

Pamphlets and Pamphleteering in Early Modern Britain

In mid-sixteenth century Britain, printed texts played a marginal role in propaganda exercises and efforts to influence the public. By the end of the seventeenth century it was self-evident that any attempt to generate public support for a political initiative, party or position would have to exploit the persuasive powers of the press. The most effective means of persuasion and communication was the pamphlet, which created influential moral and political communities of readers, and thus formed a 'public sphere' of popular, political opinion. This book traces the rise of the printed pamphlet as an imaginative and often eloquent literary form.

Using a long-term perspective and a broad range of historical, bibliographical and textual evidence, the book sketches a complex definition of a 'pamphlet', showing the coherence of the literary form, the diversity of genres and imaginative devices employed by pamphleteers; and it explores readers' relationships with pamphlets. Individual chapters look at the definition of the pamphlet; Elizabethan religious controversy; the book trade, the distribution of books and commercial and physical influences on the pamphlet form; the publication of news; the Scottish origins of the explosion of print in 1637–42; the uses of pamphleteering in the English Civil War and interregnum; women, gender and pamphleteering; and the uses of print in the Restoration.

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PAMPHLETS AND PAMPHLETEERING IN EARLY MODERN BRITAIN

JOAD RAYMOND

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In memory of Max Raymond (1916–1999)

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A wise man will make better use of an idle pamphlet,
then a fool will do of sacred Scripture.

Milton, *Areopagitica* (1644)

The great function of the pamphlet is to act as a sort
of footnote or marginal comment on official history.
It not only keeps unpopular viewpoints alive, but sup-
plies documentation on events that the authorities of
the day have reason to falsify.

George Orwell, *British Pamphleteers* (1948)

CONTENTS

<i>List of illustrations</i>	page	viii
<i>List of figures</i>		xi
<i>Preface</i>		xiii
<i>Notes on conventions</i>		xv
Prologue: Changing experiences 1588, 1642, 1688		1
1. What is a pamphlet?		4
2. 'How loudly they cry': Marprelate, purity and paper bullets		27
3. 'Stitchers, Binders, Stationers, Hawkers': printing practices and the book trade		53
4. 'A mongrel race of Mercuries lately sprung up': the business of news, c. 1580–1660		98
5. 'From words to blowes': Scottish origins of the explosion of print, 1637–42		161
6. 'This bookish partiall formall fierce factious animositous age': printing revolutions, 1641–60		202
7. 'Speaking abroad': gender, female authorship and pamphleteering		276
8. 'A Bog of Plots, Sham-plots, Subornations and Perjuries': pamphlets and polemic in the Restoration		323
9. Epilogue		383
<i>Index of names and titles</i>		385
<i>General index</i>		401

Zwicker, *Lines*

Steven N. Zwicker, *Lines of Authority: Politics and Literary Culture, 1649–1689* (Ithaca and London, 1993)

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Prologue: *Changing experiences 1588, 1642, 1688*

Approach a bookstall in St Paul's Churchyard in 1588 and what do you see? Pinned on boards are title-pages from a handful of small books offered for a penny or two. Some tender *Newes from France* or *Newes out of Spain*, and you feel the call of remote and unseen places, as well as anxiety for the fate of true religion. Others extend stern advice, in sermons or guides to upright living; or rail against dicing, dancing and vain interludes; or anatomise the abuses of the times, costly apparel, face-painting, masculine dress in women, superfluity of appetite, covetousness, adultery, the violation of the Sabbath. Perhaps you see a *Blast* against the stage and plays; and, minding which, is that a playbill over there for something by Marlowe? In addition to the short tracts in paper wrappers, there are small stacks of books in plain bindings, vellum or calf. Most are godly, and you thumb a Psalter, a prayer book or, perhaps desiringly, a new Bible with notes. As you stand there, idly admiring the clutter of leather, paper, ribbon ties, and deep-pressed ink, another customer approaches and is proffered a small plain parcel in exchange for a handful of coins – and is gone. Could that be a pamphlet which must remain unnamed, a tract attacking the venality of bishops and mocking their pomp, something which you would scarcely know how to ask for, sold here under the very shadow of St Paul's?

Approach the churchyard in 1642 and before you reach the bookstalls you hear the cries of mercuries and hawkers crowding the air around St Paul's. The walkers and talkers have overspilled the confines of the cathedral and parade along the line of stalls, though there is a sombre mood this morning, and the fashionable converse mentions proposals, answers and observations. The many customers flit between the hawkers – who sell from a pack of wares, including ribbons and pamphlets, needles, almanacs and chapbooks, and call the titles, as ballads are sometimes sung – and the more substantial booksellers, who keep a stall, and perhaps a domestic shop in Duck Lane. At the first such stall you find Mr Cooke, waiting for his apprentice to relieve him so he can pursue a printer who is late with a pamphlet of news he has undertaken. All the talk is now of news: of speeches, proceedings and

passages in Parliament, of Ireland. This is what excites you. Your eye passes over a copy of *A Perfect Diurnal* and instinctively you reach out. For months you have sought a newsbook every Monday morning. At first they were a marvel, a weekly promise of the latest letters and rumours, of Parliament's ongoing concern with the rebellious Irish, of its negotiation with the king; if it were not for repeated threats to ban newsbooks and all accounts of Parliament owing to their false and scandalous reports, they would now be almost mundane. Your eye is caught by a bold woodcut on a title-page, a depiction of Parliament with its worthy members locked in debate, under the benign authority of the king's seal. You readily hand over your two pennies, and begin to read as you walk past the site of the lately defaced cross.

Walk along Fleet Street and up Ludgate Hill in 1688 and everything is different. St Paul's, which had graced the skyline from every reach of the city, was levelled by fire decades ago; it is now being replaced by a grander edifice, which is rising from the ashes. In the sky you see two builders perched at a terrifying height on the ascendant dome. The approach is more imposing than formerly. The streets are wider, the buildings less ramshackle. More carriages pass down the street, rattling noisily on the cobblestones. The churchyard itself is still crowded, though the Exchange is perhaps as important a place for sociable converse, at least among tradesmen. Greedy ears throng around the merchants who have picked their way home from the Levant with a profitable cargo. A crowd gathers around a ballad singer, a rare sight in London these days. The chapmen and ballad singers, it seems, have been driven out by the more respectable vendors of books. The thrill of a new ballad is not what it was; perhaps their trade has been eroded by the many coffee-houses where you may read the latest gazettes and listen to talk of religion and war for the price of a dish of coffee. You have a sharper appetite for this stuff than for an old tale penned anew and sung to an antique tune. The warble of the ballad singer barely overcomes the hubbub of the place; you notice the pickpockets making their way around the crowd. Is that a playbill for something by Mistress Behn? Turning to the nearest stall your eyes alight on a toy by that traducer Roger L'Estrange, barking another answer to yet another hapless dissenter, no doubt. On all sides it is framed by unsold tracts from the days of the Popish Plot, speculatively offered at a reduced price: discoveries of the unmaskings, trials, packets of advice, accounts of popery, true narratives of the plot, impartial narratives, discoveries of iniquity, impudence and malice triumphant and defeated. There is the *London Gazette*, somewhat thinner in all senses than the newsbooks used to be, before they became newsheets; there are pamphlets on the scandal at Magdalen College (some distinguished scholars have been intruded upon the

place); there are tracts on toleration, and many sermons counselling obedience to the Catholic king. Some pamphlets are now printed in folio, do not fit as easily into a pocket, or the clutch of a hand, as the old ones used to. They have ideas above their station. Perhaps you can find something new by Dryden? Or perhaps you should head to Westminster and to Miles' for a coffee?

What is a pamphlet?

NAMING A PAMPHLET

In 1597 Richard Stonley, a teller in Queen Elizabeth's Exchange of Receipt, was found to have embezzled over £12,600. His property was seized, and it soon became apparent that he had spent a moiety of his illicit income in satiating (or probably not satiating) his bibliomania. The inventory of books at his dwelling in Aldersgate Street lists hundreds of titles: over 200 volumes in his bedroom, a similar number in the gallery next to the bedchamber, 34 in his study and a solitary French Bible in the parlour. Stonley owned scriptural commentaries and sermons; fashionably politic and erudite treatises by Justus Lipsius; the classics, ranging from Cicero and Aristotle to Caesar, Herodotus and Ovid; historical tomes; small books on witchcraft, health and medicine; and literary works including More's *Utopia* and Spenser's *Shepherd's Calendar*. His tastes were educated and broad, and his reading passionate; the diary he kept in prison details his daily fare of small beer and oysters and devoted reading.¹

Scattered among respectable works, the inventory identifies in the bedchamber five 'Bundells of Pamphlets in quarto' valued at 20*d.*, and eleven 'Bundles in viii^o' valued at 4*s.*; in the Gallery 'xlv Panphelets' valued at 2*s.* 6*d.*; 'xxxv small Pamphlets', and a further eleven pamphlets each bundle valued at twelve pence. The devout works in the study were jumbled with seven pamphlets valued at sixpence. Books and especially pamphlets, being of little monetary value, are rarely identified individually in early modern inventories. Only the most diligent of accountants would have distinguished the many one- and two-penny books in an attempt to recover the embezzled sum. One of the curiosities of this inventory is that bundles of anonymous pamphlets are listed among the titles of other items of little value: 'A defence of things lately done in the Lowe Countries' appraised at 1*d.*; 'Newes out of

Helvetia' at 1*d.*; 'The Edicte of the kynge of France' at 2*d.*; 'Doctor Watsons twoe Sermons' at 2*d.*; 'Nicholls Recantacion' at 1*d.*; 'Euphues shadowe', 'Treasure for Englishe men' and 'Difference of these our dayes', and [Stubbes'] 'Anatomy of Abuses' all at 1*d.* These and many other items we would classify as pamphlets.

This inconsistency might be circumstantial. Whether a pamphlet was named or not might come down to whether it was bound or bundled with other items; it may be that several clerks were performing the task, one of whom thought such details were trifling; perhaps the attractions of a nearby alehouse persuaded a clerk to rush the job. Nevertheless the mishmash of items suggests two things. First, the educated taste of a man like Stonley was eclectic and included printed materials too trifling to name. This serves as a useful corrective to Thomas Bodley's famed interdiction against preserving pamphlets in the University collections, as they were 'not worth the custody in suche a Librarie'.² Secondly it indicates the emerging concept of a *pamphlet* as a small book, and as something over and above that.

What, then, was in these bundles? What was a pamphlet? In the first instance it was a short, quarto book. Some printing terminology will be useful at this point. The format and size of an early modern printed book was determined by the proportions of the paper on which it was printed and the number of times the paper was folded. Size influenced status. A folio was made from sheets folded once, resulting in a large and usually grand book; a quarto was made from sheets folded twice; and an octavo from sheets folded three times, producing a correspondingly small book. These less prestigious formats were used for diverse purposes. A pamphlet typically consisted of between one sheet and a maximum of twelve sheets, or between eight and ninety-six pages in quarto.³

The classification of books in inventories can reveal the mental ordering of books within a series of registers, by size, content and value, in a way that is less charged than the polemical exchanges within print. The 1625 inventory of the books of Sir Roger Townshend, a prominent Norfolk gentleman, includes works in Latin, English and French, most identified by a short title. The format of each book – quarto, octavo or folio – is specified. Clusters of books in the same format suggest that they may have been shelved according to size, or that the compiler of the list recognised that size affected value. While the classics and Latin works, including Plato, Cicero and Quintillian, are for the most part collected into distinct groups, they are listed no more diligently than numerous plays or ephemera, including 'The crying murder in 4^o',

¹ Leslie Hotson, 'The Library of Elizabeth's Embezzling Teller', *Studies in Bibliography*, 2 (1949–50), 49–61; Stonley's diary is in the Folger Shakespeare Library, MS V.a.459–61.

² Thomas Bodley, *Letters of Sir Thomas Bodley to Thomas James*, ed. G. W. Wheeler (Oxford, 1926), p. 40.

³ The reasoning behind these figures is given below, pp. 81–3.

'Proceedings against the late Traytors in 4^o', John Deacon's 'Tobaccoe tortured. in 4^o', 'The gowts apologie. in 4^o', and numerous godly books and sermons, all in quarto.⁴ The list of Townshend's library is interesting precisely because it records the formats of books and provides similar details for each.

Later in the century, a catalogue of the extensive library of Sir Edward Dering (1598–1644) identifies a diversity of volumes learned and less-learned, arranged according to size and subject. Among the theological treatises and the classics which comprise the majority of the volumes stand a few named pamphlets: 'Mr Milton: the plott discovered. Lond 1640' (one of a group of thirteen items costing 7s. in total) and other tracts more securely attributed to John Milton; also 'The first and second booke of discipline in Scotland. 1560. Lond 1641'; '2 Allmanackes'; 'Depositions and Articles agst Tho: Earle of strafford. 16. febr. 1640'; 'A copy of a letter of mr Cotton of Boston in New England 1641'; and many 'playbooks'. Dering's interest in short, controversial works burgeoned in 1640, a time when pamphlet controversy was closely bound with the political future of the kingdoms. The list also notes the purchase of books in bulk: 2s. 3d. was paid in 1621 'For 10 small bookes', and 2s. paid in January 1627 for 'pamphletts 6 and 2 MS'.⁵ As in the list of Stonley's books, some small and perhaps inconsequential pamphlets are listed in detail, while others recede into the shadows of Dering's shelves. Slightly later still, an inventory of the library of Robert Devereux, Earl of Essex, made in early 1647, soon after his death, identifies neither format nor value, but lists short titles, including many manuscripts and large volumes of theology, as well as single-sheet pamphlets of news and polemics, many associated with the parliamentary cause for which Essex fought.⁶

After 1640 the distinctive nature of a pamphlet became more evident. In 1640–1 the bookseller George Thomason began collecting pamphlets because he recognised their importance as documents of controversial times; no one had systematically collected English pamphlets before then. At about the same time Anthony Wood, the Oxford antiquarian, and John Rushworth, newly appointed clerk-assistant to the House of Commons, began smaller collections.⁷ Pepys, however, does not mention pamphlets in his accounts of browsing booksellers' stalls. In the 1727 inventory of Newton's library, scholarly works in all formats are identified; the ignominious 'small chymical

⁴ *Private Libraries in Renaissance England*, vol. 1, ed. R. J. Fehrenbach and E. S. Leedham-Green (Binghamton, NY, 1992), pp. 79–135.

⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 137–269.

⁶ Vernon F. Snow, 'An Inventory of the Lord General's Library, 1646', *The Library*, 5th ser., 21 (1966), 115–23.

⁷ On Thomason and Rushworth see Ch. 5, below and Raymond, *Invention*, chs. 2 & 6; Nicholas K. Kiessling, 'The Library of Anthony Wood from 1681 to 1999', *Bodleian Library Record*, 16 (1999), 470–91.

books' and various quantities of 'Wast Books & Pamphletts' are not described individually.⁸ By 1700 everyone knew what a pamphlet was and what it did. Early in the century Myles Davies, a Welsh convert to Protestantism, began writing his *Critical History of Pamphlets* (1716), a mercurial and peppery account of theological controversy in print. During the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries 'pamphlet' became a useful and meaningful word, but without a firm definition for it held little interest for the antiquarian or etymologist. In his 1617 lexicon John Minsheu merely described the pamphlet as 'opusculum stolidorum', a fool's diminutive performance.⁹ No one defined the pamphlet, or tried to explain the phenomenon of its rise to prominence. This book tells the story of something that through the seventeenth century was too immediate, too mundane to receive critical interrogation: so what then made a pamphlet?

Though already venerable the word 'pamphlet' prospered in the 1580s, as its meanings shifted and it entered into common use. In 1716 Myles Davies claimed it as 'a true-born *English* Denison', a native idiom, 'of no longer a Date than that of the last Century, since 'tis almost certain its Pedigree can scarce be trac'd higher than the latter end of Queen *Elizabeth's* Reign.'¹⁰ Davies offered a range of meanings for the term, at the root of which was the small 'stitch'd' (not bound) book, tending to calumny or scandal. It was perhaps, he noted, etymologically related to *Pan* = *all* and *I love*: 'signifying a thing belov'd by all: For a Pamphlet being of a small portable Bulk, and of no great Price, and of no great Difficulty, seems adapted for every one's Understanding, for every one's Reading, for every one's Buying, and consequently becomes a fit Object and Subject of most People's Choice, Capacity and Ability.'

The term first appeared in Anglo-Latin writing in the fourteenth century, and in English in the fifteenth. It derived from *Pamphilus seu de Amore*, a popular twelfth-century Latin amatory poem. Thence, with the diminutive ending *-et*, it became a familiar appellation for any small book. Following the spread of printing, the term began to specify a 'separate', a small item issued on its own, usually unbound, not substantial enough to constitute a volume by itself. In a minor usage the word described a collection of literary items, in poetry or prose, which were produced to be disposable rather than enduring. These were produced for the market of gentleman readers who sought entertainment or titillation. The printer's prefatory epistle in George Gascoigne's poetic anthology *A Hundreth Sundrie Flowres* (1579),

⁸ John Harrison, *The Library of Isaac Newton* (Cambridge, 1978), pp. 32–3.

⁹ See under 'pamphlet' in John Minsheu, *Hegemon eis tas glossas* (1617), p. 345; and Stephano Skinner, *Etymologicon Linguae Anglicanae* (1671), sig. Lll4v.

¹⁰ Davies, *Athenae*, vol. 1, section 2: *A Critical History of Pamphlets*, p. 1.

referred to 'the publication of these pleasant Pamphlets'. Here pamphlets refers not to the poems themselves (Gascoigne writes: 'I may not compare Pamphlets unto Poems'), but metonymically describes separates collected into a volume.¹¹ This usage continued into the next century: Robert Anton, in *Vices Anotimie Scourged and Corrected in New Satirs* (1617) complained of 'obsceane and shallow Poetry' produced by and for the university graduate who 'murders the Presse with fellonious Pamphlets stolne from the imperfections of their dearest friends'.¹²

During the 1580s the meaning of the word 'pamphlet' coalesced with frequent use: it came to refer to a short, vernacular work, generally printed in quarto format, costing no more than a few pennies, of topical interest or engaged with social, political or ecclesiastical issues.¹³ By the 1590s it had found a range of uses: the noun 'pamphleter' (and later pamphleteer), the verb 'to pamphlet', and the adjective 'pamphletary' meaning pertaining to pamphlets. Some attributive uses were subsequently coined, including 'pamphlet Treaties', 'Pamphlet-Forms . . . Pamphlet-Subjects', and 'pamphlet war'.¹⁴ These frequently carried pejorative overtones. Pamphlets were unreliable. A character in Henry Holland's dialogue *A Treatise Against Witchcraft* (1590) complains that 'many fabulous pamphletes are published, which give little light and lesse prooffe'.¹⁵

Pamphlets were closely associated with slander or scurrility. This meaning has a discernible trajectory in the second half of the sixteenth century, and can be found in legal contexts. In 1559 Queen Elizabeth issued to the Court of High Commission, the supreme ecclesiastical court of the country, a set of recommendations and instructions regarding their duties. The fifty-first article of these Injunctions charged the archbishops of Canterbury and York and the Bishop of London with responsibility for supervising the press: 'And bycause many pamphletes, playes and balletes, be often times printed, wherein regard wold be had, that nothinge therin should be either heretical, sedicious, or unsemely for Christian eares: Her majestie likewise commaundeth, that no manner of person, shall enterprise to print any such, except the same be to him lycensed.'¹⁶ John Leslie, Bishop of Ross, was interrogated by

¹¹ *Flowres*, sig. A2v, p. 50; Arthur F. Marotti, *Manuscript, Print, and the English Renaissance Lyric* (Ithaca and London, 1995), pp. 227–8, 302n.26; on the licensing history of this text and its censored sequel, see Clegg, *Press Censorship*, pp. 103–22.

¹² Robert Anton, *Vices Anotimie Scourged and Corrected in New Satirs* (1617), sig. B1r.

¹³ OED: *vide* 'pamphlet', noun 2.

¹⁴ These examples, between 1571 and 1730, come from the very useful entry in OED; some of the examples given below predate those in OED for the sense of 'pamphlet', noun 2.

¹⁵ Henry Holland, *A Treatise Against Witchcraft* (1590), sig. E3v. Theophilus refers to debates over the devil's delusory empowerment of witches.

¹⁶ Quoted in Edward Arber, ed., *An Introductory Sketch to the Martin Marprelate Controversy, 1588–1590* (1879), pp. 49–50.

the Queen's ministers in 1570; he had written a book, defending the honour and legitimacy of Mary Queen of Scots, entitled *A Defence of the Honour of the Right Highe, Mightye and Noble Princesse* (1569). Leslie justified himself by declaring that 'nothing was intended but a defence of her honour against so many blasphemous "treateis" and "pamflettis" as have been set abroad both in England and Scotland, which are printed at London.'¹⁷ In 1579 John Aylmer, who as Bishop of London bore responsibility for supervising the output of presses, wrote to Secretary of State William Cecil, Lord Burghley: 'I have founde out a presse of pryntyng with one [William] CARTER, a very Lewd fellowe, who hath byne Dyvers tymes before in prison for printinge of Lewde pamphettes.'¹⁸ In 1580, drafting an act to control 'the licentious printing selling and uttering of unprofitable and hurtfull Inglish bokes', the lawyer William Lambarde spread his net wide to include 'sundrie bookes, pamfletes, Poesies, ditties, songes, and other woorkes, and wrytinges, of many sortes and names serving . . . to let in a mayne Sea of wickednesse . . . and to no small or sufferable wast[e] of the treasure of this Realme which is thearby consumed and spent in paper, being of it selfe a forein and chargeable comoditie'.¹⁹ In 1583 a group of stationers complained to the Privy Council that the lack of codified rights to ownership of texts (or 'copy') was undermining their profitability. A commission appointed to investigate the privilege warned the Council that, unless some remedial action was taken, 'onelic pamflettes, trifles and vaine small toies shall be printed, and the great bokes of value and good for the Chirch and Realme shold not be done at all'.²⁰ A 1588 royal proclamation, concerned with the import of Catholic propaganda into England, requested that all officers should 'inquire and search for all such bulls, transcripts, libels, books and pamphlets, and for all such persons whatsoever as shall bring in, publish, disperse, or utter any of the same'.²¹ By 1588 pamphlets were disreputable, potentially dangerous works that needed to be monitored.

An obsolete, early sixteenth-century usage of 'pamphlet' meant a prostitute. This may have coloured the name for a cheap book, available to any in return for a small payment. John Taylor drew the analogy bluntly in a comic poem:

For like a *Whore* by day-light or by candle,
'Tis even free for every knave to handle:
And as a new *whore* is below'd and sought,
So is a new *Booke* in request and bought.

¹⁷ *Calendar of State Papers Relating to Scotland*, 3 (1903), p. 160.

¹⁸ Arber, *Transcript*, vol. 2, pp. 749–50. ¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 751.

²⁰ Greg, *Companion*, p. 127.

²¹ Paul L. Hughes and James F. Larkin, *Tudor Royal Proclamations*, 3 vols. (New Haven & London, 1964–69), vol. 3, pp. 13–17.

When *whores* wax old and stale, they're out of date,
 Old Pamphlets are most subject to such fate.
 As *whores* have Panders to emblazen their worth,
 So these have Stationers to set them forth.
 And as an old *whore* may be painted new
 With borrowed beauty, faire unto the view,
 Whereby shee for a fine fresh *whore* may passe,
 Yet is shee but the rotten *whore* shee was.
 So Stationers, their old cast Bookes can grace,
 And by new Titles paint a-fresh their face.
 Whereby for currant they are past away,
 As if they had come forth but yesterday.²²

Even in its late sixteenth-century usage, the word pamphlet was deprecatory. Pamphlets were small, insignificant, ephemeral, disposable, untrustworthy, unruly, noisy, deceitful, poorly printed, addictive, a waste of time. As the form of the pamphlet emerged, the name given to it was, like 'Puritan', an insult. In his preface to Robert Greene's *Menaphon* (1589), Thomas Nashe dismissed the uninventive offerings of unashamedly commercial 'Pamphleters, and Poets, that make a patrimonie of *Inspeech*'.²³ In *Pierce Penilesse* (1592) Nashe railed against Gabriel Harvey: 'thou *Pigmie Braggart*, thou Pamphleter of nothing but *Peans*'.²⁴ Harvey responded in *Four Letters* (1592) with a complaint against 'those, whose owne Pamflets are readier to condemne them, then my letters forward to accuse them'.²⁵ Other people write pamphlets. Thus Barnaby Rich in 1606: 'What a number of Pamphlets haue wee by our new writers of this age, whereof the greatest part are nothing else but vanitie'.²⁶ As if to say: pamphlets insult the readers' intelligence, but *this*, dear reader...²⁷ In 1608 the lawyer Sir Edward Coke denounced the unauthorised publication of an inaccurate paraphrase of one of his speeches: 'little doe I esteeme an uncharitable and malicious practise in publishing of an erroneous and ill spelled Pamphet [sic]'.²⁸ In the late sixteenth and early seventeenth century a stereotypical pamphleteer was an idle exploiter of

²² *The Penguin Book of Renaissance Verse 1509-1659*, selected by David Norbrook, ed. H. R. Woudhuysen (1982), p. 740.

²³ [Greene], *Menaphon* (1589), sig. A3r.

²⁴ Nashe, *Pierce Penilesse* (1592), in *The Works of Thomas Nashe*, 5 vols., ed. Ronald B. McKerrow (1904-10), vol. 1, p. 196.

²⁵ *The Works of Gabriel Harvey*, ed. Alexander B. Grosart, 3 vols. (1884-5), 1:155.

²⁶ Barnaby Rich, *Faultes, Fault And Nothing Else but Faultes* (1606), reprinted ed. Melvin H. Wolf (Gainesville, FL, 1965), sig. 39v.

²⁷ Cf. A. R., *True and Wonderfull. A discourse* (1614), sig. A3r; Thomas Bedwell, *Kalendarium viatorum generale* (1614), sig. A4v; Joseph Swetnam, *The Araignment of Lewde, Idle, Froward, and Unconstant Women* (1615), sig. A4v.

²⁸ Quoted Peter W. M. Blayney, *The Texts of King Lear and their Origins*, vol. 1: *Nicholas Okes and the First Quarto* (Cambridge, 1982), p. 64; I am grateful to Peter Blayney for this reference.

the credulous vulgar; by the mid-seventeenth century he would cease to be merely frivolous and become greedy and malicious.

The term 'pamphlet' was not always used pejoratively, nor always to refer to someone else's writing. Nashe refers to his *Strange Newes* (1592) as 'my Pamphlet', but only after describing Harvey 'giving monie to have this his illiterat Pamphlet of Letters printed (whereas others have monie given them to suffer them selves to come in Print)'. Nashe is defiantly answering a fool after his own folly, and thus is prepared to denigrate the status of his own two-sheet quarto.²⁹ Harvey dances a symmetrical caper in *Four Letters*, when, after haranguing Nashe, he refers to his own work as 'this impertinent Pamflet... this slender Pamflet', before beseeching writers 'not to trouble the Presse, but in case of urgent occasion, or important use'.³⁰ Nashe, conscious of his dependence on his readers, modestly admits: 'I must not place a volume in the precincts of a pamphlet', meaning to let it grow beyond its proper stature.³¹ A similar feint of humility appears in John Taylor's *Nipping and Snipping of Abuses* (1614) where he admits, 'I have at idle times some Pamphlets writ', and refers to his quarto volume of poetry as 'This little pamphlet'.³² Taylor, a waterman and popular writer, uses the term both negatively and neutrally as part of a deliberate attempt to represent himself as a modest, self-educated, and honest author. A 1591 news pamphlet regretted that 'this Pamphlet' had been held up by other 'apish Pamphleters'.³³ In all these uses the term pamphlet hints at ambivalence; a commercial or pragmatic compromise has been made, a small bark floats on a sea of scurrility. In the hands of Elizabethan pamphleteers, 'pamphlet' is a complex term, but is essentially an insult.

FORMS OF PRINT 1500-1588

The 1580s were a watershed for the pamphlet, a moment determined by increasing literacy, commercial capacity within the book trade, tensions in the Elizabethan church, and a fermentation of the English language, itself a consequence of the Reformation and the Protestant emphasis on vernacular scripture and of the loosening of classical rhetoric.³⁴ Several factors conspired

²⁹ *Works of Thomas Nashe*, vol. 1, pp. 258-9.

³⁰ *The Works of Gabriel Harvey*, vol. 1, pp. 220-1, 231.

³¹ Nashe, *The Unfortunate Traveller and Other Works*, ed. J. B. Steane (Harmondsworth, 1972), p. 224.

³² Taylor, *The Nipping or Snipping of Abuses* (1614), sigs. B3v, L4r.

³³ G. B., *Newes out of France* (?1591), sig. A4r-v.

³⁴ On prose style see Ian Robinson, *The Establishment of Modern English Prose in the Reformation and Enlightenment* (Cambridge, 1998); John Carey, 'Sixteenth- and Seventeenth-century Prose' in Christopher Ricks, ed., *English Poetry and Prose, 1550-1674* (1970; 1986), 329-411; Paula Blank, *Broken English: Dialects and the Politics of Language in Renaissance*

to shape the pamphlet and create the circumstances for its future prosperity, though the changes in this decade were a stage in a longer-term expansion of print that had been in evidence for much of the sixteenth century. The decade witnessed a Catholic propaganda campaign against the crown, serviced by printing presses in London and overseas. Subsequently these ingredients spawned a controversy in the form of the pseudonymous pamphleteer Martin Marprelate, whose writings publicly challenged conventions and figures of authority. The encounter between Marprelate and his antagonists recognised the potential of cheap print as a vehicle for controversy. From the 1580s pamphlets were a regular feature of booksellers' stalls, and an increasingly important element in the economy of the book trade.

