Roger C. Lewis, *Thomas James Wise and the Trial Book Fallacy*. Aldershot, Hants: Scolar Press, 1995. xxiv, 244 pp.; \$76.95 U.S. (cloth). ISBN 1-85928-036-6.

Will the last word on T.J. Wise's abominable legacy ever be written? Are there still areas of bibliographical infamy perpetrated by this wretched man which have remained hidden, despite the enormous Wise literature that has grown up since Carter and Pollard's *Inquiry* of 1934? Alas, it seems likely that we have still not seen the end of the Wise story; and if Roger Lewis's contribution to the desanctification of Wise is a mere footnote to the Pollard and Carter discoveries and to David Foxon's revelation almost forty years ago that Wise was a thief and book mutilator as well as a forger, one does, nevertheless, hesitate to think that the Wise dossier is now closed. The masks worn by this man were so many. William Andrews Clark, who had paid a bookseller \$776.24 for his copy of the fake Browning *Sonnets* (1847), commissioned the San Francisco printer John Henry Nash to produce a facsimile of this pamphlet as his 1927 Christmas book. A copy of this elaborate production, a facsimile of a Wise forgery, was sent as a gift to Wise, who wrote to Clark an unpublished letter dated 5 February 1928, in which he remarked: 'What would Mrs. Browning have said if she had ever dreamed of a magnificent form which would one day be given to her beautiful *Sonnets*.' What ironies indeed!

Professor Lewis's book is devoted to an investigation of a number of so-called trial copies of books by Tennyson (both Alfred and Frederick), Rossetti, Stevenson, Conrad, and Shaw, with which Wise had much to do. These are not forgeries, but somewhat less criminally are in the main proof copies occasionally doctored, and almost always overdescribed, so that Wise could sell them to collectors as pre-first editions which would fetch a premium. A great number of these were sold to John Henry Wrenn and are now in the Humanities Research Center at Austin, Texas; a number remained in Wise's own collection and are thus at the British Library as part of the Ashley Library; and others can be found in various rare book libraries elsewhere. It should be added that not every bound proof of every work by these writers went through Wise's hands, though the term 'trial' book came into common bibliographical parlance due to his efforts. There are, for example, three bound Tennyson proofs, labelled trial copies, at the William Andrews Clark Memorial Library for which Clark paid Maggs (in the person of Seymour de Ricci) a great deal of money in 1929. These, like some of the Texas items, once belonged to Sir James Knowles, the editor of the *Contemporary Review* to which Tennyson was a frequent contributor, but they do not appear ever to have been in Wise's possession.

Lewis worked on this book over a twenty-five year period, and has studied the facts carefully and in depth. He has used hundreds of unpublished Wise letters and other documents (especially, but not only, at Texas again) to document how Wise prevaricated, fudged, and liberally misinterpreted the evidence in order to make 'impossibles' (as he liked to call them, i.e. extremely rare editions) out of proof copies, partly to enhance his private collection and partly to make money.

He has recorded a great number of copies of these mislabelled trial books, and has tracked their appearance and sale over the decades since Wise was active as a bookseller. He does not dispute the term trial book completely, and notes, for example, how Stevenson's *The Hanging Judge* (1887) is a genuine example of the genre: set up and printed in a very small number of copies for the author, who presented them to friends for comment, and then decided not to proceed with publication. (Edmund Gosse, Wise's friend, later muddled the bibliographical waters by preparing proofs of the text of this book for inclusion in a collected Stevenson, and then deciding not to include the piece.) But most of the trial copies so labelled by Wise are simply proofs — interesting indeed, for the most part, as proofs, but not such as bibliographically to dethrone the genuine first editions of the books in question. Lewis sorts all of this out with admirable care and lucidity.

Wise once described himself in a letter as "the most modest of men," a statement which is either a whopping lie or a perhaps characteristic example of how the variety of sociopath attracted to forgery and related crime is unable to judge his own self. He constructed his cover with care, and that care included missing no opportunity to excoriate bibliographical criminality in others. William Andrews Clark and his staff had an extensive correspondence with Wise over Clark's acquisition of a rare Byron piece entitled *Euthanasia* (1812), which Clark had bought bound with a Byron letter presenting a book, though probably not *that* book. Both book and letter are genuine, but when Clark sent it to Wise for examination, the latter fulminated about the bookseller who had, he said, faked a connection between the two. 'I have exposed & denounced in the plainest possible terms the action of the scoundrel who produced the 'Fake,' and who imposed his fabrication upon Mr. Clark.' Clark's staff was rather overwhelmed by the vehemence of Wise's prose on this subject, as well they might have been. Surely here the guilty conscience of the forger betrayed itself in an unnecessarily thunderous condemnation of a piece that was only marginally misrepresented. In retrospect, Wise's brimstone is like the tell-tale heart.

All readers interested in the Wise story will want to own *Thomas James Wise and the Trial Book Fallacy*, and scholars and collectors of the writers involved in this piece of bibliographical history will also learn much from the book. It is a learned and important contribution to the subject.

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William Andrews Clark Memorial Library, UCLA

Jacques Michon, dir. *Édition et pouvoirs*. Sainte-Foy: Presses de l'Université Laval, 1995. xii, 329 pp.; 40\$. ISBN 2-7637-7387-7.

À la conjonction de Soi-même et du monde, l'être humain donne sens à son action. En se référant à son imaginaire et en usant du discours, il cherche à exprimer le caractère et la promesse de son identité, à l'organiser selon la logique du récit, à