Window-Mounted Cancels?: More Questions Than Answers

In 1755 Philip Barton, LL.D, Canon of Christ Church and Fellow of Winchester College, gave to the latter institution nearly 300 books. Two are bound as a matching pair: Palæographia Græca (Paris: Guerin, Boudot and Robustel, 1708) and Bibliotheca Coisliniana, olim Segueriana (Paris: Geurin and Robustel, 1715), both by Bernard de Montfaucon. The bindings are in full dark green morocco with oval centre-piece arms of Louis XIV within an ornate oval, and a decorative roll border incorporating, among other devices, crowns, fleurs de lys and acorns. Louis’ crowned monogram is found on the spines. Both volumes measure 45 x 28.5 cms.

Externally both volumes are very handsome: internally it is a very different matter.
Palæographia Græca is printed on good quality paper, with the watermark of a bunch of grapes and countermark ‘P [heart] G’.

There are no evident cancels. In contrast, Bibliotheca Coisliniana is printed on very poor quality paper: the watermark is again, for the most part, a bunch of grapes, and there appears to be more than one countermark, but it has not been possible to decipher the countermarks with the equipment currently available in Winchester. There is evidence of cancellation.

Problems start with the title page which is both damaged along the lower edge, and has been laid down, prior to binding, on a leaf of the same paper as has been used for the free endpapers, with a watermark of the Strasbourg arms, not found within the text.
Throughout the volume there are holes both in the margins and within the text area, with loss of text, and there is evidence of abrasion; some sheets have been repaired (occasionally clumsily).

Some repairs can only have been carried out prior to binding (at least one repair is in the inner gutter); and others appear to be what Joseph Moxon in *Mechanick Exercises on the Whole Art of Printing* called ‘torn, wrinklel, stained and otherwise naughty sheets’—his description of the contents of the cassie quires which printers were advised to put onto their waste piles.¹

There is apparent evidence of cancellation in the index: three signatures are flagged with asterisks, 9I*, 9N*, and 9O*, and to add to the complications, within 9I* two pages are starred, 769* and 770*, as is the case in 9O*, where are found 789* and 790*. These marks would seem to indicate that the bifolium in these signatures has been cancelled. In 9N*, however, all four pages are starred, 785*, 786*, 787*, and 788*, which may possibly indicate that each leaf is a separate cancel. Throughout the index there are inked deletions, though none occurs on a page with a starred number. These ink deletions

are also found in the New College, Oxford copy, and in the copy in the Universidad Complutense de Madrid.²

That the asterisk is used to indicate a cancel is demonstrated by a leaf paginated 431*-432*.

² New College Library, Oxford, NB.119.11; the Madrid copy is available at <https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=ucm.5319074149&view=1up&seq=819>.
to be found misplaced between 5X1 and 5X2. This oversight on the part of the collator or binder means that the cancellandum has been preserved in its original position.

What was originally a leaf recording variant readings in two columns was cancelled to be replaced by a leaf recording only a selection of those variants but presented with short explanations. The subsequent pages revert to the simple columnar lay-out. The reasons for cancelling only a part of this information are obscure.

What is most idiosyncratic about the Winchester volume is that there are seventeen leaves where the text area has been very neatly cut out, and to the resulting window there has been very carefully pasted an appropriately cut-down replacement leaf. These window-mounted insertions are to be found in signatures 2R-2S, 3H, 5A, 5X-5Z, 7G, 7Q and 7Z.
Window-Mounted Cancels?

Bibliotheca Coisliniana, p. 369
Bibliotheca Caisliniana, p. 460
Bibliotheca Coidinitana, p. 577
The edge of the window is most clearly visible in the image of p. 213.

The simplest explanation would be that there were errors on the leaves which were only discovered after the expensive binding had been completed, and rather than disbind the volume, it was decided to carry out this labour-intensive method of cancellation. There are a number of objections to this theory.
61 errata are listed on p. [ii], of which five relate to leaves which are window-mounted. None of these errata is corrected in the mounted leaves, which must therefore have been printed before the errata list.

Leaf 431*-432* is an indisputable cancellans and if the assumption that those index leaves which are marked with an asterisk both in the signature and the pagination are cancels is correct, why are the mounted leaves not similarly marked?

Why would anyone put together such a poor quality copy: laid-down and damaged title page; torn, holed, creased and dirty leaves; some pages repaired prior to binding; and then put it into such a handsome binding? And why then, having shown no regard for the quality of the production, have excised so carefully seventeen leaves and replaced them equally carefully in such a time-consuming fashion?

There are three manuscript corrections to the main body of the text, all to window-mounted pages. On p. 163 ‘quod’ is deleted in line 18.

Bibliotheca Coisliniana, p. 163—deleted ‘quod’

On p. 371 a Greek accent is inserted 14 lines from the bottom of the page.

Bibliotheca Coisliniana, p. 371—inserted accent
And on p. 577, nine lines up, capital Mu is corrected to capital Pi.

The ‘quod’ is also deleted in the New College and Madrid copies; the Greek accent has been printed correctly in both; and the capital Mu is left uncorrected in both. This selectivity is as unexplained as the window-mounts.

Geoffrey Day
Formerly, Fellows’ Librarian
Winchester College