Popular forms of print in Britain had been used to disseminate news and propaganda since the early sixteenth century. Richard Atkyns' history of printing in England, written in 1663–4, applauded the royal patronage of Henry VIII, and lamented the loosening of controls which followed the grant of a royal charter to the Company of Stationers in 1557. This had given printers power to debase their craft and to subvert authority:

the Body forgot the Head, and by degrees (breaking the Reines of Government) they kickt against the Power that gave them Life: And whereas before they Printed nothing but by the Kings especiall Leave and Command, they now (being free) set up for themselves to print what they could get most Money by; and taking the Advantage of those Virtiginous Times, of the latter end of *Henry* the 8. *Edward* the 6. And *Queen Mary*, they fill'd the Kingdom with so many Books, and the Brains of the People with so many contrary Opinions, that these Paper-pellets became as dangerous as Bullets . . . Thus was this excellent and desireable ART, within less than one hundred years, so totally vitiated, that whereas they were before the King's Printers and Servants, they now grew so poor, so numerous, and contemptible, by being Concorporated, that they turn'd this famous ART into a Mechanick Trade for a Livelyhood.³⁵

Atkyns exaggerated the potency of books in the mid-sixteenth century, but he was probably right to identify a devolution of authority, a move from carefully controlled royal propaganda to a commercial trade beyond absolute regulation, and from thence to pellets of paper. Reformation and Counter-Reformation propaganda, news publications, wonder pamphlets and ballads, cony-catching literature and political libels were all woven together in the fabric of the Marprelate controversy and the culture of pamphleteering that followed it.

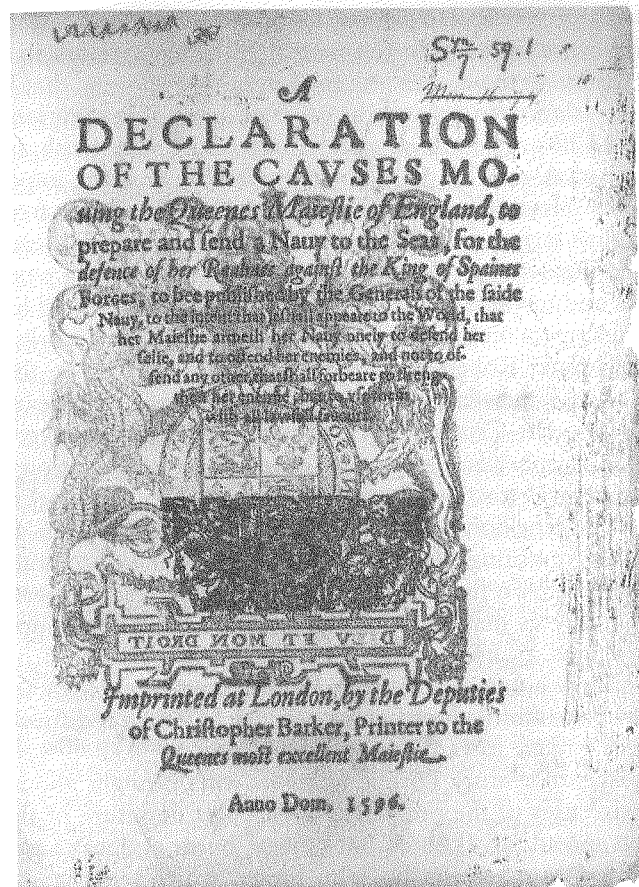
Writings (1996), ch. 2; Elizabeth Skerpan, *The Rhetoric of Politics in the English Revolution 1642–1660* (Columbia and London, 1992); Richard Helgerson, *Forms of Nationhood: The Elizabethan Writing of England* (Chicago, 1992); for a more detailed account of these factors see Ch. 2, below.

³⁵ Richard Atkyns, *The Original and Growth of Printing* (1664), sigs. C3v–C4r.

The growth of vernacular printed literature in England began with imports of Reformist works from Germany and the Netherlands in the 1520s. It was in response to these, rather than to domestic printing, that Henry VIII introduced legislation to control the production and distribution of books, notably his 1529 proclamation against heretical books (with an index of prohibited works), and his 1538 proclamation against the importation of English books. Nevertheless, the break with Rome hailed a fresh attitude towards English scripture and, for a while, a more relaxed attitude towards domestic and imported printed works. A shift in emphasis in worship away from images and towards words had begun, a shift that would have a deep and enduring impact on English culture. First, a handful of works published by the royal printer Robert Pynson before the royal divorce; then, during the 1530s, official and semi-official propaganda began to appear under the guidance of Thomas Cromwell. This included a debate between Thomas More and Christopher St German; a series of pro-Reformation prose dialogue tracts; several tracts against civil disobedience; and works attacking the Lincolnshire rebellion and the Pilgrimage of Grace in 1536. Henry also encouraged the rewriting of English history in order to promote the independence of the crown from Rome, and to present clerical interventions in the English polity as manifestations of tyranny. John Bale's morality play *King John* welded an imaginative rewriting of history with pro-Tudor didacticism to forge a new, distinctively English literature. However, with the exception of Bale, and Robert Crowley in the 1550s, it is difficult to see in these patterns a move towards a popular literature.³⁶

Across sixteenth-century Europe religious wars brought about inventive and innovative uses of the press. The vernacular literature of the German Reformation spread far; Luther's books were burnt at Paul's Cross in 1521 and condemned in a sermon by John Fisher, which itself was printed as *The Sermon of Johan the Bysshop of Rochester Made Agayn ye Pernicuous*

³⁶ Hughes and Larkin, *Tudor Royal Proclamations*, nos. 122, 186. Also the Canons of Convocation; see Gerald Bray, *The Anglican Canons 1529–1947* (1998), pp. 24–39. D. M. Loades, 'The Press Under the Early Tudors: A Study in Censorship and Seditious', *Transactions of the Cambridge Bibliographical Society*, 4 (1964), 29–50; Richard Rex, *Henry VIII and the English Reformation* (Basingstoke, 1993), chs. 1 and 4; Alistair Fox and John Guy, *Reassessing the Henrician Age: Humanism, Politics and Reform 1500–1550* (Oxford, 1986), which includes Guy's 'Thomas More and Christopher St. German: The Battle of the Books', pp. 95–120; Alistair Fox, *Politics and Literature in the Reigns of Henry VII and Henry VIII* (Oxford, 1989); Greg Walker, *Persuasive Fictions: Faction, Faith and Political Culture in the Reign of Henry VIII* (Aldershot, 1996); Carole Levin, *Propaganda in the English Reformation: Heroic and Villainous Images of King John* (Lewiston, 1988); Margaret Aston, *England's Iconoclasts: Laws Against Images* (Oxford, 1988); John N. King, *English Reformation Literature: The Tudor Origins of the Protestant Tradition* (Princeton, 1982); J. Christopher Warner, *Henry VIII's Divorce: Literature and the Politics of the Printing Press* (Woodbridge, 1998).



1. *A Declaration of the Causes Moving the Queenes Majestie of England* (1596), Cambridge University Library, Syn. 7. 59. 1. Early royal propaganda: the English version of an official declaration published in several languages. The royal arms on the verso of the title-page can be seen shining through.

Doctryn of M. Luuther (1521), one of the earliest examples of Tudor propaganda. Lutheran and anti-Lutheran writings appeared in pamphlet form and as satirical broadsides, anticipating in their scurrilous and anti-authoritarian styles the rise of the popular press elsewhere in Europe. A propaganda war between the emperor Charles V and King Francis I of France during the 1520s suggests that the press was perceived as a potential tool for manipulating readers. A genre of small, anonymous printed prophecies, in prose and verse, flourished in Italy between 1480 and 1530. While these prophecies had their roots in folk culture, the printed reports appropriated them as propaganda for the Italian wars and for the early campaign against Lutheranism.

The French Wars of Religion, beginning in the 1560s, and the Dutch Revolt of 1568 sparked revolutions in print. The effects of these printed texts are debatable, and anxious contemporaries may have exaggerated both the number of readers and their susceptibility, but a clear pattern emerges of the introduction of printed propaganda across Europe between 1500 and 1700: religious controversy brought printed propaganda which helped to create readerships, who subsequently turned to secular media.³⁷

During the early years of Edward's reign, under Somerset's regency, and during the reign of Mary, something resembling a propaganda war broke out in England, though one aimed mainly at an educated readership. This included anti-Catholic writing, surreptitious, anti-government polemic.³⁸ From about 1550 the beginnings of a self-consciously Protestant literary tradition are evident, with the publication of a series of tracts which hail Langland as an avant-garde Protestant and *Piers Plowman* as a Reformation hero.³⁹ Some diversification in the backgrounds of authors is apparent at this time: Langland's sixteenth-century editor, Robert Crowley, was a printer as well as a clergyman, and apparently proud of the capacity of his mother tongue; the lay Catholic propagandist Miles Hogarde was a hosier.⁴⁰

From the 1560s printed media supplied the appetite for news among the reading public in England. In 1562 a gaggle of pamphlets reported on English

³⁷ R. W. Scribner, *For the Sake of Simple Folk: Popular Propaganda for the German Reformation* (Cambridge, 1981); Ottavia Niccoli, *Prophecy and People in Renaissance Italy*, trans. Lydia G. Cochrane (Princeton, 1990); Jeffrey K. Sawyer, *Printed Poison: Pamphlet Propaganda, Faction Politics, and the Public Sphere in Early Seventeenth-Century France* (Berkeley, 1990); Robert O. Lindsay and John Neu, *French Political Pamphlets, 1547–1648: A Catalogue of Major Collections in American Libraries* (Madison, Milwaukee, London, 1969); Donald R. Kelley, *The Beginning of Ideology: Consciousness and Society in the French Reformation* (Cambridge, 1981), esp. ch. 6; Craig E. Harline, *Pamphlets, Printing, and Political Culture in the Early Dutch Republic* (Dordrecht, 1987); Martin van Gelderen, *The Political Thought of the Dutch Revolt 1555–1590* (Cambridge, 1992), pp. 288–90; and Peter Burke and Asa Briggs, *A Social History of the Media* (Cambridge, 2002), ch. 2.

³⁸ Jennifer Loach, 'Pamphlets and Politics, 1553–8', *Bulletin of the Institute of Historical Research*, 48 (1975), 31–44; Loades, 'Press Under the Early Tudors'; Edward J. Baskerville, *A Chronological Bibliography of Propaganda and Polemic Published in English Between 1553 and 1558* (Philadelphia, 1979) and 'Some Lost Works of Propaganda and Polemic from the Marian Period', *The Library*, 6th ser., 8 (1986), 47–52.

³⁹ *A Godly Dyalogue & Dysputacion Betwene Pyers Plowman and a Popyshe Preest* (c. 1550); *I Playne Piers Which can not Flatter* (1550?); *Pierce the Ploughmans Crede* (1553); *Pyers Plowmans Exhortation* (1550); *The Vision of Pierce Plowman* (1550, three editions). See also *Temporis filia veritas* (1598), a dialogue pamphlet involving 'a playne Plowman'. Also Andrew N. Wawn, 'Chaucer, *The Plowman's Tale* and Reformation Propaganda: The Testimonies of Thomas Godfray and *I Playne Piers*', *Bulletin of the John Rylands University Library*, 56 (1973–4), 174–92; and 'The Genesis of *The Plowman's Tale*', *Yearbook of English Studies*, 2 (1972), 21–40.

⁴⁰ Crowley's editing of Langland's poem is discussed in King, *Tudor Reformation Literature*, ch. 7; on Hogarde see J. W. Martin, 'Miles Hogarde: Artisan and Aspiring Author in Sixteenth-Century England', *Renaissance Quarterly*, 34 (1981), 359–83; on the marginalisation of Catholic literary traditions, see Alison Shell, *Catholicism, Controversy and the English Literary Imagination, 1558–1660* (Cambridge, 1999).

forces sent to assist the Huguenots in France. The revolt of the Northern Earls in 1569 provoked a handful of publications, reporting topical domestic news. Some subsequent publications adopted a more polemical approach, defending the legitimacy of the government against the Catholic conspirators. The 1569 rebellion generated both tracts and ballads. Thomas Norton wrote several accounts that combined news and politics, including *To the Quenes Majesties Poor Deceived Subjects in the North* (1569) and *A Bull Graunted by the Pope to Doctor Harding* (1570). While Norton wrote in prose, others wrote verse tracts intended for a similarly educated market. Meanwhile, the ballads, such as William Elderton's *A Ballat Intituled Northumberland Newes* (1570) and *Prepare Ye to the Plow* (1570), addressed the less educated. Just as topical, the ballads combined news with propaganda, counselling obedience.⁴¹ The clear distinction between tracts and ballads suggests that a market for the popular news pamphlet had not yet matured. Sixteenth-century governments were nervous about the circulation of news, especially when it concerned domestic events, and at this stage print was used to shape public opinion from the top down. There is also some evidence of public opinion being animated and mobilised from above during the Anjou Match in 1579.⁴²

Another mode of cheap news publication was guided more by commercial interests, and perhaps by popular belief, than by political ends. These were accounts of monstrous births, which flourished in England in the late 1560s. On the Continent, the tradition had originated around 1500, and the images, though often based on real progeny, were often deployed to express anxiety about social disorder and spiritual trauma.⁴³ The increasing incidence of printed reports of deformities during the first decade of Elizabeth's rule may reflect Protestant anxieties about religious stability, succession, and the threat of Catholic invasion. In France monsters were reported in prose canards, whereas the preferred format in England was the illustrated broadside ballad,⁴⁴ though in time this shifted to the quarto pamphlet.⁴⁵ From

⁴¹ A useful account of the propaganda appears in James K. Lowers, *Mirrors for Rebels: A Study of Polemical Literature Relating to the Northern Rebellion 1569* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1953).

⁴² Blair Worden, *The Sound of Virtue: Philip Sidney's Arcadia and Elizabethan Politics* (New Haven and London, 1996), pp. 110–11.

⁴³ Lorraine Daston and Katherine Park, *Wonders and the Order of Nature 1150–1750* (New York, 1998), ch. 5; see also Park and Daston, 'Unnatural Conceptions: The Study of Monsters in Sixteenth- and Seventeenth-Century France and England', *P&P* 92 (1981), 20–54; Niccoli, *Prophecy and People*, ch. 2.

⁴⁴ *The True Reporte of a Monstrous Childe, Borne at Muche Morkeslye* [1562]; John Barker, *The True Description of a Monstrous Chylde* [1564]; William Elderton, *The True Fourme and Shape of a Monstrous Chylde* [1565].

⁴⁵ David Cressy, *Travesties and Transgressions in Tudor and Stuart England* (Oxford, 2000), chs. 1–2; on monstrosities see also Dudley Wilson, *Signs and Portents: Monstrous Births from*

the 1580s onwards the prose pamphlet began to displace the ballad as the most common medium for conveying news. The expansion in the market for domestic news, caused in part by the war with Spain, coincided with a shift in the form in which that news was conveyed. During the 1580s and 1590s occasional news pamphlets became an everyday facet of the London book trade.⁴⁶

Rogue literature, a genre of print that spans most of the sixteenth century, also bears upon the history and origins of the pamphlet. The tradition commenced by Robert Copland c. 1535 and Thomas Harman in 1561 flourished during 1591–2 with a series of pamphlets by Robert Greene which influenced Thomas Middleton, Thomas Dekker and many other writers of the seventeenth century.⁴⁷ The premise of these moralising fictions is the penetration of the criminal underworld by an honest man, who subsequently exposes their deceitful practices, explaining their confidence tricks, social structure, mores and language. The boundary between fact and fiction in cony-catching tracts is knowingly distorted. Though – with the benefit of hindsight – they belong to the realm of imaginative literature, their first-person narrators emphasise that they are documenting reality; indeed some of Harman's colourful anecdotes from Middlesex can in part be verified.⁴⁸ Cony-catching pamphlets establish verisimilitude by offering apparatus, including glossaries and the purported names of actual thieves. Harman glosses his pamphlet with a flavour of news by describing events from 1566–7.

the Middle Ages to the Enlightenment (1993), ch. 2; Kathryn M. Brammell, 'Monstrous Metamorphosis: Nature, Morality, and the Rhetoric of Monstrosity in Tudor England', *Sixteenth Century Journal*, 27 (1996), 3–21; Ambroise Paré, *On Monsters and Marvels*, tr. Janis L. Pallister (Chicago, 1982). On earlier English prophecies see Katherine R. Firth, *The Apocalyptic Tradition in Reformation Britain, 1530–1645* (Oxford, 1979); Sharon L. Jansen, *Political Protest and Prophecy under Henry VIII* (Woodbridge, 1991).

⁴⁶ For the 1580s and 1590s see Matthias A. Shaaber, *Some Forerunners of the Newspaper in England, 1476–1622* (Philadelphia, 1929), pp. 177–9; Denis B. Woodfield, *Surreptitious Printing in England, 1550–1640* (New York, 1973); Fritz Levy, 'The Decorum of News', in Raymond, ed., *News*, pp. 12–38. For the story of news, see Ch. 4 below.

⁴⁷ Robert Copland, *The Highway to the Spital-House* (1535–6); [Gilbert Walker?], *A Manifest Detection of the Most Vyle and Detestable Use of Diceplay* (c. 1552); [John Awdeley?], *The Fraternitie of Vagabondes* (1561); Thomas Harman, *A Caveat or Warening, for Commen Cursetors Vulgarly Called Vagabones* (1567; repr. in 1592 as *The Groundwork of Cony-Catching*); Robert Greene, *A Notable Discovery of Coosnage* (1591), *The Second and Last Part of Conny-Catching* (1592), *Thirde and Last Part of Conny-Catching* (1592), *A Disputation Betweene a Hee Conny-Catcher, and a Shee Conny-Catcher* (1592) and *The Blacke Bookes Messenger* (1592); and 'Cuthbert Cunny-catcher', *The Defence of Conny Catching* (1592). These texts are available in modern editions: Arthur F. Kinney, ed. *Rogues, Vagabonds & Sturdy Beggars: A New Gallery of Tudor and Early Stuart Rogue Literature* (Amherst, MA, 1990); Gamini Salgado, ed., *Cony-Catchers and Bawdy Baskets: An Anthology of Elizabethan Low Life* (Harmondsworth, 1972); A. V. Judges, *The Elizabethan Underworld* (1930; 1965).

⁴⁸ Kinney, ed., *Rogues, Vagabonds*, pp. 107, 297–9.

The significance of these cony-catching tracts to the history of the pamphlet is threefold. First, they are commercially produced works of quasi-fiction that speak to a broad audience in lively prose. Though there is a touch of Elizabethan prodigality or Euphuism in Harman's alliteration and internal rhyme, his prose is marked by a bold plainness. He explains that he must innovate to reflect upon and explain the secretive and previously unprinted language spoken by his subjects: 'the lewd lousy language of these lewtering Lusks, and lazy Lorels'.⁴⁹ Nonetheless he emphasises his simplicity: 'I write in plain terms... Eloquence have I none; I never was acquainted with the Muses; I never tasted of Helicon. But according to my plain order, I have set forth this work, simply and truly, with such usual words and terms as is among us well known and frequented.'⁵⁰ Despite its redundancy and copious alliteration, this plain-style, improvisatory approach to language, and commitment to an everyday decorum, anticipates the path that pamphleteers will tread when they wish to address a wide, unlearned audience.

Secondly, the cony-catching tracts provide entertainment. Averting a serious purpose, they offer insight into an imaginary reconstruction of an alternative, inaccessible world. Their narrators are wandering heroes who by discovering and exposing the secrets of criminal society have performed the greatest trick of all. Harman lies to his victims in order to expose the truth and thereby to undermine the illicit underworld itself. 'Now, methinketh, I see how these peevish, perverse, and pestilent people begin to fret, fume, swear, and stare at this my book, their life being laid open and apparently painted out, that their confusion and end draweth on apace.'⁵¹ The texts offer to empower the reader with secret knowledge, and an illicit vocabulary of 'thieves cant' or 'peddler's French'; they titillate with tales of sexual transgression. The veneer of morality wears thin. These fictions are certainly precursors of the novel, but their influence was extended through, and mediated by, later generations of pamphlets.

Thirdly, cony-catching tracts express through fiction, narrative and other literary devices, prevalent concerns about morality and social transformation. They repeatedly distinguish between the deserving and undeserving poor. They articulate concerns over increased vagrancy and geographic mobility, signalled in the Welsh and Irish population of the underworld; over 'masterless men'; over the decline in hospitality that is breaking up traditional communities.⁵² The elimination of theft, Harman writes, will 'encourage a

⁴⁹ Ibid., pp. 110–11. ⁵⁰ Ibid., pp. 149, 113. ⁵¹ Ibid., pp. 143, 110–11.

⁵² A. L. Beier, *The Problem of the Poor in Tudor and Stuart England* (1983) and *Masterless Men: The Vagrancy Problem in England 1560–1640* (1983); Spufford, *Small Books*, pp. 56, 182–4; Felicity Heal, *Hospitality in Early Modern England* (Cambridge, 1990), ch. 3; Paul Slack, *Poverty & Policy in Tudor and Stuart England* (1988); Ian Archer, *The Pursuit of*

great number of gentlemen and others, seeing this security, to set up houses and keep hospitality in the country, to the comfort of their neighbors, relief of the poor, and to the amendment of the commonwealth; then shall not sin and wickedness so much abound among us'.⁵³ Thus, these tracts find a means of moralizing that is quite distinct from Puritan tracts and sermons railing against social abuses.

The criminal underworld is an inversion of the world of the godly, and offers a more or less prescriptive perspective on correct social values and hierarchies.⁵⁴ Cony-catching became a powerful metaphor for the world of commerce. In *A Caveat or Warening, for Commen Cursetors* (1567), a 'Doxy' (or female cony-catcher, who is sexually available to all males in the fraternity) challenges Harman's predilection for moralising on the evil of their trade, stating with rude common sense: 'Alas, good gentleman, everyone must have a living.'⁵⁵ 'Cuthbert Cunny-catcher', the pseudonymous author of *Defence of Conny Catching* (1592), complains that the success of Greene's tracts has ruined his trade; one of his potential victims warns him: 'I have for three pence bought a little pamphlet, that hath taught me to smoke such a couple of knaves as you be.' The perverse compliment suggests that Greene himself may have been the author, in which case the pamphlet plays an elaborate catch upon the reader. Cuthbert claims that cony-catching is only a form of sharp practice, and that all tradesmen and especially lawyers are themselves guilty of it on a much greater scale: 'Are not these vipers of the commonwealth, and to be exclaimed against, not in small pamphlets, but in great volumes?' He who cannot dissemble, cannot live by trade. Cuthbert concludes: 'there is no estate, trade, occupation, nor mystery, but lives by cony-catching'.⁵⁶ Cony-catching became a commonplace metaphor for business. In 1614 a news pamphlet entitled *True and Wonderfull. A Discourse Relating a Strange and Monstrous Serpent, or Dragon, Lately Discovered... in Sussex Two Miles from Horsam*, interpreted this prodigy as a metaphor for exploitation:

Stability: Social Relations in Elizabethan London (Cambridge, 1991), ch. 6; J. McMullan, *The Canting Crew: London's Criminal Underworld, 1550–1700* (New Jersey, 1984).

⁵³ Kinney, ed., *Rogues, Vagabonds*, p. 110.

⁵⁴ See Stuart Clark, 'Inversion, Misrule and the Meaning of Witchcraft', *P&P* 87 (1980), 98–127.

⁵⁵ Kinney, ed., *Rogues, Vagabonds*, p. 143.

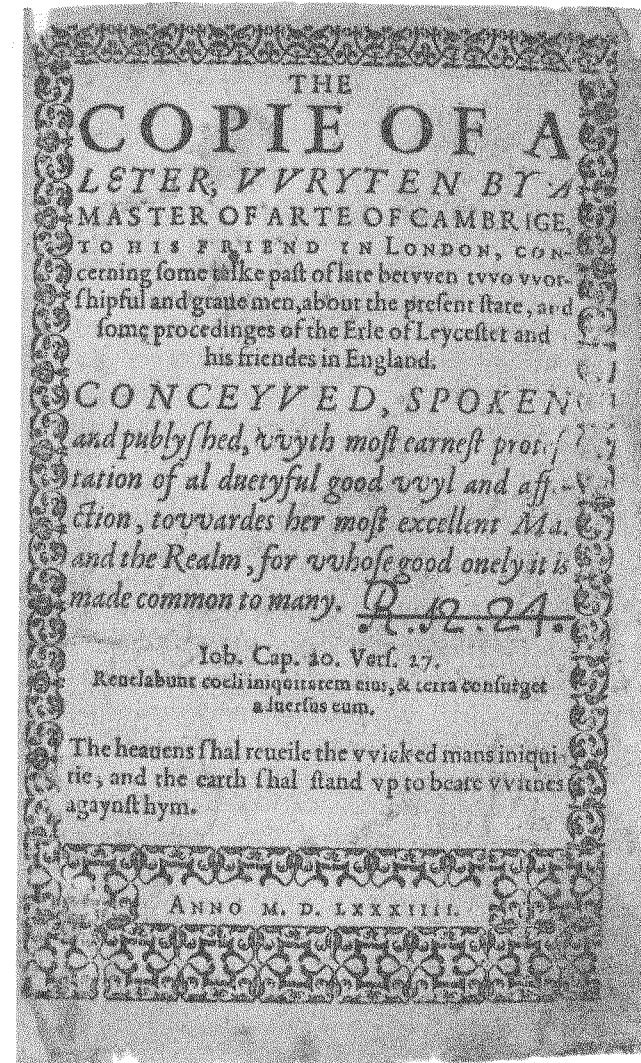
⁵⁶ Salgado, ed., *Conny-Catchers and Bawdy Baskets*, pp. 342, 347, 376; on the authorship of the *Defence*, see David Margolies, *Novel and Society in Elizabethan England* (London & Sydney, 1985), pp. 109–10; and I. A. Shapiro, 'An Unexpected Earlier Edition of *The Defence of Conny-Catching*', *The Library*, 3rd ser., 18 (1963), 88–112. Jean-Cristophe Agnew discusses cony-catching pamphlets as evidence of a crisis of representation surrounding commerce: *Worlds Apart: The Market and the Theater in Anglo-American Thought, 1550–1750* (Cambridge, 1986), pp. 61–73.

The Serpent devours poore mens cattell, so doth the covetous wretch, both cattell, and chattell, goods, houses and all, his scales of defence are said to be blacke and reddish, and doth it not resemble the Inke & Ware, wherein gentlemens lands are morgagde, which afterwards turnes offensive to themselves? his necke is long to overlooke much, and doth not the Miser so? Tis said likewise, to prey upon Conies, and doe wee not in this age of ours call those sillie men that fall into their snares, Connies?⁵⁷

One contemporary bound a copy of this pamphlet in a volume together with *A Caveat*.⁵⁸ Cony-catching tracts anticipated later pamphlets by combining entertainment, moralising and fiction, exploiting them for profit; they themselves stole pennies from the vulgar by the misuse of ink. They offered a parable of the commodification of print.

Propaganda, news and moralistic fictions all fashioned the idea of the pamphlet and its possibilities, and shaped the practice of the many pamphleteers who were to find new business in the 1580s and beyond. A final thread in this cloth is drawn from a cognate term for pamphlet, the libel. The term, derived from the Latin *libellus*, a diminutive of *liber*, meant a small book, but it already carried connotations of defamation, stronger than those associated with pamphlet. The French *libelles* which developed in the later sixteenth century, and were particularly plentiful during the insurrection of the Catholic League in 1589–94, had a similar status: they were distinguished from *canards*, *occasionnels*, and *feuilles volantes* that supplied less seditious news, and from the diverting *bibliothèque bleue*.⁵⁹ This lexical range is more nuanced than the less numerous English equivalents, and *libelle* described broadsides or quarto pamphlets that offered popular commentary on politics, often using literary genres, such as the dialogue or dream narrative. They were the equivalent of the political pamphlet satire on the other side of the channel, and became the predominant means of influencing public opinion. During subsequent political crises they reached new peaks of production, notably the Fronde in 1648–52, when the burlesque form of the *mazarinade* developed. A similar genealogy can be traced in Britain: an initial flourishing of libellous pamphlets during the 1580s was exceeded during the 1640s.

