Otherwise, each page is numbered accurately at the top left or top right, and with these same exceptions, each page includes running headlines reading "THE CENCI" on verso and indication of the Act and Scene on recto. The pagination on page 89 is underlined. The first quire contains pages [1]-8, the second 9-16, the third 25-32, and so forth until the final gathering of pages 97-104.

The last page, 104, is followed again by two binder's blanks (this time without any watermarks but presumably of the same stock as the first two), and the decorated flyleaf. Although several bibliographic descriptions of first editions of *The Cenci* suggest that an ideal copy contains a terminal blank leaf as well, I could find no evidence to support this. (See list of auction catalog records in the Appendix of this paper. Sales dated June 1982, December 1983, December 1990, and July 2000 state that copies are missing a final printer's blank. A copy currently for sale by Bromer Booksellers also claims to have a terminal blank present.)

Paper

The Cenci is printed on laid paper with clearly visible horizontal wire lines and vertical chain lines, thick enough that the printed type frequently leaves deep impressions.

Some papermaker's tears (see Figure 2) and other inconsistencies are present throughout, offering further evidence of the paper being handmade. The binder's blanks mentioned above are remarkably similar, but exhibit a different watermark (or lack of watermark) from the ones evident throughout the rest of the book.

After the binder's blanks, sections of a watermark appear at the top of every leaf from the edge of the page all the way to the gutter, indicating that there was a watermark at the center of every half-sheet where the paper would have been folded horizontally to produce four leaves within the gathering. Since two copies of *The Cenci* in the Pforzheimer Collection retain a contemporary binding, and only the top edges of the text block are cut, these offered the clearest view of the watermark. (See Figure 3.) It is described in the NYPL catalog record as "w/m: [star] La Stella [w. spray]; c/m: G and C Cini [w. Spray]."

In other words, both a watermark and countermark exist, following the common papermaking custom of including one pattern in the right side of the sheet and another in the left of the whole sheet. A reconstructed view of this pair of watermarks would include, on the left, a five-pointed star above the words "La Stella" above a spray of two flowering laurel branches intersecting at the center; on the right, a similar composition, this time with "G e C Cini" over the pair of laurel branches.

The catalog record for the copy of this book held by the Bibliothèque nationale de France helpfully notes that in the copy held there, quires π , **, [1]-3, 5, 8 and 13 contain the Cini watermark, while quires 4, 6-7 and 9-12 have the Stella watermark. In this copy, π , 2-4, 7, 9, and 11-13 contain the Cini watermark, and **, [1], 5, 6, 8, 10, the Stella one. It is clear from the placement of the watermarks that the book was indeed printed on

half-sheets, as each quire contains two halves of the bottom laurel spray either on the inner or outer two conjugate leaves, and two halves of the script reading either “La Stella” or “G e C Cini” on the other two conjugate leaves. The inconsistent ordering of which quires contain which watermark, plus the fact that each quire contains only one of the two, indicate that whole sheets were not used. If that had been the case, there would be a regular pattern of every four leaves including both the countermark and watermark, alternating between the top and bottom portions of both marks. (Constructing a model of this out of scrap paper is helpful.)

Such a watermark is described in detail in Tokoo’s index to *Bodleian Shelley Manuscripts (Volume XXIII)* as it appears in Shelly’s notebook A43, which contains 132 surviving leaves. The whole sheets, by Tokoo’s estimation, would have measured a minimum 362 millimeters by 504 millimeters, slightly smaller than demy, as the leaves in the octavo-format notebook are about 181 millimeters by 126 millimeters (2013, p. 53).

The size of the leaves in the Pforzheimer Collection’s examples of *The Cenci* with uncut deckle edges vary slightly (as deckles are wont to make exact measurements difficult), but they are approximately 225 millimeters by 150 millimeters; or 300 by 225 millimeters together with the conjugate leaves. Therefore each “half-sheet” before printing would have measured 450 millimeters by 300 millimeters, and a full-size sheet would have been 600 by 450 millimeters, larger than the standard measurements for medium sized paper, but still well below royal. I am not sure how to reconcile the differences in measurements here against those given by Tokoo. It is possible that a different size mold

was used, but if the paper size is significant to any further research, it warrants additional investigation.

Citing Piccardi's *La Cartiera de la Briglia e la manifattura della carta nel Granducato di Toscana (secoli XVII-XIX)*, Tokoo also notes that Giovanni and Cosimo Cini, the "G e C" of the watermark, set up a paper mill at San Marcello Pistoiese in 1807 (p. 54). The Cini family had social connections with the Shelley family as well, and indeed, in 1997, a manuscript copy of Mary Shelley's 1820 story *Maurice* was discovered at the Casa Cini at San Marcello and finally published generations posthumously (Tomalin, 2000, p. 10).

Type and printing

The printer's name is not listed in the text and is unknown; however, Shelley wrote the play while living at Villa Valsovano "about halfway between Leghorn and Monte Nero" (Bates, 1908, p. 8). Dowden notes that "it seems morally certain" that Shelley would have gone to the printer Masi, located in Leghorn, who had already printed Eustace's four-volume *Classical Tour through Italy* in 1817, as well as several other English books, at prices lower than printers in London would have charged (1886, p. 279).

It is interesting to note that 19th century Livorno (referred to above and in several other bibliographic descriptions by its English exonym Leghorn) was known as a place where censorship was lax. In 1822, the governor of Livorno named Glauco Masi as "the only printer in Livorno who is suspect" of having illegally printed an "extremely dangerous" book entitled *The Private Grief of Napoleon Bonaparte While on the Island of Elba*, "because of his [Masi's] political views" (Davis, 2000, p. 90).

The type itself exhibits a strong contrast between thick and thin strokes in the body of each letter, with straight, unbracketed, horizontal hairline serifs. Teardrop terminals are evident in the descenders of lowercase “j” and “y.” These characteristics indicate a Modern Roman Didone typeface, and the Italic type used for stage directions and to indicate characters have similarly common Didone features, although with less significant contrast between thick and thin strokes. Both Didot and Bodoni’s typefaces were popular and would have been available to Masi, but distinguishing the typeface beyond this point is difficult. Giambattista Bodoni was an extremely prolific punch-cutter, and 142 series of Roman typefaces are included in his 1818 (posthumously published) *Il Manuale tipografico*.

Although it seems likely that Masi would have used Italian founts rather than Fermin Didot’s French ones, some letterforms appear more similar to Didot, to me: the tail of the capital “Q,” for instance, matches an example from Didot; the capital “W” has three upper terminals rather than four, the horizontal bar on the number “4” has no vertical serif, and the counter of the lowercase “a” droops. That said, my comparison relies on modern font revivals (using Identifont.com’s comparison tool and other specimens readily available online), and there are hundreds of variations of typefaces that could have been used, so I am confident only in claiming this book to be printed in a Didone typeface. (See Figures 4 and 5 for an example of typographic comparisons of the capital letter Q to modern revivals of Bodoni, Didot, and Baskerville typefaces.)

Both the Italic and Roman typefaces used are present in a variety of sizes, ranging from 8 millimeters (about 22 point) type used for both the main title and fly-title to tiny 2

millimeter (about 5 point) capitals used to indicate the publisher on the title page. (These point measurements were converted by Google from millimeter measurements I took using the tape measure provided for me in the Rare Book Room. In the future, I would use a transparent typesetter's ruler to ensure greater accuracy.)

Percey Bysshe Shelley requested several corrections in a letter to his publisher Ollier in April 1820, to guide his publication of the second edition. The list of errata, written in Mary's hand, are published in Forman's *Shelley Library*. They include exchanging the word "slave" for "vassal" on page 11, "shall" for shalt" on page 8, "no one" for "not one" on page 18, and so forth: mostly line edits rather than printer's errors. There are eleven such items in total, and the letter with which they were enclosed states that in addition to correcting these errors, "the correctness of the forms of typography &c. which are considerably numerous, you will be so obliging as to attend to yourself. I cannot describe the trouble I had with the Italian printer" (quoted in Forman, 1886, p. 91).

