

Black-letter

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AN INTERPRETATION OF EVENTS
RELATING TO THE TIME AND PRESENCE OF
JOHANN GUTENBERG

BY
JEFFREY ATHERTON

THE BIELER PRESS
MARINA DEL REY, CALIFORNIA
2000

Witness

The following is the complete transcription of the materials that were submitted to me for translation, arrangement, and codification. The anonymous nature of the varied items has forced my hand as to their correct identification. The proper interpretation is therefore a matter of nuance in form and transition. These items, both great and small, have been given equal weight for the sake of verisimilitude, but it is difficult to know what is fugitive and what is substantive; some of the material seems at odds one to another, some of ephemeral nature, some of seeming inconsequence. Much of the evidence of the controversy seems not touched upon here, leading one to wonder— which is phantom, which is real. The summation and conclusion of this I must therefore leave in your capable hands.

Chronology

1394–1406 [year uncertain]. Johann Gensfleisch zur Laden zum Gutenberg was born in Mainz.

1411. Gutenberg and his family, along with other patri- cians, leave Mainz to avoid taxes levied by the guilds.

1420–30 [year uncertain]. Peter Schöffer is born in Gernsheim on the Rhine. After his father dies Schöffer is adopted by Johann Fust.

1428. Continuing conflicts between the patrician fami- lies and the guilds in Mainz lead to a repeal of the pa- tricians' civil rights. Gutenberg may have left the city at this time.

1434. City records show that Gutenberg is a resident of Strasbourg.

1438. Andreas Dritzehn, Andreas Heilmann, and Hans Riffe form a partnership with Gutenberg to produce devo- tional mirrors. As a result of a miscalculation of the date of the Aachen pilgrimage, the partners enter into a new agreement wherein they will learn certain *secret arts*, involving formulae and techniques being perfected by Gutenberg.

1439. With Dritzehn's death from the Plague in 1438, his brothers Jörg and Claus bring a court action against Gutenberg so that they might be admitted into the part- nership. They are unsuccessful in their case.

1444. Gutenberg is listed as affiliated with (but not a member of) the guild of Master goldsmiths, painters, saddlers, and glaziers in Strasbourg. However, between the years 1444 and 1448, his whereabouts are unknown; no record exists of him either in Strasbourg or Mainz.

1444. Schöffer attends the Erfurt University.

1448. Gutenberg is residing in Mainz.

1449. Records indicate Schöffer is in Paris working as a manuscript copyist at the Sorbonne.

1449. Johann Fust lends Gutenberg funds to begin the production of equipment related to *the new art*.

1450. Gutenberg and Fust enter into a partnership in- volving work on the 42-line Bible (B42)–the first large- scale book printed with moveable type. A production facility is established at the Humberghof. It is specu- lated that Gutenberg also maintained an auxiliary shop during the arrangement; a smaller facility at the Guten- berghof [perhaps established in 1448 or 1449].

1452 [date uncertain]. Fust sends word to Schöffer re- questing his presence in Mainz to work on the Bible.

1453. The Turks capture Constantinople, 29 May.

1455. A suit [The Helmasperger Instrument] is brought against Gutenberg by Fust for repayment of loans total- ing two thousand and twenty-six gulden relating to *the work to our common profit* and *the work of the books*. Schöffer allies himself with Fust and serves as a witness to this pivotal document. As a result of the annulment, Gutenberg ceases his work at the Humberghof; how- ever, it is thought that he continues his activities at the Gutenberghof.

1455. Enea Silvio Piccolomini, Bishop of Siena and le- gate to Emperor Frederick III, writes to the Spanish Cardinal Juan de Carvajal describing the printed Bibles that were on view in Frankfurt. He had seen several of the ten-leaf quires from the book. He reported that the edition, 158 or 180 copies, was attracting ready buyers.

1456. Heinrich Cremer of Mainz finishes the rubrica- tion and binding of both volumes of a set of the 42-line Bibles in August.

1457. The *Mainz Psalter* is issued by Fust and Schöffer. The book is printed in multiple colours with mechanical rubrication. It is likely that the work on the Psalter had begun prior to the suit which separated Gutenberg from the Humberghof.

1458–60 [uncertain]. Production of the 36-line Bible (B36) by Albrecht Pfister in Bamberg [east of Mainz]. Printed with type thought to have been produced by Gutenberg, commonly referred to as the DK-type.

