Introduction

CATHERINE ARMSTRONG

THE VARIED SCHOLARSHIP being undertaken in the field of the history of the book is reflected again in this volume of the *Print Networks* series. The remit of the conferences from which the volumes emerge is broad, focusing on connections in the book trade from the earliest days of the printed book through to the present day. The geographical focus is on Britain, although connections with the former colonies are also explored. For the first time this year, a comparative paper explores the similarities between reading and book-buying in England and the United States in the nineteenth century. Frank Felsenstein's exploration of the significance of the public library in Muncie, Indiana (known famously to historians as 'Middletown' after the study by the Lynds in 1929) shows how, during the late nineteenth century, Muncie's library positioned the town and its readers in a global community of knowledge. However, as always the central concern of the series remains the production, distribution and reception of printed artefacts in the British Isles. These papers were presented at the conference at the University of Birmingham held in July 2005. Although the conference was held three years after Peter Isaac had passed away, his legacy to this series, his enthusiasm and energy, were still felt by the conference-goers.

The title of this volume emphasises an important recurring theme in book trade history, that of connections. No author, printer, publisher, bookseller or reader operated in isolation, he or she was part of a network of practitioners of the book trade whose economic, political, social or personal interests were sometimes conflicting but always diverse. An essay by John Feather introduces this volume and served to coalesce the themes of the conference. Feather's expertise in the history of the book is renowned and his chapter in this volume provides a fascinating insight into those he perceives as being somewhat outside the book trade orthodoxy (if such a thing exists at all). He hopes to shine some light on the book trade's 'others'. This encompasses those who have been deliberately censored either by their contemporaries or since, and those whom history has simply forgotten,

such as the peddlers of cheap print outside London. Feather also makes a plea for the book trades of Wales, Scotland and Ireland to receive the attention they deserve, which the authors of the chapters here collected have obviously heeded.

The production and distribution of cheap and popular printed items is a recurring theme throughout these chapters, showing that scholars are now attempting to reverse the previous neglect of these cultural artefacts, dismissed by the less aware as 'ephemeral'. Angela McShane writes a chapter on the typography of the broadside ballad in seventeenth-century England, and proves that, far from being a peripheral print form during the period, it was ubiquitous and attracted readers from all levels of society. She offers a distinction between black- and white-letter ballads and explores their production methods and the audiences at which they were aimed. Eddie Cass and Paul Smith also explore a cheap printed form, the chapbook versions of the 'mumming plays', folk plays that were once popular throughout England and in parts of Scotland, Wales and Ireland. Cass explores how versions of these plays transferred from printer to printer in counties such as Lancashire in the nineteenth century, while Paul Smith offers a bibliographic overview of the survival of the 'mumming play' chapbooks and describes how an historian of the book might categorize and study these unusual examples of cheap print. In the final chapter of this volume, Elaine Jackson explores the colourful publishing career of Marguerite Jervis, known variously under pseudonyms such as Countess Barcynska and Oliver Sandys. Her contributions of popular fiction to journals in the early twentieth century are surveyed, as are the techniques she used to convey sexually and politically suggestive material.

Newspapers and periodicals feature prominently in the chapters of the *Print Networks* volume. Susannah Randall focuses on the proliferation of newspapers during the Popish Plot and Exclusion Crisis. Randall explores both institutional and cultural reasons for this development, including the lapse of the Licensing Act in 1679. By undertaking a statistical analysis of the production of newspapers, the author makes a unique contribution to the study of print during this turbulent period. A later lapse of the Licensing Act, in 1695, provides the starting point for the chapter by Victoria Gardner. She moves out of the capital to explore the print culture of the North-East of England,

a subject dear to the heart of Peter Isaac and many of the contributors to this series. She illuminates the career of John White of Newcastle and York, hitherto neglected by historians and biographers of eighteenth-century newspaper publishers. Indeed, Gardner regards the White family as so significant that she credits them with the founding of printing in the north of England from the Glorious Revolution onwards. The career of another eighteenth-century newspaper publisher is the focus of Stephen Brown's paper. Peter Williamson (or 'Indian Peter' as he became known) was active in Edinburgh during the middle years of the century, but his young life was a fascinating transatlantic story of enforced migration and kidnap by Native Americans. Williamson, like Feather's 'others' was always considered an outsider in the Edinburgh trade, culminating in his divorce from the daughter of Edinburgh bookseller John Wilson, which left him destitute.