Yet such typographical errors are remarkably fewer than one might expect from such a severe complaint. There is one italic "r" that appears upside-down on page 70 in every copy of this book I saw, and a few examples of type with lost serifs or other breakage of the type. (See Figures 6 through 8 for a few examples.) The inking is also not entirely consistent. It appears heavier in some areas and lighter in others; the last quire in particular is generally light in all the copies I examined. However, this is all in accordance with what one might expect from hand-printed type, and does not affect readability.

Covers, casing, and binding

The book is housed in a later binding, significantly different in appearance from the two copies with contemporary blue paper bindings in the Pforzheimer Collection. The contemporary bindings are loosely sewn, one with wastepaper visible behind the spine, and the other rebacked for additional support. Both retain the label indicating the book's price (cut and added to the rebacked spine) as 4s. 6d. *bds.* In other words, 4 shillings, 6 pennies, and indicating the paper boards. (See Figures 9 and 10.)

This copy, however, has been transferred into a brown morocco case binding. A small stamp on the verso of the initial decorated flyleaf reads "Tout binder," indicating that it is likely the work of Victorian binder Samuel Tout of London, who worked out of Nassau Street in Soho, London from 1868 to 1879 and Whitechapel from 1880 (Brass, n.d., p. 62).

It is bound more tightly than the examples of *The Cenci* in contemporary bindings. Nonetheless, sewing threads are still visible in the center of some of the gatherings. There are fifteen holes for sewing stations through which the binder has pulled thread, but not all holes are used for the sewing of each gathering; most commonly the thread seems to be pulled through every other or so. The main means of keeping the entire text block together looks like a kettle stitch at very close intervals, or possibly stab-sewing, in addition to sewing through the folds. It is difficult to tell much about the sewing method in the book's current state, since the text block does not open flat. The fact that the initial blank leaf is missing from the first gathering suggests that stab-sewing might have been necessary; otherwise, the leaf that should have been conjugate would come loose.

On the outside, the spine is divided by five false raised bands blind tooled with a line in the center to give the impression of the text block having been sewn on double cords. This tooling follows the edges of the false bands and continues on to the upper and lower boards as narrow blind-tooled triangles. These triangles visually reference the practice of tying off raised bands for articulation and adherence to the leather during the bookbinding process. (See Figure 11 for a demonstration of this part of the bookbinding process, and Figure 12 for comparison to the binding at hand.) Their use as a common decorative element in conjunction with false bands might be taken as further evidence of the late 19th century concern with resembling older traditions visually but not structurally, in order to add the perception of value while simultaneously taking advantage of more expedient and inexpensive contemporary methods.

The title is gilt tooled in the second compartment of the spine, the author's name (as P. B. Shelley) in the third, and place and date of publication (London 1819) at the very bottom of the final compartment. Also on the book's exterior, thin gilt rules run along the edges of the cover and the rounded top and bottom edge of the spine. Endbands in three colors have been added, as well as a red bookmark. These details altogether are a nice hint heralding the interior of the cover, which is decorated much more sumptuously than the exterior: a gilt inside dentelle and two more thin rules surround decorative endsheets.

The endsheets are smoothly surfaced with a pale mint background and a pattern of irregularly shaped lichen-colored spots edged with darker green, reminiscent in look to tiny dried coffee splash stains, or a blot of watercolor pooling at its edges. A few pale and

fuzzy areas of light purple are evident in the background, too. The flyleaves facing out have faded along the three edges that close onto the leather turn-ins. (See Figure 13).

These endsheets are not marbled, strictly speaking, but appear more similar to what R. J. Wolfe has identified as “imitation or pseudo-marbled” papier d’Annonay (1990, p. 113-115). Einen Miura, describing a related German (Gustav) pattern, explains that instead of being created in a vat, papers decorated in this style were coated in color, and then marbling brushes were used to sprinkle, splatter, or sponge additional color onto the surface, resulting in the patterns of dispersion and haloing evident here. M. Montgolfier and others began practicing further innovations of this German technique in the 1820s (Wolfe, 1990, p. 47).

Based on Wolfe’s plate XX, numbers 4-7 (reproduced poorly in Figure 14), this example appears closest specifically to the type of Annonay paper called “papier tourniquet,” which was made in both France and Germany during the 1830s and 1840s, and of course in other regions in later years. According to Wolfe, “the papiers d’Annonay and agates and other artificial designs were never used as endpapers in books, *but as cover papers only*” [emphasis original] (p. 115). Perhaps they truly never were used as endpapers, and my research into this pattern has floundered (this is quite possible and seems most likely). But perhaps some pseudo-marbled papers were recovered by Tout and used in this unconventional manner, or the technique was picked up by a London craftsman not so beholden to the tradition of using the style only for covers.

The text block is gilt on all edges, which has preserved the pages inside very well. By contrast, the uncut examples of this book demonstrate the negative side effects of

retaining the deckle edges: the two copies in the Pforzheimer Collection have picked up quite a bit of dirt and discoloration over their lifetimes, while this copy is immaculate.

Provenance

There is a plate on the inside front cover identifying this copy as a gift given to the New York Public Library in memory of Francis Minot Weld, 1875-1949. Several other books in the New York Public Library's Rare Book Collection came from Weld, and of these, many are in original or contemporary bindings, so it seems unlikely that Weld would have taken the book to be bound for himself; he is likely to have purchased or received it in essentially its current state.

Clippings from auctions tucked into the book between its flyleaf and back cover describe three auction catalog entries for similar copies: one in original boards enclosed in a morocco case, one in original boards and uncut, and finally, one in "brown levant morocco, gilt inside borders, gilt edges, by Tout." This latter clipping has a handwritten note, "Anderson, October 27, 1911, W.A.W. \$80." The description matches this volume, and *American Book-Prices Current, Volume 18* from 1912 does list a sale on that date for "Selections from the Private Library of a Brooklyn Collector. Sold in New York by the Anderson Auction Co." (p. xi) and, in the index listing titles, an entry under *The Cenci* reading "lev. mor., g.e., A., Oct. 27, '11. (143) \$80.00" (p. 718). I was not able to find further information about which collector the Anderson Auction Company sold this book on behalf of.

Evaluation

Research value

Although it has received less scholarly study than most of Shelley's other works, possibly due to its being so dissimilar from the rest of his oeuvre, *The Cenci* is undoubtedly a worthy subject for researchers of British literature--arguably for the same reason. There are few papers on it from recent years, though in a lecture given to the Shelley Society in 1887, Forman glowingly described *The Cenci* as "the greatest tragedy produced since Shakespeare's hand left working in that kind" (1888, p. 85).

A search for the controlled vocabulary term "CENCI, The (Play : Shelley)" in EBSCOhost Academic Search Premier on November 20, 2017 retrieved one scholarly article from 2013, two from 2012, one from 2000; the rest were published over ten years ago. Google Scholar tends to provide access to much more recent articles, and shows that several more articles and chapters have appeared between 2013 and 2017. Without human-assisted subject headings like those EBSCO offers, it is more difficult to disambiguate articles dealing with other authors' representations of the story, or articles mentioning *The Cenci* only tangentially rather than as a primary topic; therefore, I have not attempted to quantify relevant articles. Still, purely subjectively, the scholarly landscape surrounding this particular play is less significant than I expected.