1460. Completion of the *Catholicon* (a Latin dictionary and grammar) by an unknown printer. Considered, by virtue of its typeface, to have been printed by Gutenberg at the Gutenberghof.

1462. Gutenberg, as well as Fust and Schöffer, are exiled from Mainz as a consequence of the war between the Archbishops. They must forfeit their possessions, in- cluding their presses. Their assistants are also exiled.

1463. The reconciliation of Mainz allows these exiles to return to the city but not all repatriate. Several, includ- ing some of those employed at the Humberghof and the Gutenberghof, establish presses elsewhere, spread- ing the art of printing beyond the Rhineland.

1465. The Archbishop of Mainz appoints Gutenberg his servant and courtier.

1466. Fust dies in Paris.

1468. Gutenberg dies in Mainz.

1502–03 [year uncertain]. Schöffer dies in Mainz.

Testament

By the assistance of the Most High, at whose bidding the tongues of children become eloquent, and who often reveals to the lowly what He conceals from the wise, this noble book, *Catholicon*, in the year of our Lord's incarnation, 1460, in the mother city of Mainz (which belongs to the illustrious German nation, and which God has deigned to prefer and to raise with such an exalted light of the mind and of free grace above the other nations of the earth), was perfected, not by means of quill, reed, or stylus, but by the admirable concord, proportion, and measure of *patronae* and *formae*...

[Colophon from the *Catholicon* of Johann Balbus of Genoa. Publisher's note: This passage is thought, by some scholars, as possibly the sole surviving statement of Johann Gutenberg on the printing arts. The Latin terms above are often interpreted to mean the devices used in the production of mechanical writing, i.e., printing equipment, or more specifically, the apparatus of transformation: punches>matrices>type.]

On Discussing events Displaced by Time

Those in attendance may wish to question the contrivances that they see here expressed with so much minuteness. The phenomenon of time, whose effects are not entirely understood, will through its actions distort the truth of the matter at hand. It is only through the careful application of every technique of veracity that we can come to any position touching upon the truth.

Dream: I yield to the draw of a restless sleep where it seems that over the course of the night my weariness is seldom, if ever, transposed. In a vision my eyelids rebel against the command to open, and when they finally do, my eyes move in a manner that is thick and slow. With much difficulty I dimly observe a group of citizens seated in a large wooden hall with a high, beamed roof overhead. They are assembled on tiered benches behind which an enormous oak tree grows. Its branches arc over the last tier and hang down into the audience; they seem oblivious to this trespass. The branches scratch the arms and faces of the citizens as they gesture fiercely. Their state of discord is clear, but I cannot hear what anyone is saying. As if signaled, they all fall still at once. My desire to see more grows most urgent, but my eyes will not respond to my thoughts. Slowly, as the scene dims, I awaken.

Treatise on the physical arts [fragment]: One must endeavor to place oneself in a state of concordance with one's materials. To achieve harmony with the elements is to begin converse with the *anima motrix* in all of nature. Seek your wisdom in the books of the Masters, but never forget that nature is a book unto herself. Read this treatise carefully and your works will pass to the ages. Woe to those who attempt to shorten the road to knowledge, for the stuff that is made from those not diligent in their studies will, mark well my words, betray them. For nothing can be set forth in a treatise so complete that it would vouchsafe the need to commune with, and thereby learn from, the true nature of the thing studied. Through this intimacy one will come to know the secrets of any of the arts.

On the just art of mirror-making: Firstly, before beginning any lesson that would unlock the secrets of the manufacture of this most wondrous of God's gifts, I am bound to admonish all of those who read these lines to keep that which they learn here a *complete and utter*

secret. Allow only those whose assistance is needed for the tasks herewith described to share of the techniques and devices of which, by my hand, you will be privileged to know and understand. Secondly, I would admonish those who have the whole of their will set upon knowing and practicing this most demanding art—capturing the world within the confines of clear glass and opaque metal—to keep faith with the Church. Pay the greatest heed to my words in this matter for there are those amongst us who will, if given the tools, use these wonders for the Devil's profit. Know them, and know they assume many names. It is they who will use the skill of the mirror-maker for no good use. They will claim to capture images showing the World not as it is, but rather the World as it soon will be. These images and these tricksters are sent by the Devil to test the weak soul. For only God can see that which has yet to pass. Pilot your course away from these men of evil, and you will profit all the more by it.