One of the most scandalous printed books of Elizabeth's reign was *The Copy of a Letter Written by a Master of Art of Cambridge to his Friend in London* (1584), a sprightly epigone of the genre, and precursor of the style of many later pamphlet-libels. Probably written by exiled English Catholics in Paris, published in Rouen and imported into Britain in considerable numbers, this fairly substantial tract was popularly referred to as *Leicester's Commonwealth*. It combined an attack on the person of Robert Dudley, Earl of Leicester, exposing his shady personal history with a plea for religious



2. *The Copie of a Letter, Wryten by a Master of Arte of Cambrige* (1584), Cambridge University Library, Syn. 8. 58. 165. Also known as *Leicester's Commonwealth*. The first printed edition of the Elizabethan libel against Robert Dudley, Earl of Leicester.

toleration, and a discussion of the succession to the throne which defended the honour of Mary Queen of Scots, and thus favoured her son James VI of Scotland as a future king of England and Wales. Most sensational to contemporaries was the poisonous assault on Leicester. The Privy Council

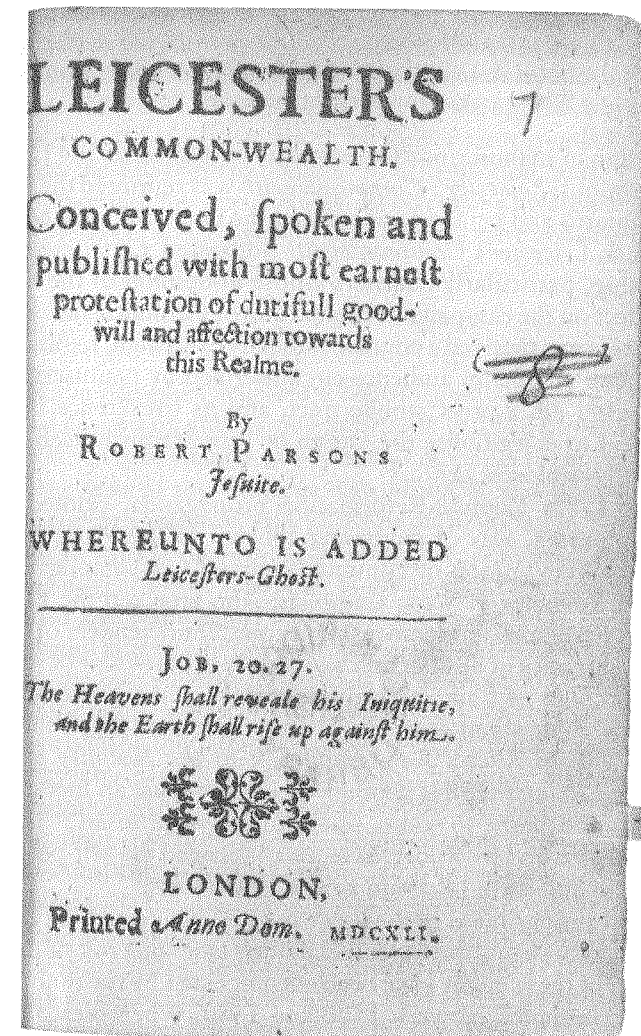
⁵⁷ A.R., *True and Wonderfull* (1614), sigs. Cv-C2r. ⁵⁸ Bod: 4° R 21(5) Art.Seld.

⁵⁹ Robert Darnton, *The Forbidden Best-Sellers of Pre-Revolutionary France* (1996), ch. 8.

recognised that its circulation both at home and abroad was likely to tarnish the reputations not just of Dudley but of the government and even Elizabeth herself, and they moved to suppress it and to deny the rumours that it promoted.

Leicester's Commonwealth is rich with literary devices. It is framed by a letter written by a Cambridge scholar, who presents the text as a true account of a conversation in which he recently participated; there follows a dialogue between the scholar, a (Protestant) Gentleman and a (moderate) Catholic lawyer, which mixes comic vilification of Leicester with earnest political and legal analysis. Leicester, it is averred, is driven only by lust and ambition; he is denounced as a Machiavellian (an Elizabethan scare-word). Having failed to secure the throne by marriage, he now has the motives and means to rebel against the Queen. The reader is reminded that both branches of his family tree are marred by treason and the executioner's block. Dudley is sexually voracious: 'No man's wife can be free from him, whom his fiery lust he liketh to abuse . . . The keeping of the mother with two or three of her daughters at once or successively is no more with him than the eating of an hen and her chicken[s].'⁶⁰ Suspicions are aroused concerning the death of his first wife.

Numerous manuscript copies made from the printed text suggest that it was popular with readers. Nevertheless it failed to provoke printed responses. Sir Philip Sidney hurriedly wrote a 'Defence' of his uncle, though it was not published. Another manuscript response was a burlesque comedy written shortly after Dudley's death in 1588, reporting on the arrival of his ghost in Hell. The narrative offers a dramatic and more obscene rehashing of the material from the original satire. After a debate about the most suitable punishment for the Earl, Pluto resolves that he is to be tormented by a 'naked feind in the forme of a lady', who is 'so directly placed against him that the gate of her porticke conjunctcion should be full oposit to the gase of his retoricke speculation, so that he could not chose but have a perfit aspect of the gull point of her bettelbroude urchin in the triumphant pride and gaping glory thereof'. This will so entice Leicester that he will continually assay her, and thereby 'drown the member of his virillitye in the bottomeless barrell of her virginnitye, through which runeth a felde of unquencheable fier'.⁶¹ Less pornographic, though equally damning, was a narrative poem composed c. 1605 by Thomas Rogers, entitled 'Leicester's Ghost'. In the form of a confession by the ghost, it summarised many of the accusations in the



3. *Leicester's Commonwealth* (1641), Cambridge University Library, Bb*. 15. 26. 7/8. The 1641 octavo reprint of the Elizabethan libel, here attributed to Robert Parsons. Note the simple typography of the title-page.

Commonwealth and earnestly reflected on the nature of political corruption. The ghost, portrayed as a religious hypocrite, denies the accusations made against him. The imputation of concupiscence is again foregrounded:

Also yee said that when I waxed old,
When Age and mispent time had made mee drie
For ancient held in carnall lust if cold,

⁶⁰ *Leicester's Commonwealth*, ed. D. C. Peck (Athens, Ohio, 1985), pp. 88–9. On the circumstances of composition and publication, and of the government's reaction, see Peck's introduction; Clegg, *Press Censorship*, pp. 91–3; Peter Holmes, 'The Authorship of "Leicester's Commonwealth"', *Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, 33 (1982), 424–30.

⁶¹ The MS is BL: MS Sloane 1926, ff. 35–43v; it is printed in D. C. Peck, 'Newes from Heaven and Hell': A Defamatory Narrative of the Earl of Leicester', *ELR* 8 (1978), 141–58, quote on p. 157.

Natures defect with art I did supplie,
That so to helpe this imbecility,
I used strange drinckes and ointments of great price,
Whose tast or touch might make drie flesh arise.⁶²

After circulating in manuscript the poem was published in 1641, in quarto and octavo editions; *Leicester's Commonwealth* was reprinted the same year, also in both quarto and octavo formats, and the two works are often found bound together. *Leicester's Commonwealth* addressed a restricted and educated readership, particularly courtiers whose ill-opinion of the Earl might have some effect on the campaign for toleration of Catholics; hence, whereas the Marprelate tracts received a counter-publicity campaign, rejoinders to the libel were shared among an audience circumscribed by manuscript circulation. It was, after all, a pro-Catholic tract, and its irreverence might have seemed a threat to delegitimise the Queen or Protestantism itself. The libel was a perilously explosive genre.

During the 1580s Counter-Reformation propaganda, printed surreptitiously and imported, was of increasing concern to the Privy Council. In 1581 the trial and execution of Edmund Campion (see Chapter 2) resulted in a pamphlet exchange between Catholics, who attacked the Elizabethan government for religious intolerance, and Protestant defenders of the crown who accused Catholics of disaffection and Jesuits in particular of subversion. One official account of Campion's alleged conspiracy regretted the 'divers slaundersous pamphlets and seditious libels' which challenged the subject's allegiance.⁶³ William Allen's *An Admonition to the Nobility and People of England and Ireland* (1584) denounced Elizabeth as 'an incestuous bastard, begotten and borne in sinne, of an infamous curtesan'.⁶⁴ Dozens of pamphlets by Allen and by Robert Persons challenged the self-perception of late Elizabethan and early Jacobean British Protestants.

Reformation propaganda, rogue literature and cony-catching tracts, ballads describing monstrous births, political libels emerging out of manuscript circulation: all of these might have been encompassed by the innovative and shifting term 'pamphlet' between 1500 and 1580. When uses of the word consolidated during the 1580s, they built upon the practice of publishing

⁶² *Leycesters Ghost* (1641 quarto), p. 15. For a modern edition, based on printed and MS versions, see Thomas Rogers, *Leicester's Ghost*, ed. Franklin B. Williams, Jr. (Chicago, 1972); for attribution and other background information, also see Franklin B. Williams, 'Thomas Rogers of Bryanston, an Elizabethan Gentleman-of-Letters', *Harvard Studies and Notes in Philology and Literature*, 16 (1934), 253–67, and 'Leicester's Ghost', *Harvard Studies*, 18 (1935), 271–85.

⁶³ *A Particular Declaration or Testimony* (1582), sig. Aiiiir; see pp. 36–8 below.

⁶⁴ George Orwell and Reginald Reynolds, eds., *British Pamphleteers*, 2 vols. (1948), vol. 1, p. 47.

and experience of reading these older literary forms. Yet the appearance of the pamphlet, in the form in which it was to remain fairly fixed for the next 200 years and more, was not simply the logical development of these predecessors. It was caused by economic factors within the book trade, by an emerging sense of literary vocation, by longer-term trends in literacy, by a crisis within the Elizabethan church, by urbanisation, and perhaps by that most ever-present of historical causes, an increasing awareness of social conflict and difference; soon it was to play its own part not only in expressing but in influencing these factors.

OVERVIEW

The rise of the pamphlet reflected a transformation in the circumstances of politics and of reading and writing in Britain. In 1560 printed texts played a marginal role in propaganda exercises and attempts to influence the public. By 1688, the year of the Glorious Revolution, it was self-evident that any attempt to generate public support for a political initiative, party or position, would have to exploit the persuasive powers of the press. This book tells the story of the advent of the pamphlet as an object and a concept in Britain in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

Four general theses emerge from the many narratives in this book. The first is that the pamphlet is a form that requires a complex and historically relative definition (it is much more than a short book of a certain historical period), a definition that attends to generic and rhetorical elements, to its political and polemical uses, to material form and to the circuits of production and consumption. Accordingly, this study looks at all of these aspects, and, crucially at their interrelationships. Secondly, and following from the first, pamphlets constitute a literary form. They are literary texts, often highly artful and indirect, best understood and appreciated with reference not only to immediate social and political context, but to the traditions and conventions of pamphleteering. In the same way that *Paradise Lost* acquires meaning through its relationship with Virgil, Homer, Lucan and others, and *The Prelude* is shaped through its connections with Milton's epic, so many pamphlets rely on intertextuality, and on readers' familiarity with pamphlet genres, conventions and decorum. This quality is apparent when the pamphlet form is viewed over an extended period, revealing its generic transformations, recycling of materials, and appropriation of memories and ghosts.

Thirdly, in the period 1500–1700 a transformation occurred in the role of printing and its relationship to the public, a metamorphosis in the nature and idea of print, which was partly effected by and through pamphlets. Printing became a semi-regulated trade, a part of everyday life, untrustworthy, irregular, a common and devalued currency, but ultimately a necessary

and powerful communicative tool. In the early sixteenth century printed texts played a marginal role in politics; by the end of the seventeenth century they were essential in political life, and the pamphlet was the most public print medium. The pamphlet developed from other forms of print; it carried with it a momentum that influenced those other forms, then moved away to be distinguished from them (and they from it), while leaving its mark upon them. Authors of literary and political writings were aware of the opportunities for communication that the pamphlet offered, and while they expressed reservations about the commonness of the medium, they either chose to exploit the form, traffic with it, or found themselves influenced by its negative pressures. Propaganda and poetry, even political theory, found the pamphlet's literary strategies, techniques of animadversion, fictional narratives and imaginary dramas an effective means of mounting an argument or exploring an issue. The pamphlet became a pre-eminent model of public speech, a way of conceiving of the power of the word. The transformation in the role of print, particularly cheap print, brought about major shifts in the conduct of literary culture. Finally, the historical significance of pamphlets lies in the fact that they were read and thereby exercised social influence. Between the mid-sixteenth century and the end of the seventeenth, pamphlets became part of the everyday practice of politics, the primary means of creating and influencing public opinion. Notwithstanding their commercial and contestatory basis, they assisted in creating informed critical debate about news, politics and culture. Put another way, pamphlets became a foundation of the influential moral and political communities that constitute a 'public sphere' of popular political opinion.

The story woven from these four theses is not a direct one. Accounts of book-trade practices, literary transformations and political conflicts and moments do not invite concurrent narration; this book therefore offers a range of stories with different kinds of narratives and temporality: from an account of the Marprelate controversy; through a synoptic view of the cycle of literary production, distribution and consumption; through analysis of particular periods and themes; to a resolution in an exploration of pamphlets and plotting in the Restoration. These stories converge at times, and shed light upon each other, offering glimpses of alternative endings, but in the end they reach their destination: an account of the rise of the pamphlet as a mode of expression and a means of influencing the public.

2

'How loudly they cry': Marprelate, purity and paper bullets

In 1644 the ghost of Thomas Nashe, summoned by the royalist pamphleteer John Taylor, reflected on the controversies of the late 1580s:

Amongst those innumerable *Locusts* that then were spewed from the Bottomlesse Pit, there crawl'd and swarm'd over the Kingdome, a Crew of Rascalls called *Martinists*; whose Laxative Purity did most shamefully in printed toyes, Pamphlets, and Lying Libells, besquitter all *England* over with such poynts of Doctrine, as was never known by Christ and his Apostles. And these *Martins* intituled their Pasquills by the Impudent and sawcie names of *Martin Mar Prelate*. These scandalous Railings of theirs were then answered by as Grave, Wise, Learned, and Reverend men as *England* yeilded . . . but . . . like Anvills, the more knocks they had the more obdurate they were; insomuch that those *Martins* like Caterpillars increased most pestiferously.¹

Taylor believed that he had identified the origin of the pamphlet conflicts of the Civil War in Elizabethan contention over reformed church government. This chapter proposes that Taylor was in a sense right, and that a religious war of words in 1588–9 refined the cheap print of earlier pamphlets into paper-bullets. Beginning with an account of the Marprelate controversy, it proceeds to offer an anatomy of the pamphlet as a mode of communication.

'PLAIN ENGLISH'

1588 was a turning point in the history in the fortunes of 'Puritans', a term used by contemporaries to insult zealous Protestants, more sympathetically known as the godly.² The Spanish fleet had scarcely dispersed when a series

¹ John Taylor, *Crop-Eare Curried* (Oxford?, 1644), sigs. A2v–A3r.

² Christopher Hill, 'The Definition of a Puritan', in *Society and Puritanism in Pre-Revolutionary England* (1964; 1969), pp. 15–30; Patrick Collinson, *The Religion of Protestants: The Church in English Society 1559–1625* (Oxford, 1982), chs. 4 and 5. This story is elegantly told in Patrick Collinson, *The Elizabethan Puritan Movement* (1967; Oxford, 1990); Diarmaid MacCulloch, *The Later Reformation in England, 1547–1603* (1990); Peter Lake, *Moderate Puritans and the Elizabethan Church* (Cambridge, 1982) and *Anglicans and Puritans?: Prebyterianism and English Conformist Thought from Whitgift to Hooker* (1988); Nicholas

John Dryden, were to become even more intimate with a culture of pamphleteering, not least because their more ambitious works participated in the same commercial enterprise and productive practices as pamphlets and pamphleteering. It is to the organisation of the book trade, the processes that shaped pamphlets and their polemical and financial potentials, to the contours of the cycles of communication between author, bookseller, and reader – essential to the understanding of the content of pamphlets and their uses – that we must now turn.

'Stitchers, Binders, Stationers, Hawkers': printing practices and the book trade

Early modern readers thought books were made not from words alone, but from the union of words, ink and paper. The City of London personified speaks, as it surveys St Paul's yard, full of booksellers and their customers:

A Pen! The invention of that, and of *Inke* hath brought as many curses into the world as that damnable Witch-craft of the *Fryer*, who tore open the bowels of Hell, to find those murdering engines of mankind, *Guns* and *Powder*.

Both these are alike in quality, in mischief: yea, and almost in fashion; The *Pen* is the Piece that shootes, *Inck* is the powder that carries, and *Wordes* are the Bullets that kill.

The one doth onely destroy men in time of warre, the other consumes men, both in warre and peace.¹

Thomas Dekker employs a common trope here: the pen is mightier than the sword. 'Men may be said to shoot from the *Press* as well as from the *Artillery*', wrote Lewis Griffin.² In *Pierce Penilesse*, Thomas Nashe warns: 'I have tearmes (if I be vext) laid in steepe in *Aquafortis*, & Gunpowder, that shall rattle through the Skyes, and make an Earthquake in a Pesants eares.'³ The implements of warfare offered useful comparisons for the instruments of polemic. When the second Martinist printer, John Hodgkins, was receiving delivery of his press at Warrington, one of the boxes of type was overturned and the pieces spilled onto the ground. A curious bystander asked what they were, and Hodgkins answered that they were 'shott', and his fellow-workers 'saltpeter men'.⁴ Within days they were arrested. Later Andrew Marvell lamented: 'O *Printing!* how hast thou disturb'd the Peace of Mankind! that Lead, when moulded into Bullets, is not so mortal as when founded into

¹ Thomas Dekker, *The Dead Tearme* (1608), in *Non-Dramatic Works*, ed. Alexander B. Grosart, 4 vols. (privately printed, 1884–6), vol. 4, p. 65.

² L[ewis]. G[riffin]., *Essayes and Characters* (1661), sig. A5v.

³ Nashe, *Pierce Penilesse* (1592), in *The Works of Thomas Nashe*, 5 vols., ed. Ronald B. McKerrow (1904–10), vol. 1, p. 195.

⁴ William Pierce, *An Historical Introduction to the Marprelate Tracts* (1908), pp. 337–8.

Letters!⁵ The invention of the printing press was no less traumatic and morally ambiguous than the invention of gunpowder; the pen was mightier than the sword, but the press outdid both.

Printed controversy was shaped by the production and distribution processes that put the words on the page. Printing and bookselling, moreover, offered tropes for writers of news and controversy, and the new efficacy of print commanded a range of practical metaphors to describe it. Authors played with their readers' familiarity with books as objects. The language of printing, publication and typography inflected the common discourse of pamphleteering. Changes in printing practices have obscured this. When Milton compared books to 'those fabulous Dragons teeth . . . being sown up and down' he punned on the sewing and stitching of sheets.⁶ *Scintilla, or a Light Broken into Darke Warehouses* (1641), an anonymous pamphlet attacking the Stationers' Company's monopoly in the book trade, concluded with 'some few observations [that] shall serve for the *Errata*, which the Honourable House of *Parliament* may correct in the Society of *Stationers*'.⁷ The author's pun was that the errata must be corrected in legislation, not ink. The caustic exchanges between Nashe and Harvey in the 1590s were bursting with satirical allusions to the medium in which they were conveyed.⁸ These devices were successful because they appealed to a shared experience; readers knew what books looked like and how they were constructed. There was also an immediacy to such metaphors when they appeared in the printed medium to which they alluded. The pamphleteer's bibliographic self-consciousness, and the way the physical construction and distribution shaped the social and rhetorical performances of pamphlets, necessitate some appreciation of production processes. This chapter gives an overview of the book trade and printing procedures in the late sixteenth and seventeenth centuries in order to elaborate on the bookish allusions of pamphleteers, and to place pamphlets in the material and commercial contexts of their production, dispersal and reception.

COMMERCE AND COMMUNICATION

Early modern London was an unparalleled babel of commotion and confusion, internally variegated, its streets teeming with people and animals, carts and wagons, tradesmen's stalls and chapmen's cries, buzzing with business

⁵ Andrew Marvell, *The Rehearsal Transpros'd*, ed. D. I. B. Smith (Oxford, 1971), p. 5.

⁶ CPW, vol. 2, p. 492; discussed at pp. 269–72 below.

⁷ [Michael Sparke?], *Scintilla* (1641), p. 6; for errata, see above, p. 40, and below, p. 78.

⁸ Nashe and Harvey are discussed in Halasz, *Marketplace*, pp. 96–8; for some metaphors, see pp. 72–3, below.

and pleasure, an array of dialects, the echoes of devotion, the glow of propriety and glister of notorious conduct, the luminescence of a society governed by spectacle, display, consumption and expenditure, and the muttering of an other world in its penumbra. The book trade borrowed something of this complexion. Governed by the Stationers' Company and by detailed legislation and regulations passed by Parliament and various courts, it possessed a series of norms from which it customarily deviated. Its practices were improvisatory, its cast of characters diverse and transient, its economic infrastructure unstable. Nevertheless, it is possible to sketch the networks of communication and production that led from the writer's desk through the printing house to the reader, and back again; this was a circuit in which readers did not just passively consume but actively participated, forcing writers to anticipate readers' expectations and appetites, and to respond to readers' reactions.

In 1663, seeking to regulate the disorder that the book trade could unleash upon society, Roger L'Estrange, then Charles II's Surveyor of the Press, identified its main agents:

The Instruments of setting the work afoot are These. The *Adviser, Author, Compiler, Writer, Correcter*, and the Persons for whom, and by whom; that is to say, the *Stationer* (commonly), and the *Printer*. To which may be Added, the *Letter-Founders*, and the *Smiths*, and *Joiners*, that work upon *Presses*.

The usual *Agents* for publishing, are the *Printers* themselves, *Stitchers, Binders, Stationers, Hawkers, Mercury-women, Pedlers, Ballad-singers, Posts, Carryers, Hackney-Coach-men, Boat-men, and Mariners*.⁹

The manufacture of a printed book was collaborative, involving one or more authors and financiers, the artisans who manufactured the equipment, the machinery and consumables, the printer, compositors, correctors and pressmen who laboured over the work, through to the binders and distributors, grand and petty. Each manufacture, every printed book, bore the marks of this collaboration. The process was essentially similar for multi-volume folios and single-sheet pamphlets, though at certain stages in the process cheap books were simpler to manufacture. Cheap books could be produced both by small-scale operations and by major printing houses, who could cut corners and use smaller projects to fill in gaps between larger jobs.

The circuit of communication began with the author, who negotiated with a publisher or undertaker to produce copy; the copy was sent to a printing house, where it was worked upon by compositors, correctors, pressmen, supervised by a Master Printer, who purchased his supplies from joiners, typesetters, ink and paper manufacturers. Once printed the sheets were

⁹ Roger L'Estrange, *Considerations and Proposals in Order to the Regulation of the Press* (1663), p. 1.

gathered by the printer's warehouse-keeper, who collated and bundled the copies; these were then conveyed, by shippers or other agents, to the bookseller or booksellers, one of whom was not uncommonly the publisher or undertaker responsible for financing the printing. A bookseller would have the sheets fully collated and either stitched or sewn; he might have a few copies of longer works sent to a binder, who would fix them in a simple trade binding (paper boards, vellum, sheep or calf). The bookseller might then sell them wholesale (at a price limited by order of the Stationers' Company) to a number of retail booksellers, perhaps in the provinces; or he would sell them at his stall or shop; or he might pass them on to a mobile retailer, a hawker or peddler or chapman; or (from the 1640s onwards) he might hand them over to a mercury woman who would distribute them among the hawkers. This array of vendors would then sell books to the reading public. Wealthier buyers might take them to a binder to arrange a custom binding. Then they might distribute their books to a wider range of readers: friends who borrowed them, or who listened to them being read aloud, in private or public, including taverns and church porches. Coffee-houses, a feature of British society after the 1650s, bought copies of newsbooks and pamphlets of news, and their customers read them over dishes of coffee; taverns subsequently imitated this practice. Readers might then respond to books, in writing, verbally, or by action, and these reverberations could then pressure an author into lifting his pen once more.¹⁰ These are the characters in our network, expanded from L'Estrange's sketch: stationers, undertakers, editors and authors, licensers, manufacturers of ink and paper, printers, type-founders, compositors, correctors, press-men, stitchers and binders, booksellers, hawkers, chapmen, mercury women, post men, carriers, proprietors of coffee houses and taverns, and, finally, readers.

'ALL SORTS OF UNAUTHORIZED AUTHORS'

Authors had a variety of motives. They wrote for money or out of religious or political commitment, though in practice the distinction between these two was flexible. Marprelate was exceptional, though not unique; he wrote solely out of principle, though he relied on some commercial networks for

¹⁰ Robert Darnton, *The Forbidden Best-Sellers of Pre-Revolutionary France* (1996), pp. 182–3 and *The Kiss of Lamourette: Reflections in Cultural History* (New York, 1990), ch. 7. The best short account of this circuit in early modern England is Peter W. M. Blayney, 'The Publication of Playbooks', in John D. Cox and David Scott Kastan, eds., *A New History of Early English Drama* (New York, 1997), pp. 383–422. For general accounts of the organisation of the book trade see John Feather, *A History of British Publishing* (1988), pp. 29–63; Marjorie Plant, *The English Book Trade: An Economic History of the Making and Sale of Books* (1939; 3rd edn, 1974); Johns, *Nature*, chs. 2, 3.

distribution. Some of those who responded to him were commissioned to write, and, from the 1640s, ideologically motivated authors were also sometimes remunerated. The appearance of the pamphlet coincides with a period in which ideas of authorship, especially in print, were shifting. Pamphleteering was not an activity for a gentleman scholar; thus, an aristocrat like Henry Howard, Earl of Northampton, who engaged in prose controversy in the 1580s, was exceptional.¹¹ Writers who did not seek remuneration generally wrote in more prestigious genres. Print would, for decades to come, continue to be stigmatised as an unrespectable, sullied means of speech, socially inferior to manuscript circulation. A gentleman would not wish to make his performances public or 'common'.¹² Yet this disrepute was already losing its grip by the 1580s, and the dismissal of print as a debased currency was most commonly found as a modesty trope in prefaces to printed works and as a stock topos in satire. Increasingly, authors would find cause to deny that their move to print was a sign of pride, a very different kind of stigma: 'To come in print is not to seeke praise, but to crave pardon: I am urgd the one; and bold to begge the other', wrote Henry Chettle around 1593.¹³

While professional authors were uncommon before the early eighteenth century, the spectre of the writer who wrote primarily for profit emerged in the 1580s.¹⁴ The majority of pamphlets were probably commercial (occasionally officially subsidised) publications; accordingly, the author would expect a payment from the undertaker, either monetary or in the form of a number of gratis copies which he or she might then sell on. Sometime after 1660 the physician John Ward noted in his commonplace book that this was a standard procedure: 'In printing Books this method for y^e Copies in y^e first Impression they give^e Author 200 Copies at half y^e price y^t they may bee sure to have some taken of, y^e 2: Edition they give him intirely one in ten.'¹⁵

¹¹ Linda Levy Peck, *Northampton: Patronage and Policy at the Court of James I* (1982).

¹² Arthur F. Marotti, *Manuscript, Print, and the English Renaissance Lyric* (Ithaca and London, 1995) and *John Donne, Coterie Poet* (Madison, WI, 1986); Richard Helgerson, *Self-Crowned Laureates: Spenser, Jonson, Milton, and the Literary System* (Berkeley, 1983); J. W. Saunders, 'The Stigma of Print: A Note on the Social Bases of Tudor Poetry', *Essays in Criticism*, 1 (1951), 139–64, and *The Profession of English Letters* (1964); Wendy Wall, *The Imprint of Gender: Authorship and Publication in the English Renaissance* (Ithaca, NY, 1993), ch. 1; Dustin Griffin, *Literary Patronage in England, 1650–1800* (Cambridge, 1996).

¹³ H[enry]. C[hettle]., *Kind-Harts Dreame* (?1593), sig. A3r–v.

¹⁴ Alvin Kernan, *Printing Technology, Letters and Samuel Johnson* (Princeton, NJ, 1987); Dustin Griffin, 'The beginnings of modern authorship: Milton to Dryden', *Milton Quarterly*, 24 (1990), 1–7, and *Literary Patronage in England, 1650–1800* (Cambridge, 1996); Edwin H. Miller, *The Professional Writer in Elizabethan England: A Study of Non-Dramatic Literature* (Cambridge, Mass., 1959); Phoebe Sheavyn, *The Literary Profession in the Elizabethan Age* (1909; New York, 1967); Sandra Clark, *The Elizabethan Pamphleteers: Popular Moralistic Pamphlets, 1580–1640* (1983); Feather, *History of British Publishing*, pp. 26–7; Manley, *London*, ch. 6.

¹⁵ Folger Shakespeare Library, MS V.a.299, f. 4v.

Remuneration was small, and the trade earned little respect. One bookseller wrote in 1624 that 'most of the best Authors are not soe penurious that they looke soe much to theire gaine, as to the good they intend Religion or State. They are too Mercenary that write bookes for Money, and theire covetousnes makes theire labours fruitles, and disesteemed.'¹⁶ In the same year, George Wither, engaged in a conflict with the Stationers' Company, complained that the domination of the trade by profit-oriented booksellers was ruining learning, and that they would rather pay a pittance to a hired pen than bargain with a real scholar: 'what needs the Stationer be at the charge of printing the labors of him that is Maister of his Art, & will require that respect which his paine deserveth? Seeing he cann hyre for a matter of 40 shillings, some needy IGNORAMUS to scribe upon the same subject, and by a large promising title, make it as vendible for an impression or two, as though it had the quintessence of all Art?'¹⁷ In return for payment all rights in the copy would be resigned to the undertaker, and equivalent or higher sums would be expected in return for a dedication to a patron. Nashe received five pounds from the dedicatee of *Christs Teares Over Jerusalem* (1593). A similar sum might be exchanged for a printed playbook, though not necessarily to the author. In contrast, a playwright could receive a payment from a theatre company of between five and eight pounds for a play, and he might expect forty shillings as a payment for a contribution, additions or emendations to a play.¹⁸ Writing pamphlets was not abundantly lucrative.

Most authors of pamphlets were educated members of the 'middling sort'. Artisans like Miles Hogarde and Thomas Deloney were exceptional. An increase in educational provision, at both grammar school and university level, and the culture of the Inns of Court, created a small class of educated and underemployed individuals both within and without the clergy. Intense migration into London resulted in increasing social fragmentation and tensions there. Moreover, the city had apparently grown to a point at which an urban consciousness became not only possible but sufficiently widespread to be the subject of humour.¹⁹ Simultaneously the marketplace of print was

¹⁶ BL Add MS. 18648, f.18r; qu. Love, *Scribal Publication*, p. 58; cf. p. 59.