Bates' 1908 study represents one significant early attempt to rescue *The Cenci* from its overlooked status. (The earliest was Wilhelm Wagner's 1903 German-language dissertation *Shelley's "The Cenci," Analyse, Quellen, und innerer Zusammenhang mit des*

Dichters Ideen, according to Curran, 1970, pp. 28-29.) Bates notes that *The Cenci* is interesting particularly as an example of Shelley attempting to renew a historical subject, and as the only example of a completed attempt in “regular drama” (1908, p. 2).

The play has largely also been studied in the context of Shelley’s other drama written simultaneously and published in 1819, *Prometheus Unbound*, with Beatrice’s character studied in contrast to that of Prometheus (for instance, by Rieger, who positions her in his 1967 *Mutiny* as a heretical Shelley’s Satan, pp. 125-126, or Marino, who considers the two as contrasting illustrations of methods for dealing with despotism, 2010, p. 145).

Given that the history and framing of the play, it is well-positioned to resurface as an object of study to researchers of textual transmission and the intertwining histories of oral, written, and printed information. Further research may involve studying the first edition in the context of the manuscript translations and drafts for the play, if extant, as well as the corrigenda supplied to the publisher for the second edition, to support claims regarding authorial intent. One such exploration from recent years that touches upon these topics has been Potkay’s “Incest as Theology in Shelley’s *The Cenci*” (2004), in which the author argues that Shelley’s inclusion of incestuous rape in *The Cenci* may not have had a textual source, but was either invented or given a centrality in the story supported neither by historical understanding nor by “Relazione,” the manuscript named in the play’s Preface.

Analysis of the language and all corrigenda communicated following *The Cenci*’s first publication may also have potential for researchers interested in collaborative writing

processes, or in the writing relationship between Percy Bysshe Shelley and Mary Shelley, since its writing followed a circuitous path: she copied and possibly also translated the manuscript, he encouraged her to write the dramatization of the story before taking on the task himself, and thereafter she was involved in its production. “This tragedy is the only one of his works that he communicated to me during its progress. We talked over the arrangement of the scenes together,” wrote Mary Shelley in a letter (cited by Kim, 2012, p. 767).

Mary Shelley was also involved in revisions to *The Cenci*. These collaborations and continued revisions complicate the task of providing an authoritative edition. The 2008 publication of *The Cenci* by Valancourt Press is based on the 1819 edition, and its blurb claims it to be “the first edition ever to present the text as Shelley intended it, rather than based on the emendations of later editors, such as his wife, Mary Shelley, who revised the text after his death.”

As a matter of history, *The Cenci* also shows English perceptions of Italian history and culture, including religious and political tyranny, male and female roles, corruption, secrecy, and intrigue. Shelley used terrifying and titillating Gothic elements to produce a play which he believed would see dramatic and commercial success. Analyzing the reception that actually followed, and studying the ownership of the books which were produced, and how they were used by their readers, has the potential to enlighten scholars interested in such questions as how English audiences were willing to explore these ideas. Perhaps they preferred to contemplate the seedy underbelly of Renaissance Italy from between the privacy of a book’s covers rather than on a public stage, for instance. The

relationship between critical reviews and actual sales is another interesting avenue to explore as a matter of public reception, too.

The Cenci's themes also lend themselves well to critical study under a variety of lenses that have become more common in recent years: feminism and sexual violation, familial inheritance of trauma, patriarchal corruption, and gendering of economic and domestic spheres. (Lia Criselda Lim Pun-Chuen's 2005 dissertation "Social Disruption in the Gothic Novels of Horace Walpole, Elizabeth Inchbald, and Jane Austen" does not include Shelley, but several of the themes listed above are addressed as an exploration of the ways key Gothic plot conventions related to sexual politics in eighteenth-century England.) Researchers studying such topics would also benefit from attending to whatever physical evidence the book provides as to the context in which it was produced, and, afterwards, how it was received by its author, his associates, and society at large.

Extant copies

In addition to the five copies held at the New York Public Library, the following institutional holdings are visible on OCLC WorldCat:

- Morgan Library, uncut copy bound with original boards, in red morocco case.
- Morgan Library, Gordon N. Ray Collection, with green morocco exhibition fanfare binding by Zaehnsdorf, brown morocco doublures tooled in gilt.
- National Art Library of Great Britain, Dyce Collection, donated by the Rev. Alexander Dyce.
- Bibliothèque nationale de France

- University of Sussex, The Keep Special Collections, Caffyn Collection, bound with other poems and lettered on spine as Shelley's Poems, Volume II.
- The British Library, St. Pancras
- Deutsche Nationalbibliothek, Leipzig / Frankfurt am Main

Microform versions are available at a number of other institutions, including the European Register of Microform and Digital Masters, St. John's University in Queens. HathiTrust does not include a full-text electronic copy of the 1819 edition, but only those published in 1821, 1837, 1886, and 1903.

A partial list of past sales enumerated in *American Book Prices Current* and elsewhere, plus current copies available and being sold online, can be found in Appendix of this paper. It is likely that some copies appear on both these lists or are listed multiple times in *ABPC*, having changed ownership at various points. My estimation on the basis of these is that at least fifty distinct copies are recorded; it is very likely that there are more in the world that are simply not represented in library or auction catalogs.

Valuation

This copy sold in 1911 at a price slightly below but comparable to other copies sold around the same time, so I would expect for its appreciation to follow the same general pattern as other copies in similar condition. See Appendix A for a partial listing of past sales of *The Cenci* first edition copies, which indicate the increase in price (and inflation of the US dollar, not adjusted for) over the years.

Current sale prices for the first edition range from an auction sale of \$2,583 to a bookseller's asking price of \$7,500. The latter example also has association value, so it is priced higher than most. The former, less expensive price is more useful for the purposes of establishing the value of this particular book, since it is also housed in a later binding with similar decoration as the present copy; however, most of the listings of this book at prices below \$3,000 have condition notes like browned, foxed, spotted pages, and it would not surprise me if the copy that sold for \$2,583 exhibited similar problems. The presence or lack of the initial printer's blank in the prelim, on the other hand, does not seem to be much of a factor in pricing.

The condition of this book is excellent, especially in comparison to the contemporary bindings in the Pforzheimer Collection; however, their thumb-stained pages and evidence of the time period demonstrate greater historical value to scholars of Shelley and his time period. This copy, in reflecting the concerns of binders and book collectors in the late 19th and early twentieth century, offers historical value of a different sort. Even the endpapers alone are interesting (to me), although they are slightly strained and beginning to separate in the opening gutter. The binding is a good example of later 19th-century fine binding, albeit with slightly worn hinges and bumped corners.

It may also be helpful to compare similar examples of the binder's work, and not solely rely on copies of the same title and same edition to determine this book's potential monetary value. The most comparable recent examples of similar books bound by Tout with prices available through *American Book Prices Current* online are a (rebacked) copy of Shelley's *Posthumous Poems*, which sold for £300 (\$378) in 2016, and a Tout binding

of a “foxed and soiled” first issue *Prometheus Unbound*, which sold in 2010 for £700 (\$1,051).

Considering the condition and the level of detailed knowledge evident with regard to binding and provenance, I would estimate the value of this book between \$4,000 and \$5,000.

Exhibition loans

The good condition of this book also makes it a good candidate for an exhibition. If another institution or department within the library were interested in displaying it, I would not hesitate to approve it, assuming all normal conditions of loaning were met, and that no researchers were expected to need it throughout the duration of the exhibition.

It might not be the first choice for a curator interested in exhibiting a first edition of *The Cenci*, since copies in the Pforzheimer have several more visually interesting and historically significant details: two in original boards; one with a guarded leaf containing the portrait of Beatrice that Shelley had hoped to include, plus a tipped-in note regarding it; and one with corrections to the text in what is possibly either Percy Bysshe or Mary’s hand. The fragility of the original bindings and the high value of the other two in terms of both research and monetary value makes them less ideal candidates to loan, so if this copy could do as well, it should be recommended instead.