Physician's report [fragment]: ...Whereupon heating the substance I found the vapours were the cause of no small amount of distress in the lungs and the head. These effects lasted some days and were accompanied by a general lethargy and a weakness in the extremities. Further exploration followed, but in general the material gave up its secrets only grudgingly and always with some associated discomfort.

...How one may quantify the metal has occupied my mind for some time. Do the vapours contain the demons that cause the illness, or is it in the improper handling of the material that one initiates the discomfort? Its properties are simple: grey, heavy in relation to its proportion, malleable, changes state from solid to liquid with ease.

...The perils that my experiments have wrought leave me at a crossroads. Both myself and my assistant have been afflicted with a listlessness that must be overcome by a force of will that grows more extreme with

the passing of each season. More than once I have been tempted to forego any further investigation and retreat to the less physical pursuits of my studies.

Applications of the physical arts: The art of making playing cards requires much patience and exactitude. One must be able to align the parts of the master blocks with a precision that is most exact or the set of cards will be of inferior quality. The blocks themselves can be made of any suitable hardwood, and should be cut in such a way so as to cause the diverse parts to interlock, much as a carpenter does in the building of fine boxes. In some cases one block will be used to print over another to create a pleasing effect, the result of which causes the card to appear not unlike one that has been painted by hand. The maker of playing cards will do well to remember that a variety of qualities of cards will be required so that various people's needs, of disparate means, can be well met.

Description: The bank of the Rhine. To the right, a small stand of juvenile poplar trees; to the left, a large clump of river shrubs and reeds. The time is first light, in the spring. From the time of day it is clear that there is still a chill in the air. One can hear the sound of water gently lapping against the sides of three small craft. In the distance a bridge is just visible due to the gentle curve of the river bed. Very occasionally, people are seen moving about near the bridge. The sounds of a market can be made out as sellers begin to open their stalls. The bells of the cathedral ring faintly in the distance. Soon after the ringing of the bells falls silent, a woman's scream resonates through the air. It is coming from the shrubbery to the left.

Guild meeting: It is abundantly clear that the patricians who can and do control what is, within their view, lawful or right, care not for the financial status of the city in general. As citizens who are engaged in the harmonious passing of trade, we above all know that by making and trading goods and stores, we and the city prosper; taxes, dues, levies, and tolls all flow from the guilds and their proper activities.

Physician's report: A boy, almost certainly below the age of majority, has been discovered. His fate was that

of drowning in the river. The outward appearance of his skin now belongs to those dead things in nature that seem to mimic the faint luminescent white glow of a pearl. The look of the skin is a witness to the truth that his body has been released from the grip of the river wherein it had lain for some long time. Even now it causes me to shudder. God grant that I should never again be called upon to view such a sight.

Firming my wits, I ordered the small body brought to my chambers where I would endeavor with the Constable to discover the origin of the boy and the events of his passing. For not one soul in the town claimed any acquaintance with the poor wretch.

Master's journal: Early in the passing of my life two men acquainted with my family came to be living under our roof. These two called themselves by the names Kornoff and Reyse. As right members of the Society of the Mint, they were, from time to time, obliged to perform some of their various duties on days or nights when they were not at the Old Mint. On those occasions I would view with great intent all that passed through their hands. I endeavored to determine the nature and the proper order of their many operations. The work I was allowed to observe was generally of a preparatory kind, but I found that a knowledge of their art – no matter how imperfect – stood as a great store for me.

On the just art of mirror-making: Once the glass has been shaped to the satisfaction of the maker – having gained the final shape of the finished mirror, be it flat, or curved – the reflecting surface must then be applied. This next step is most critical, as it will determine the quality that attaches itself to the finished mirror.

Consider first the quality of the metal that will become the smooth reflecting eye of the glass. It should have the correct composition, that composition known by the physician as speculum metal, or more properly, as now rightly proportioned by the goldsmith. The true apprentice will do well to take great pains to ensure he has obtained the best metal possible, and it will need to be clean and free of any defects of the fire. Further, it must be at exactly the right and proper level of heat, as is so with the glass itself, or all will come to naught. The disasters which will come to pass if any of these conditions are not well met are various, and they can manifest

suddenly at any time in the life of the glass. However, assuming that all is right at this stage of the making, the molten metal may then be carefully applied to the still-hot glass. If the two are of compatible temperatures, they will lie close together and a modicum of metal will be all that is needed to properly coat the whole of the glass. Thus coated, the glass is placed into the cooling chamber of the furnace so that it should not be given cause to crack by cooling too quickly. If this is accomplished well and correctly, the result should be a clear and handsome glass with a near-faultless reflection. A good workman will then take some care to protect the back of the mirror from the ravages of time.