From Scotland, the volume moves to Ireland, and a fascinating chapter by Johanna Archbold on the reaction in Irish periodicals to the 1798 rebellion and the Act of Union. Periodicals enjoyed a more secure position than that of newspapers, and were perceived to be less seditious. However, they were still priced cheaply and would have attracted similar sorts of readers to the newspapers. Archbold refutes the claim that many Irish periodicals were simply pale imitations of the London journals and attributes to them a lively and controversial political culture. Lisa Peters also surveys the reaction in newspapers to a period of political crisis, this time focusing on the North Wales press during the Boer War era and specifically their attitudes to David Lloyd George. It was his opposition to the war that thrust Lloyd George into the public eye and the reaction to this differed widely in the Liberal and Conservative newspapers. The relationship between publisher and author is the focus of the chapter from James Caudle. He writes about the experiences in London of James Boswell in the mid-eighteenth century and, through a detailed survey of Boswell's manuscript archive of letters and diaries, highlights the relationships he had with various book trade practitioners, especially William Flexney and Samuel Chandler. By juxtaposing the world of letters with that of print culture, Caudle exposes the importance of books and their production in London society during this period. The editors hope this collection of chapters by both eminent and emerging book history scholars will

reflect the growing significance of the subject among cultural and social historians of all eras. The editors would like to thank Dr. Maureen Bell for her assistance in editing this volume.

Contributors

Johanna Archbold has her PhD from Trinity College, Dublin. Funded by the Higher Education Authority of Ireland, her research focuses on print culture and specifically the development of monthly magazines in Ireland, Scotland and America in the long eighteenth century. Johanna has co-edited *Behond the Anchoring Grounds: More Crosscurrents in Irish and Scottish Studies,* forthcoming from Clò Ollscoile na Banríona at Queen's University Belfast.

Catherine Armstrong is a Lecturer in American History at Manchester Metropolitan University. Her first monograph entitled *Writing North America in the Seventeenth Century* was published in 2007 by Ashgate. Her book trade interests centre on transatlantic cultural connections between England and North America during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

Stephen Brown is the Master of Champlain College at Trent University in Ontario Canada and the 3M Fellow in the Department of English. The author of over fifty articles and book chapters and editor of the manuscripts of the Scottish 18th-century printer, William Smellie, he is currently engaged as co-editor of volume two of the Edinburgh History of the Book in Scotland.

Eddie Cass is a Research Fellow at the University of Aberdeen and the author of three books on folk plays. Currently, his main research interests are the 300 British folk play texts in the James Madison Carpenter Collection at the Library of Congress, Washington and the printing history of peace-egg chapbooks.

James J. Caudle is The Associate Editor of the Yale Editions of the Private Papers of James Boswell. His next volume in the series will be 'Boswell's Earliest Journals, 1758-1763', the companion volume to Boswell's 'General Correspondence, 1757-1763 (2006). His work in the History of the Book includes 'Richard Francklin...A Case Study', in The *Cambridge History of the Book in Britain: Volume 5, 1695-1830*, forthcoming; and 'Preaching In Parliament...1701-1760,' in *The English Sermon Revised...1600-1750* (2000). For the Oxford DNB (2004), he

wrote the biographies of the Booksellers Donaldson [with Richard Sher], the Dilly Brothers, Francklin, and Motte I and II.

John Feather has been Professor of Library and Information Studies at Loughborough University since 1987. He is the author of *The Provincial Book Trade in Eighteenth-Century England* (1985), *A History of British Publishing* (revised edition 2006) and many other books and papers on the history of books and the book trade.

Frank Felsenstein is Reed D. Voran Honors Distinguished Professor in the Humanities at Ball State University in Muncie, Indiana. He has taught at the Universities of Geneva and Leeds, Vanderbilt University and Yeshiva College in New York. When at Leeds, he was the organizer of the first British Book Trade conference, which was held in 1980.

Victoria Gardner is currently undertaking her D. Phil at St. John's College, Oxford. She is exploring the impact of newspaper ownership on social and economic status between 1760 and 1820.

John Hinks, Honorary Fellow at the Centre for Urban History, University of Leicester, has research interests in book-trade networks and early modern print culture. He is also a Visiting Lecturer at the University of Birmingham, where he contributes to the MA Text & Book in the English Department and runs a third-year course on 'Living and Writing in Shakespeare's England' for the Department of Modern History.

Elaine Jackson wrote her PhD thesis on the publishing and writing experiences of women writers of popular romance between the wars. Her ensuing research interests are women in publishing, and the history and development of dustwrappers. She is currently Editorial Assistant on the on-line journal of *Ergonomics Abstracts* at the University of Birmingham.

Angela McShane gained her PhD from the University of Warwick in 2005 and now teaches on the Masters programme at the Victoria and Albert Museum, London. She has published a number of articles and is currently turning her thesis on the political world of the broadside ballad into a book.

Lisa Peters is the law librarian at the University of Chester. She completed her doctoral thesis on 'Wrexham Newspapers, 1848-1914' in 2002 at the University of Wales, Aberystwyth.