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Figures

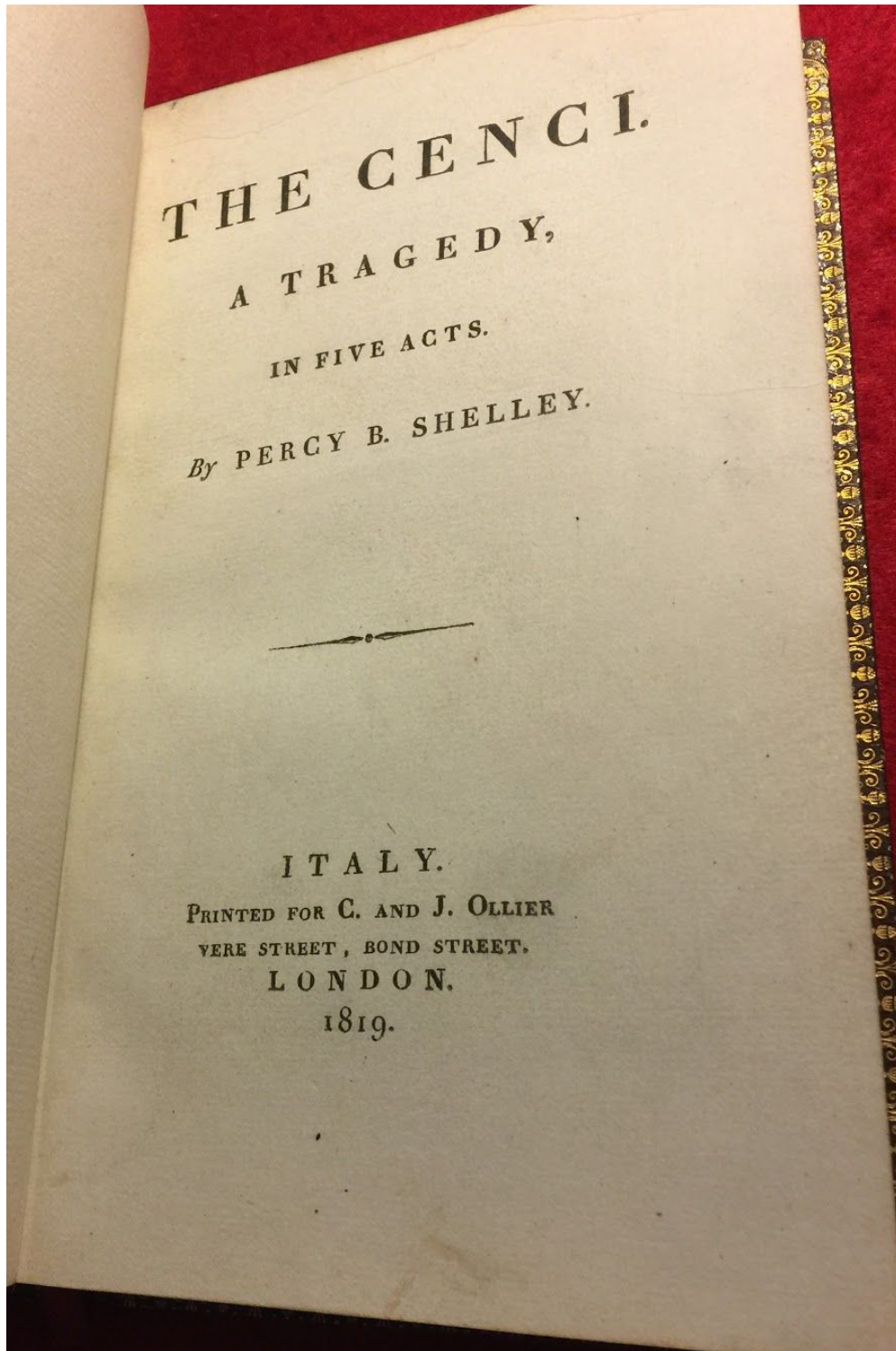


Figure 1. Title page of *The Cenci. A Tragedy, in Five Acts*, copy *KL (Shelley, P.B. Cenci, 1819)

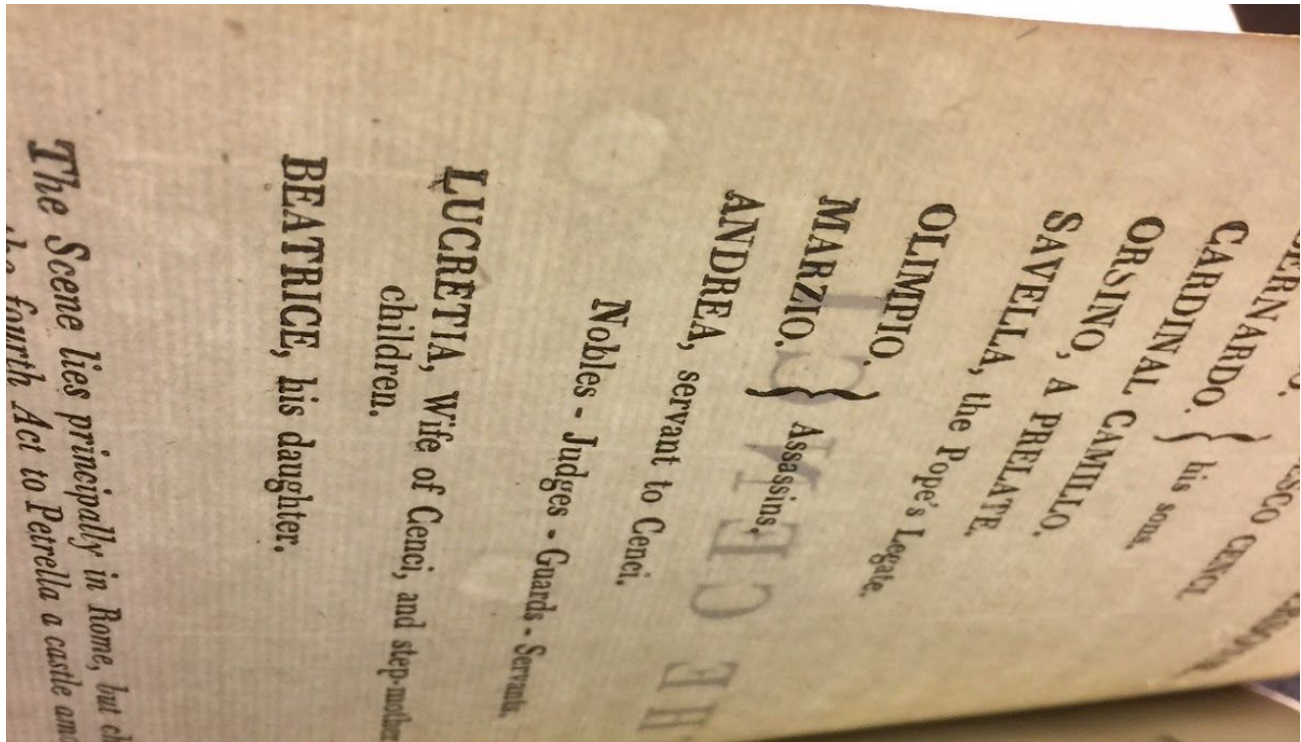
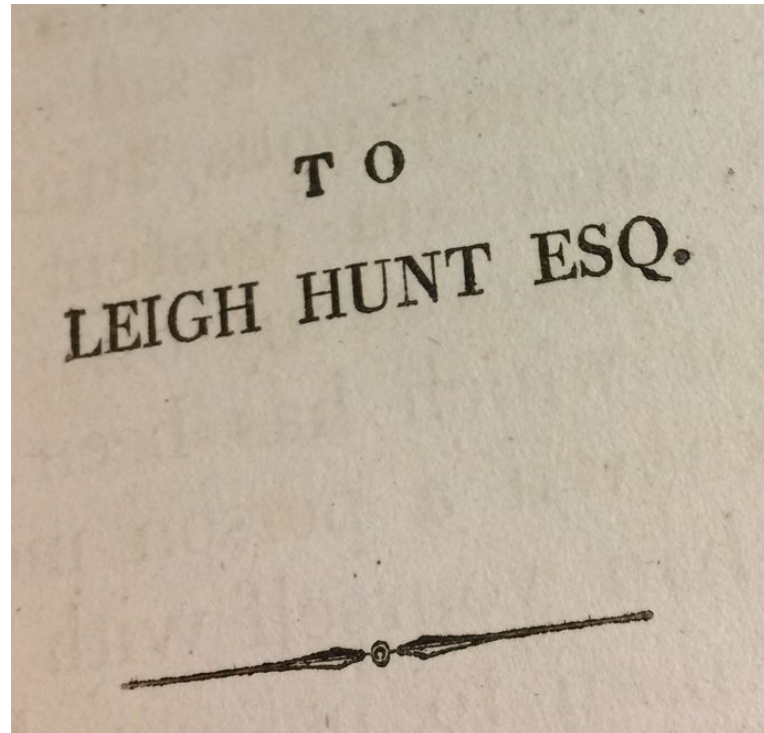
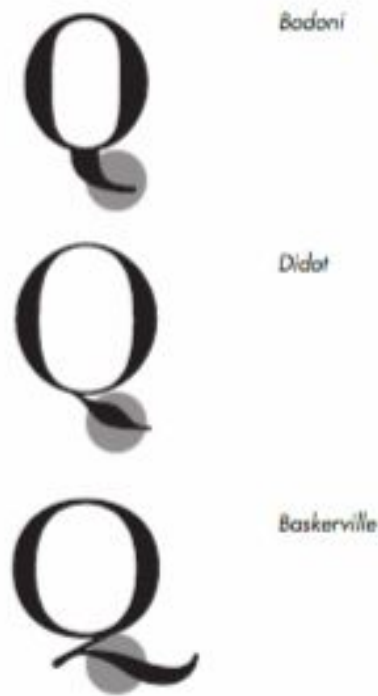