Physician's report: Once the body was brought to my rooms I began to conduct the investigations that I had seen performed by the physicians in Paris. Owing to the warmth of the season, I saw to it that the body was anointed with the various aromatic oils that I had in my stores, for neither my assistant nor I could approach the boy without feeling a stone rise up in our throats, so disturbing was the air emanating from his lifeless form. Far worse, we came to realize too late the error of our decision, for the oils seemed to make the stench not more bearable, but less. Still we were obliged to proceed regardless of our physical discomfort. We were forced, however, upon several occasions, to quit the foul room wherein we had laid the body. It was necessary that we breathe the fresh air of the day, so as not to swoon from too overlong a time spent in that putrid air.

Where does one begin when endeavoring to attach a meaning to that which, for all outward appearances, is meaningless? I looked to the body with all of my training. What would be the marker that showed to my eyes where and when this boy came to Mainz? Other than the actions of some of the creatures in the river, and the action of the water itself—this causing a most unnatural swelling and softening of all the flesh of the corpus—the body was more than less intact. The river had stripped the boy of vestment; here there was to be found no assistance of any kind involving place or origin. Without hope of solution I pressed my mind for a way to place this stranger. I tasked my assistant to mark and note every element of the body in his journal. This labour led us to a portrait of sorts, made up as it was of pale, lackluster words. Alas, for the time, this seemed all that any of us could do.

Dialogue:

1st speaker: I have heard it whispered in the patrician's wine house that Gutenberg has devised a most clever method, the use of which will speed the production of the manufacture of mirror frames, thus rendering a greater profit for all involved in the venture.

2nd: Though I do not claim to know the man well, I have in my passing acquaintance with him, knowledge to the end that he can be trusted with the polishing of the mirrors, but that he does not possess any great gift in the casting of metal.

1st: In this you are in error. Do you not know that he has some connection with the guild of goldsmiths? In this, it is said, that he has traveled with a member of the Mint and that he is using knowledge gained from this man to forward his enterprise relating to the pilgrimage. I have seen the carpenter Saspach and his apprentices moving a large device with elements of a wine press to the place where Gutenberg and his men meet. Of all this it can be said that if he is indeed readying himself and his partners for an undertaking involving the making of the mirror badges for the pilgrimage, then the successful closing of this task must involve this new device from the carpenter.

2nd: Until now my ears have not heard of, nor have my eyes seen, such a device. I have, however, heard tell in the wine house that the Master of the enterprise himself has mistaken the dates of the pilgrimage incorrectly by the amount of one full year of days! He and his partners must now find ways to afford sustenance and coin to last the year while they all wait for time to correct their error.

1st: Aye, and if the device is as dear as my eyes have told me, all involved will have had their pockets drained by the preparation of the contrivance.

Pilgrims' song:

To Aachen we will go my friends

To catch a glimpse we will go my friends
Along the road we will go my friends

To save our souls, and hope once again
The Lady she will be behind us then

With Angels and sweetness and light again

To Aachen we will go my friends

To catch a glimpse we will go my friends
The mirror we take will hold her there

Her beauty and grace will all be there

Our hearts will be light as we walk
We mount the path as our burdens fly off
To Aachen we will go my friends
To catch a glimpse we will go my friends

Preparations for the mirrors: The mirrors are to be affixed within a kind of lattice-work of metal formed as one piece. These frames are of the common type with three rings of metal joined one on top of the other, arranged as follows: the middle size is top-most and carries either the image of the Robe of the Virgin or the face of our crucified Lord; the smallest is the next – outfitted with protruding teeth of metal to hold the mirror fixed in position; the lowest is by design the largest ring, with the Blessed Virgin and her Son appearing here, flanked by saints holding their emblems. All that is described above is to be fashioned from metal for the most durable use of the pilgrims to Aachen.

After removal from the mould, the frames are filed and well-cleaned until a pleasing appearance has been reached. Only at this time can the mirrors be attached. It is expected that each finished badge, if it is of quality great enough, will cost a pilgrim half of a gulden.