¹⁷ George Wither, *The Schollers Purgatory Discovered in the Stationers Common-Wealth* ([1624]), p. 130; see also Greg, *Companion*, pp. 230–3.

¹⁸ See below, p. 65; for Nashe, see Katharine Duncan-Jones, ed., *Shakespeare's Sonnets* (1997), p. 60; for plays, David Scott Kastan, *Shakespeare After Theory* (New York, 1999), pp. 72–3; Blayney, 'Publication of Playbooks', p. 395; John Stephens, *Cynthia's Revenge* (1613), sig. A2v.

¹⁹ The classic article on the clergy is Mark H. Curtis, 'The Alienated Intellectuals of Early Stuart England', *P&P* 23 (1962), 25–43; on London see Ian Archer, *The Pursuit of Stability: Social Relations in Elizabethan London* (Cambridge, 1991) and David Rappaport, *Worlds Within Words: Structures of Life in Sixteenth-Century London* (Cambridge, 1989). For literary accounts of urban self-consciousness, see John Twynning, *London Dispossessed: Literature*

expanding. The literate audience grew, and book prices, in relative terms, fell. Writers could replace an aristocratic patron with a body of anonymous purchasers: the 'multitude is now to be our Audience' wrote Dekker.²⁰ Books became a commodity.²¹ The opportunity was both liberating and disturbing. Dependence on a fee-paying readership provoked anxiety over the loss of control over a text; for Nashe the sense of thralldom was pervasive, and he articulates an untrammelled ambivalence towards his readers. This fraught relationship may go some way to explaining why so many writers revile readers and express contempt for the literary taste of the vulgar, from whom they made their living. The social conditions of authorship in the later sixteenth century were disposed to foster pamphlet forms that were market-oriented, and written and read with facility.

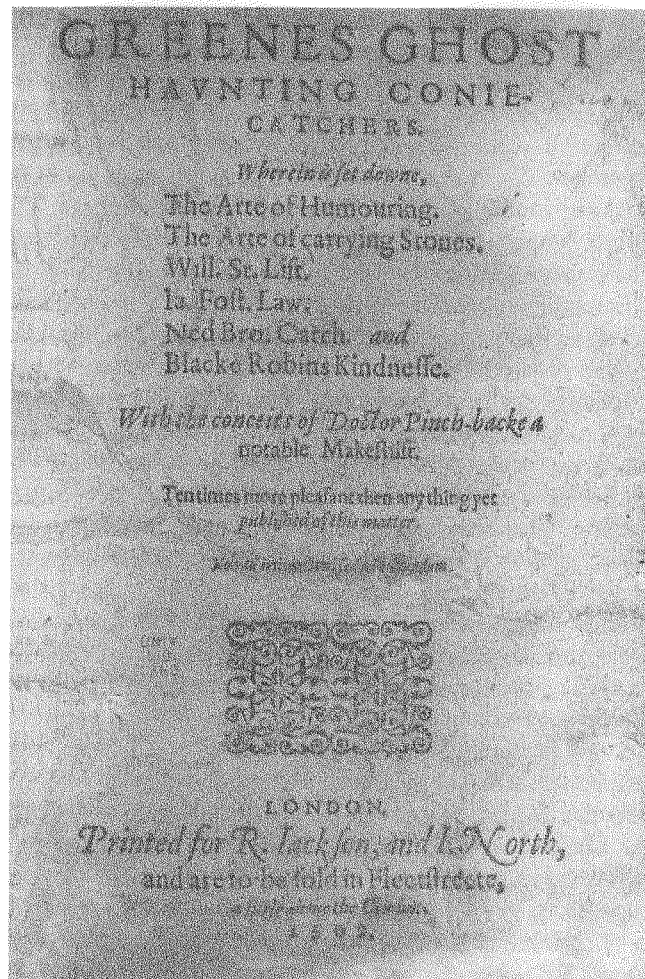
An abundance of authors wrote pamphlets, some anonymously, some collaboratively. Pamphleteers ranged from the ballad-writers William Elderton and Martin Parker to the poets John Milton and John Dryden, and among them such diverse and versatile writers as Thomas Churchyard, Phillip Stubbes, Anthony Munday, John Stubbe, the prolific water-poet John Taylor, Henry Goodcole, the Ordinary of Newgate Prison, the shrewd politician Henry Parker, William Prynne, Marchamont Nedham, Roger L'Estrange, the prophetess Lady Eleanor Davies, the Leveller John Lilburne, and Elizabeth Cellier. We cannot generalise about these writers; but it is possible to outline the social currency of pamphlet-authorship as perceived by contemporaries. A few contemporary character sketches of distinguished pamphleteers will reveal something of the *idea* of the pamphlet author. Robert Greene was an Elizabethan prodigal, friend of Nashe and author of several cony-catching pamphlets in the 1580s, as well as numerous plays, poems and narrative romances. A Cambridge graduate, he travelled across Europe and returned a machiavellian and a malcontent – or at least as claimed by his quasi-fictional self-projection Robertus. No Martin, he became an archetypal Elizabethan pamphleteer because of his self-professedly dissolute urban lifestyle, and his ability, attested by Nashe, to write at speed: 'In a night & a day would he have Yarkt up a Pamphlet as well as in seaven yeare'.²² He died in poverty

and *Social Space in the Early-Modern City* (Basingstoke, 1998); Manley, *London*; David L. Smith, Richard Strier and David Bevington, *The Theatrical City: Culture, Theatre and Politics in London, 1576–1649* (Cambridge, 1995).

²⁰ Dekker, *The Whole Magnifycent Entertainment* (1604), sig. B1v.

²¹ Prices remained relatively constant between 1558 and 1635, a period of modest inflation (100 per cent over the period); Francis R. Johnson, 'Notes on English Retail Book-Prices, 1550–1640', *The Library*, 5th ser., 5 (1950), 83–112.

²² Robert Greene (& Henry Chettle?), *Greenes Groats-Worth of Wit* (1592); a modern edition has been edited by D. Allen Carroll (Binghamton, NY, 1994). Nashe, *Strange Newes* (1592), in *Works*, vol. 1, p. 287.



6. [Samuel Rowlands], *Greenes Ghost Haunting Conie-Catchers* (1602), Cambridge University Library, Syn. 7. 60. 74. Robert Greene, an archetypal Elizabethan pamphleteer, is resurrected a few years after his death as an authorial persona for a humorous rogue pamphlet. Ghostly authorship, and dialogues between ghosts, became an important motif in pamphlets.

in 1592, and like Nashe, was repeatedly resurrected as a ghostly voice.²³ Gabriel Harvey, scholar and Nashe's enemy in the 1590s, left the following pamphletary epitaph:

²³ *Greenes Vision: Written at the Instant of his Death* (1592), B. R., *Greenes Neues Both From Heaven and Hell* (1593), *Greene in Conceit, New Raised from his Grave* (1598) and *Greenes Ghost Haunting Cony-Catchers* (1602); on ghosts, see pp. 253–4, 351 below.

who in London hath not heard of his dissolute, and licentious living; his fonde disguisinge of a Master of Arte with ruffianly haire, unseemely apparell, and more unseemely Company: his vaine glorious and Thrasonically bravinge: his piperly Extemporizing, and Tarletonizing; his apische counterfeiting of every ridiculous, and absurd toy: his fine coosening of Juglers, and finer jugling with cooseners: hys villainous cogging, and foisting; his monstrous swearing, and horrible forswearing; his impious profaning of sacred Textes: his other scandalous, and blasphemous ravinge: his riotous and outragious surfeitinge; his continuall shiftinge of lodgings: his plausible mustering, and banquettinge of roysterly acquaintance at his first comming; his beggarly departing in every hostesses debt; his infamous resorting to the Banckside, Shorditch, Southwarke, and other filthy hautes: his obscure lurking in basest corners: his pawning of his sword, cloake, and what not, when money came short; his impudent pamphletting, phantasticall interluding, and desperate libelling, when other coosening shifts failed: his employinge of Ball (surnamed cuttinge Ball) till he was intercepted at Tiborne, to leavy a crew of his trustiest companions, to garde him in daunger of Arrestes: his keeping of the foresaid Balls sister, a sorry ragged queane, of whome hee had his base sonne, *Infortunatus Greene*: his forsaking of his owne wife, too honest for such a husband: particulars are infinite: his contemning of Superiours, deriding of other, and defying of all good order?²⁴

Harvey's character-sketch is as much an attack on the personality of pamphlets themselves as on the integrity of an individual author. Pamphlets and pamphleteers are confections of eloquence and imprudence, indecorousness and commercial interest. Greene's embodiment of urban decadence is the antithesis of Martin's godly and plain-speaking earnestness, but both typify the voices found in pamphlets.

Half a century later a writer with an altogether different educational background and social status came to represent the new archetype of the pamphleteer. In 1642 a pamphlet by John Taylor lamented the 'numberlesse Pamphlets, seditious and scandalous Libells, impudent over-bold, impertinent and sawcy Petitions' that troubled the king and kingdom, and identified the 'main cause' of these as Henry Walker. A former ironmonger, despite a brief education at Cambridge, Walker had recently been prosecuted for throwing into the King's coach a pamphlet with the minatory title *To Your Tents, O Israel*. Taylor describes his trajectory from ironmonger to pamphleteer, bookseller and Independent preacher:

Then having left selling Grydirens and Gads, with a gadding braine walk'd and found out a softer occupation, and setting up a Booke-sellers Shop, fell to Booke-selling; Hee never having any word of God in his said Shop above the bulke or size of an Horne-booke. In these troublesome times Mr. *Walker* set his wits a worke to compose such things as he supposed would vent or be saleable, amongst such people as understood them not, loves contention, or were willing to beleve any thing that tended to rend or shake the piece [sic] of either Church or State, and such (and no other but such)

²⁴ Harvey, *Four Letters* (1592), in *The Works of Gabriel Harvey*, ed. Alexander B. Grosart, 3 vols. (privately printed, 1884–5), vol. 1, pp. 168–9. Tarlton was Elizabeth's famous jester; a queane is a prostitute.

were all the printed Pamphlets, which he (the said Walker[]) composed, caused to be printed and sold, of which kinds of stuffe it is supposed that he hath written neere 300. severall ones, of which number many of them hath bin printed. 1500 or 200. [sic] at an Impression, and 100. (at the least) of any one of them, besides some of them that have bin printed twice or thrice over, so that there hath not bin fewer then between 4. or 500000. of such Pamphlets of his dispersed, by which means or doings, some hundred of thred-bare scriblers fell to Trade of scandalous Writing, and Newes making, and would bee called Poets, some halfe a yeare (or thereabouts) Mr. Walker did set his name to his worthlesse workes, till at last his name grew odious and contentible, so that his phlimphlams would not sell, if people did perceive they were of his doing. Then hee set out his Rarities, namelesse and shamelesse, in greater numbers than formerly he had done, so that all this Kingdome or Island of Great Brittain, with the Principality of Wales and Realme of Ireland, were embrodered over with Lyes, Libells and Lice...²⁵

Taylor's concerns are different from Harvey's. Greene's pamphleteering was a symptom of his dissolute lifestyle, and the greatest threat he posed was to language; Walker threatens to engulf the book trade and shake the precarious stability of the kingdom. While the pamphleteering of both authors was portrayed as having pecuniary motives, Walker inspires not merely folly but political and religious division. Walker proceeded to have a successful career as a preacher and journalist through the 1640s.²⁶

Over the next decades the stereotypical pamphleteer was greedy, unprincipled, arrogant, witty, but wielding the wit of the bludgeon rather than the rapier. The epitomes of these characteristics – not perhaps in themselves but in the public personae given them by the press – were Marchamont Nedham and Roger L'Estrange. Both were pamphleteers and journalists who worked for successive governments, and took some role in assisting, or supervising, the press. Despite his loyalism, L'Estrange's reputation was for greed and lack of principle, 'an amphibious Creature, sworn a *Papist* by others, and sworn a *Protestant* by his n'own self'.²⁷ His pamphleteering is discussed in Chapter 8. Oxford-educated Nedham was a gifted polemicist and journalist who repeatedly changed sides during the civil wars, and became notorious for his railing style and political transpositions. Editor of three influential weekly newsbooks, the parliamentarian *Mercurius Britannicus* (1643–6), the royalist *Mercurius Pragmaticus* (1647–9) and the republican *Mercurius Politicus* (1650–60), he established himself as a towering figure in the history of journalism, and as an important political theorist. When Nedham committed an offence by libelling the king, a satirical dialogue pamphlet, entitled *Aulicus his Hue and Cry Sent Forth after Britannicus* (1645), described him as:

²⁵ John Taylor, *The Whole Life and Progresse of Henry Walker* (1642), sigs. A1v–A2r; cf. [Taylor?], *A Recommendation to Mercurius Morbicus* (1647); [Francis Wortley?], *Mercurius Britannicus His Welcome to Hell* (1647), p. 7.

²⁶ Raymond, *Invention*; Smith, *Literature and Revolution*, esp. pp. 61–7.

²⁷ *Weekly Pacquet of Advice from Rome*, 47 (29 April 1680), p. 375.

a petty penny Clerke, sometime a writer of Writs for a penny a dozen, who hath forgot his owne name, and hath a long time answered to the name of *Britannicus*; hee is a man of low stature full set, blacke haire, hollow-hearted, empty scull'd, barren of invention, a lover of basenesse, void of grace, and lastly, a Traytor to his King.²⁸

Nedham allegedly had human failings not unlike Greene's: 'there is a great lamentation made for the losse of him at many Tavernes in the City, especially at the Mere-maid in Cheapeside, for they have lost a sweet customer of him'.²⁹

One hostile pamphleteer wrote of Nedham and *Politicus*: 'His book, and he, are so complicated, and bound up together, they are so much the same thing, and he takes such a pride in it, that if I could, yet it were too great an inhumanity to part them'.³⁰ Endless pamphlet attacks on his various twists and turns and on his bold critiques of the king and his family conflated Nedham's personality with his writings, and with the problem of cheap print more generally.³¹ At the Restoration, when Nedham fled to the continent in fear of his life, L'Estrange credited his enemy with extraordinary powers:

what was by others singly attempted in several waies, has been in all practis'd by the late writer of *Politicus*, *Marchemont Nedham*, whose scurrilous Pamphlets flying every Week into all parts of the Nation, 'tis incredible what influence they had upon numbers of inconsidering persons, who have a strange presumption that all must needs be true that is in Print. This was the *Goliath* of the *Philistines*, the great Champion of the late Usurper, whose Pen was in comparison of others like a Weavers beam.³²

Pamphlet authors, especially notorious authors with distinctive styles, and editors of weekly publications were being increasingly conflated with what they wrote, as if the book were the personification of the writer, and the writer the embodiment of the book. Nedham represented to his enemies the instrumental role of cheap print in political culture.

For the early modern pamphleteer the author's authority was an opportunity for gamesome elaboration.³³ This playfulness included anonymous

²⁸ [Francis Cheynell?], *Aulicus his Hue and Cry Sent Forth after Britannicus* (1645), p. 1.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 3. ³⁰ [John Cleveland], *The Character of Mercurius Politicus* (1650), p. 2.

³¹ Other attacks on Nedham include: *Mercurius Anti-Britannicus*, 3 issues (August 1645); [Francis Wortley?], *Mercurius Britannicus His Welcome to Hell* (1647); William Prynne, *A Checke to Britannicus* (1644); John Taylor, *Rebells Anathematized, And Anatomized* (1645); *Mercurius Academicus*, 14 issues (December 1645–March 1646); for attacks in 1659–60 see the pamphlets cited in Joad Raymond, 'The Cracking of the Republican Spokes', *PS* 19 (1996), 255–74. For Nedham see pp. 154–5 and n.176 below.

³² [Roger L'Estrange], *A Rope for Pol* (1660), 'Advertisement'.

³³ Michel Foucault, 'What is an Author?', in Josué V. Harari, ed., *Textual Strategies* (1979), pp. 141–60 at 158–9. On the history of authorial copyright: Lyman Ray Patterson, *Copyright in Historical Perspective* (Nashville, 1968); Joseph F. Loewenstein, 'For a History of Literary Property: John Wolfe's Reformation', *ELR* 18 (1988), 389–412 and 'Idem: italics and the genetics of authorship', *Journal of Medieval and Renaissance Studies*, 20 (1990), 205–24.

and pseudonymous publication. Anonymity had been common among pamphleteers in Reformation Germany, and in 1576 Johann Wigand equated anonymity with non-being, the authorship of *nemine*: 'The Neminist is a writer who either alone or with others publishes writings on religious matters in which he conceals his name with the deceitful intention of not being caught... It is characteristic of him to carry on his business in the darkness, in the night, and in secrecy.'³⁴ He was driven by deception, delusion and the need to avoid disgrace. Yet there are many motives for anonymity and pseudonymity other than timidity, diffidence, or shame.³⁵ Pamphleteers dropped and adopted names and fashioned voices and personalities in order to inflect their words. The author of *Martine Mar-Sixtus* explained his anonymity:

Loath I was to display my selfe to the world, but for that I hope to daunce under a maske... I was content for once to become odious, that is, to speake in print, that such as use to carpe at they know not what, may for once likewise condemne they know not whome, and yet I doo not accuse the readers, as if all writers wer faultles, for why? We live in a printing age, wherein there is no man either so vainely, or factiously, or filthily disposed, but there are crept out of all sort unauthorized authors, to fill and fit his humor... every red nosed rimester is an author, every drunken mans dreame is a booke, and he whose talent of little wit is hardly worth a farthing, yet layeth about him so outrageously, as if all *Helicon* had run through his pen, in a word, scarce a cat can looke out of a gutter, but out starts a halffpeny Chronicler, and presently *A propper new ballet of a strange sight* is endited.³⁶

The superficial point is that printed texts are common and therefore odious; yet the author, signing himself 'R.W.', borrowed Martin's 'maske' in order to adopt his railing style. The imitation of a recognisable voice legitimates a breach in decorum. Pseudonymous authorship created a new set of decorums for cheap print. It was a powerful literary device. More than the absence of a name, anonymity plays an important part in the history of the pamphlet, and merits a typology:

1. anonymity where the author's name has been lost
2. 'neministic' or fugitive anonymity/pseudonymity to avoid prosecution
3. shamefaced anonymity/pseudonymity for the pornographic
4. anonymity because the author's identity is entirely irrelevant (e.g. because the text has its own independent authority)
5. anonymity where the author's identity would undermine the authority of the text, or prejudice its reception

³⁴ Quoted in Archer Taylor and Frederic J. Mosher, *The Bibliographical History of Anonyma and Pseudonyma* (Chicago, 1951), p. 90.

³⁵ Samuel Halkett and James Lang, *Dictionary of Anonymous and Pseudonymous English Literature*, revised by James Kennedy, W. A. Smith and A. F. Johnson, 9 vols., including supplements (Edinburgh, 1926–62), vol. 1, pp. xi–xxiii.

³⁶ R. W., *Martine Mar-Sixtus* (1591), sig. A3r–v.

6. anonymity/pseudonymity to avoid stigma, often for reasons of gender or social status
7. anonymity for modesty's sake
8. anonymity/pseudonymity to indicate collective enterprise
9. pseudonymity for satirical purposes, as a literary mask, including:
 - tailor-made fictions
 - borrowed (such as Marprelate's filiations)
 - imitative of real speaker (e.g. a mock-sermon or letter)
10. the use of initials partly to conceal identity, perhaps allowing identification by a restricted audience
11. the use of initials as a perfunctory gesture of modesty
12. 'by the author of...', establishing credentials without identity.

These are not exclusive categories, and numerous pamphlets used one or more of these to various effect. Anonymity became increasingly common in the century after Marprelate; while its uses diversified, it became something of a commonplace – a convention rather than an evasion of identification. Star Chamber decrees in 1637 required that all publications identify an author; this was reinforced by Parliament in January 1641 and subsequently, but not by the Printing Act of 1662 or later legislation. Only for these twenty-five years did the law call for authors to be named, and in these years many disobliged. During the eighteenth century anonymity became the norm for novels. Authorial naming has an elaborate, imaginative history, quite independent from notions of authority, culpability and property.³⁷

Authors usually needed publishers of sorts. Publication was funded by an undertaker, most commonly a bookseller, occasionally an author or printer. The author supplied the words; the undertaker the capital. The relationships between authors, printers, publishers, booksellers and their various agents and go-betweens were fluid, and surviving contracts for the seventeenth century or earlier are rare.³⁸ Nevertheless the arrangement which resulted in the publication of a book frequently left some mark on the imprint at the foot of the title-page: 'printed for [bookseller or undertaker]' or 'printed by [printer] for [bookseller or undertaker]', 'printed by [printer,

³⁷ See pp. 168–9, below; Robert J. Griffin, 'Anonymity and Authorship', *New Literary History*, 30 (1999), 877–95; Gerard Genette, *Paratexts: Thresholds of Interpretation*, trans. Jane E. Lewin (Cambridge, 1997), pp. 37–55.

³⁸ Milton's contract for *Paradise Lost* is famous; see a series of articles by Peter Lindenbaum: 'Milton's contract', in M. Woodmansee and P. Jaszi, eds., *The Construction of Authorship: Textual Appropriation in Law and Literature* (Durham and London, 1994), pp. 175–90; 'The Poet in the Marketplace: Milton and Samuel Simmons', in Peter G. Stanwood, ed., *Of Poetry and Politics: New Essays on Milton and His World* (Binghamton, 1995), pp. 249–62; 'Authors and Publishers in the Late Seventeenth Century: New Evidence on their Relations', *The Library*, 6th ser., 17 (1995), 250–69; 'Rematerializing Milton', *PH* 41 (1977), 5–22.

and, probably, undertaker]', sometimes with the coda, 'and are to be sold by [the wholesale bookseller, if not the undertaker]'.³⁹ For the most part, printers undertook work for money, and the capital was put up by a bookseller, usually but not always the owner of the copy. The imprint 'by [printer] for [bookseller]' may indicate a joint venture with responsibility for capital and/or copy shared. Some printers adopted the role of publisher, and authors occasionally funded their own publications and arranged distribution with or without the printer's assistance. While the imprint 'Printed for the author' at the foot of a title page was itself fairly unusual, the formulation 'Printed in the year', or simply 'Printed', where it does not indicate surreptitious printing, usually indicates that the work was printed at the author's behest.⁴⁰

Having agreed with an author upon a publication, with or without the manuscript in hand, the undertaker might proceed to Stationers' Hall, where he could register his ownership of the work. Stationers' Hall was not a constant during the period: the initial Hall, acquired in 1554, was within the precincts of St Paul's; in 1606 it occupied temporary, rented accommodation on Milk Street; in 1611 the Stationers' moved across the road to Abergavenny Hall; when this, with satellite buildings, was destroyed during the Great Fire temporary lodgings were established, and a new building was completed on the former site around 1673–4. The Hall was the industrious centre of the day-to-day business of the book trade, where records were kept, disputes adjudicated, activities supervised and regulated. Though authors for the most part spent little time there, its influence extended into every stage of production and distribution.

THE CHARACTER OF A STATIONER

A pause in this progress through the network of communication must be made to sketch the most important and distinctive characteristic of the book trade in England and Wales: its government by commercial monopoly. All those involved in the network described above, with the exception of the least important participant – the author – were known as stationers. Some of these stationers would be Stationers, that is to say, members of the Stationers' Company, the chartered guild which regulated the book trade. The company,

³⁹ On the interpretation of imprints, see W. W. Greg, *Some Aspects and Problems of London Publishing Between 1550 and 1650* (Oxford, 1956), pp. 82–9; M. A. Shaaber, 'The Meaning of the Imprint in Early Printed Books', *The Library*, 4th ser., 24 (1943–4), 120–41; though cf. Blayney, 'Publication of Playbooks', p. 390.

⁴⁰ D. F. McKenzie, 'The Economies of Print, 1550–1750: Scales of Production and Conditions of Constraint', in *Produzione e commercio della carta e del libro secc. XIII–XVIII*, Istituto Internazionale di Storia Economica 'F. Datini' Prato, Serie II–Atti delle 'Settimane di Studi' e altri Convegni, 23 (Prato, 1992), pp. 389–425, at 398.

which had existed in some form since 1403, was first incorporated by Mary in 1557; its Charter was confirmed by Elizabeth in 1559, a natural step in its evolution which secured it the authority to control the trade. Seeking royal privileges, the Stationers petitioned Parliament and the courts for additional statutory rights, in return for which it undertook responsibilities. The most important transaction took place in 1586 when the Star Chamber issued decrees which endeavoured to redress the 'greate enormities and abuses . . . commonly used and practised by dyvers contentyous and disorderlye persons professinge the arte or mysterye of Pryntinge or sellinge of bookes'. The decrees formalised existing practices by codifying orderly behaviour and specifying punishments for offences. They reiterated and thereby emphasised the powers of search conferred by the Charter, authority for which ultimately lay in High Commission. The decrees also restated the Elizabethan Injunction forbidding printing, 'Except the same booke, woork, coppye, matter, or any other thinge, hath been heeretofore allowed before the ymprintinge thereof, accordinge to th[e] order appoynted by the Queenes majesties Injuntions'. In practice, not all books were so authorised, and non-compliance went unnoticed except when an offence was caused. The cost of licensing proved a disincentive for pamphlet publishers. The decrees forbade any to sell 'utter', bind, stitch or sew unlicensed books. Offenders were to be debarred from printing, and imprisoned for six months.⁴¹ Approval was not necessary for works protected by royal patents (such as Bibles, psalters and Latin works), which enabled lucrative monopolies.⁴² Aside from London, printing was also permitted and protected by patent at a single press each in Cambridge and Oxford. Scotland, a separate kingdom, was not affected by this legislation and the authority of the Stationers' Company did not extend there.

The company also operated its own licensing procedure, to confer its own approval on a text under the powers it had been granted by its 1557 Charter. This gave the licensee ownership of copy. In addition, a distinct and optional procedure involved the registration of copies at Stationers' Hall. Following the incorporation of 1557, proprietary rights in a text could be registered by a Stationer (or in exceptional cases by an author or another)⁴³ by his entering his name, and an approximate title for the text, perhaps accompanied by the author's name, in the Entry Book of Copies or Stationers' Register; the

⁴¹ Arber, *Transcript*, vol. 2, pp. 807–12.

⁴² Arnold Hunt, 'Book Trade Patents, 1603–1640', in Arnold Hunt, Giles Mandelbrote and Alison Shell, eds., *The Book Trade and its Customers 1450–1900: Historical Essays for Robin Myers* (Winchester, 1997), pp. 27–54; and p. 170, below.

⁴³ John Feather, *Publishing, Piracy and Politics: An Historical Study of Copyright in Britain* (1994), pp. 24–6; Mark Rose, *Authors and Owners: The Invention of Copyright* (Cambridge, MA, 1993), p. 4.

entry was then signed by the master and/or one or more wardens of the company, and sometimes by a licenser. This served as an insurance policy on rights in copy. The minimum fee for a licence was 6*d.*; the entry itself cost between 4*d.* and 6*d.* extra.⁴⁴ Thereafter no publisher or printer was permitted to publish the same copy, though it could be inherited and rights could be assigned, through a separate entry in the Entry Book, to another printer, usually in return for a fee. Entry did not signify official approval, and the Entry Book was not intended to act as a licensing mechanism, though sometimes, especially in later years, the distinction was blurred.⁴⁵

The Stationers' Company regulated the trade in other ways, most significantly by limiting its size. Membership of the company was primarily limited to those who had served apprenticeships under Stationers. A register was kept of all apprentices, and a Stationer was permitted between one and three apprentices according to his rank. Membership could also be extended to sons of freemen of the company; a member could be transferred from another company; and membership could be purchased at a fee. The 1586 decrees limited the number of printing houses in London, stipulating that no new printers were to set up until the excessive number was diminished as the Archbishop of Canterbury saw fit. One member complained in 1582 that there were twenty-two printing houses, whereas eight or ten would do. In 1637 the second Star Chamber decree limited the number to twenty.⁴⁶ Until 1642 transgressions were fairly modest, though from time to time the Company, at its own instigation or by official request, would take action against supernumerary printers. The organisation disintegrated during the 1640s, and the number of printing houses had roughly doubled by the end of the decade. By 1659 there were fifty-nine; in 1663 Roger L'Estrange estimated the number of Master Printers at sixty. This figure was reduced to thirty-three by the Great Fire of 1666, but crept up to perhaps fifty-five

⁴⁴ The entry fee remained constant throughout this period; the entry fee for a ballad increased, erratically, from 4*d.* to 6*d.* during the 1580s and 1590s. For a few works a higher fee was paid; perhaps this included a licence fee. See Greg, *London Publishing*, pp. 38–9; Cyprian Blagden, *The Stationers' Company: A History 1403–1959* (Stanford, CA, 1960), pp. 43–4.

⁴⁵ For example, under regulations of 1643 governing printing, which gave responsibility for both licensing and entry to the Company; see *LJ* 6:96–97. Thereafter anything entered could be assumed to have received approval. This distinction is a factor in debates over the intention behind and the effectiveness of press regulation in the early modern period. On licensing and entrance procedures, see p. 41 n.44, above. On the Stationers' Company, see Blagden, *The Stationers' Company*; Robin Myers and Michael Harris, eds., *The Stationers' Company and the Book Trade 1550–1990* (Winchester, 1997); Robin Myers, *The Stationers' Company Archive* (Winchester, 1990); Ian Anders Gadd, '“Being like a field”: Corporate Identity in the Stationers' Company 1557–1684', DPhil thesis, University of Oxford (1999); Blayney, 'Publication of Playbooks', pp. 398–405.