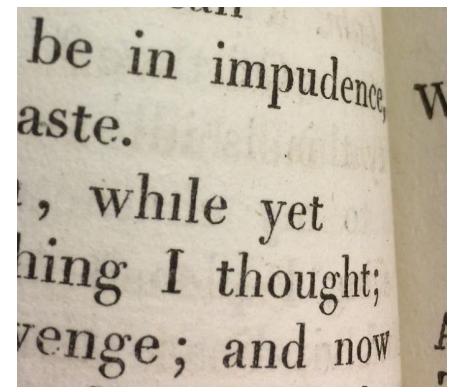
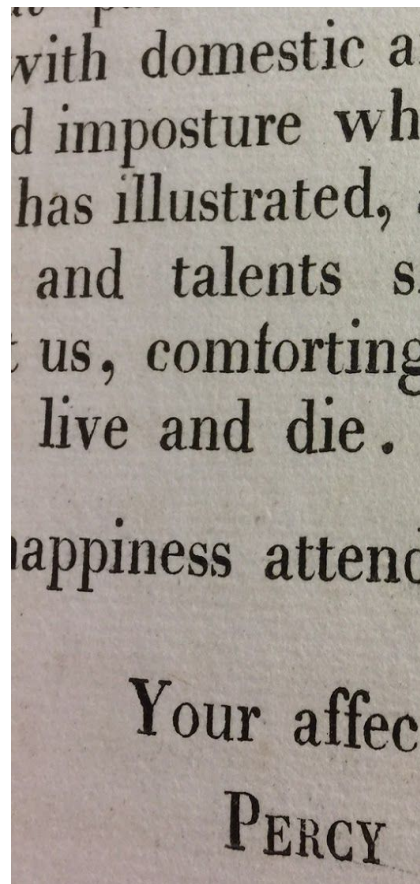
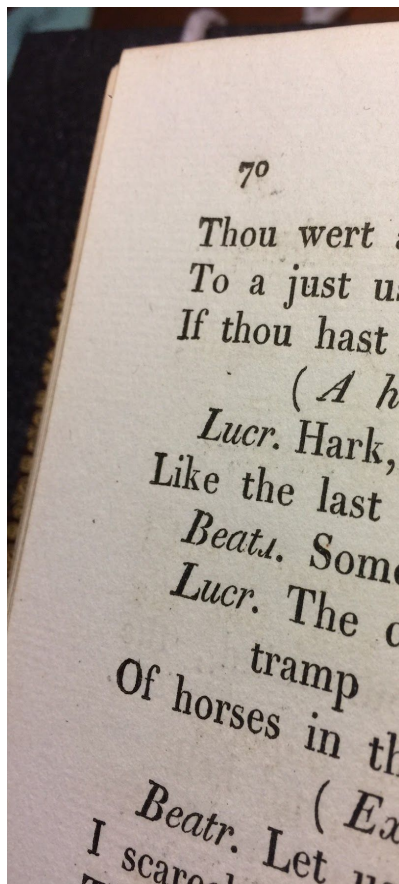
Figure 2. Thin wire lines running parallel to the text, with papermaker's tears visible as light spots.



Figure 3. A high-contrast image demonstrating the subtle watermark on the top of each leaf of *The Cenci*: here we see a section of the laurels. As the tag indicates, this is one of the copies in original boards in the Pforzheimer Collection. The larger size of the untrimmed leaves, looser binding, and even the low light in the Pforzheimer reading room, made this easier to use as an example, but the same evidence is present in the main copy addressed throughout this paper.



Figures 4 and 5. The comparison at right of the capital Q in three similar Modern Roman typeface designs comes from a student design project by Rachel Healey for a class at Washington University in 2015. At left, see the similarity of the Q in *The Cenci* to the Didot sample.



Figures 6-8. Some typographical oddities. Figure 6. Seven lines down, a lowercase "r" set upside down. Figure 7. Five lines down, a broken "f" lost its terminal. Note also that no ligature is used for "ff." Figure 8. Three lines up from the bottom, the "i" in "while" missing its dot.