Letter:

Most aggrieved Madam,

It is a most sorrowful task that I find I must now perform. Your nephew Andreas, known to me as a hard working and loyal man, has met his grave on the second day of the celebration of our Savior's birth, Saint Stephen's Day, in the year of our Lord fourteen hundred and thirty-eight. The mad dog who feasts on the poor souls unfortunate enough to cross his path, and known to all as the Black Death, is responsible for his untimely demise. A curse on those who brought it to this land. Andreas was a partner in an enterprise in which I am also involved. This venture is headed by a patrician of standing, who is possessed of no small amount of learning. It was this man who charged me to see to Andreas and attend to the affairs of his passing. It is in this capacity that I made the arrangements necessary for his resting place. The enterprise of which I speak is related to the Aachen pilgrimage. Beyond this, trust in my words that I am bound by an oath to say no more.

Now – and here I am hopeful that I might tread lightly enough so you may see your way clear to grant my request – I am aware that another nephew from your

family, called Jörg, is seeking entrance to the enterprise of which I spoke, consequent to his brother's passing. It has been said he will bring the matter before the council if he is not admitted. God's truth, Madam, I know with certainty that in Andreas's passing nothing was owed to him; rather, Andreas himself did owe to the enterprise some seventy-five gulden on his deathbed. This came to me from his own lips as he lay withering.

Please, Madam, if it falls within your power to do so, dissuade Jörg from this path. The success of this enterprise hangs upon the thread of secrecy. If the matters involved were to be brought to the council, Jörg would – and here I can state most assuredly – fail and gain nothing by the course of his actions. In acting rashly in this manner he might, however, make known to the council and to the persons in attendance details of the enterprise which would best be held close to the men involved; it was for this enterprise that Andreas, as well, added his own sweat. You would do his soul honour if you could add your voice to our cause in this most delicate matter and, through its success, Andreas may come to know peace. What is needed now is the time and tranquility to perfect our methods. Any distraction would slow our progress, and any revelations regarding that which we hold as secret would, I fear, begin a barrage of disasters.

Wood-turner's journal [fragment]: ...The device must withstand far more pressure than the wine-maker requires. The screw used to impart the force should be fine enough to ease the work, but not so fine as to inhibit the opening above the work when the screw is moved through its motion only a quarter turn. The press used by the paper-maker may well serve as the most useful progenitor for the new stamping press, far more so than the press used to turn grapes into wine.

Physician's journal: Of all the metals, lead has the simplest essence. Thus it is most rightly said to be the point upon which to begin. I, in my studies, have tried every transformative process known to me and still I have little to show for my labours. Four days prior, my constant assistant passed – not through any agent of the Plague as we surmised when he took ill, for the disease took a course that differed from the Black Death in considerable ways. I can say, although it pains me, that the work in which we have been engaged contributed in no

On Discussing events Displaced by theory

If I, most patient observers, were to endeavor to impress you with the acumen of my thoughts, I might be tempted to put forth a most surprising theory and then, time permitting, prove the truth of it. For you see, the more outlandish the theory, the more impressive I would be for the proof of it. This, then, is the vice of the professional scholar, of whose services we will be in need before the day is overtaken by the night. Guard your minds well against the proffering of such drama, for though the truth itself may be hiding there in the wings, more often we find only a poor player attempting to enlarge his less-than-supporting part.

small way to his demise. It now seems that the search for the truth by way of its champion – knowledge – is a task thick with danger. One would never see the studies that engage such a man as being harmful until he was pulled down into his grave. Would that I had some result with which to salve my wound, but there is no salve for his passing.

For myself, the exhaustion that haunts me grows as the days pass. Every thought is an effort as an action, and actions are mountains no matter how trivial they are in doing. It is only by God's will that I can continue at all. Whatever the miasma is that contaminates the air surrounding the work, I know now that it is a certainty that I have breathed of it, and do at this moment pay the price for my search.

Argument: Praise to the Lord our God and all who are gathered to hear the arguments herewith presented. The question put to this body is one of the most basic for the Church and its well being. The very words of the Church have become corrupted by the act of communicating text to text as the great work is copied. In some cases, as my brethren are no doubt aware, the errors are small and of little consequence; but there are cases of additions by the well-meaning scribe which have thereafter been mistaken as the word of God. These changes, mistakes, and additions, have by their effect the power to destroy the integrity of the whole.