⁴⁶ Arber, *Transcript*, vol. 1, p. 144; vol. 2, pp. 809, 812; vol. 4, pp. 532–3; Greg, *Companion*, pp. 27–8.

by 1688.⁴⁷ A greater number of printing houses and printers resulted in a greater productive capacity and less control, circumstances which might spawn supernumerary pamphlets and seditious writing. In 1663 L'Estrange doubted that self-regulation was a sufficiently effective method of control, arguing that the Stationers' interest in profit had extinguished their deference to the law: 'It seems a little too much to Reward the Abusers of the Press with the Credit of Superintending it: upon a Confidence that They that Destroy'd the Last King for their Benefit, will now make it their businesse to Preserve This to the Last.'⁴⁸

The decrees of 1586 formed the basis of press control for half a century, and provided the foundation for the Stationers' regulatory operation. They were revised by the more elaborate arrangements of the Star Chamber decree of 1637, which restated many former regulations in stronger terms, and expressed particular concern over 'printing in Corners without licence'. The effect of the additions and alterations was to strengthen the company's monopoly in order to exert greater control over books that, in the court's view, threatened to disturb the peace. The interests of the company and the court converged in this. Significant additions included the outright proscription of any involvement in 'seditious, scismaticall, or offensive Bookes or Pamphlets'; the import of English-language books was forbidden; all printers had to register and be bound with sureties to the Court of High Commission; licences were required for all reprints; only four type-founders were permitted. One item required that 'Every person and persons that shall hereafter Print, or cause to be Printed' any matter 'shall thereunto or thereon Print and set his and their owne name or names, as also the name or names of the Author or Authors, Maker or Makers of the same, and by, or for whom any such booke, or other thing is, or shall be printed'. Another outlined a new licensing procedure: all appointed licensers were to be presented with 'two severall written Copies of the same Booke or Bookes with the Titles, Epistles, Prefaces, Proems, Preambles, Introductions, Tables, Dedications, and other things whatsoever thereunto annexed'. One copy was to be kept by the licenser in a public office:

to the end that he or they may be secure, that the Copy so licensed by him or them shall not bee altered without his or their privitie, and the other shall remain with him whose Copy it is, and upon both the said Copies, he or they that shall allow the said Booke, shall testifie under his or their hand or hands, that there is nothing in that Booke or Books contained, that is contrary to Christian Faith, and the Doctrine

⁴⁷ McKenzie, 'Economies of print', pp. 395–6; L'Estrange, *Considerations and Proposals*, p. 27; also Richard Atkyns, *The Original and Growth of Printing* (1664), p. 16; Johns, *Nature*, p. 72.

⁴⁸ L'Estrange, *Considerations and Proposals*, p. 25.

and Discipline of the Church of England, nor against the State or Government, not contrary to good life, or good manners, or otherwise, as the nature and subject of the work shall require, which license or approbation shall be imprinted in the beginning of the same Booke, with the name, or names of him or them that shall authorize or license the same, for a testimonie of the allowance thereof.⁴⁹

Licensing was never intended to silence all discussion or controversy; instead it aspired to serve as a means of tracing and punishing those who committed specific offences, and to discourage them from offending in the first place. The Stuart monarchs did not seek tyrannical subjugation of the press, nor to suppress all criticism, though it should be considered whether the government's legislated right to prevent free speech was not in fact an abrogation of free speech whether or not actual interventions were made against speaking. Licensing was not, however, a monolithic system, and was frequently ineffectual. The effect of the Star Chamber decrees of 1586 was to cause a dramatic rise in both the rate of entry in the Stationers' Register and the incidence of licensing; yet the latter fell with equal drama within a few years.⁵⁰ About two-thirds of all extant titles in the period 1576–1640 were entered, and about half of these were licensed, though these statistics must be tentatively interpreted.⁵¹ The most seditious books were printed clandestinely, without reference to the licenser. As one opponent of licensing wrote in 1679: 'there are some Authors and some Printers so bold, that the one to vent his Humour, and the other for the Lucre of Money, would Write and Print such Books in spite of the strictest enquiry, and in defiance of the severest Penalty'.⁵² Some books that were licensed nonetheless caused offence, including Walter Raleigh's *History of the World* (1614) and William Prynne's *Histriomastix* (1632). Later in the century L'Estrange complained of the republication of old pamphlets which were in themselves libellous but which nonetheless managed to avoid close scrutiny because they were reprints.⁵³ Approved scripts could be changed after a licence was obtained, perhaps altered after a few copies were printed. Milton, describing the prospects of an author who wanted to amend his copy at any stage, exaggerated the practical consequences, if not the dangers, of licensing laws:

⁴⁹ Arber, *Transcript*, vol. 4, pp. 528–36.

⁵⁰ From 87 per cent in 1589–90 to 11 per cent by 1594–5, according to W. W. Greg, 'Entrance, Licence, and Publication', *The Library*, 4th ser., 25 (1944), 1–22; see also Maureen Bell, 'Entrance in the Stationers' Register', *The Library*, 6th ser., 16 (1994), 50–4; Clegg produces slightly different figures, and notes that the effect was not immediate, but took place after Whitgift appointed his panel of authorisers (*Press Censorship*, pp. 18, 60–1).

⁵¹ Greg, 'Entrance, Licence, and Publication', pp. 3–5; cf. below, p. 170.

⁵² 'Philopatris', *A Just Vindication of Learning* (1679), p. 17.

⁵³ L'Estrange, *Considerations and Proposals*, sig. A3v, pp. 9–10; *L'Estrange's Narrative of the Plot* (1690), p. 17; cf. L'Estrange, *A Word Concerning Libels and Libellers* (1681), p. 2.

The Printer dares not go beyond his licenc't copy; so often then must the author trudge to his leave-giver, that those his new insertions may be viewed; and many a jaunt will be made, ere that licenser, for it must be the same man, can either be found, or found at leisure; mean while either the Presse must stand still, which is no small damage, or the author loose his accuratest thoughts, & send the book forth wors then he had made it, which to a diligent writer is the greatest melancholy and vexation that can befall.⁵⁴

Though regulations were customarily ignored, they impressed themselves forcefully on the imagination of writers and other citizens opposed to ecclesiastical authority over the presses.

Changes were happening at a deeper level within the Company and within the trade. In the sixteenth century the dominant figures were the printers; from the late sixteenth century onwards printers were gradually eclipsed by booksellers, commonly the financers of publication. Writing in 1664 Richard Atkyns suggested that the declining status of printers and the incorporation of booksellers and lesser craftsmen into the Company of Stationers had led to commercialisation and thus to a vitiation of the art of printing: 'they fill'd the Kingdom with so many Books, and the Brains of the People with so many contrary Opinions, that there Paper-pellets became as dangerous as Bullets . . . whereas they were before the King's Printers and Servants, they now grew so poor, so numerous, and contemptible, by being Concorporated, that they turn'd this famous ART into a Mechanick Trade for a Livelihood'.⁵⁵ The pamphlet developed alongside these changes.

PAPER, INK AND MOVEABLE TYPE

The text having been licensed and entered, the undertaker, or his representative, would convey the copy to the printer. For larger books the text could be farmed out to several printing houses, in order to speed up production: for short pamphlets, this was unnecessary except when seditious materials demanded very circumspect work.⁵⁶ The printer might be blessed with a fair copy, perhaps one already marked up by the author to indicate capitals, italics and other effects, or he might be faced with a messy, heavily corrected

⁵⁴ *CPW*, vol. 2, p. 532.

⁵⁵ Richard Atkyns, *The Original and Growth of Printing* (1664), p. 7; a *Remonstrance* published in 1643 by the Stationers' Company protested that Stationers should not be viewed as 'meer Mechanicks', but lived in the 'Suburbs of Literature', as the French recognised. See Arber, *Transcript*, vol. 1, p. 584. On further commercial change see below, pp. 327–9.

⁵⁶ Peter W. M. Blayney, 'The Prevalence of Shared Printing in the Early Seventeenth Century', *Publications of the Bibliographical Society of America*, 67 (1973), 437–42; Beth Lynch, 'Mr. Smirke and "Mr. Filth": A Bibliographic Case Study in Nonconformist Printing', *The Library*, 7th ser., 1 (2000), 46–71.

and interlined scrawl. In either case he would immediately begin to make decisions about what kind of a book this was, and how best to print it; for a pamphlet this was relatively straightforward. A print run would be determined, and printing costs estimated and agreed. Paper size and quantity and type size would be chosen, and ink ordered, if necessary, usually by the barrel from the Stationers' Company itself. These were the materials by which the author's words were made flesh, and they impressed themselves upon both writing and reading.⁵⁷

The single most costly element in the printing of a book was the paper, which constituted between half and three-quarters the cost of production. When the prolific and prolix divine William Prynne fell silent for a short while in 1649, the young pamphleteer John Hall wrote: 'I began to feare and tremble lest either you were in labour with some great voluminous work, which like a Leviathan would swallow up all the Paper, and be a means to raise Ballads and Pamphlets, from three farthings to a penny a Sheet.'⁵⁸ Hall's comment is premised upon the known fact that paper was a major determinant of the price of books, and that it was limited in supply. Paper in Britain was more expensive than in the rest of Europe because there was no British manufacture of white paper for printing until the eighteenth century (though the monopolist John Spilman's celebrated brown-paper mill⁵⁹ was founded in 1588). The British wore wool rather than linen, and wool made poor paper. Brown English paper was used for wrapping, while printers imported paper from France and Italy, and to a lesser extent from Germany and the Netherlands. In addition to the transport costs, this was subjected to a 5 per cent duty. Paper was a valuable commodity; in a poem by John Davies of Hereford paper personified complains of the price to which it had soared during the exchanges between Nashe and Harvey: 'How many Quires (can any Stacioner tell) / Were bandied then . . . ? / Five Grotes (good Lord!) why what a rate was that, / For one meere rayling Pamphlet to be at?'⁶⁰ The centrality of London within English and Welsh literate culture is indicated by London's

⁵⁷ The account of printing in these paragraphs is indebted to: Philip Gaskell, *A New Introduction to Bibliography* (1972; Oxford, 1985); Joseph Moxon, *Mechanick Exercises on the Whole Art of Printing* (1683-4), ed. Herbert Davis and Harry Carter (New York, 1978); D. F. McKenzie, *The Cambridge University Press 1696-1712*, 2 vols. (Cambridge, 1966), and 'Printers of the Mind: Some Notes on Bibliographical Theories and Printing-House Practices', *Studies in Bibliography*, 22 (1969), 1-75; David McKitterick, *A History of Cambridge University Press*, vol. 1: *Printing and the Book Trade in Cambridge 1534-1698* (Cambridge 1992); Blayney, 'Publication of Playbooks'. I am indebted to the late Don McKenzie and to Michael Turner, for instructing me in the use of the hand press.

⁵⁸ Hall, *A Serious Epistle to Mr. William Prynne* (1649), p. 2.

⁵⁹ See, for example, Thomas Churchyard's 'A Description and Playne Discourse of Paper', in *A Sparke of Friendship* (1588).

⁶⁰ J[ohn]. D[avies]. and A[braham]. H[olland]., *A Scourge for Paper-Persecutors . . . With a Continu'd Just Inquisition* (1625), p. 4.

consumption of imported white paper for both printing and writing; even at the end of the seventeenth century it absorbed 97 per cent of imports.⁶¹

Paper for printing was made from linen rags, warmed and wetted until rotten, then cut and finely pulped. This substance (called 'stuff') was shaken in a wire mesh mould (with a watermark indicating the origins and size of the paper), pressed in felt and dried, and then sealed with gelatine size. It was then counted into quires (24 or 25 sheets) or reams (20 quires, hence 480 or 500 sheets) and sold. Paper was made in several sizes, the larger the more expensive; hence William Prynne's complaint that 'Shakespeare's plays are printed in the best Crown paper, far better than most Bibles'. Pamphlets were printed on 'pot paper', a smaller, cheaper size, which during the 1620s sold for between 3s. 4d. and 5s. 6d. a ream, depending on quantity.⁶²

Ink, the life-blood of the page, had considerable metaphoric power. Nashe threatened words steeped in aqua fortis and gunpowder, and Harvey replied in like terms: 'although his incke, be not pitch, or poison, yet it is incke; that will neither blush for shame, nor waxe pale for feare; but will holde his owne, when perhaps gayer collours shal lose their coullor; and *Aqua fortis* valiantly eate his owne harte'.⁶³ A pamphleteer, commending plain English and religious toleration, wrote in 1645: 'A mans inke may be tempered to thicke with *humane* Elegancies, to write the mysteries of the Gospel.'⁶⁴ A pamphlet of 1678 looked upon words as embodied in the commodity of ink blackened with vitriol: 'The honest *Covenanters* have been whetting their Pens at him these Five years; so have we our Spleens in *England*, we have spent the most part of our Gaul in Ink-pots.'⁶⁵ Seventeenth-century writers ruminated on the hue and intensity of ink.

Printers' ink was different from writers' ink; water-based ink would not adhere to the metal type, and thus left an uneven and pale impression.⁶⁶ Printing ink was made of two elements: varnish and colour. Varnish was made from linseed or walnut oil, reduced by extended heating in a cauldron. When cool the varnish was mixed with pigment: lampblack made from the smoke of burnt resin was ground into the oil to give it a black hue, while red ink was obtained by mixing with a vermilion pigment. Red ink was used to enhance the appearance of early modern books, both for decoration and to suggest authority. Two-colour printing was a costly procedure, however, and

⁶¹ D. C. Coleman, *The British Paper Industry 1495-1860: A Study in Industrial Growth* (Oxford, 1958), p. 14.

⁶² Prynne, *Histrion-Mastix* (1633), f. 1v; Blayney, 'Publication of Playbooks', p. 408.

⁶³ *Works of Gabriel Harvey*, vol. 1, pp. 217, 214.

⁶⁴ *The Ancient Bounds, or Liberty of Conscience* (1645), p. 20.

⁶⁵ *A Letter from Amsterdam to a Friend in England* (1678), p. 5.

⁶⁶ In addition to the sources in n.57 above, see C. H. Bloy, *A History of Printing Ink* (1967); R. H. Leach, R. J. Pierce et al., *The Printing Ink Manual*, 5th edn (1993); M. D. Fertel, *La Science pratique l'imprimerie* (Saint-Omer, 1723).

was not used in cheap pamphlets. While water-based inks tended to be pale or brown, good printing ink could be richly black, and Gutenberg produced excellent inks of deep intensity. He was perhaps inspired by contemporary artists, who were experimenting with oil-based paints as an alternative to tempera. The blacker the ink the more expensive it was to produce, and later printers failed to match Gutenberg's colouration. With time, fewer printers made their own ink. English printers bought it and thus their standards varied 'according to the Conscience of the *Inck-Maker*'.⁶⁷ There was little demand for expensive, high-quality ink.

While the earliest continental printers made their own type, the English tended to import matrices. By the late sixteenth century typefounding had emerged as a separate profession, and printers bought in sets (or 'founts') of type. Highly skilled engravers etched the letters of the alphabet (plus capitals, small capitals, italics, punctuation and incidentals) on the tips of steel punches. These punches were then hammered into small copper blocks, known as matrices, which provided a recessed impression for each letter. To cast the type these matrices were in turn inserted into a hand-held mould which formed the body of the type, typically a rectangular block about 2.5 centimetres high and a few millimetres deep and wide, with a nick in one side to indicate orientation. The skilled caster would tip a lead alloy into the mouth of the mould, allow it to solidify for a few seconds, then eject it by opening the mould at the hinge and flicking the fresh type onto a growing pile.

Printed letters were modelled on handwriting. The earliest sets of type, made on the Continent, followed the heavy Gothic script. This 'blackletter' typeface derived from France and was the norm in England in the early sixteenth century. It was gradually phased out – in London-printed vernacular works – in favour of the roman and italic faces based on humanist hands. Simultaneously, an italic face, initially used for the body of a text, was increasingly employed in conjunction with the roman face to indicate emphasis. The move away from blackletter for the most part took place between 1580 and 1610, though it sometimes persisted thereafter in works printed for the less educated, including ballads and chapbooks, and in official documents, where it connoted authority. By 1620 its infrequent appearance in pamphlets made it seem old-fashioned, and perhaps it was only used when type ran short at the printing house. Its abandonment in England probably stems from its poor legibility compared with more open faces: roman type requires less vertical movement of the eye than blackletter. Roman was chosen for Latin textbooks, and English handwriting increasingly preferred a more upright script. Nevertheless, it took time for less educated readers, or

⁶⁷ Moxon, *Mechanick Exercises*, p. 82.

those who read less frequently, to get used to the change. The shift also necessitated considerable capital outlay on new cases of type; a scholarly printing house would want to exact ten years' use from a fount, while others, with an eye to cutting costs, would want to use a fount for longer.⁶⁸ Given the practical considerations, the transition from blackletter to roman type was swift.

The elegance of its letters minutely shapes the aspect of a page, viewed proximately or from distance, and determines the ease with which the eye moves along the line. In his *Mechanick Exercises on the Whole Art of Printing* (1683–4) the printer Joseph Moxon praised the labours of Dutch type-founders (Van Dyck was one) for their ability to combine art with functionality:

the late made *Dutch-Letters* are so generally, and indeed most deservedly accounted the best, as for their Shape, consisting so exactly of Mathematical Regular Figures as aforesaid, And for that commodious Fatness they have beyond other *Letters*, which easing the Eyes in Reading, renders them more Legible; As also the true placing their Fats and their Leans, with the sweet driving them into one another, and indeed all the accomplishments that can render *Letters* regular and beautiful, do more visibly appear in them than in any *Letters* Cut by any other People: And therefore I think we may account the Rules they were made by, to be the Rules of true shap'd *Letters*.⁶⁹

As Moxon's punning title suggests, the type-founder's skill, like the printer's, was both mechanic (the handicraft of a tradesman) and an art (the accomplishment of the educated).⁷⁰

In the printing house, type was sorted into trays with compartments for each character. Typically each fount of type came in two trays, and the arrangement of the letters (or 'lay') was regionally standardised, so the compositor (or typesetter) knew where to locate them by reflex. In the printer's shop the tray, or case, with capitals was usually placed at the top of the compositor's table, the case of uncapitalised letters below it, from whence we derive our terms upper- and lower-case. As type represented a considerable initial outlay, smaller businesses would be constrained by limited quantities and choice of faces; and as an early-modern printer would use a fount for as many years as possible, worn or chipped type was common. The appearance of broken type in cheap books was conflated with poor prose and calumnious content in one mischievous tract offering to describe the 'abuse of Printing', *A Presse Full of Pamphlets: Wherein, are Set Diversity of*

⁶⁸ McKenzie, *Cambridge University Press*, vol. 1, p. 37.

⁶⁹ Moxon, *Mechanick Exercises*, pp. 22–3.

⁷⁰ See n.55, above; also Ian Gadd, 'The Mechanicks of Difference: A Study in Stationers' Company Discourse in the Seventeenth Century', in Myers and Harris, eds., *Stationers' Company*, pp. 93–111.

Prints, Containing Deformed and Misfigured Letters: Composed into Books Fraught with Libellous and Scandallous Sentences (1642).⁷¹ The Marprelate printer Hodgkins' explanation that his spilled type was 'shott' was probably a desperate and hasty evasion, but also an injudicious jest, as the superficial similarity between type and ammunition resulted in frequent comparisons between the two. The parallel metaphor of pamphlets as 'paper bullets' may have been transferred from this more visual trope: pamphlets were potentially deadly weapons, pressed with the apparatus of warfare.

'A PRESSING TO DEATH'

In Britain printing was essentially a domestic business, and the printer lived above his workshop. Printers' houses were busy with customers, agents, wary authors, apprentices, family, materials, and the coming and going of tall collations of sheets. The work would take place in two or three rooms, traditionally lined with paper windows. Labour was overseen by the master printer, who was responsible for the artistry of his printing and the internal economics of payments and profit.

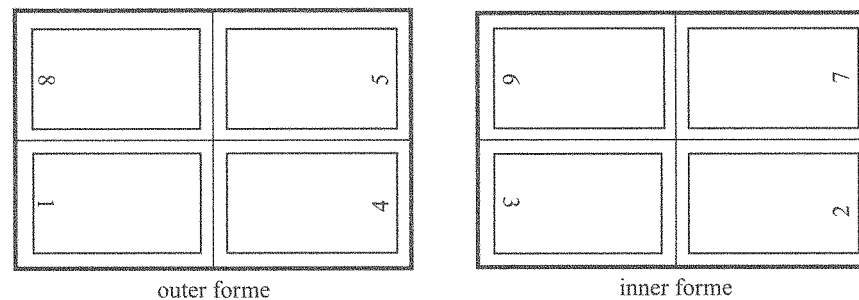
Having agreed with the publisher the format that the copy would take, and having calculated the sheets it would fill, the printer would pass it on to the compositor. With a neat manuscript or a reprint, the printer or compositor would be able to 'cast off' by judging where page-breaks would occur and dividing the copy accordingly. This allowed the copy to be set 'by formes', so one side of a sheet could be composed and printed, followed by the other side; less type was required for this. For elaborate books, such as music and mathematical printing, copy demanded careful preparation. For a pamphlet, especially a short one, the process was comparatively simple, and composing simply a matter of getting the words down. Cheap, inelegant printing, such as that found in many pamphlets, led to accusations that the mystery was being debased, as in one pamphlet poem of 1645: 'This instrument of Art, is now possess / By some, who have in Art no interest.'⁷²

A compositor, working in a separate room, stood at a desk with his cases of type in front of him, and with the manuscript copy either above them or to one side. The compositor read his copy and in turn placed each letter, space or incidental in an implement known as a composing stick, adjustable to the width of the page. Early modern compositors did not necessarily produce a literal transposition of the manuscript; they adjusted the text according to their aesthetic judgement and the conventions of the printing-house, and might take it upon themselves to introduce italics and capitals for emphasis. Moxon writes:

A good *Compositor* is ambitious as well to make the meaning of his *Author* intelligent to the *Reader*, as to make his Work shew graceful to the Eye, and pleasant in Reading: Therefore if his *Copy* be Written in a Language he understands, he reads his *Copy* with consideration; that so he may get himself into the meaning of the *Author*, and consequently considers how to order his Work the better both in *Title Page*, and in the matter of the *Book*: As how to make his *Indenting*, *Pointing*, *Breaking*, *Italicking*, &c. the better sympathize with the *Authors* Genius, and also with the capacity of the *Reader*.⁷³

After laying each line the compositor would insert additional spaces between words so that the line was justified. After several lines of text the stick would be full, and the compositor would carefully slide the type onto a flat tray known as a galley. When he had completed the full number of lines for a page he would add the paratext (the page number, the heading that appeared at the top of each page, a catchword and, on some pages, a signature), tie the block of type together, then put it to one side until he was ready to assemble the forme.

A forme is the term used to describe the pages printed on one side of a sheet of paper. Their arrangement depended on format: for most pamphlets this was quarto. The pages of books were (and are) not printed in consecutive sequence. Because more than two pages appear on each sheet of paper (except in the case of broadsides), and because pages are printed on both sides of the sheet, the pages have to be arranged to ensure that, when folded, page three will follow page two, and so on. In a quarto book, pages one, four, five and eight appear on one side of a sheet of paper; this was known as the outer forme. On the other side, the inner forme, pages two, three, six and seven were printed. Care had to be taken to ensure that page two appeared on the rear (or 'verso') of page one (the 'recto'), and so on. The arrangement of the two formes is best illustrated diagrammatically:



To assist in the arranging and the folding of the paper, the first word of the next page (the 'catchword') was printed at the bottom of each page of

⁷¹ *A Presse Full of Pamphlets* (1642), sig. A2v, title-page.

⁷² *The Great Assises Holden in Parnassus*, ed. Hugh Macdonald (1645; Oxford, 1948), p. 2.

⁷³ Moxon, *Mechanick Exercises*, pp. 211–12; for conventions of emphasis, see pp. 216–17.

printed text. Some pages (usually one, three and five) had a signature: a letter or letters designating the sheet, followed by a numeral (e.g. Ai, Aii and Aiii). Signatures were not necessary for single sheet pamphlets, but their use was habitual.

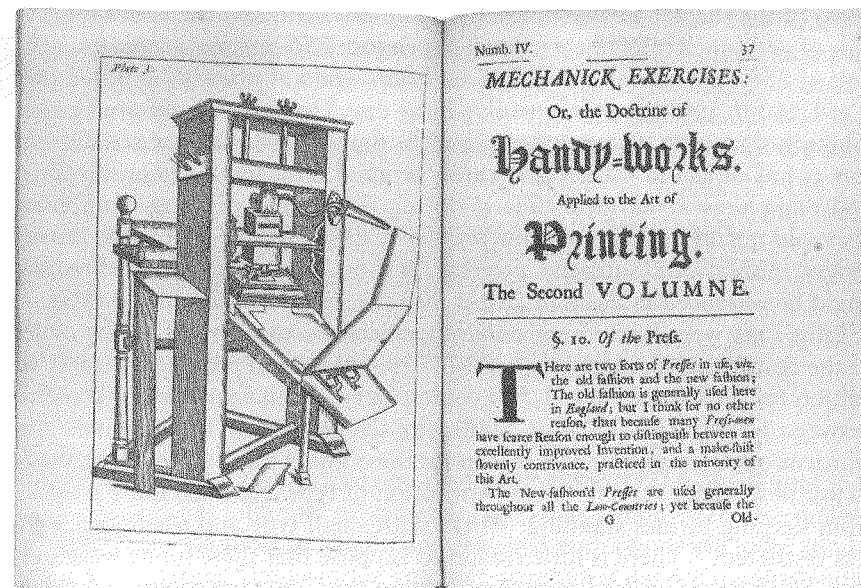
When the compositor was ready to arrange a forme, a process known as imposition, he would take the composed pages, lay them out on a flat and polished imposing stone, place them in the correct positions, and surround them with a 'chase', a wooden frame. He would squeeze in blocks of wood and hammer in small wedges ('furniture' and 'quoins') until the type was firmly held in place. The forme was then ready for printing. The press-men printed from this a single sheet of paper, allowing the text to be proof-read. The largest printing-houses employed a permanent proofer. For most this was not the case, and the work was undertaken by another, infrequently the author. The correcting of the most expeditiously produced pamphlets was often cursory. Nonetheless fragmentary proofs of the suppressed Marprelate reprint *Oh Reade Me for I Am of Greate Antiquitie. I Playne Piers* (c. 1589) survive; otherwise the work would be entirely lost. Sometimes crude checking took place from the block of type itself during imposition. Subsequently, as sheets were printed off, typographical errors might be spotted and amended before proceeding: paper was too expensive to throw away. Such stop-press corrections can be identified even in pamphlets. As further errors were noted a list of errata could be compiled and printed at the end of the book, or in a blank space elsewhere. The author might stop by the printing-house and inspect the work as it proceeded. Occasionally lists of faults were accompanied by an author's apology for his inability to supervise printing, usually because he or she lived at a distance from the press.⁷⁴ In John Lilburne's *The Legall Fundamentall Liberties of the People of England Revived* (1649), the printer played upon this convention in a concluding poem:

READER, As thou the faults herein dost spy,
I pray thee to correct them with thy Pen;
The Author is Close-Prisoner, knows not why;
And shall have Liberty, but knows not when.⁷⁵

A hand printing-press looked like a torture instrument, and the pun was irresistible to Thomas Dekker: 'he that dares hazzard a pressing to death (that's

⁷⁴ McKitterick, *History of Cambridge University Press*, vol. 1, pp. 236–48; McKenzie, *Cambridge University Press*, vol. 1, pp. 67–9, 84–5, and 'Printers of the Mind', pp. 42–9; Moxon, *Mechanick Exercises*, pp. 233–9, 246–50, 382–3; Percy Simpson, *Proof-Reading in the Sixteenth, Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries* (1935; Oxford, 1970), the Marprelate tract is discussed at pp. 69–71.

⁷⁵ John Lilburne, *The Legall Fundamentall Liberties of the People of England Revived* (1649), p. [76].



7. Joseph Moxon, opening from *Mechanick Exercises on the Whole Art of Printing* (1683–4), St Catharine's College, Cambridge. Moxon's manual on how to print, initially published as a serial. The engraving shows a hand press typical of the early modern period. The perspective has foreshortened both frame and platen.

to say, To be a man in Print) must make account that he shall stand . . . to be beaten with all stormes'.⁷⁶ The elaborate construction of wood and steel fittings remained more or less unchanged from the sixteenth to the eighteenth century. In simplest terms a press consisted of two moving parts: first, an assembly through which a sheet of paper, held in a frame, was lowered onto the type, and then rolled under a heavy wooden block called the platen; secondly a mechanism that lowered the platen onto the paper and type in order to make an impression. The presswork was usually undertaken by two men, though much less efficient operation was possible by one: one would ink the type, the other insert and press the paper. The day before printing, the paper was moistened – the damp paper was more sensitive to the pressure of type, more receptive to the ink, and thus required slightly less effort by the press-men. As each sheet was printed it was thrown on a bench called the horse, and when the horse was full the sheets were hung up to dry. When the required number of one forme (including a limited supply of spares) had been printed off, and the ink had dried, the next could be printed on the

⁷⁶ *The Plague Pamphlets of Thomas Dekker*, ed. F. P. Wilson (Oxford, 1925), p. 4.

verso of the sheet. The work was hard and physical, and the hours long. A pair of press-men might be expected to produce 250 impressions an hour – a unit of 250 impressions was called an ‘hour’ – and as many as 2,500–3,000 (i.e. 1,250–1,500 sheets) in a twelve-hour day. These are maximum figures, taking no account of corrections; and in practice printing-houses did not run at full capacity.⁷⁷ They also rarely worked on a single book at a time, and pamphlets made ideal ‘fillers’ during concurrent printing. Pamphlets also sold quickly, and could thus provide a steady source of income during longer, more capital-intensive projects. A short pamphlet of a sheet or two could be produced in a run of 250–1,500 copies over two or three days.