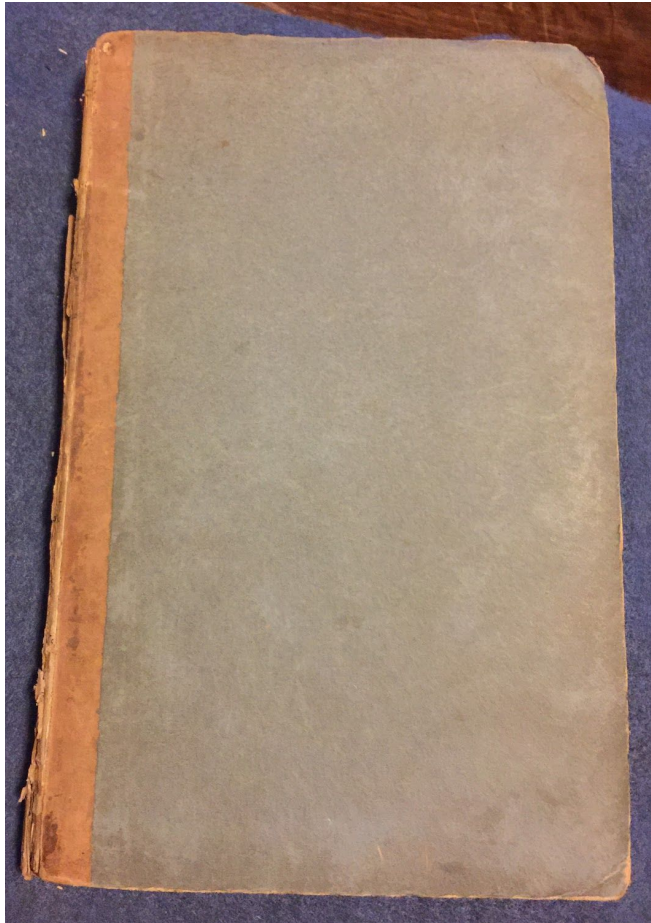
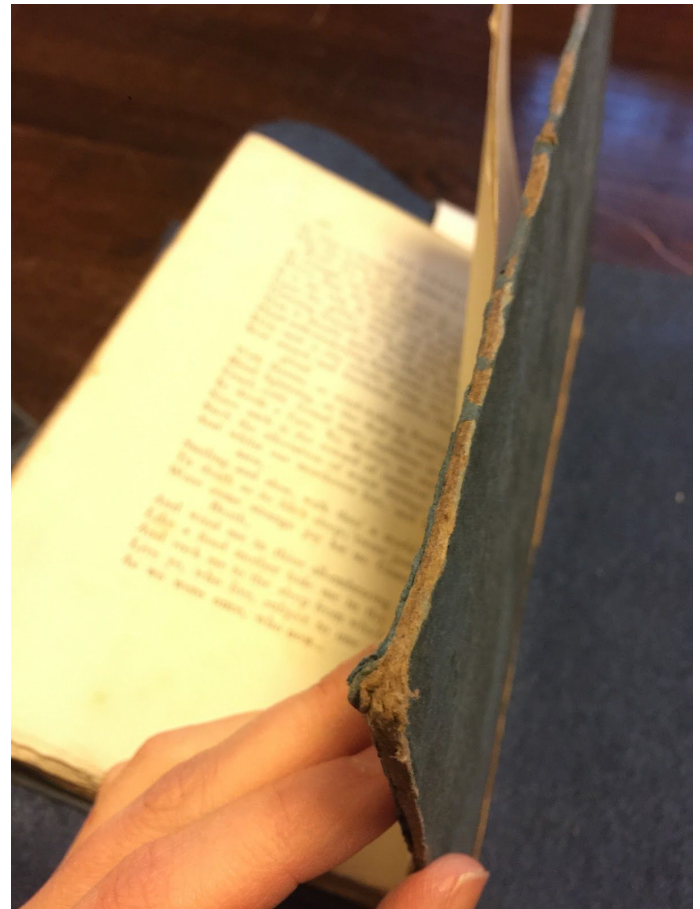


Figure 9.
Left,
Pforzheimer
copy in original
blue paper
boards, with
wastepaper
visible on the
very brittle
spine.

Figure 10.
Right, another
Pforzheimer
copy in original
blue paper
boards. This
copy has been
rebacked and
the original title
and price
added. The
boards also
show clear
evidence of
major wear.



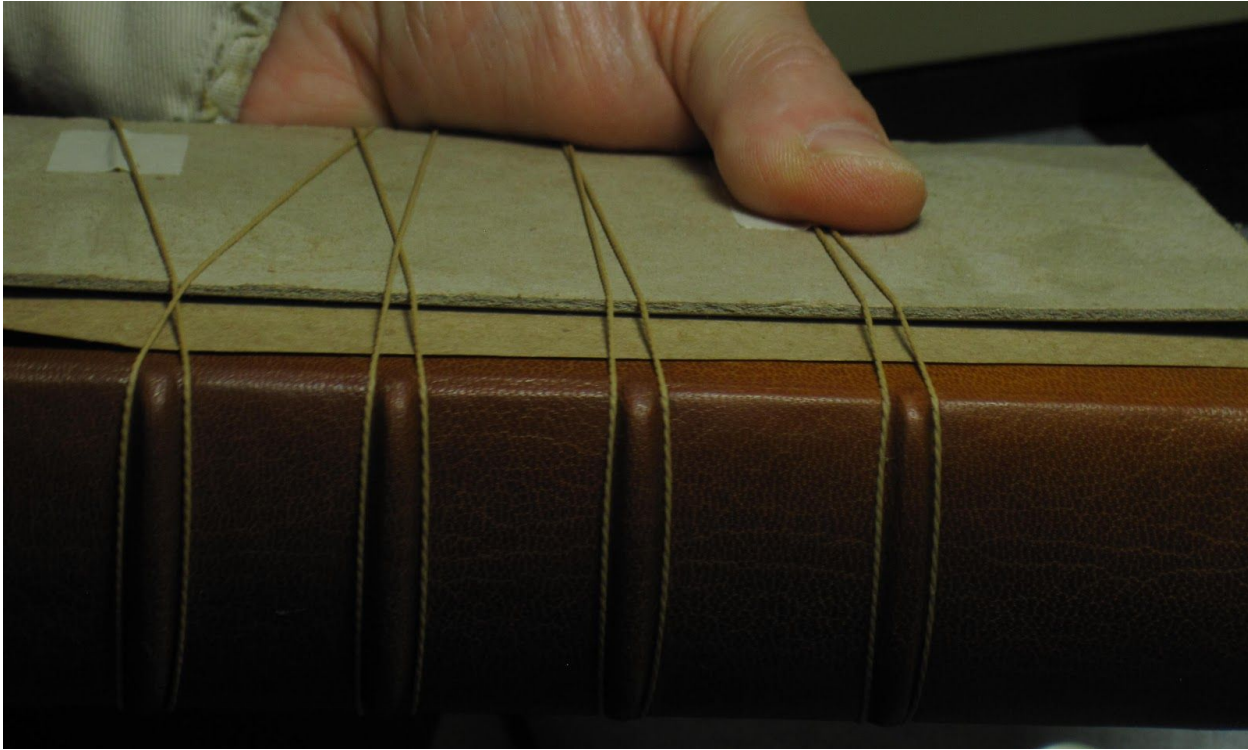


Figure 11. Florian Bieschke demonstrates how cords of a spine are tied to dry. (Atelier, 2013)



Figure 12. Tooling on covers of *The Cenci*, copy *KL (Shelley, P.B. Cenci, 1819)



Figure 13. Endpapers of *The Cenci*, copy *KL (Shelley, P.B. Cenci, 1819) exhibiting unusual pseudo-marbled pattern. Also visible are the elaborate gilt inside dentelles, fading of the flyleaf where it came in contact with the turn-ins, and some stress to the paper along the hinge.