My dear brothers, we must act as one on this most pressing dilemma. It matters not which text we are discussing – all are succumbing to this corruption of the word. To fail to achieve accord in a matter such as this will demonstrate a most egregious lack of governance. The Church cannot at this, or any other time, have more than one true face to show the world. To decree that there will be a standard in this matter is to take the

first step in repairing a small rent in the fabric of the Church. Be warned, though, that lack of action will allow this tear to grow, and the shimmering robes that grace our Lord would then be allowed to fall into tatters.

In short, all texts must mirror the one text, and this by needs must be guarded and enforced. Any scriptorium deviating from the ideal – whether by will good or ill – must be held to task and all inferior texts destroyed. Although difficult, scriptoria must strive to copy the revised missals without any deviation whatsoever. We must remember above all else, that the reform we are undertaking is the Lord's will, and the tasks He sets for us are within our mortal grasp.

I convey my most humble gratitude to the learned brethren for their patience in attending to my thoughts in this most vexing of matters.

—These words were spoken in council by papal legate, Cardinal Nicholas of Cues, and duly recorded for the greater glory of God, by the hand of brother Wolfrick.

Dream: Two wooden chairs stand with their backs one to the other. In a busy market in the town square, an old man stands motionless and erect holding a box filled with wonderful bits of a shattered device. As the townspeople swirl around the man, few people take notice. The square is filled with the sound of a rushing cataract. The crashing of the water becomes deafening, drowning out the calls of the sellers. Yet the man remains motionless. There is a mulberry tree near the canal whose leaves are falling as spring approaches. I am awakened in a sweat by my own laughter.

Master's journal: I must speak now of these trifles created using blocks of wood carved in a mirror fashion. It seems clear the images resulting from this method have a value that can be counted upon. The carving, however,

uncertain of times for all of us. Turning now to the necessity of this letter, I find that I must discharge a far less pleasant office, of which this dispatch is the most humble of agents.

It is my profound duty to announce to you that the man known as Johann Gutenberg has passed from life in this month of February in the year of our Lord, fourteen hundred and sixty-eight. Although the exact circumstances of his passing are not known to me, I am in a position to recount the recent events of his life and station to you so that you may come to know more of him since the distance between you became so great.

As you well know, the war in Mainz between the Archbishops Diether von Isenburg-Büdingen, the defeated reformer, and Adolf von Nassau, the man who sacked and humiliated the proud city, led to the banishment of many of its citizens. Included among their number was Gutenberg. Unable to return to Strasbourg, he and his servants traveled to Eltville, long a place of refuge for his family. There he assisted with the establishment of a small printing house with the help of two brothers, of whom I have heard tell, though I am unacquainted with them or their family name.

After the reconciliation of the exiles, no doubt you are aware that Gutenberg was able to reclaim some of what was his. But in need of much, he turned to one who may be known to you, the financier Doctor Konrad Humery. This man Humery has since come to claim all of the devices and letters that were at Gutenberg's disposal. There is no dispute that Gutenberg had pledged them in trust against the monies that were needed to begin printing again. Humery has pledged to the Archbishop that he would not allow the instruments in his possession to be used to the advantage of anyone outside the walls of Mainz; therefore you would do well not to request that any of the effects which relate to the Master's invention be sent to you, as Humery will find it impossible to grant such a plea.

As a matter related to the reconciliation—and here I mention this as a formality as I am sure that you are aware of it—Gutenberg was appointed courtier to the Archbishop. This appointment did somewhat ease the hardships of living that the man endured. In spite of this, Gutenberg found he could not accomplish much of what he thought he was capable, although his situation in the last days was less abject than before. As to his mortal remains, his body has come to rest with the

Franciscans in Mainz—a place he had chosen and where they will pray for his salvation. And here I must end my report. For all of its paucity do forgive an old man. It is my hope that there is comfort here, and that I in some way have enlightened you as to a few of the events leading to the passing of this great man.

Historical apocrypha iv: Hear me all who seek to separate the beauty of truth from the flawed countenance of fiction. If you desire to know the name of the one true devisor of the glorious art of printing, then pay homage to Johann Mentelin of Strasbourg. It was he who was the first, among all those pretenders to the claim, to bring together all of the elements that resulted in the reproduction of letters using a device.