Print runs were limited not only by projections of demand but by order of the Stationers’ Company. After 1587 the maximum permitted size of an edition for most books was 1,500 copies; in 1635 this figure was relaxed to between 1,500 and 2,000 – or 3,000 with the permission of the master and wardens of the company. The reason for these limits was partly to give work to journeymen by forcing the redistribution of type and preventing printers from keeping formes standing. Works with small type and textbooks were less restricted.⁷⁸ There is little reason to suppose that these limits were universally observed; indeed complaints within the Company suggest that they were flouted. Yet, as paper was the most expensive unit cost in production and composition comprised approximately half of the labour costs required to produce 1,500 sheets, limited savings were achieved at substantial risk by producing more than 1,500 copies; very large editions were only judicious when sales were certain.⁷⁹ A Commission on Privileges noted in 1583 ‘the great losse that printers beare when bokes unsold come to wast paper’.⁸⁰ For economic reasons print runs were probably commonly less than 1,500. The commercial minimum was 250 or 500, because books were usually printed in increments of 250 units, but also because composition costs would make smaller runs unprofitable. Some contemporaries suggest, albeit in polemical exchanges, that fewer could be printed: the imputation is that the author is guilty of vanity publishing. John Taylor refers to a run of 100; *Mercurius Elencticus* suggested of John Hall’s *Mercurius Britannicus* (1648): ‘there was but 200. in all printed for his owne use’. Given commercial limitations and legal restraints, between 250 and 1,500 copies can be regarded as the practical size of an edition of most pamphlets.⁸¹

⁷⁷ McKenzie, *Cambridge University Press*, vol. 1, pp. 137–8, and ‘Printers of the Mind’, pp. 7–22.

⁷⁸ Greg, *Companion*, pp. 43, 94–5; Arber, *Transcript*, vol. 2, p. 6, vol. 4, pp. 21–3.

⁷⁹ Gaskell, *New Introduction*, pp. 160–3. ⁸⁰ Greg, *Companion*, p. 133.

⁸¹ John Taylor, *Whole Life and Progress*, sig. Av; *Mercurius Elencticus*, 29 (14 June 1648), p. 222; Raymond, *Invention*, pp. 233–8; and p. 90, below.

Once dry the individual sheets would be folded, collated and wrapped. The warehouseman would flatten a pile of sheets within a standing press for a day and a night, and when the whole impression had been pressed, he would arrange for their delivery to the publisher or bookseller. A verse in an early seventeenth-century commonplace book assembled some of the fertile metaphors of print:

The world’s a printing house: our words, our thoughts,
Our deeds are characters of severall sizes:
Each soul is a compositor, of whose faults
The Levites are correctors; Heaven revises;
Death is y^e common press; from whence being driven
W’are gathered sheete by sheete, & bound for heaven⁸²

STITCHED BOOKS

Once the publisher had possession of the printed sheets he or she sold them wholesale, either unbound or stitched. Pamphlets would be folded, collated if more than one sheet in length, and fastened with two fairly loose stitches on the left margin. Unlike larger volumes, pamphlets did not require binding (though a collector might subsequently assemble and bind a volume of them), and were sold stitched, with the pages uncut. Stitching was intrinsic to their simple and convenient production; every reader was familiar with its appearance, and practised in handling the pages without unfastening them. By the later seventeenth century, in some contexts, ‘stitched book’ was used synonymously with ‘pamphlet’. A 1680 serial publication, *A Compleat Catalogue of all the Stitch’d Books and Single Sheets Printed Since the First Discovery of the Popish Plot* (1680), listed books of various formats – quarto, folio, octavo and broadsides; but the purpose of the project, as the title indicates, was to provide a bibliography of short and for the most part topical works, many connected with the Plot which had inspired a glut of pamphlets.⁸³ Auction catalogues of this period also offer as categories ‘Sticht Books’, ‘*Bundles of Funeral Sermons in Quarto, Sticht*’ and ‘*Bundles of Sticht Books English, in Quarto*’.⁸⁴ Myles Davies glossed ‘pamphlets’ as ‘all Sticht’d Books on serious Subjects’.⁸⁵ Eighteenth-century lexical works defined pamphlets by their stitching: Edward Phillips’ *The New World of Words* (1706) as ‘a little

⁸² Folger Shakespeare Library, MS V.a.381, p. 83.

⁸³ All three parts can be found in Bod: Wood E27; for the Popish Plot see Ch. 8, below.

⁸⁴ *Catalogus variorum librorum in selectissimis bibliothecis doctissimorum virorum* (1680), pp. 146–7; *Catalogus variorum librorum ex bibliothecis selectissimis doctissimorum virorum nuperrime defunctorum* (1685), p. 82; *Bibliotheca Smithiana: sive catalogus librorum* (1682), p. 385.

⁸⁵ Davies, *Athenæ*, vol. 1, section 2, p. 1; vol. 1, preface, p. 66.

stitch'd book'; *Glossographia Anglicana nova* (1707) as 'a stitched book or a libel'; Johnson's *Dictionary* (1755) as 'A small book, properly a book sold unbound, and only stitched'.⁸⁶

This stitching enables a precise and contemporary definition of the length of a pamphlet. In March 1586 representatives from the Stationers' Company and London Aldermen agreed on a series of regulations that would protect the livelihood of bookbinders. One of these was to limit the size of books which could be sold 'bored or prycked thorough with bodkyn, alle [awl?], needle, or other instrument, and stitched with thryd, slyp of leather, or other such device'. Any book over a certain size, that is, had to be properly sewn. The 1586 agreement instigated the following maximum sizes: 'in the volume called *folio* there maie be bound styched onelie fortie sheetes and not above. In the volume called *octavo* twelve sheetes onelie and not above. And in the volume called *decimo sexto* fyve or sixe sheetes at the most and not above.'⁸⁷ The absence of quartos here is striking; it might imply that quartos over a certain length did not concern the Stationers, though the progression between formats suggests a limit of between twelve and forty sheets for quartos. An absence of surviving stitched books of this latter length, in any format, suggests that these figures were soon reduced in practice, so that when the Stamp Act of 1712 defined the maximum length of a pamphlet for the purposes of taxation, it only confirmed a constraint which had been observed (and the record for which may have been lost) for a century or more. A stitched book, taxed at two shillings, could contain no more than twenty sheets in folio, twelve in quarto and six in octavo; half of the 1586 figures. From this it appears that, according to the customs of the book trade in Britain, a stitched quarto book or pamphlet was not more than twelve sheets in length, or 96 pages in total. This can be compared with sixteenth-century Italy, where ten sheets was the maximum for a stitched book.⁸⁸ Longer works would not ordinarily be referred to as a pamphlet, except in a derogatory sense. Books of more than a hundred pages aspired to a more elevated status. They did not normally engage in debate with pamphlets, and when they did they were liable to be mocked for excessive length. The discursive practices of writers reinforced the twelve-sheet boundary marked by law. This also limited the costs. Before the book-price inflation of the 1630s, a work of up to three or four sheets would have cost 1*d.* or 2*d.*; twelve sheets, on average 6*d.* These figures would be subject to a mark-up

⁸⁶ Quoted in David Foxon, 'Stitched Books', *The Book Collector*, 24 (1975), 111–24, at 113; I am grateful to Arnold Hunt for referring me to this article.

⁸⁷ Stationers' Company, Liber A, f.50r–v; Foxon, 'Stitched Books', p. 111; S. T. Prideaux, *An Historical Sketch of Bookbinding* (1893), pp. 239–42.

⁸⁸ See Foxon, 'Stitched Books', p. 112; his argument is supported by a sample survey of stitched books. Ottavia Niccoli, *Prophecy and People in Renaissance Italy*, trans. Lydia G. Cochrane (Princeton, 1990), p. 15.

by a retailing bookseller of up to 50 per cent. Towards the end of the century the retail price was nearer a penny a sheet, and a work of a dozen sheets rose to as much as a shilling.⁸⁹

SPREADING THE WORD

With the works stitched or bound they were ready for sale. Effective distribution of books was the foundation of commercial success, the basis of the effective use of surreptitious propaganda, and a major concern for authorities engaged in controlling the book trade. Most books were sold at booksellers' shops or stalls, centred around St Paul's churchyard, which, from the later sixteenth century onwards, was the centre of the retail book trade in London.⁹⁰ Shops were identified by signs, and would be recognisable from the books on display and the title-pages fixed to every available surface. James Fraser, a visitor from the north-east of Scotland observed in 1657: 'the seat and staple of Stationers. round about this Churchyard each Stationer haveing his Shop & Sygn & so close to one another y^t for varietie, goodness number of choice bookes, such another sight will not be seen in the world'.⁹¹ Alternatively small books were sold by street pedlars, chapmen, hawkers, ballad mongers and mercury women. The nexus of the book trade spread out from those towns with presses: London particularly, but also Oxford, Cambridge, York, Edinburgh, Glasgow, Aberdeen, St Andrews. Books were transported from London to the provinces by chapmen or by carriers (along certain routes); there they were distributed among friends.⁹² The first postal service was introduced in 1635, costing a penny or more according to distance. The price of the post fell during the seventeenth century, and second and third posts were added in 1649 and 1654 respectively.⁹³ Metropolitan readers habitually sent pamphlets and newsbooks to

⁸⁹ Francis R. Johnson, 'Notes on English Retail Book-Prices, 1550–1640', *The Library*, 5th ser., 5 (1950), 83–112; Watt, *Cheap Print*, pp. 262–3; Blayney, 'Publication of Playbooks', pp. 410–13.

⁹⁰ Peter W. M. Blayney, *The Bookshops in Paul's Cross Churchyard*, Occasional Papers of the Bibliographical Society, 5 (1990); Freist, *Opinion*, ch. 3.

⁹¹ AUL: MS 2538, f.9r.

⁹² On the distribution, see Robin Myers and Michael Harris, eds., *Spreading the Word: The Distribution Networks of Print, 1550–1850* (Winchester, 1990); Michael Frearson, 'The Distribution and Readership of London Corantos in the 1620s' in Robin Myers and Michael Harris, eds., *Serials and their Readers, 1620–1914* (Winchester, 1993), pp. 1–25; Margaret Spufford, *Small Books and Pleasant Histories: Popular Fiction and its Readership in Seventeenth-Century England* (1981), pp. 111–26; Watt, *Cheap Print*, pp. 23–30, 266–73; Feather, *History of British Publishing*, pp. 29–63, and *The Provincial Book-Trade in Eighteenth-Century England* (Cambridge, 1985); Raymond, *Invention*, pp. 238–41. On carrier services, see John Taylor, *The Carriers Cosmographie* (1637).

⁹³ Herbert Joyce, *The History of the Post Office: From its Establishment down to 1836* (1893), pp. 15–32; Howard Robinson, *The British Post Office: A History* (Princeton, NJ, 1948), pp. 23–47; Raymond, *Invention*, pp. 239–40.

their correspondents; seventeenth-century letters are littered with references to enclosed printed material. Provincial booksellers spread through the seventeenth century. Diaries and inventories testify to the reach of books. As Atkyns wrote, 'Printing is . . . so Spirituall withall, that it flies into all parts of the World without Weariness.'⁹⁴

The metaphors used by contemporaries to complain of the dangers of pamphlets suggest their availability: they swarm, they are a disease, an epidemic. As pamphlets were more mobile than weighty, bound volumes, and accessible to a wider, less wealthy readership, itinerant vendors played an important part in their distribution. The success of John Wolfe's underground printing in the 1580s depended on the successful distribution of his books.⁹⁵ Around 1593 Henry Chettle reported, in documentary mode, on a man 'being of a worshipfull trade, and yet no Stationer' who takes 'apprentices' and trains them, and 'after a little bringing them uppe to singing brokerie, takes into his shop some fresh men, and trusts his olde searvantes of a two months standing with a dossen groates worth of ballads. In which if they proove thrifty, hee makes them prety chapmen, able to spred more pamphlets by the state forbidden than all the Booksellers in London.'⁹⁶ The figure grew in the literary imagination. Autolycus in Shakespeare's *The Winter's Tale* (1609–11) is both chapman and ballad-singer, an object of fascination and unashamed entertainment, 'littered under Mercury' whose 'traffic is sheets', including printed ones.⁹⁷ Chettle, and others after him, exaggerated for moral and poetic effect, but the frequency of satire suggests that the presence of street vendors, and travelling chapmen, was a real one, within and beyond London. In 1616 William Brown described the sales pitch of 'Ballad-mongers on a Market-day' singing their wares:

Halfe part he chants, and will not sing it out,
But thus bespeakes to his attentive rout:
Thus much for love I warbled from my brest,
And gentle friends, for mony take the rest.

Chapmen peddled small books and ballads among a miscellany of items.⁹⁸ They provoked anxiety not least because they were geographically mobile, 'masterless men' who lived on the margins of society. They gathered crowds,

⁹⁴ Atkyns, *Original and Growth of Printing*, p. 2. ⁹⁵ See p. 107 and n.26, below.

⁹⁶ C[hettle], *Kind-Harts Dreame*, sig. C2v.

⁹⁷ *The Winters Tale*, 4.3.25–8; in *The Norton Shakespeare*, ed. Stephen Greenblatt (New York and London, 1997).

⁹⁸ William Brown, *Britannia's Pastorals. The Second Booke* (1616), p.11, quoted in Watt, *Cheap Print*, p. 24, also chs. 7 and 8; Margaret Spufford, *The Great Reclothing of Rural England: Petty Chapmen and their Wares in the Seventeenth Century* (1984), pp. 5–6, 85–9 and *passim*; A. L. Beier, *Masterless Men: The Vagrancy Problem in England 1560–1640* (1985), pp. 92, 123–45.

which were seen as inherently disorderly. Greene suggests that crowds were a magnet for pick-pockets, and citizens frequently lost their purses while listening to 'singing of Ballets, and songs at the doores of such houses where playes are used, as also in open markets and other places of thie Cittie'.⁹⁹ Wandering booksellers seemed to threaten the social order. In 1637 Star Chamber decreed that all distributors of print had to serve an apprenticeship to a Stationer.

During 1641, a year of change in London printing and reading, other street-vendors of pamphlets and newsbooks appeared. One satirical pamphlet, *The Downefall of Temporizing Poets, Unlicenst Printers, Upstart Booksellers, Trotting Mercuries, and Bawling Hawkers* (1641), distinguishes between male hawkers, who sell from a particular spot, and wandering mercuries, both male and female. It presents itself as a 'Dialogue, between *Lightfoot* the Mercury, and *Suck-Bottle* the Hawker: *Red-nose* the Poet being Moderator'. Red-nose is a pot-poet, an extemporiser of rough verse, sometimes godly, and sometimes libellous.¹⁰⁰ Suck-Bottle complains to the Mercury: 'you solely endeavored to pull down the admirable Corporation, or rather Bacchanalian Society of the most reverend wandering Stationers'. Lightfoot responds:

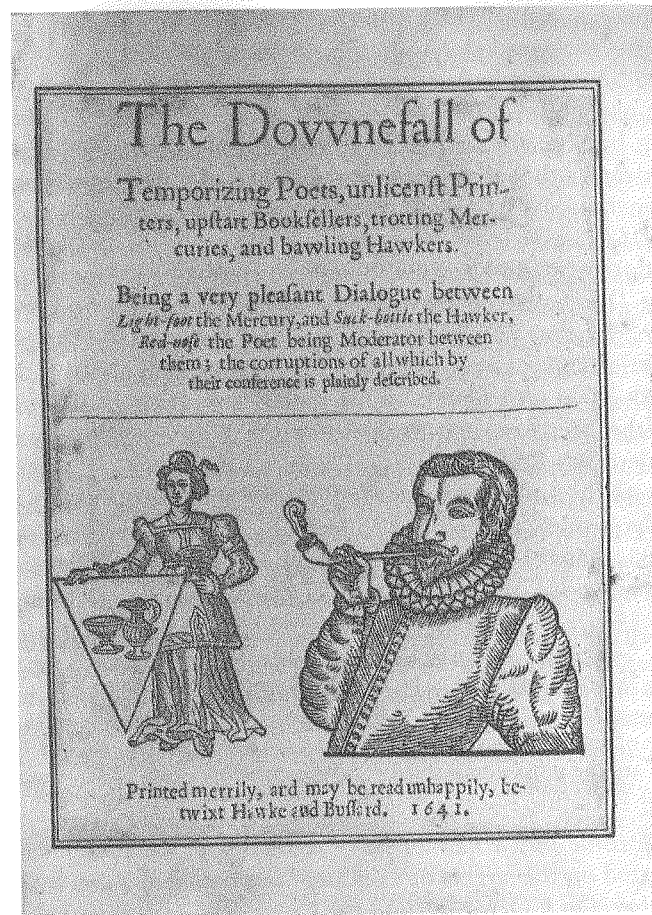
You may well call your selves wandring Stationers, for there was scarce one of you that could say, at such a house I will lodge to night: one of you came out of a hedge, another out of New-gate, a third out of the New-prison, and the fourth not being above a moneth out of Bedlam, roundly, profoundly, and soundly cries out with a voyce made of cannon prooffe, *Come buy a new Booke, a new Booke, newly come forth*; these are the most admirable proprieties which belong to your most admired Corporation.¹⁰¹

This call – '*come buy a new book*' – resonates in the pamphlet literature as it resonated on the streets of London. Like ballad-singing, it was a form of advertising. On 9 October 1643 the Common Council issued an act 'for the prohibiting of all persons whatsoever, from crying or putting to sale about the streets within this city, and Liberties, any Pamphlets, Bookes, or Papers whatsoever, by way of Hawking, to be sold', which lamented that 'a multitude of vagrant persons, men, women, and children, which after the manner of hawkers, doe openly cry about the streetes, pamphlets, and other books, and under colour thereof are found to disperse all sorts of dangerous Libels, to the intolerable dishonour of the Kings maiesty, and of the high

⁹⁹ R[obert]. G[reene], *The Third and Last Part of Conny-Catching* (1592), sig. C3v.

¹⁰⁰ Thomas Cogswell, 'Underground Verse and the Transformation of Early Stuart Political Culture', in Amussen and Kishlansky, *Political Culture*, pp. 277–300; Watt, *Cheap Print*, ch. 2 and 'Publisher, Pedlar, Pot-Poet: The Changing Character of the Broadside Trade, 1550–1640', in Myers and Harris, eds., *Spreading the Word*, pp. 61–81.

¹⁰¹ *The Downefall of Temporizing Poets* (1641), pp. 1–2.



8. *The Downefall of Temporizing Poets* (1641), Cambridge University Library, SSS. 37. 10. A satirical dialogue pamphlet about transformations in the London book trade in 1641. A later owner has mounted this title-page, introducing a decorative border not present in the original. This frames the page and makes it more stately in appearance.

Court of Parliament, and the whole Government of this Realme, and this City in particular'.¹⁰²

In the first issue of *The Intelligencer* (1663), L'Estrange identified this crying of titles on the streets as an effective means of rapid distribution:

¹⁰² BL: Thomason Tracts, 669 f.7.49; see also *The Cryes of Westminster. Or a Whole Pack of Parliamentary Knaves Opened, and Set to Sale* (1648), which mimics a chapman's cries and substitutes Parliament's disingenuous arguments for wares.

The Way (as to the *Vent*) that has been found most *Beneficiall* to the *Master of the Book*, has been to *Cry*, and *Expose* it about the Streets, by *Mercuries* and *Hawkers*; but whether *That Way* be so advisable in some *other respects*, may be a *Question*: for under Countenance of that *Imployment*, is carried on the *Private trade of Treasonous*, and *Seditious Libels*, (nor effectually, has any thing considerable been dispersed, against either *Church*, or *State*, without the *Aid*, and *Privity* of this sort of *People*.)¹⁰³

A satirical dialogue periodical, which appeared in 1681, simulated these street-cries with two stationers calling out titles ('Here is...') of spurious publications (including Cromwell's translation of Machiavelli's *Prince*). The title was *The Mock-Press: or, the Encounter of Harry Lungs, and Jasper Hem, Two Running-Stationers; or, Pamphleteers*. In this idiosyncratic usage, 'pamphleteer' describes the agent responsible for dispersal, rather than (or perhaps conflated with) the polemical author: the distributor has become co-author.

There were other, quieter means of advertising. Booksellers occasionally arranged for a list of their recent publications to be placed in the endpapers of a book. The publisher of one 1644 newsbook issued a handbill to promote it.¹⁰⁴ Title-pages were stuck on posts and all suitable surfaces at booksellers' stalls. A character in *The Honest Man's Fortune* (performed 1613), seeking publicity, swears: '[I'll] have the copies of it pasted on posts / Like pamphlet titles that sue to be sold.'¹⁰⁵ The moralising Barnaby Rich in a pamphlet of 1606 complained: 'the *Printer* himselfe, to make his booke the more vendible, doth rather desire a glorious Title, then a good Booke... To speake truly, I have many times beene deceived with these flourishing Titles that I have seene pasted upon a Post, for bestowing my mony in haste at my better leisure looking into the book, and finding such slender stuffe, I have laughed at my owne folly.'¹⁰⁶ Woodcuts on title-pages arrested the eyes of browsers at bookstalls. Some authors and publishers devised arresting titles: *A Wonder Woorth the Reading* (1617), and:

Militia Old and New.
One thousand six hundred and forty two.
Read all or none; and then censure. (1642)

And:

Good counsel to be had at a cheap rate...
Thou that to read this Title doth begin
Turn over leaf and see what is within. (1663)

¹⁰³ *The Intelligencer*, 1 (31 August 1663), p. 3. ¹⁰⁴ Raymond, *Invention*, p. 37.

¹⁰⁵ Nathan Field and John Fletcher(?), in *Comedies and Tragedies Written by Francis Beaumont and John Fletcher* (1647), p. 161.

¹⁰⁶ Barnaby Rich, *Faultes, Fault And Nothing Else but Faultes* (1606), reprinted ed. Melvin H. Wolf (Gainesville, FL, 1965), sig. 40r-v.

The verso of the title-page of *The Trimming of Thomas Nashe* (1597) read:

To the Learned
Eme, perlege, nec te precii pœnitebit
 To the simple

Buy mee, read me through, and thou wilt not repente thee of thy cost.

Authors and booksellers responded to the circumstances of purchasers and readers.

A final means of distribution in the pamphlet economy was the second-hand market. The traditional classification of pamphlets and news publications as 'ephemera' suggests that they had a short shelf-life; 'news is like fish' ran the proverb, it 'stinks in three days'.¹⁰⁷ Yet, then as now, unwanted books, including topical pamphlets, were sold on at discounted prices. New owners of used books occasionally made notes on title-pages. In 1716 Myles Davies described 'hawk'd-about Tryal-Pamphlets' that were available half a century after publication, including accounts of the trials of Sir Henry Vane, Algernon Sidney, Stephen Colledge, Elizabeth Cellier and the Earl of Shaftesbury; probably of interest primarily to law students, their price had crept up, owing to their rarity. Davies regretted that they were not reprinted in the 'English Historical Library': pamphlet news had retained its currency and become history.¹⁰⁸

The formation of social spaces that allowed free access to topical publications increased circulation, though not distribution. Foremost among these were coffee-houses, which commonly subscribed to periodical newsbooks and papers. For the modest price of a penny for a dish of coffee, a man or woman could read the latest news. Coffee-houses promoted a talking culture, and contemporary accounts of debates about politics and foreign affairs suggest that they may have whet the appetite for reading.¹⁰⁹ Alehouses sometimes had subscriptions to the gazettes, wherewith to furnish their readers.¹¹⁰ After 1690 clubs offered a new kind of social space that provided access to books to a restricted membership.¹¹¹

¹⁰⁷ *A Dialogue Between Dick and Tom* (1689), p. 4.

¹⁰⁸ On the second-hand book trade, see Michael Hunter, Giles Mandelbrote, Richard Ovenden and Nigel Smith, eds., *A Radical's Books: The Library Catalogue of Samuel Jeake of Rye* (Woodbridge, 1999), pp. xxxii-xli and *passim*; Peter Clark, 'The Ownership of Books in England: The Example of Some Kentish Townfolk', in Lawrence Stone, ed., *Schooling and Society in the History of Education* (Baltimore, 1976), pp. 95-115; Davies, *Athenæ*, vol. 1, pp. 344-6.

¹⁰⁹ Steve Pincus, '“Coffee Politicians Does Create”: Coffeehouses and Restoration Political Culture', *JMH* 67 (1995), 807-34; Bryant Lillywhite, *London Coffee Houses: A Reference book of Coffee Houses of the Seventeenth, Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries* (1963); Joad Raymond, 'The Newspaper, Public Opinion, and the Public Sphere in the Seventeenth Century', in Raymond, *News*, pp. 115-17.

¹¹⁰ CSPD 1666-67 (1864), p. 511; G[eorge]. M[eriton?], *The Praise of York-shire Ale* (1685).

¹¹¹ Peter Clark, *British Clubs and Societies 1580-1800: The Origins of an Associational World* (Oxford, 2000).

'GENTLE READER, COURTEOUS READER, AND LEARNED READER'

The pamphlet is now in the hands of the reader. Readers were in the first instance circumscribed by literacy. The second half of the sixteenth century saw an expansion in education with the foundation of many new grammar schools. Literacy, though still occupation-dependent, was spreading further down the social scale. Illiteracy among gentlemen was being eradicated. Change was slower for women, though it probably accelerated significantly after c. 1650. It is estimated that in 1600 about 10 per cent of women in England were literate; by 1700 this had risen to perhaps 30 per cent. About 30 per cent of English men could read in 1600; over the next century this rose to almost a half. These figures, based on the ability to sign one's name, may be pessimistic, partly because reading was taught before writing at school. They should be regarded as a minimum for literacy (or a maximum for illiteracy), a minimum that declined through the seventeenth century.¹¹²

Literacy was geographically variable. Overall illiteracy in Wales was approximately 80 per cent; education there was largely in English, though the appearance of Welsh printed books suggests the dissemination of reading literacy below the ranks of gentry. While literacy was high among the Irish nobility, male and female, there is scant evidence to assess its diffusion among other ranks. In Scotland literacy rates began to rise during the Counter-Reformation.¹¹³ London, the teeming metropolis and destination of so many migrants, had the highest male literacy. The city especially offered alternative contexts for learning, and it was here that a culture of pamphlet writing and reading was based, with peripheral centres in other cities where there was a substantial book trade. Literacy varied according not only to social status but also by profession: while male gentry were highly literate, husbandmen and labourers were highly illiterate. Yeomen and tradesmen

¹¹² J. W. Adamson, 'The Extent of Literacy in the Fifteenth and Sixteenth Centuries: Notes and Conjectures', *The Library*, 4th ser., 10 (1929-30), 163-93; David Cressy, *Literacy and the Social Order: Reading and Writing in Tudor and Stuart England* (Cambridge, 1980); Margaret Spufford, 'First Steps in Literacy: The Reading and Writing Experiences of the Humblest Seventeenth-Century Spiritual Autobiographers', *Social History*, 4 (1979), 407-435, and 'Literacy, Trade and Religion in the Commercial Centres of Europe', in Karel Davids and Jan Lucassen, eds., *A Miracle Mirrored: The Dutch Republic in European Perspective* (Cambridge, 1995), pp. 229-83; Keith Thomas, 'The Meaning of Literacy in Early Modern England', in Gerd Baumann, ed., *The Written Word: Literacy in Transition* (Oxford, 1986), pp. 97-131; Rosemary O'Day, *Education and Society 1500-1800: The Social Foundations of Early Modern Britain* (1982), ch. 2; a useful survey is Nigel Wheale, *Writing and Society: Literacy, Print and Politics in Britain 1590-1660* (1999), ch. 2.

¹¹³ For Welsh, Irish and Scottish literacy, see: W. P. Griffith, *Learning, Law and Religion: Higher Education and Welsh Society, c. 1540-1640* (Cardiff, 1996), pp. 108-9; Margaret McCurtain, 'Women, Education and Learning in Early Modern Ireland', in Margaret McCurtain and Mary O'Dowd, eds., *Women in Early Modern Ireland* (Dublin, 1991), pp. 160-78; R. A. Houston, *Scottish Literacy and the Scottish Identity: Illiteracy and Society in Scotland and Northern England, 1600-1800* (Cambridge, 1985).

were somewhere in between, proportionate to practical necessity: shopkeepers were more likely to be literate than artisans.