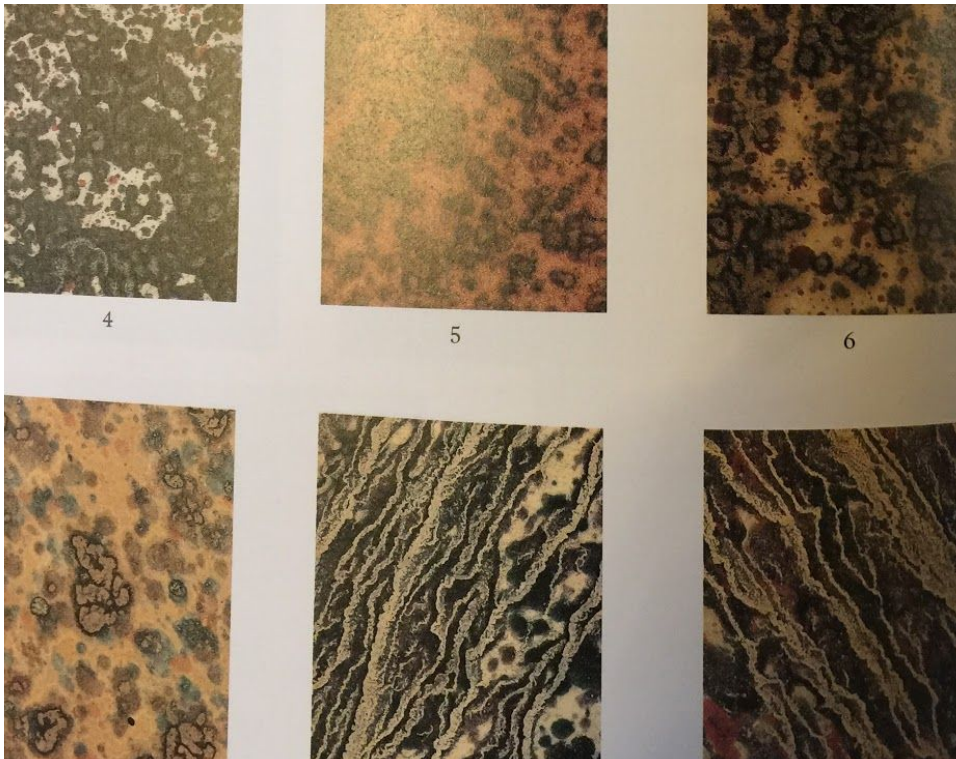


Figure 14. Plates from R.J. Wolfe's *Marbled Paper* (1990) showing techniques for "marbling" paper outside of a vat. Numbers 4-7 are examples of a type of papier d'Annonay called "papier tourniquet."

Appendix

Auction catalog records

The items in this (incomplete) list are chronologically arranged, from oldest to most recent sales. Sales from 1977 to 2016 are pulled from the *ABPC* online catalog accessed Monday, November 20, 2017; sales from 1911 to 1922, from digitized copies of *ABPC* volumes accessed through HathiTrust. In a few cases, records have been added that were available online but did not show up in *ABPC*; these are indicated and the link to the online auction record is provided. The record for the copy that is the primary focus of this bibliographic research paper is italicized.

levant morocco super extra, double, watered-silk fly-leaves, gilt over uncut edges, by Chambolle-Duru, in case. French sale, Libbie's, April 23, 1901, lot 1457, \$190

levant morocco, gilt edges, by Riviere. Goodwin sale, Henkels', Nov. 12, 1903, lot 339, \$28

cf., g.e., by Zaehnsdorf, A., Apr. 11, 1905, lot 740, \$86

lev. mor., partly unc, A., Dec 14, 1909, lot 528, \$70

lev. mor., g.e., A., Oct 27, 1911, lot 143, \$80

lev. mor., g.t., by Sangorski and Sutcliffe, Hinckley, A., Feb 27, 1912, lot 784, \$101

lev. mor., richly inlaid and tooled, g.t., unc., by Zaehnsdorf 9 1-16 x 5 1/8 inches), Allis, A., Mar 25, 1912, lot 750, \$165

lev. mor., g.e., Rollins, A., May 1, 1912, lot 1187, \$77.50

lev. mor., g.t., unc. By Riviere (Thick paper), Hoe, A., Jan 8, 1912, lot 3060, \$150

lev. mor., g.t., unc. (some margins slightly mended), Hoe, Nov 11, 1912, lot 2919, \$130

lev. mor., elaborately inlaid and tooled, g.t., unc., by Riviere, Borden, G., Feb 17, 1913, lot 679, \$190

lev. mor., g.t., in case, Wood & Whitney, A., Feb 19, 1914, lot 465, \$105

lev. mor., g.t., unc., by Bedford (Locker-Lampson copy), Ives, G., Apr. 6, 1915, lot 888, \$170

lev. mor., g.e., by Zaehnsdorf, Ives, G., Apr. 6, 1915, lot 889, \$70.00

lev. mor., richly tooled, g.e., by Miss S. T. Prideaux, in mor. case, Barrow, A., Apr. 14, 1916, lot 463, \$180

lev. mor., richly tooled, g.t., unc.,
by Zaehnsdorf (Thick paper), Jones, A.,
Nov. 20, 1916, lot 480, \$200

lev. mor., g.t., unc., Groves, A.,
Dec. 12, 1917, lot 401, \$220

hf. mor., g.t., unc. (portrait
inserted, McKee copy), Hagen, A., May 13,
1918, lot 1131, \$235

old cf. (rebacked), Emmet, A., Oct.
21, 1918, lot 700, \$135

lev. mor., g.t., by Riviere, Blair, A.,
Dec. 9, 1918, lot 284, \$222.50

mor., g.t., unc, by De Coverly
(etched frontispiece inserted, list of
"Errata" at end in handwriting of Mrs.
Shelley), Forman, A., Mar. 15, 1920, lot
641, \$300

rus., g.e., (stamp on title, few spots,
H. W. Poor copy), Wallace, G., Mar. 22,
1920, lot 1193, \$100

mor., g.t., unc. By The Club
Bindery, Holden, G., Apr 28, 1920, lot
1402, \$225

lev. mor, gilt-tooled, by Rivière,
Clawson, A., Nov. 29, 1920, lot 428, \$175

lev. mor., g.e., by Worsfold, Saltus,
A., Jan. 18, 1922, lot 221, \$125.00

lev. mor., g.t., unc, by Wood (bnd.
in is a copy of the Second edition, Lond.,
1821), Corder, G., Jan. 26, 1922, lot 688,
\$170

lev., g.t., unc., by Bedford (lacks
blank preceding title; 8¾ x 5¾ in
1937-1938 N(472) \$145.

lev. (title and a few other pp.
soiled; lacks blank preceding title; 7¾ x 5
in. 1937-1938 T(381) \$40.

lev., by Doves Bindery. 1937-1938
MM(370) \$160

orig wraps - spine def, fore-edge of
rear cover supplied - Thin paper copy on
wove paper watermarked "Cesta di
Linqua" with a chest. Borowitz copy -
Sotheby's New York, Nov 15, 1977, lot
216, \$1,900 - Granniss 50; Sterling 767;
ABPC 75; BMC

modern mor - Lacking 1st & last
blanks - Christie's New York, Jun 11,
1982, lot 211, \$400 - Granniss 50; Sterling
767; ABPC 75; BMC

later 19th-cent mor gilt - marked -
Lacking 1st & last blanks - Sotheby's, Dec
8, 1983, lot 128, £300 (\$431) - Granniss
50; Sterling 767; ABPC 75; BMC

later half calf - rubbed -
Bloomsbury, Jan 19, 1984, lot 226, £400
(\$563) - Granniss 50; Sterling 767; ABPC
75; BMC

later 19th-cent mor gilt - some
rubbing - Inscr to Thomas Jefferson Hogg
- Sotheby's New York, Dec 12, 1984, lot
688, \$2,750 - Granniss 50; Sterling 767;
ABPC 75; BMC

mor gilt by Zaehnsdorf - Lacking
initial blank; a few spots or marks -
Esher copy - Sotheby's, Dec 18, 1986, lot
84, £1,050 (\$1,510) - Granniss 50; Sterling
767; ABPC 75; BMC

mor gilt by Zaehnsdorf - Lacking
initial blank - Doheny copy - Christie's
New York, Oct 18, 1988, lot 1591, \$2,800
- Granniss 50; Sterling 767; ABPC 75;
BMC

mor gilt by Sangorski & Sutcliffe -
Lacking initial blank - Christie's New
York, May 17, 1989, lot 213, \$2,800 -
Granniss 50; Sterling 767; ABPC 75; BMC

orig wraps, uncut - This copy a
mixture of wove & laid paper.
Hogan-Martin copy - Sotheby's New York,

