

retained the older fly-leaves and preserved the original spines of the nineteenth-century bindings by gluing them onto the front pastedowns of the new bindings. The lower compartments of all three original spines bear the British Museum's library manuscript number stamped in gold.³¹

Although such information may seem peripheral to the study of Brontë's own document, it is crucial for any editor or critic to note. Any time a book is rebound, additional materials can be introduced into its structure; the leaves of a manuscript can be removed or added to—or reorganized and joined in various ways—particularly in this case, in which they have been supplemented and altered. Often binders and conservators will make repairs to paper leaves as part of the rebinding process. Such alterations can materially influence the shape of a work. (I once discovered, for instance, that one of Brontë's early manuscripts, held in a leading research library, had been rearranged and digitized out of order after it had been treated by a conservator, who was presumably well intentioned but apparently unfamiliar with the manuscript's textual contents.) Today, professional conservators routinely and very carefully document their alterations to books, a trend that started in the 1970s according to Cathleen Baker.³² In the nineteenth century, however, bookbinders who performed restoration work did not usually note their modifications. Even with respect to changes made in the twentieth century, one cannot rely on accurate recordkeeping. For example, the BL has no documentation available outlining any former alterations made to the paper leaves of the manuscript volumes of *Shirley*—a troubling oversight, as this valuable manuscript bears many excisions and repairs, as well as additions and rearrangements.

To undertake my study, I created a table to document the manuscript's paper stocks, its multiple forms of leaf and page numbering, its writing media (i.e., different colored inks and pencil), its excisions, the compositors' markup, and other notable features (e.g., paper repairs, sewing holes, &c.). Using a light sheet, I moved through the manuscript, page by page, recording this information for all of its 896 leaves; I performed this work at the BL twice, first in 2017, and then again in 2019 to check my earlier work and to record additional details about the manuscript's leaf and page numbering, which turned out to be more complicated than expected.

Paper-based evidence confirms that one full wove leaf (vol. 1, BM f. 215) was added to the manuscript as part of its nineteenth-century binding—an alteration that was also documented by the British Museum staff when they officially accessioned the manuscript in 1949.³³ This full leaf apparently replaced a fragment of a leaf that had been so heavily excised by Brontë and, consequently, so small,

31. The British Museum accessioned the manuscript of *Shirley* only in 1949. The BM, however, routinely tooled information onto non-institutional bindings during that time period—a fact worth noting, given that this alteration was not documented in writing. I am grateful to Karen Limper-Herz both for confirming that this was a practice of the BM, and for sharing her opinion about the date of the original bindings. We both independently determined that they dated from the last quarter of the nineteenth century.

32. Cathleen Baker addressed this issue as part of a discussion she led on RBS Online in October 28, 2020: "How Making Paper by Hand and by Machine Impacts Its Characteristics."

33. The note reads: "the blank leaf between ff.214 & 216, inserted in place of the original f. 215, was in its present position when the MS. was received in the B.M." The note is written in blue pen on the label appearing on the verso of the first of three endpapers at the back of volume 1, Add MS 43477.