London predominated because of its physical and social geography, but also because of its demography. In 1580 its population was around 100,000; over the next two decades migration into the city resulted in spectacular growth, so that the population had doubled to around 200,000 by the turn of the century. Over the next half century it doubled again, and thereafter growth slowed; the population was around 575,000 by 1700. The process of urbanisation gave dynamism to the metropolitan culture, not least in the culture of news and debate that thrived there. The growth of the population of England was somewhat slower. In 1581 it stood at around 3.6 million; in 1601 at around 4.1 million; by 1651 this had grown to 5.2 million. Thereafter stagnation and decline occurred; in 1686 the population had fallen to 4.8 million. In 1601 the population of Wales stood at around 288,000; it peaked at around 370,000 in 1651, and declined to 348,000 in 1671 and thereafter stagnated. Ireland's population grew slightly faster: in 1603 it was around 1.4 million, in 1687 about 2.2 million. Owing to paucity of evidence the population of Scotland can only be guessed at: it was in the order of 1 million in 1700, probably slightly smaller in 1600.¹¹⁴

Some tentative though suggestive figures can be extrapolated here. In 1642 the population of England who could read was around 1 million; in the same year, somewhat more than 4,000 works were published in Britain or in English elsewhere. If the average print run was 1,000 copies,¹¹⁵ this means that about 4 million copies were printed that year: four for every literate Englishman, or four books for every five people in England. The same calculations suggest ten books printed for every Londoner, or slightly fewer than two books for every three inhabitants of England, Scotland and Wales. Assuming constant average print runs (in fact, these probably increased over the century, and were likely to be higher at times of crisis), in 1591 there was about one book printed for every thirteen inhabitants of England, and slightly more than two books for every Londoner; in 1681 about three books printed for every five inhabitants of England, almost six for every Londoner. These figures, which are of course only impressionistic, indicate that books

¹¹⁴ E. A. Wrigley and R. S. Schofield, *The Population History of England 1541–1871: A Reconstruction* (1981; Cambridge, 1989), pp. 208–9; Roger Finlay, *Population and Metropolis: The Demography of London 1580–1650* (Cambridge, 1981), p. 51; T. W. Moody, F. X. Martin and F. J. Byrne, eds., *A New History of Ireland*, vol. 3: *Early Modern Ireland, 1534–1691* (1976; Oxford, 1991), pp. 388–90; Michael Flinn et al., *Scottish Population History: From the 17th Century to the 1930s* (Cambridge, 1977), pp. 4, 109–200; David L. Smith, *A History of the Modern British Isles, 1603–1707: The Double Crown* (Oxford, 1998), pp. 415–17.

¹¹⁵ McKenzie, 'Economies of Print', p. 398; D. F. McKenzie, 'The London Book Trade in 1668', *Words*, 4 (1974), 75–92, at 79; see also Mark Knights, *Politics and Opinion in Crisis, 1678–81* (Cambridge, 1994), p. 168 and nn.101–2; cf. p. 80, above.

were scarce but also that, despite social and geographic concentration, their numbers were sufficiently high to be a part of everyday life. Of course this concentration was likely to be among those – male non-impooverished Londoners – whose opinion was most politically influential.

The ability to read print was more common than the ability to read manuscript and the ability to write, and it was this mode of literacy that provided the foundation for pamphlet culture. The many tradesmen, craftsmen and even artisans who lived in London and were able to read became the new patrons of cheap print. Many pamphlets and plays addressed particular attention to apprentices.¹¹⁶ In London the audience for cheap print was socially diverse, and extended to those whose involvement in the workplace or religious community allowed them to hear texts they could not read themselves (and to those who could not afford to purchase books).¹¹⁷ The desire and hope for printed works frequently expressed in manuscript correspondence probably had its parallel in less literate circles among those who sought to hear texts read aloud.¹¹⁸ Some suggested that popular taste, combined with the commercial consideration of the purchasing power of a mass readership, influenced the output of the presses. In 1599 John Davies of Hereford complained: 'The Printer praies me most uncessantly, / To make some lines to lash at Lechery.'¹¹⁹ Expansion in the production of news pamphlets, sermons, moralising pamphlets, chivalric romances and ballads, cony-catching pamphlets, prison literature, and anti-feminist pamphlets, many of which went through multiple editions, may reflect the developing taste, godly and middlebrow, of a growing reading public.¹²⁰ The scarce direct evidence suggests, however, that no 'middle-class' culture had begun to separate from an elite, aristocratic or intellectual culture; these tastes were shared by the educationally privileged, who also purchased these texts, though occasionally professing a wearisome disdain for them.¹²¹

¹¹⁶ Mark Thornton Burnett, *Masters and Servants in English Renaissance Drama and Culture: Authority and Obedience* (Basingstoke, 1997), ch. 1; on London and pamphlet culture see Manley, *London*, ch. 6.

¹¹⁷ Watt, *Cheap Print*, pp. 264–6; Raymond, *Invention*, pp. 64–5.

¹¹⁸ On reading aloud, see Roger Chartier, 'Leisure and Sociability: Reading Aloud in Modern Europe', trans. Carol Mossman, in Susan Zimmerman and Ronald F. E. Weissman, eds., *Urban Life in the Renaissance* (Newark, NJ, 1989), pp. 103–20; Chartier *The Cultural Uses of Print in Early Modern France*, trans. Lydia G. Cochrane (Princeton, NJ, 1987), pp. 152–5. For references to reading aloud, see C. H. Firth, ed., *The Clarke Papers*, 4 vols. (1891–1901), 4:231; *Weekly Pacquet of Advice*, 21 (12 May 1682); Robert Purnell, *Englands Remonstrance* (1653), p. 3; Thomas St. Serfe, *Tarugo's Wiles* (1668), p. 24.

¹¹⁹ Quoted in Clark, *Elizabethan Pamphleteers*, p. 163.

¹²⁰ Watt, *Cheap Print*; Louis B. Wright, *Middle-Class Culture in Elizabethan England* (Chapel Hill, NC, 1935).

¹²¹ Peter Burke, *Popular Culture in Early Modern Europe* (1978; Aldershot, 1988), p. 28 and *passim*; Natalie Zemon Davis, *Society and Culture in Early Modern France* (Stanford, CA, 1975), ch. 7; Spufford, *Small Books*; Bernard Capp, 'Popular Literature', in Barry Reay, ed., *Popular Culture in Seventeenth-Century England* (1985), pp. 198–243; David Pearson,

Readers are inventive creatures and have always improvised with texts. Manners of consumption cannot be reduced to patterns of production: the reader's encounter with the texts involves negotiations, appropriations and improvisations. This is no place for a history of reading practices, which must be written using marginalia, commonplace books, diaries, correspondence, court records and a panoply of sources, but it is possible to sketch some of the ways that readers impinged upon pamphlets, and the ways in which pamphlets moulded themselves to their readers.¹²² The contours of these encounters were integral to the development of public opinion, and to the part that books played in shaping this and, ultimately, influencing the play of politics. In short, reading and readers bridged the gap between news and polemic and politics and public opinion.¹²³

In 1614 Richard Brathwaite wrote apologetically to his 'understanding Reader' that 'So many idle Pamphleters write to Thee now a daies, as thy understanding (in my judgement) seemes much disparaged.'¹²⁴ Expressions of concern that most readers were vulgar, ill-informed and credulous, and that

'The Libraries of English Bishops, 1600–40', *The Library*, 6th ser., 14 (1992), 221–57; Roger Chartier, *Forms and Meanings: Texts, Performances, and Audiences from Codex to Computer* (Philadelphia, PA, 1995); Ronald Hutton, *The Rise and Fall of Merry England: The Ritual Year 1400–1700* (Oxford & New York, 1996); Alexandra Walsham, *Providence in Early Modern England* (Oxford, 1999); T. A. Birrell, 'Reading as Pastime: The Place of Light Literature in Some Gentlemen's Libraries of the 17th century', in Robin Myers and Michael Harris, eds., *Property of a Gentleman: The Formation, Organization and Dispersal of the Private Library 1620–1920* (Winchester, 1991), pp. 113–31, though Birrell suggests that there was a narrowing of tastes and range in gentlemen's libraries during the seventeenth century.

¹²² Some of the more informative and influential interventions concerning early modern reading include: Lisa Jardine and Anthony Grafton, "'Studied for Action": How Gabriel Harvey Read his Livy', *P&P* 129 (1990), 30–78; Robert Darnton, *The Kiss of Lamourette: Reflections in Cultural History* (New York, 1990), ch. 7; William Sherman, *John Dee: The Politics of Reading and Writing in the English Renaissance* (Amherst, MA, 1995); James Raven, Helen Small and Naomi Tadmor, eds., *The Practice and Representation of Reading in England* (Cambridge, 1996); Alberto Manguel, *A History of Reading* (1996); Eugene R. Kintgen, *Reading in Tudor England* (Pittsburgh, 1996); Guglielmo Cavallo and Roger Chartier, eds., *A History of Reading in the West*, trans. Lydia Cochrane and Andrew Winnard (Oxford, 1999); Kevin Sharpe, *Reading Revolutions: The Politics of Reading in Early Modern England* (New Haven and London, 2000); Steven N. Zwicker, *Producing Passions: Habits of Reading and the Creation of Literary Culture in Early Modern England*, forthcoming; William Sherman, *Used Books: Reading Renaissance Marginalia*, forthcoming.

¹²³ The place of the reader and of reading is implicit in recent studies of later seventeenth-century public opinion; a useful discussion of the impact of the press in terms of distribution appears in Knights, *Politics and Opinion in Crisis*, pp. 168–84; historians of France have attempted to assess more directly the connection between reading and political events: see Roger Chartier, *The Cultural Origins of the French Revolution*, trans. Lydia G. Cochrane (Durham, NC, 1991), pp. 89–91; Jeremy D. Popkin, *Revolutionary News: The Press in France, 1789–1799* (Durham, NC, 1990), pp. 78–95.

¹²⁴ Brathwaite, *The Schollers Medley* (1614), sig. A4v.

bookstalls pandered to such indecency were legion. Readers of pamphlets and news did in fact read with excitement, with an interest in passions, emotions, miracles and wonders, and with an appetite that seemed even to them unreasonable. Here our evidence is largely confined to those who could themselves write. Nehemiah Wallington, a puritan woodturner, felt compelled to read the news, even when his conscience advised him against it. In prison Richard Stonley kept himself immersed in his reading, though his library had been denuded. Ralph Josselin, an Essex vicar, worried at the self-restraint he found necessary to prevent himself from purchasing and reading non-soteriological works. Some read sceptically, conferring texts; but rarely did readers of news and pamphlets read with the practical, utilitarian, goal-oriented intent that has been the focus of studies of early modern reading practices.¹²⁵ Particularly in the case of news publications they read with fervour, were affected by news, sought to identify with the victims of disasters. Wallington left a detailed and immensely illuminating account of his experiences of reading foreign-news publications in the 1630s: it reveals how deeply he was moved by the sufferings of his fellow-Protestants, and how news inspired him to meditate upon his own situation and the blessings of providence.¹²⁶ Reading news pamphlets could be irrational, impractical and unprofitable. Some of the marginalia surviving in polemical pamphlets suggests a similarly immediate, passionate response, including the anger that, in some cases, would result in the writing of a rejoinder.¹²⁷

Anticipating such readers, pamphleteers were increasingly knowing in their addresses to them, seeking to capture goodwill, forestall criticism, and secure agreement. Insulting ignorant readers paradoxically had the same effect: it acknowledged the actual reader, differentiating him or her from the incognisant. Reviling readers was an indirect mode of praise. Pamphleteers

¹²⁵ See Joad Raymond, 'Irrational, Impractical and Unprofitable: Reading the News in Seventeenth-Century Britain', in Kevin Sharpe and Steven Zwicker, eds., *Writing Readers in Early Modern England* (Cambridge, 2002); for systematic reading of news see also Raymond, *Invention*, ch. 5; for goal-oriented reading, see Jardine and Grafton, 'Studied for Action'; Lisa Jardine and William Sherman, 'Pragmatic Readers: Knowledge Transactions and Scholarly Services in Late Elizabethan England', in Anthony Fletcher and Peter Roberts, eds., *Religion, Culture and Society in Early Modern Britain: Essays in Honour of Patrick Collinson* (Cambridge, 1994), pp. 102–24; Eugene R. Kintgen, 'Reconstructing Elizabethan Reading', *Studies in English Literature*, 30 (1990), 1–18.

¹²⁶ See below, p. 116.

¹²⁷ See, for example, the Scots-related pamphlets in Glasgow University Library, Bk.7–g.1; the Beinecke Library, Yale, copy of Rachel Speght's *A Mouzell for Melastomous* (1617), annotations reproduced in *The Polemics and Poems of Rachel Speght*, ed. Barbara Kiefer Lewalski (New York and Oxford, 1996), pp. 91–106; a petition in *Perfect Diurnal*, 85 (10–17 March, 1644[5]), in Bod: Hope Adds 1128. On modes of marginal annotation, see H. J. Jackson, 'Writing in Books and Other Marginal Activities', *University of Toronto Quarterly*, 62 (1992/3), 217–31.

spoke to unknown readers, and thus sought to fashion them, sometimes in careful prefaces to the 'learned' or 'judicious' reader, into an ideal audience. Readers were customers, the new patrons whose approval was sought and whose appetites were catered for out of financial prudence. The fact that he could not control the identity of his audience – as a coterie manuscript author could – prompted Dekker to dedicate one of his pamphlets to 'Nemo / Nobody', and to strike upon an ingenious method for securing his customers' loyalty: 'I know the Stationers will wish me and my pamphlets burnt (like heretics) at the Crosse, if thou doest (now) but enter into their Shops by my meanes: It would fret their hearts to see thee at their Stalls reading my Newes.'¹²⁸

For Dekker and other writers the relationship with readers was largely a commercial one. Anonymous purchasers and readers displaced aristocratic patrons as the consumers and arbiters of taste and success. This provoked anxiety: authors complained that contemptible trashy pamphlets sold better than their best intellectual labours. This is a formulaic rhetorical gesture, but it suggests that, then as now, authors and booksellers were conscious of the pressure, to write more fashionable, accessible works.¹²⁹ The language of patronage shifted to anonymous readers, as prefaces flattered their judgement, and sought their custom. This produced its own resentments, articulated by Dekker in an address 'to the Reader':

And why to the *Reader*? Oh good Sir! Theres as sound law to make you give good words to the *Reader*, as to the *Constable* when he caryes his watch about him to tell how the night goes . . . to mainteine the scurvy fashion, and to keepe *Custome* in reparations, he must be honeyed, and come-over with *Gentle Reader*, *Courteous Reader*, and *Learned Reader*, though he have no more *Gentilitie* in him that *Adam* had (that was but a gardner) no more *Civility* than a *Tartar*, and no more *Learning* than the most errand *Stinkard*, that (except his owne name) could never finde any thing in the *Horne-booke*.¹³⁰

Dekker's masculine pronouns were not universal; others suggested a less gender-specific readership.¹³¹ His dependence on a reader who preferred Dekker's own writings to Homer and Euripides made Dekker anxious about his own status. For Dekker and others who were at least partly dependent on income from writing this concern was particularly acute, precisely because their moralistic intent – and the providential godliness of Dekker and others is not to be underestimated – coincided with a personal profit motive.

¹²⁸ Dekker, *Newes from Graves-end* (1604), in Wilson, ed., *Plague Pamphlets*, pp. 73–4.

¹²⁹ For concerns expressed by the Stationers, see Greg, *Companion*, pp. 126–7.

¹³⁰ 1603. *The Wonderfulfull Yeare* (1603), in Wilson, ed., *Plague Pamphlets*, p. 4.

¹³¹ Elizabeth Cellier, *Malice Defeated* (1680), p. 32; *Jane Anger, Her Protection for Women* (1589), sig. A2r–v; both discussed below.

Prefaces were a means of courting the reader, necessary not only to enhance sales but to reduce the risk of misreading. Pamphlet authors surrendered themselves to the judgement of the marketplace, and expressed feelings ranging from resentment through humility to resignation. Prefatory acknowledgements reflected the growing influence and diversity of readers. Nashe shrugged: 'buy who list, condemn who list, I leave every reader to his free liberty'. For Milton, this liberty of interpretation was the virtue of reading and of cheap print, as it enabled a 'free and open encounter' between truth and falsehood.¹³² Apologising for offence caused by *Andromeda Liberata* (1614), George Chapman lamented that he had thought 'I might be reasonable & consciounable master of mine owne meaning', but had found himself answerable to the misconstructions of readers.¹³³ The prospect of anonymous readers magnified fears of misreading, and writers pondered on the negotiations between authors, books and readers.

The defensive strategies of authors multiplied through the seventeenth century, especially during the 1640s, when the language of political consensus was displaced by the rhetoric of polemical aggression. In a peculiar moment of defensiveness in an extraordinarily irenic tract of 1644, Henry Robinson began an address to his readers: 'Let not the seeming noveltie of opinions deter thee from searching out the Truth, and be assured that Gods people, as well as worldlings have their time to fish in troubled waters; wherefore before thou proceed on with this Discourse, promise me, I beseech thee, to read it out.'¹³⁴ Writers came to anticipate criticism, from other authors and from readers whose own political awareness, coupled with critical interpretative faculties, encouraged oppositional stances in reading.¹³⁵ Pamphlets increasingly provoked answers and disproofs, appropriations, fragmentation, quotation and confutation. Writers of news would continue to stress their veracity, perhaps reluctant to make providential applications of their reports; writers of polemic would phrase their arguments anticipating a hostile pen. A double audience came to inhabit political writings: first, the general reader, whose esteem was sought; and secondly, the adversary, engaged in a war of words, who must be defeated in view of other readers. This condition was often reflected in multiple prefaces. Pamphlet genres, of dialogue and animadversion, developed in sophistication partly as a means of negotiating the complexities of this triangular relationship. In an elaborate set of animadversions in 1687 Henry Care asseverated that an author who was

¹³² Nashe quoted in Sharpe, *Reading Revolutions*, p. 56; CPW, vol. 2, p. 561.

¹³³ Chapman, *A Free and Offences Justification* (1614), sig. *3r.

¹³⁴ [Henry Robinson], *Liberty of Conscience: Or the Sole Means to Peace and Truth* (1644), Av.

¹³⁵ Zwicker's *Producing Passions* (forthcoming) will present the case for a politicisation of reading during the seventeenth century; see also Sharon Achinstein, *Milton and the Revolutionary Reader* (Princeton, NJ, 1994).

'pleased to *dispense* with his Readers Expectations' of the '*strict Truth*, or *solid Arguments*' of a pamphlet, keeping only the 'Stile' was likely to convince only 'vulgar Ears more open to *Rhetorick* than *Logick*'.¹³⁶ Pamphlet decorum, style and genres mediated between authors and audiences. As would be the case with printed petitions to Parliament, and Parliament's printed addresses to the King, the pamphlet was a public stage on which a speaker addressed a listener before a silent but all-important audience.

The circuit of communication is closed, with the author's and bookseller's anticipation of and reactions to the reader. Perhaps as early as the 1590s customers exerted indirect pressure through demand on the suppliers of print. In Myles Davies' lyrical paean to pamphlets, he presents an intimate, reciprocal relationship between pamphlets and society, in which cheap print, sensitive to a congeries of overlapping communities of readers defined by status, gender and trade, both reflects and advances trends, simultaneously instructs and feeds on vanity, purveys business and pleasure. It merits quotation at length, as it sketches the proximities between authors and readers which kept the cycles of production and consumption buoyant:

From Pamphlets may be learn'd the Genius of the Age, the Debates of the Learned, the Follies of the Ignorant, the bevews of Government, the Oversights of Statesmen, the Mistakes of Courtiers, the different approaches of Foreigners, and the several encroachments of Rivals; in *Pamphlets*, Merchants may read their Profit and Loss, Shopkeepers their Bills of Parcels, Country-men their Seasons of Husbandry, Sailors their Longitude, Soldiers their Camps and Enemies; thence School-boys may improve their Lessons, Scholars their Studies, Ministers their Sermons, and Zealots their Devisions. *Pamphlets* furnish Beau's with their Airs, Coquets with their Charms: Pamphlets are as Modish Ornaments to Gentlewomen's Toylets as to Gentlemen's Pockets: Pamphlets carry reputation of Wit and Learning to all that make them their companions: The Poor find their account in Stall-keeping, and in hawking them: The Rich find in them their Shortest way to the Secrets of Church and State. In fine, there's scarce any degree of People but may think themselves interested enough to be concern'd with what is publish'd in Pamphlets, either as to their private Instruction, Curiosity and Reputation, or to the publick Advantage and Credit: With all which, both ancient and modern Pamphlets are too too often over-familiar and free. To remedy the dangerous Excrescencies whereof, the whole Constitution has hitherto struggled in vain; tho' its Frame has been often threaten'd with Convulsions thereby, yet both Church and State have been thought to have been often clear'd up by a seasonable displaying of the better sort of such Pamphlet-Rays and Paper-Luminaries.¹³⁷

This chapter has traced a circuit of communication. These material circumstances and practices shaped the physical appearance of pamphlets and therefore the kinds of messages that they carried; and they informed the expectations of authors and readers, and the uses to which pamphlets were

put. To use a complementary metaphor, pamphlets had a life-cycle. Patterns of exchange breathed life into an inanimate object. Once in the marketplace pamphlets assumed their own agency, independent of their authors; this circumstance fostered anonymity and pseudonymity, and even named pamphleteers found their authorial identities appropriated and fictionalised. Authors were projected as intemperate figures whose voices were made flesh in pamphlets. The anonymity of readers was equally formative: pamphlets spoke to everyone and no one, and though the impersonal nature of communication might provoke concern, it was precisely this capacity to speak to the unknown, to the crowd, the multitude, even the many-headed hydra, that empowered the pamphlet to imagine a public, and to speak to and fashion the public's opinions.

¹³⁶ Henry Care, *Animadversions on a Late Paper* (1687), pp. 8–9.

¹³⁷ Davies, *Athenæ*, vol. 1, section 2, pp. 2–3.

truth and perfection began with ameliorating conditions for speech. The anonymous author of *The Ancient Bounds, or Liberty of Conscience* (1645) also complained of the lack of civil and meek speech in religious matters; yet the 'generall restraint' of opinion would hinder the emergence of the truth, 'and better many errors of some kind suffered, then one usefull truth be obstructed or destroyed'.¹⁸⁴

Defences of the liberty of the press, and attacks on press licence, are often thoughtful commentaries from which we might extrapolate a sociology of the press. Religious toleration was a central issue in the Civil Wars: it divided king and parliament, and when these tracts were written it was dissolving the fragile parliamentary alliance.¹⁸⁵ The association between liberty of conscience and the dissemination of ideas in print was a tenacious one, which we have little reason to repudiate. Belief, and the progress of truth, depended on public encounters with ideas and opinions, and cheap print was perceived as the most public form of communication. While the liberty of speaking and reading was perceived as a natural right in and of itself (and therefore improperly monopolised), it was also a necessary adjunct to religious liberty. These arguments were articulated while other appeals were being made to a reading public, constituting and empowering a body of opinion that extended to, and perhaps beyond, the reach of the printed word. We might say the idea of public opinion had been created, grounded in the most common form of print.¹⁸⁶

'This is true Liberty when free born men | Having to advise the public may speak free' begins the title-page epigram of *Areopagitica; a Speech of Mr. John Milton for the Liberty of Unlicenc'd Printing, to the Parliament of England* (November 1644), today probably the most widely read early-modern pamphlet. Milton's uniquely eloquent account of the relationship between reading, opinion and liberty exploits strategies, genres and metaphoric registers that typified the pamphlet form; a fact that disappears when it is read as a merely curious addendum to *Paradise Lost*. For this reason, and because of its brilliant characterisation of the pamphlet culture of the 1640s,

it merits particular attention here. The syntax of the typographically simple yet semantically complex title-page suggests that it is not an attack on censorship (one of several canonical misreadings), but a defence of printing without pre-publication licensing as a form of liberty, one of several aspects of liberty. Milton believed that these varieties of liberty were increasingly available to Englishmen with the re-advent of parliamentary government, and he presented the expansion in publishing and debate in the 1640s as a restitution of the ancient liberty of speaking or *parrhesia* of the Athenian republic. This is broached in the epigraph, a defence of Athenian democracy from Euripides' *The Suppliants*, and in the title, alluding to a speech (intended to be read rather than spoken) by the Athenian orator Isocrates.¹⁸⁷

Areopagitica has been described as a compromised and self-interested expression of a nascent bourgeois individualism.¹⁸⁸ Such criticism is based in part on a misreading of the 1643 Ordinance, and a misunderstanding of the nature of seventeenth-century copyright.¹⁸⁹ Milton did have a personal grudge against parliamentary intervention in the press. On 24 August 1644 the Stationers' Company presented a petition to the House of Commons. Two days later the House ordered the Committee for Printing 'diligently to inquire out the authors, printers, and publishers of the pamphlet against the immortality of the soul and concerning divorce'.¹⁹⁰ Recent tracts and a sermon had recommended the censure of Milton's *Doctrine and Discipline of Divorce* (1643). Yet Milton had objected to censorship earlier.¹⁹¹ No doubt he was also incensed by attacks on him as a libertine 'Divorcer' by those opposed to liberty of faith and of publishing. Nonetheless, Milton did not object directly to post-publication censorship *per se*, only pre-publication licensing; his recommendations would anyway not have protected him from criticism or official censure. Like Walwyn he allowed that dangerous and

¹⁸⁴ *Ancient Bounds* (1645), p. 34, sig. A4r.

¹⁸⁵ John Morrill, *The Nature of the English Revolution* (1993), pt 1.

¹⁸⁶ This argument complements, though it does not entirely agree with, the argument of David Zaret's *Origins of Democratic Culture: Printing, Petitions, and the Public Sphere in Early-Modern England* (Princeton, 2000). Zaret's account of the invention of public opinion in the 1640s is a powerful one, and his emphasis on the impact of printing entirely persuasive. Zaret claims that printed petitions have a unique instrumental role in creating public opinion and notions of the public accountability of government; I think their effect cannot be disengaged from the operation of pamphlet culture more generally. Printed petitions engaged in a dialogue with other pamphlets, and the ideas and principles they articulated, individually and as a form, were mediated through their interaction with other pamphlet genres.

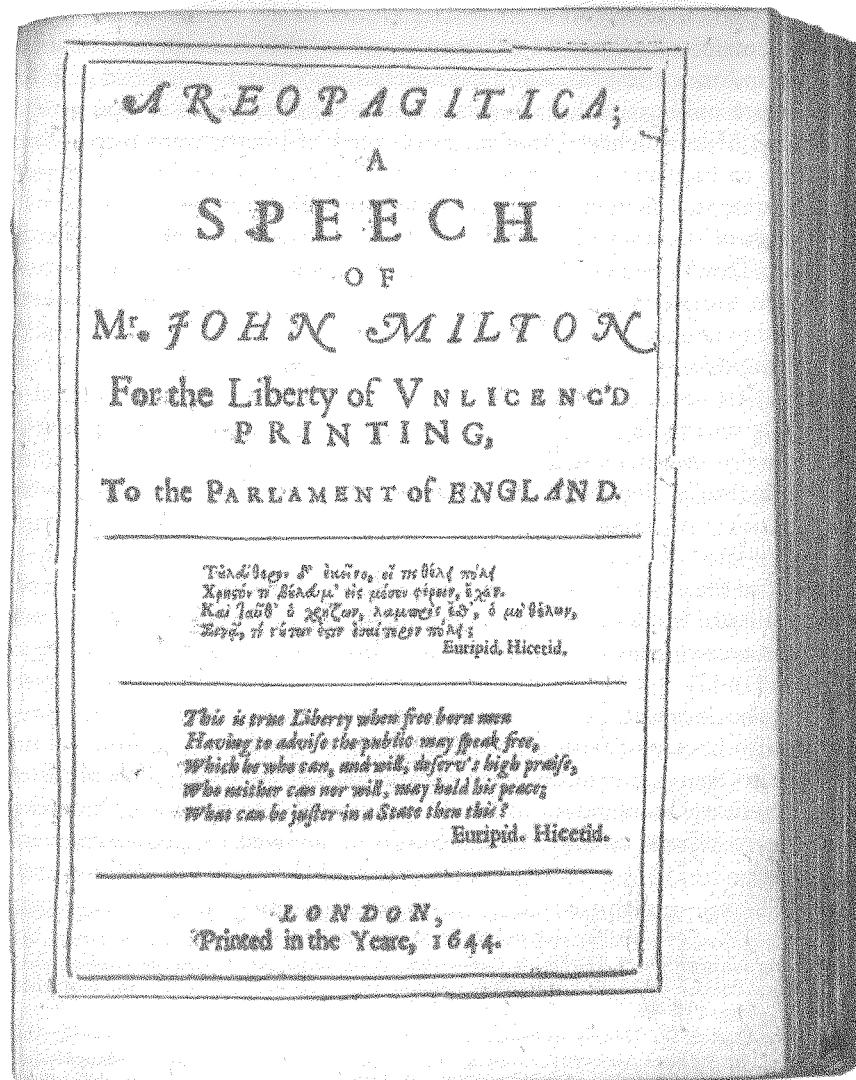
¹⁸⁷ In addition to Ernest Sirluck's introduction and notes in *CPW* vol. 2, see David Norbrook, 'Areopagitica, Censorship, and the Early Modern Public Sphere', in Richard Burt, ed., *The Administration of Aesthetics: Censorship, Political Criticism, and the Public Sphere*, Cultural Politics, vol. 7 (Minneapolis & London, 1994), pp. 3–33, at 16–19; and Norbrook, *Writing*, pp. 118–39.

¹⁸⁸ Francis Barker, *The Tremulous Private Body: Essays in Subjection* (1984), pp. 41–52; Abbe Blum, 'The Author's Authority: Areopagitica and the Labour of Licensing', in Mary Nyquist and Margaret W. Ferguson, eds., *Remembering Milton: Essays on the Texts and Traditions* (1987) pp. 74–96; Stanley Fish, 'Driving from the Letter: Truth and Indeterminacy in Milton's Areopagitica', in Nyquist and Ferguson, eds., *Remembering Milton*, pp. 234–54; Stanley Fish, *There's No Such Thing as Free Speech: And It's a Good Thing Too* (New York & Oxford, 1994), pp. 102–4. See the critiques in Norbrook, 'Areopagitica', and William Kolbrenner, *Milton's Warring Angels: A Study of Critical Engagements* (Cambridge, 1997), pp. 11–27.