May 1, 1990, lot 3189, \$7,000 - Granniss 50; Sterling 767; ABPC 75; BMC

mor gilt by Wood - Lacking initial & final blank - Schiff copy - Sotheby's New York, Dec 11, 1990, lot 304, \$3,000 - Granniss 50; Sterling 767; ABPC 75; BMC

mor gilt by Riviere - spine darkened - Christie's New York, Dec 5, 1991, lot 330, \$1,800 - Granniss 50; Sterling 767; ABPC 75; BMC

mor extra - joints cracked - Some leaves soiled - Christie's New York, Dec 5, 1991, lot 329, \$2,400 - Granniss 50; Sterling 767; ABPC 75; BMC

mor gilt by Zaehnsdorf - upper joint cracked - Tp repaired at extreme outer edge; lacking blank at frontf - Huth - Brunswick - Neufeld copy - Christie's New York, Apr 25, 1995, lot 253, \$2,200 - Granniss 50; Sterling 767; ABPC 75; BMC

calf gilt by Zaehnsdorf - extremities worn, bookplate removed from inside front cover - Lacking blank at front - Christie's East, Apr 26, 1995, lot 536, \$1,700 - Granniss 50; Sterling 767; ABPC 75; BMC

lev gilt by Broca - Doyle, May 24, 1995, lot 139, \$2,600 - Granniss 50; Sterling 767; ABPC 75; BMC

19th-cent mor gilt - extremities rubbed - Some spotting - Christie's, Nov 26, 1997, lot 218, £1,400 (\$2,364) - Granniss 50; Sterling 767; ABPC 75; BMC

19th-cent mor gilt by Chambolle-Duru - extremities rubbed, corners bumped - Lacking final blank - Foyle copy - Christie's, Jul 12, 2000, lot 736, £2,600 (\$3,920) - Granniss 50; Sterling 767; ABPC 75; BMC

mor gilt by the Club Bindery, 1900 - Holden copy - Christie's East, Dec 12,

2000, lot 355, \$3,000 - Granniss 50; Sterling 767; ABPC 75; BMC

contemp Italian wraps - edges worn, spine def at foot, tear in upper cover - All quires on laid paper by Cini with watermark of a trailing plant & star countermark - With 1 correction in Shelley's hand. Vander Poel copy - Christie's, Mar 3, 2004, lot 113, £3,800 (\$6,939) - Granniss 50; Sterling 767; ABPC 75; BMC

mor gilt by Riviere - Lacking initial blank; browned - Hoe - Blair copy - Sotheby's New York, Dec 3, 2004, lot 230, \$2,100 - Granniss/Grolier Shelley 50; Ashley 5:69

original blue boards, plain paper spine, uncut. Condition: small tear to front endpaper, four small ink spots to front cover, spine slightly torn, extremities rubbed. Provenance: Simon Nowell-Smith and his wife Judith Adams Nowell-Smith (bookplates); sale Bertram Rota, 300: The Simon Nowell-Smith Collection (2002), lot 670. very rare in the original boards. [...] Graniss, p.56; Wise, Ashley Library, p.69; Tinker 1895. Lot 0210. US\$6,000 - \$9,000 (estimate), starting bid: \$3,000.00, final sale price not listed, 23 June 2009. Sale not listed in ABPC. Bloomsbury Auctions

https://www.liveauctioneers.com/item/6473045_210-shelley-percy-bysshe-1792-1822-the-cenci-a-tr

mor by Riviere - Foxing - Christie's South Kensington, Jun 7, 2010, lot 165, £600 (\$901) - Granniss 50; Sterling 767; ABPC 75; BMC; Wise, p 51

without initial and final blank, early calf by Morrell, rebaked preserving original spine, g.e. [Buxton Forman 56; Wise, p. 51] Sold for £900 inc. premium, 22 March 2011. Sale not listed in ABPC.

Bonhams

<http://www.bonhams.com/auctions/18784/lot/82/>

brown crushed morocco gilt by Zaehnsdorf, title in gilt on cover and spine, gilt edges and turn-ins, without initial blank (Provenance: Estelle Doheny, morocco gilt book label, sale, Christie's New York, 18 Oct 1988, lot 1591, \$2,800) US\$4,267-6,828 (estimate), final sale price not listed, 2014. Sale not listed in ABPC. Sotheby's
<http://www.sothebys.com/en/auctions/ecata>

[logue/2014/english-literature-history-childrens-books-illustrations-114404/lot.570.html](http://www.bonhams.com/auctions/18784/lot/82/)

mor by Riviere - Spotting - Skinner, Nov 15, 2015, lot 288, \$2,100 - Granniss 50; Sterling 767; ABPC 75; BMC; Wise, p 51

mor gilt by Bedford - stains to front cover, fore-edge spotted - Gerald N. Wachs copy - Sotheby's New York, Jun 14, 2016, lot 107, \$1,800 - Granniss 50; Sterling 767; ABPC 75; BMC; Wise, p 5

Currently for sale

First edition, with the initial blank, uncut in the original blue-grey boards, drab paper spine; tear to front joint, corners somewhat worn, but an exceptional copy, from the library of Simon Nowell-Smith. US\$7,826.76 Bernard Quaritch, Ltd.
<http://www.quaritch.com/books/shelley-percy-bysshe/the-cenci-a-tragedy-in-five-acts/E3250/>

Hoe Copy of Shelley's verse drama. [...] First edition, one of 250 copies, without initial blank. Bound in full green morocco, gilt spine, t.e.g., by Riviere & Sons, professionally rebaked in invisible fashion, spine gilt (very slightly sunned, else fine). Bookplate of Robert Hoe and Blairhame. US\$7,500.00 James Cummins Bookseller
<https://books.bibliopolis.com/main/find/2102632/The-Cenci-A-Tragedy-Shelley-Percy-Bysshe-James-Cummins-Bookseller.html?id=3Ym8baqU>

This copy has been bound in full brown morocco by the Club Bindery, with elaborate gilt scroll borders to the covers. Initial and terminal blank leaves are present. Spine in five compartments with gilt titling and fleurons. Thin gilt rules on edges and turn-ins. T.e.g. With the bookplate of Edwin B. Holden, one of the driving forces behind the Club Bindery. Bookseller Inventory # 17171. US\$5,000.00 Bromer Booksellers, Inc.
<https://www.abebooks.com/servlet/BookDetailsPL?bi=97271650>

Bound without the initial blank leaf in later full blue straight-grain morocco, double gilt-ruled borders on covers enclosing a blindstamped roll, gilt-decorated spine in 6 compartments, gilt-lettered direct in 1, a.e.g.; nice copy. [...] Forman, p. 56; Wise, p. 51; Ashley Library V, p. 69. Bookseller Inventory # 27381. US\$6,250.00 Rulon-Miller Books
<https://www.abebooks.com/servlet/BookDetailsPL?bi=8833892947>

Colophon

The text of this book evaluation project essay is set in GFS Didot, a typeface designed in 1994 by Takis Katsoulidis, and digitized by George Matthiopoulos. GFS Didot is based on the typeface designed by Firmin Didot in Paris in 1805. It was made available through a Google Docs add-on called Extensis Fonts.

The essay was composed on at least four separate devices, primarily a MacBook Pro laptop, using Google Docs software rendered by Google Chrome, Version 62.0.3202.94. The text was initially set in the default Arial type and later reformatted. Photographs were taken with an iPhone 6s running iOS 11.1.2, and automatically synced to Google Drive.

Once formatting was complete, the essay was printed on Georgia-Pacific Spectrum Standard 92 Multipurpose Paper (20 lb. weight, 92 bright, 145 whiteness) using an HP ENVY 4520 All-in-One Printer with HP Instant Ink, cartridges of which which had been automatically shipped when the printer communicated to the cloud-based service that it was beginning to run low.