Susannah Randall is a research student at Trinity College, Cambridge working towards a PhD on the London Newspaper Press, 1677 - 1685.

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Others: Some Reflections on Book Trade History

JOHN FEATHER

THE DANGER OF THE WRITTEN WORD is well understood. It was understood by the Nazi librarian Wolfgang Hermann when he denounced public libraries in Weimar Germany as 'literary bordellos'.[1] It was understood more recently by Radko Mladic when he ordered the deliberate destruction of the National and University Library of Bosnia in Sarajevo.[2] It was understood nearly five hundred years ago when Charles V burned all books in Arabic when he captured Tunis in 1536, just as his parents had destroyed all the Arabic manuscripts they could find when they completed the re-conquest of Spain in 1492.[3] Examples could be multiplied, and would perhaps be depressing. But before we engage in ritualized condemnation, we should perhaps pause and ask some uncomfortable questions about the history of books and the book trade in Britain.

When Charles V burned Arabic books, he did so because he genuinely believed that the alternative was that those who believed in them would themselves burn in a far hotter and more long-lasting fire. That may not excuse his action, but it does explain it. It also acknowledges his recognition of the power – and the danger – of the written word. Long before the invention of printing, books were written and circulated which promoted and supported heterodox views.

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[1] Matthew Battles, *Library. An Unquiet History* (London, 2004), p. 164.

[2] Sava Peic and Aisa Telalovic, 'Sarajevo: coping with disaster', in Paul Sturges and Diana Rosenberg, eds., *Disaster and After* (London & Los Angeles, 1999), pp. 151-60.

[3] Battles, *Library*, p. 67.

And such books have been suppressed by religious and secular authorities for as long as they have been written. The Judeao-Christian-Islamic tradition, so anxious and so proud to identify itself as the 'people of the book', has been particularly adept at this. The very act of giving supreme authority to the written word contains within it the seeds of repression of dissent.

For the same reason, the promoters of new ideas, the challengers to prevailing orthodoxies, have used the written and printed word to spread their ideas. In the narrower context of the British book trade, there are many groups – the 'others' of the title – whose history has been neglected, misrepresented or marginalized. There are many 'others': geographical, linguistic, political, religious, sexual, and social. When they are discussed at all in the formal histories of the trade, their products are all too often disparaged at least by implication. But we need to put them in perspective and context. The Dublin reprint of an eighteenth-century London book was perfectly legal in Ireland; yet English book trade historians all too often dismiss the mere fact of reprinting as 'piracy'. Would we have a different view of Roman Catholic books in England in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries if we called them 'samizdat' rather than 'recusant', and the presses that produced them 'underground' rather than 'surreptitious'? This is not an issue about the use of politically correct language. It is an issue which is central to our understanding of the history and development of the book trade in Britain.

Not just England – and certainly not only London!
Let us begin by examining geography. Conventional histories of the printed book trade in Britain focus on London, and up to a point they are right to do so. London has always been – and remains – the principal centre of publishing in the British Isles. The causes of this predominance are political, economic and cultural; there is no question of its importance. Yet there has always been – since long before Caxton arrived in Westminster – a book trade outside London and beyond the

English borders. There is ample evidence for shops selling books and associated goods in the major towns of late medieval England. And there is some evidence for a different kind of trade at a quite different level. The British Book Trade Index records a score of 'chapmen' scattered across England before 1476; for some at least there is evidence that they traded in books among their other wares.[4] And from the late fifteenth century onwards, the evidence for the existence and growth of the English provincial book trade is massive. This was very largely a distributive trade, and that has tended to attract less attention than the glamour of printing. But it is important to remember that the book trade did not arrive in York with Barker in 1642, nor in Norwich with Burges in 1701. The selling of books – and all that that implies – had been well established long before.[5] But throughout the history of the geographical expansion of the book trade in England, there is an undercurrent, a theme, which historians have accepted without always exploring. It was clearly to the economic benefit of the London trade to restrict the capacity of the provincial trade to compete with them, while at the same time encouraging it to develop a network of stable outlets for their own products. The distribution system which developed in the eighteenth century, and even more the system of wholesaling which dominated the trade from the 1780s until the Second World War, was designed to achieve precisely this end. By accident or design – and there is evidence for the latter – it worked against provincial publishers. When Archibald Constable was seeking an English co-publisher for his unexpected bestseller – Walter Scott – he turned first to the Robinson brothers. But they were in Leeds, and no better placed than he was in Edinburgh to tap into the English book market. By the time they had

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[4]   British Book Trade Index - www.bbti.bham.ac.uk - hereafter BBTI.

[5]   See John Feather, *The Provincial Book Trade in Eighteenth-Century England* (Cambridge, 1985).