¹⁸⁹ D. F. McKenzie, unpublished Sandars Lectures, 1976.

¹⁹⁰ *CJ* 3: 606. On this incident, see William Riley Parker, *Milton: A Biography*, 2 vols. [vol. 2 revised by Gordon Campbell] (1968; Oxford, 1996), vol. 1, pp. 262–5.

¹⁹¹ *CPW* vol. 1, p. 669.



28. John Milton, *Areopagitica* (1644), Aberdeen University Library, in pi 26404 Tay. Milton's eloquent pamphlet, a defence of the liberty of unimpeded reading, and a mock-speech to the English Parliament.

scandalous books should be prosecuted; but the logic of *Areopagitica* makes it difficult to see how a legal judgement could be made in any case except libel.

In *Areopagitica* Milton proposes that licensing restrictions can only hinder the progress of truth. All good Protestant doctrine began life as heresy, so

what state-instituted control institution could accurately judge what was false and erroneous?¹⁹² We could only injure truth by doubting her: 'Let her and Falshood grapple; whoever knew truth put to the worse, in a free and open encounter' (561). Falsehood requires confutation, not suppression. Faith and truth will only be strengthened by the encounter with error, as, in a post-Lapsarian world, knowledge of evil is a condition of the knowledge of good. Protestants who are exposed to error, and learn to dispute with it, will emerge with a reanimated understanding of the ways of truth. Thus, the reading of books, true and false, is a means to spiritual regeneration, and thence to the reawakening of the nation, grown lazy in the ways of Egypt. In a justly celebrated passage he proclaims:

He that can apprehend and consider vice with all her baits and seeming pleasures, and yet abstain, and yet prefer that which is truly better, he is the true warfaring Christian. I cannot praise a fugitive and cloister'd vertue, unexercis'd & unbreath'd, that never sallies out and sees her adversary, but slinks out of the race, where that immortal garland is to be run for, not without dust and heat. Assuredly we bring not innocence into the world, we bring impurity much rather: that which purifies us is triall, and triall is by what is contrary. (514–15)

'Writing is more publick then preaching' (548) and the unlicensed press creates a field in which truth and error clash in full view, a *mêlée* which every reader can witness.¹⁹³ Milton re-imagines the nature of the boundary between public and private: while faith is a matter of individual conscience, the truth is constituted through collective encounters in the public arena.

Milton, like Walwyn and Lilburne, objects to the engrossment of the means of production of truth, as if it were a commodity, criticisms resonant with prominent parliamentary criticisms of monopolies.¹⁹⁴ An '*Oligarchy of twenty ingrossers*' of knowledge would 'bring a famin upon our minds again'; licensing 'hinders and retards the importation of our richest Marchandize, Truth'; he condemns 'the tunaging and poundaging of all free spok'n truth' (558, 548, 545).¹⁹⁵ This vein of metaphors attracts sympathy to the

¹⁹² See the essays in Stephen B. Dobranski, and John P. Rumrich, eds., *Milton and Heresy* (Cambridge, 1998), especially Janel Mueller's 'Milton on Heresy', pp. 21–38; also Stephen Burt, "'To The Unknown God": St. Paul and Athens in Milton's *Areopagitica*', *Milton Quarterly*, 32 (1998), 23–31.

¹⁹³ Achinstein, *Revolutionary Reader*, pp. 58–69, argues that the pamphlets of the revolutionary decades created the 'fir', 'revolutionary' reader described by Milton.

¹⁹⁴ Earlier in the decade William Prynne, a victim of censorship who was later to become a fierce opponent of nonconformity, would have agreed with him. Prynne argued on historical grounds that the use of royal prerogative in the printing trade was an unlawful innovation. Prynne, however, would support censorship on religious grounds. See Inner Temple MS Petyt 511, vol. 23, ff. 14r–25v, discussed in Johns, *Nature*, pp. 335–7. For another attack on the Stationers' Company monopoly, see [Michael Sparke?], *Scintilla, or A Light Broken into Darke Warehouses* (1641).

¹⁹⁵ The significance of this language is discussed in Sandra Sherman, 'Printing the Mind: The Economics of Authorship in *Areopagitica*', *ELH* 60 (1993), 323–47; see also Michael

knotty proposition that 'Truth and understanding are not such wares as to be monopoliz'd and traded in by tickets and statutes, and standards' (535). They do not need to be sheltered in the marketplace; they need to be made more public, unrestricted by private interests. Truth and understanding grow through 'error' and mere opinion, 'known, read, and collated' (513). The opinion of the public, true or false, participates in the production of truth, 'for opinion in good men is but knowledge in the making' (554).

As a monopoly, Milton suggests, censorship had proven useful to the Catholic church. It is part of the polemical strategy of *Areopagitica* to tar the origins and uses of licensing with the brush of popery. *Areopagitica* presents a brief history of licensing which is also an ethical anatomy of the practice. It begins with the general tolerance in Athens and other ancient states where censorship was used only to upbraid libel; the significant exception being Rome, after its decline into its tyranny. The turning point in the history of conscientious reading was about the year 800, according to Milton, 'After which time the Popes of Rome engrossing what they pleas'd of Political rule into their owne hands, extended their dominion over mens eyes, as they had before over their judgements, burning and prohibiting to be read, what they fansied not' (501-2). The practice was limited in scope until Pope Martin V introduced excommunication in 1418 as a punishment for reading prohibited books, and Pope Leo X extended censorship to encompass all writings in 1515. Heresies were joined by indifferent matters, until censorship became a whimsy of mere taste, exercised with impunity.

Milton's view of censorship was antithetical to that presented by the Stationers' Company in their *Remonstrance* (April 1643), which prompted Parliament to pass the offending Ordinance. The Stationers regretfully noted that Catholics were more competent at effective censorship: 'it is not meere Printing, but well ordered Printing that merits so much favour and respect... We must in this give Papists their due; for as well where the Inquisition predominates, as not, regulation is more strict by far, then it is amongst Protestants... for that cause not onely their Church is the more fortified, but the Art of Printing thrives, and the Artists grow rich also beyond any examples amongst us.'¹⁹⁶ For Milton this painstaking supervision confirmed Catholicism's antipathy to true liberty. Despite its polemical thrust, Milton's history was a precise, considered one. Leo X's papal bull of 1515

Wilding, 'Milton's *Areopagitica*: Liberty for the Sects', *PS* 9 (1986), 7-38; Manley, *London*, pp. 552-4.

¹⁹⁶ *To the High Court of Parliament: The Humble Remonstrance of the Company of Stationers* (1643), sig. Ar-v; Henry Parker was the scribe for this text, though its authorship was corporate. On the *Remonstrance*, see Ian Gadd, 'The Mechanicks of Difference: a Study in Stationers Company Discourse in the Seventeenth Century', in Robin Myers and Michael Harris, eds., *The Stationers' Company and the Book Trade 1550-1990* (Winchester, 1997), pp. 93-111.

was scarcely mentioned in Protestant histories, and Milton's quiet contradiction of Pietro Sarpi, his main source, was acute.¹⁹⁷ Pope Leo's extension of the domain of censorship to include secular writings in particular supported Milton's allegation that Catholicism was not a faith so much as a worldly power, a transnational corporation, and the church at Rome a secular entity. The association between the state's ability to infringe upon liberty of speaking and the condition of slavery was one Milton had drawn earlier in his condemnation of the prelacy in *Animadversions* (1641):

The *Romans* had a time once every year, when their Slaves might freely speake their minds, Twere hard if the free borne people of *England*, with whom the voyce of truth for these many yeares... hath not bin heard but in corners, after all your Monkish prohibitions, and expurgatorious indexes, your gags and snaffles, your proud *Imprimaturs* not to be obtain'd without the shallow surviue, but not shallow hand of some mercenary, narrow Soul'd, and illiterate Chaplain; when liberty of speaking, then which nothing is more sweet to man, was girded, and straight lac't almost to a broken-winded tizzick, if now at a good time, our time of *Parliament*, the very jubily, and resurrection of the State, if now the conceal'd, the aggreev'd, and long persecuted Truth, could not be suffer'd speak, and though she burst out with some efficacy of words, could not be excus'd after such an injurious strangle of silence, nor avoyde the censure of Libelling, twere hard, twere something pinching in Kingdome of free spirits.¹⁹⁸

Licensing is a foreign, pre-Reformed bondage imposed on the naturally freedom-loving English. Joseph Hall, whom we encountered above as Milton's and Smectymnuus' adversary, decried the 'shameful number' of 'libels' that had shaken the presses; Milton averred that they were the free expressions of free spirits, bridled truths bursting out in new voices, a sign of the ancient liberty of parliament suffusing itself among the people.¹⁹⁹

Milton's philosophical discourse was published as a pamphlet. This was the form its controversial argument demanded, and its ethos required. *Areopagitica* was presented as 'a speech of Mr. John Milton', a label which bears two meanings. First, it was an oratorical performance addressed to Parliament, but presented before a wider audience, the reading public, guided by an ethos of civic virtue. It resembled printed petitions, and Parliament's Grand Remonstrance. Secondly, on a more mundane level, it employed the common pamphlet genre of the printed parliamentary speech. One copy was bound in a contemporary volume with a collection of forty-three speeches from the 1640s, plus thirty-three parliamentary petitions.²⁰⁰ Milton's speech

¹⁹⁷ I owe the first point to the kindness of Ian Gadd; for the second, see *CPW*, vol. 2, p. 500n.54; 502n.59.

¹⁹⁸ *CPW*, vol. 1, p. 669.

¹⁹⁹ *CPW*, vol. 1, p. 667; [Joseph Hall], *A Defence of the Humble Remonstrance* (1641), p. 4; pp. 200-1, 209-10, above.

²⁰⁰ CUL: Syn 7.64.121.

was thereby treated as an authentic parliamentary interjection. *Areopagitica* thus imagined that pamphlets created a virtual parliament, broadening the franchise of representation to include non-MPs. In this way the arena of print is figured as a massive parliament-without-doors, in which the citizen can represent him or herself.²⁰¹

Like other pamphlets *Areopagitica* was submitted to public appropriation, to the anonymous reader. Milton's control over his tone and style was immense, but participating in a pamphlet exchange relinquished dominion over the text. A writer is 'fit to print his mind', but this incorporeal existence loses the sway of the voice and gesture. One of Milton's most nuanced polemical strategies is to appropriate diverse languages in order to capture his readers' sympathies. The derogatory semantics of monopolies and patents is only the most obvious of these fields; he also captures the parliamentarian language of the sublime, echoes Walwyn and Selden, borrows from other pamphlets, speaks to the circle of social and scientific reformers around Hartlib, and tries to draw the sympathy of the Erastians in Parliament.²⁰² This is the work of a master prose-writer, but this mode of compressed yet heterogeneous speech is precisely typical of many less artful pamphlets which borrow and refract the conflicting languages of public exchange.

Areopagitica is richly literary in both syntax and tropes, in marked contrast with the plainer and more direct styles of Robinson and Walwyn. Robinson's informal eloquence is considerable, and Walwyn has his own artfulness and spiritual intensity, but Milton's complex and eccentric syntax is far removed from those contemporaries with whom he is sympathetic. This probably limited the persuasiveness and therefore the impact of his proposals. One contemporary reader sympathetic to his cause suggested that, as a pamphlet, *Areopagitica* was a failure 'because of his all too highflown style in many places quite obscure'.²⁰³ Milton's writing is also marked by a far higher incidence of metaphor and sustained similes. Writing is figured as a transformation of speech, as the 'voice' and 'breath of reason' (490, 493); licensing

is a 'gag' (519) to 'stop their mouths' (657); 'free writing and free speaking' are contiguous (559). Books are like food (512); they are the entrails or the tombs of men (503). Milton repeatedly animates books with souls: 'Books were ever as freely admitted in to the World as any other birth; the issue of the brain was no more stiff'd then the issue of the womb: no envious *Juno* sate cros-leg'd over the nativity of any mans intellectuall off spring; but if it prov'd a Monster, who denies, but that it was justly burnt, or sunk into the Sea' (505). They are born and die (530); they dwell in dioceses like human souls (540); they are bold and assault readers (547); they are 'the pretious life-blood of a master spirit' (493). Like Hobbes' *Leviathan* (1651), Milton's argument is performed through metaphor while professing the supremacy of reason.

Yet the most vigorous strain of figurative language has a literal edge: Milton carefully evokes the particulars of the scene of writing, the physical make-up of books and of the human industry producing them. This reveals not only Milton's familiarity with the trade,²⁰⁴ but his recognition of the role played by material objects in political and religious debate. Milton's intellectual moral community is grounded in the relationship between readers and writers, and 'all manner of tractats' (517) connecting them. In the 'mansion house of liberty . . . there be pens and heads . . . sitting by their studios lamps' (554). Milton details the scene of writing, sometimes his writing, the 'unbridled pen' (498), ink and 'servile letters' (505), the 'helpful hand' (565) of the civic-minded author, 'the labour of book-writing' (532) which an ill-qualified licenser will not have known. He enters into particulars discussing the difficulties of an author introducing new matter into an already-licensed book, and having to 'trudge' to the licenser while the printing shop awaits copy. The 1643 Ordinance overlooked such quotidian realities.

Reading is similarly evoked, from the 'perpetuall' reading of the licenser to the 'promiscuous' reading of the voluntary reader and the 'fast reading' of the seeker after knowledge (530, 517, 554). A licensing system turns reading into school drudgery, 'under the fescu of an *Imprimatur*'; 'every acute reader upon the first sight of a pedantick licence will be ready with these like words to ding the book a coits distance from him, I hate a pupil teacher, I endure not an instructor that comes to me under the wardship of an overseeing fist' (531, 533). *Areopagitica*'s reader is an independent citizen, possessed with the faculties of reason and thus virtue; whereas the Ordinance assumes that 'the whiffe of every new pamphlet should stagger them out of thir catechism, and Christian walking' (537). Early modern books had characteristic smells, as modern books do, rounding out the sensual joys of reading. In 1647,

²⁰¹ Cf. John Hall on Athenian democracy in *Peri hypsous Or Dionysius Longinus on the Height of Eloquence* (1652), sigs. A7v–Br. Hall sought to explore a republican sublime, and his interest in questions of political representation bridges the gap between art and political practice. See David Norbrook, 'Marvell's "Horatian Ode" and the Politics of Genre', in Healy and Sawday, eds., *Literature and the English Civil War*, pp. 155–8; Annabel Patterson, *Reading Between the Lines* (1993), pp. 256–72.

²⁰² Nigel Smith, '*Areopagitica*: Voicing Contexts, 1643–5', in David Loewenstein and James Grantham Turner, eds., *Politics, Poetics, and Hermeneutics in Milton's Prose* (Cambridge, 1990), pp. 103–22; see also Sirluck, in *CPW*, vol. 2, pp. 170–8, who suggests that Milton simultaneously and pragmatically addresses several constituencies, in order to obtain the repeal of the 1643 Ordinance.

²⁰³ Leo Miller, 'A German Critique of Milton's *Areopagitica* in 1647', *Notes and Queries*, 234 (1989), 29–30.

²⁰⁴ Stephen B. Dobranski, *Milton, Authorship, and the Book Trade* (Cambridge, 1999).

after the hostile reception of his *Tetrachordon* (1645), Milton wrote a sonnet satirically presenting a slothful (and uneducated) readership stumbling at the bookseller's stall:

Cries the stall-reader, Bless us! What a word on
A title-page is this! And some in file
Stand spelling false, while one might walk to Mile-
End Green . . .²⁰⁵

Direct references to printing procedures encompass the arrangement of pages, particularly of titles. Milton reads metaphors and dramas into typographical conventions, into 'shrewd books, with dangerous Frontispices' (524). An *imprimatur* is a degrading mark, 'the censors hand on the back of his title to be his bayl and suretie' (532), it is 'a visible jaylor in this title' (536). The 'suspected *typography*' of foreign printers (529), puns on the dual meaning of their books and the physical appearance of the type that would assist in the identification of work from suspicious printing-houses. In a marvellous dramatisation of the disfiguration of Italian books by the marks of approval 'of 2 or 3 glutton Friers', he writes: 'Sometimes 5 *Imprimaturs* are seen together dialogue-wise in the Piazza of one Title page, complementing and ducking each to other with their shav'n reverences, whether the author, who stands by in perplexity at the foot of his Epistle, shall to the Presse, or to the sponge' (503–4). It is the author's name, personified, that is pushed to the margins of the piazza, while popish priests perform gestures of mutual obsequiousness, patronisingly tolerating the reader. Milton quotes a series of *imprimaturs* to illustrate his point: they read like a poem in which sense has been sacrificed to venerate authority.

Milton notes the variety of book forms, acknowledging the 'Book, pamphlet, or paper' (503) identified in the offending Ordinance. He alludes to Spenser and John Selden, but also to ballads and roundels, to 'wanton epigrams and dialogues' (496, 523), and to sermons. He is critical of those licensing ministers of God who think that readers are unfit 'to be turn'd loose to three sheets of paper without a licencer, that all the Sermons, all the Lectures preacht, printed, vented in such numbers, and such volumes, as have now wellnigh made all other books unsalable, should not be armor enough against one single *enchiridion*, without the castle St. Angelo of an *Imprimatur*' (537). Milton suggests that sermons threaten the market for other kinds of books – implying that sermons are not the books that he wishes his readers to encounter – and that divines doubt their own suatory powers. Scepticism towards printed sermons returns later in an account of a minister lazily scrabbling together a sermon using a commonplace book

²⁰⁵ Milton, *Complete Shorter Poems*, p. 308.

compiled some years ago, some basic reference works and 'interlinearies, breviaries, synopses, and other loitering gear':

But as for the multitude of Sermons ready printed and pil'd up, on every text that is not difficult, our London trading St. *Thomas* in his vestry, and adde to boot St. *Martin*, and St. *Hugh*, have not within their hallow'd limits more vendible ware of all sorts ready made: so that penury he never need fear of Pulpit provision, having where so plenteously to refresh his magazin.²⁰⁶

Sermons are repetitive and redundant, compiled without inspiration, exercising the elbows rather than the spirit. They traffic only in small coins, and do not wage spiritual warfare. They sit on booksellers' shelves to assist the avoidance of thought, not to spark it. The piles are ready to be toppled by a bold book or thrust through with an *enchiridion*. The *enchiridion* is both a hand-knife and a hand-book, a book as weapon, in contrast to the thin armour of the sermon: what kind of a book is it?

Milton puns on and alludes to the details of book production. Books are 'Dragons teeth', sown up and down.²⁰⁷ If they are short books these armed men may be left unbound. Censorship pretends 'to bind books to their good behaviour' (570). In exploring the drudgery of the licenser's reading he writes:

There is no book that is acceptable unlesse at certain seasons; but to be enjoyn'd the reading of that at all times, and in a hand scars legible, whereof the three pages would not down at any time in the fairest Print, is an imposition which I cannot beleeve how he that values time, and his own studies, or is but of a sensible nostrill should be able to endure. (530)

'Imposition' puns on the impression of inked type on paper. The comparison weighs illegible handwriting against pleasing and easy-to-read typography. The 'wet sheets' of the royalist newsbook *Mercurius Aulicus* are 'dispers't among us' (528) he complains, as Lilburne would; they are wet because they are swiftly carried to the streets, as the danger of discovery looms while clandestine propaganda dries in the printing-house.

Milton's nuances extend to the size of books. The 'loitering gear' used to compose repetitious sermons are weighty; the commonplace book is a 'folio'; the sermons sit in piles. He refers with some scorn to 'defiling volumes', to 'the drossiest volume', to 'unchosen books and pamphlets, oftines huge

²⁰⁶ CPW, vol. 2, pp. 546–7. The imputation that a preacher had borrowed a printed sermon may have been a common insult, cf. Bod: MS Tanner 52, f.145. Ann Moss discusses the role of medieval florilegia in the composition of sermons, *Printed Common-Place Books and the Structuring of Renaissance Thought* (Oxford, 1996), pp. 39–41.

²⁰⁷ CPW, vol. 2, p. 492; this point (and other useful comments on this metaphoric register) is made by Dobranski, *Milton, Authorship*, pp. 120–2.

volumes' that the licenser must wearily read.²⁰⁸ He refers more approvingly to the 'three sheets of paper' on which a reader should be let loose without sanction (537), to the beneficial effects of reading 'all manner of tractats' (517), to the just and pleasing 'whiffe of every new pamphlet' (537). We must trust the people, he exhorts, 'for if we be so jealous over them, as that we dare not trust them with an English pamphlet, what doe we but censure them for a giddy, vitious, and ungrounded people' (536). Milton is supremely conscious of books as physical objects, and the experience of writing, handling, reading and smelling them inhabits his argument; his references are specific enough to indicate that the reading matter that he defends is small books, a few sheets long, in English. Not scriptural commentaries, histories or epics, grand folios, nor even sermons, but pamphlets are the enchiridion wielded by the warfaring Christian. 'A wise man will make better use of an idle pamphlet, then a fool will do of sacred Scripture' (521).

'COMMUNICATION FOR ALL'

Milton's outline of a community of vigilant, strenuous readers, guided by reason presents a powerful, embryonic notion of the formation of public opinion. This was firmly grounded in the changes he had witnessed in London culture since his return from Italy in July 1639. These were changes in both scale and nature: the number of books, especially short books had soared. The range of matter covered in these publications had expanded, notably to include detailed reports and commentaries on domestic political news, subjects previously limited to exclusive and expensive manuscript communications. A series of generic mutations rapidly ensued, as traditional genres – satires, dialogues, epistles, sermons, characters and speeches – were appropriated and reformulated to fit in a demotic format. The uses of cheap print were expanded and refined. Threats of exposure, similar to those voiced by Marprelate, suddenly carried new force as demonstrators paced London's streets and an army was mustered to fight the king. Appeals to opinion carried new weight: the public were empowered, and the relevance of its opinion in political life endorsed. Widened access to printing enabled writers to disseminate notions, generate support, and ultimately to co-ordinate political and religious movements. Radical apologists for pamphlets, defending the recently acquired territory against mainly Presbyterian prophets of social disintegration, appealed to public rights. But they also argued that pamphlet debate enhanced communication, and that communication produced truth. Even when the voices in print were innovatory and heterodox, conflict

²⁰⁸ CPW, vol. 2, pp. 511, 521, 530; cf. CPW, vol. 1, pp. 316, 323; John K. Hale, *Milton's Languages: The Impact of Multilingualism on Style* (Cambridge, 1997), pp. 73–4.

was beneficial. Pamphlets, opinion, communication and liberty were natural companions.

Milton's practical utopianism in *Areopagitica* envisages a dynamic and godly readership wresting words from the page, and extracting virtue even from the most recalcitrant. He was perhaps divided about the extent of this hermeneutic community. In 1651 (a year before he was fully blind) he became, for about a year, official licenser for the newsbooks *Mercurius Politicus*, edited by his friend Nedham, and *Perfect Diurnall*.²⁰⁹ This position may be inconsistent with his expressed ideals, and he may have collaborated with the Commonwealth Council of State to short-circuit the normative collaborative practices of the book trade. Such conduct would be un-Areopagitic.²¹⁰ Yet the records are indifferent. The only evidence for Milton's involvement in *Politicus* is the order in the Council of State's day books giving him responsibility; a handful of signatures in the Stationers' Register; and a few references to Salmasius in *Politicus*, some contributed by foreign correspondents. This suggests that the licenser and the editor talked about Salmasius, Machiavelli and Hobbes, and that their relationship was supportive and intellectual rather than antagonistic. There is no evidence that Milton ever repressed any writings; and upon one occasion he found himself interrogated by an incensed Council of State for his part in approving the heretical Racovian Catechism, a work they subsequently condemned. Milton responded that he had followed his convictions against forbidding books.²¹¹

The extent of Milton's imaginary community may have been circumscribed. A much-quoted passage of *Areopagitica* denies free speaking to Catholics: 'I mean not tolerated popery, and open superstition, which as it extirpates all religious and civil supremacies, so itself should be extirpate.'²¹² Yet this constraint may not be evidence of a condition circumscribing natural liberty. For Milton (unlike Walwyn) Catholicism was not an idea or faith open to communication, but a dark force that undermined communication through compulsion. His exclusion then is not strictly contradictory, intolerant though it may be. Another limit to the community of the public involves gender. Milton's notion of the political body has been characterised as

²⁰⁹ For 1649 see Parker, *Milton*, vol. 1, p. 355, vol. 2, p. 960n.29; for 1651 see David Masson, *The Life of John Milton*, 7 vols., rev. edn. (1875–94), vol. 4, pp. 325–35; and Parker, *Milton*, vol. 1, p. 394, vol. 2, p. 993–4n.150. For criticisms of Milton's compromise see n.188, above.

²¹⁰ Dobranski, *Milton, Authorship*, ch. 6; cf. Joad Raymond, in *Review of English Studies* 52 (2001), 114–17. Sirluck's introduction to CPW, vol. 2, still illuminates Milton's pragmatism.

²¹¹ Parker, *Milton*, vol. 1, p. 395, vol. 2, p. 994n.153; see also Dobranski, *Milton, Authorship*, pp. 128–32, 137–8.

²¹² CPW, vol. 2, p. 565; cf. Fish, *There's No Such Thing*, p. 103.

exclusively masculine. Curiously his image of the renescent nation changes sex in mid-sentence: 'Methinks I see in my mind a noble and puissant Nation rousing herself like a strong man after sleep, and shaking her invincible locks' (557–8). Perhaps the ambiguity betokens an uneasiness about the practicalities of incorporating women into the body politic. Yet would Milton not have invited the extension of the critical debate, beyond the mere 'language of the times' (534) to issues of gender?²¹³ As a model of free speech *Areopagitica* certainly has its limitations, though the work itself invites the reader to think beyond them. Milton's condoning of the new Babel of print as a necessary element of the 'spirituall architecture' of 'the Temple of the Lord' (555) is more remarkable than the limits that inhabited his own speech.

Despite its praise of undistorted communication, *Areopagitica* was not intended as a perfect pattern or archetype of liberty.²¹⁴ It is itself a 'meer unlicenc't pamphlet' (541), speaking in part the language of the polemical marketplace. It is an encomium of the processes of exchange by which liberty is arrived at (for freedom is choosing, and choosing is the use of reason), written with sensitivity to immediate circumstances. It does contain the seeds of such a blueprint: the free and open encounter, not subject to supervision which impairs the process of choosing and therefore liberty, occurs between readers and books; cheap print is the optimum means of communication, 'more publick then preaching' and thus 'more easie to refutation' (548); readers find belief, and therefore truth, through reasoned choice, which can only emerge out of public engagement and conflict; private readers engaged in public acts of communication constitute a godly public. For Milton, and for other radicals, this active public was created by changes in the uses of print c. 1640. Conflict was integral to communication: it was shaped by social, religious and perhaps gender difference; it was riven by private interests, and by commercial motivation and competition; it was perpetually under threat of violence; it had no consensual principle but was divided by competing and conflicting languages.²¹⁵ The pamphlet lay at the practical centre of Milton's

²¹³ Norbrook, 'Areopagitica', pp. 25–7.

²¹⁴ On notions of liberty in *Areopagitica*, in addition to the works mentioned above, see also: Victoria Kahn, *Machiavellian Rhetoric: From the Counter-Reformation to Milton* (Princeton, NJ, 1994), pp. 173–9; Arthur E. Barker, *Milton and the Puritan Dilemma, 1641–1660* (Toronto and Buffalo, 1942), esp. ch. 6; Christopher Kendrick, 'Ethics and the Orator in *Areopagitica*', *ELH* 50 (1983), 655–91. Kolbrener, in *Milton's Warring Angels*, pp. 11–27, argues that *Areopagitica* suggests that political interventions do not constitute the public sphere in themselves, but participate in the formation of a truth based upon 'brotherly dissimilitudes', difference and imperfection.

²¹⁵ This paragraph draws upon, conceptually modifies, and antedates the chronology advocated in Jürgen Habermas' brilliant and influential *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society*, trans. Thomas Burger (Cambridge, MA, 1989). Other scholars have adapted Habermas' model and advocated an

vision of an intellectual and moral community founded upon, and protective of liberty.

In December 1656 Morgan Llwyd wrote from Wrexham in north Wales to Richard Baxter: 'I perceive that sometimes in your books (in this bookish partiall formall fierce factious animositous age) your mind is ripening towards the flower & drawing nigh to the fountaine of all. (Love beleeveth all things.)'²¹⁶ Books were the conduit of truth as well as the distraction from it; one parenthetical remark qualifies the other, animosity and love spring from the same apple. And if the age seemed bookish in Wrexham, how did it seem on the streets of London?

earlier dating. See, for example, David Zaret, 'Religion, Science, and Printing in the Public Spheres of Seventeenth-Century England', in Craig Calhoun, ed., *Habermas and the Public Sphere* (Cambridge, MA, 1992), 212–35, and *Origins of Democratic Culture*; Achinstein, *Revolutionary Reader*, pp. 3–26; Steve Pincus, "'Coffee Politicians Does Create": Coffee-houses and Restoration Political Culture', *JMH* 67 (1995), 807–34; Halasz, *Marketplace*. For a critique, see Joad Raymond, 'The Newspaper, Public Opinion, and the Public Sphere in the Seventeenth Century', in Raymond, *News*, pp. 109–40.

²¹⁶ *Calendar of the Correspondence of Richard Baxter*, letter 341.