This noble man had in his house a servant, Johann Gensfleisch, who in a most disloyal way stole the methods and secrets of his Master, then removed himself to the city of Mainz. In this way he did his undeserving Master the gravest wrong, for Mentelin had to assemble the tools and devices necessary to begin printing again. Thus, the first book so produced from Mentelin's shop fell in the year 1459, sadly too late for history to record his primacy in this field of endeavor.

Historical comments: No one can credibly claim to have any original piece of the presses—without doubt there were several presses necessary for the production of the books. Not one single piece of metal type, nor punch or matrix, nor mould, has survived to the present. Nothing that could be revered, except for the books themselves, can provide testimony to the existence of the shop and the work. We have one witness, in the form of a legal document, that speaks of the production. All else is reconstruction, conjecture, and guesswork.

Dream: My eyes are heavy and at first they do not obey my commands to open—I must be able to see—a fear builds in me that there is something horrible I must confront. A humble cottage stands alone. There is a barren tree adjacent to the structure. A violent and hot wind swirls against the side of the building. I know the maelstrom should worry me, but I remain calm—for here there is some tangible peace. As I come to this realization, the cottage and the tree are both dissolved in the sudden force of the wind. I am left with a pitiful longing which occupies my thoughts still.

Testament

This present work of the Chronicles was printed and completed in the year of the Lord 1515, on Saint Margaret's Eve, in the noble and celebrated city of Mainz, the first inventress of the art of printing, by Johann Schöffer, grandson of the late worthy Johann Fust, citizen of Mainz, first author of the said art, who began to conceive and fathom the art of printing through his own ingenuity, in the year 1450... In the year 1452 only, he perfected it, with divine grace, and made it serviceable to the printing of books, but with the help and many necessary additional inventions of his assistant and adopted son, Peter Schöffer of Gernsheim, to whom he gave his daughter Christine as wife, in just reward for all his labour and numerous inventions. Both Johann Fust and Peter Schöffer kept this art secret, and bound all their workmen and members of their house by an oath not to make it known in any way. But at length, from 1462 onwards, this art was spread by these same workmen in diverse countries of the world, by which means it took further wing.

[Colophon from Abbot Johann Trithemius of Sponheim's *Annales Hirsaugienses*. Publisher's note: Statements providing details on the birth of printing first appeared in the colophons of early printed books. The long-lived firm of Fust and Schöffer is thought to have initiated the practice with their printing of the *Mainz Psalter* in 1457.]

Colophon

Fashioned as a pre-World War I bibliographic ghost, *Black-letter* is a speculative examination based on the extant Gutenberg research and historical studies of the time period. The book was drawn from an idea by its publisher Gerald Lange, who was also responsible for its contextual arrangement and typographic design. The cover image is a reproduction of author Jeffrey Atherton's studio photograph, *mirror and mould*, which was selected from a suite of ten images originally created for use in this project. The book was digitally set in Carter & Cone Type's Miller Text (a recent Matthew Carter design inspired by nineteenth-century Scotch romans) and P22 type foundry's Cézanne. Both fonts were letterpress configured with editing software. The digital imaging was printed from photopolymer plates and the photographic image printed from glass plates using the venerable collotype process. Atherton and Lange collaborated on the presswork in both printings. The text sheet is Umbria Bianco, a handmade paper imported from the renowned Fabriano mills. *Black-letter* was printed in editions limited to 120 numbered and 26 lettered copies bound at The Wide Awake Garage by Daniel E. Kelm with assistance from Michael Richardson and Barry Spence. The clamshell-style box that houses the lettered edition was produced at The Campbell-Logan Bindery.

The collaborators would like to express our thanks and gratitude to all those who helped in the production of this title: to Robert Dansby for the use of his Vandercook SP20 flatbed cylinder press and Sue Abbe Kaplan for the use of her Harrild & Sons 12 x 18 Albion iron handpress; to Carolee Campbell and Michael Intrator for technical assistance; to copy editor Robin Price; to readers and advisors Nicolas Barker, Hank Bunker, Steve Grody, Laura Lasworth, Steve LaVoie, Mary Moran-Lange, and Betty Vick (role model); and especially to Moloch, and Audrey, for forcing us to relearn everything we thought we knew about the black art.

Testament [I], the colophon from the *Catholicon* of Johann Balbus of Genoa (1460), and Testament [II], the colophon from Abbot Johann Trithemius of Sponheim's *Annales Hirsauigienses* (1515), are historic documents that exist in various forms of rendition and translation. The Testaments were drawn from a number of these sources and edited and revised by the author and the publisher.

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