

THE USES OF SCRIPT AND
PRINT, 1300–1700

EDITED BY
JULIA CRICK AND ALEXANDRA WALSHAM
University of Exeter



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Introduction: Script, print, and history

Alexandra Walsham and Julia Crick

When, in 1793, the fugitive French philosophe the Marquis de Condorcet traced his *Outline of an Historical View of the Progress of the Human Mind* through ten ages of history, he placed print in the seventh age, preceded by darkness. For him, the invention of printing marked a critical point in the process by which Western European society escaped the yoke of priestly dogmatism and monkish tyranny and launched from intellectual blindness into the age of Enlightenment.¹ In presenting medieval scribal culture as a symbol of clerical hypocrisy, corruption and dominance, and in linking the advent of the press with the triumph of reason and civilisation over ignorance and barbarity, Condorcet was reproducing a motif over 200 years old. In 1740 Prosper Marchand had likewise heralded printing as ‘un riche Présent du Ciel’, a conceit given graphic expression in the frontispiece to his book, which depicted the press descending from the heavens and being presented by Minerva and Mercury to Germany, and thence to the nations of Holland, England, Italy and France (Illustration 1).² But the myth of print as a providential instrument had its taproot in Reformation polemic. It was a trope which found its most classic articulation in John Foxe’s *Actes and Monuments*. For Foxe, as for Martin Luther before him, printing was a ‘divine’ and ‘miraculous’ art, a special gift from God which had dispelled the mists of idolatry and superstition and ‘heaped upon that proud kingdome’, the papacy, ‘a double confusion’.³ The theme was constantly echoed in the following century: by George Hakewill in 1627, who celebrated the role of this ‘new kinde of writing’ in redeeming books out of their ‘bondage’ in the libraries of the monasteries, and in 1662 by an anonymous apologist for the printing industry itself, who declared that

¹ Marquis de Condorcet, *Outlines of an Historical View of the Progress of the Human Mind* (1795; first publ. in French 1793), esp. pp. 178–85.

² Prosper Marchand, *Histoire de l’origine et des premiers progrès de l’imprimerie* (The Hague, 1740), p. 1 and frontispiece.

³ John Foxe, *Actes and Monuments*, 2 vols. (1583), vol. II, p. 707.



Illustration 1 The press descending from the heavens. Prosper Marchand, *Histoire de l'origine et des premiers progrès de l'imprimerie* (The Hague, 1740), frontispiece.

the pen compared with the press was ‘but as a Rush-candle to a Torch’ and boasted that by this means ‘the Church of Rome hath received such a wound, as she will never be able to cure: for upon its discovery, such a light hath broken forth, that many Kingdoms and Countries that formerly had no other glimpse but what proceeded from her Dark Lanthorn, have hence received so great Illumination, that they finde just occasion to forsake her’.⁴

The concept of a printing revolution, as retrospectively created by early modern writers, has exerted enduring and powerful influence over subsequent historians. In her famous book, *The Printing Press as an Agent of Change* (1979), Elizabeth Eisenstein saw the invention of the mechanical press as the mainspring of a major cultural metamorphosis, as a development which, by bringing standardisation, permanence, and the possibility of mass dissemination, not only facilitated and transformed the Renaissance, Reformation and the Scientific Revolution in turn, but even altered ‘the nature of the causal nexus itself’. In surveying the late medieval culture of scribal copying, she emphasised the inherent instability and infidelity of manuscript transmission and portrayed the handwritten text as an early and easy casualty of the introduction of the new technology.⁵ For Eisenstein and the generation of scholarship she represented, the boundary between ‘script’ and ‘print’ demarcated the barrier between the medieval and early modern eras.

Medievalists stand in uneasy relation to this divide. While acknowledging that printing belongs to the complex of events which have been used to define the Middle Ages from their inception, some have fiercely resisted such cultural partitions, rejecting a ‘crude binarism that locates modernity (“us”) on one side and premodernity (“them”) on the other’.⁶

⁴ George Hakewill, *An Apologie of the Power and Providence of God in the Government of the World* (Oxford, 1627), book III, p. 257 and pp. 256–9 *passim*. Hakewill was echoing the words of Polydore Vergil, *A Brief Discourse Concerning Printing and Printers* (1662), pp. 22–3.

⁵ E. L. Eisenstein, *The Printing Press as an Agent of Change: Communications and Cultural Transformations in Early Modern Europe*, 2 vols. in 1 (Cambridge, 1980 edn), p. 703. For her characterisation of medieval scribal culture, see pp. 10–14. Her work was influenced by M. McLuhan, *The Gutenberg Galaxy: The Making of Typographical Man* (Toronto, 1962). See also the optimistic assessment of the impact of printing in L. Febvre and H.-J. Martin, *The Coming of the Book: The Impact of Printing 1450–1800*, trans. D. Gerard (London and New York, 1976; first publ. Paris 1958).

⁶ L. Patterson, ‘On the Margin: Postmodernism, Ironic History and Medieval Studies’, *Speculum* 65 (1990), 93. See also his ‘Critical Historicism and Medieval Studies’, in L. Patterson (ed.), *Literary Practice and Social Change in Britain, 1380–1530* (Oxford, 1990), p. 4; D. Aers, ‘A Whisper in the Ear of Early Modernists; or, Reflections on Literary Critics Writing the History of the Subject’, in D. Aers (ed.), *Culture and History 1350–1600: Essays on English Communities, Identities and Writing* (1992), p. 192; D. Wallace, *Chaucerian Polity: Absolutist Lineages and Associational Forms in England and Italy* (Stanford, 1997), pp. xiv–xvi.

Yet this inherited model of polarity and periodisation still shapes the contours of much academic endeavour. The opposition between the two media is institutionalised in libraries in which the ‘Rare Books’ and ‘Manuscript’ rooms occupy separate spaces and are frequented by different sets of readers. Its chronological dimension is perpetuated in the traditional disciplinary distinction between ‘medievalists’ and ‘early modernists’ and reflected in the lack of dialogue, even the degree of misunderstanding and distrust, which can divide those working in these respective fields. For if the shift ‘from script to print’ has long set the agenda for specialists of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, much medieval English historiography over the past two decades has moved in semi-conscious parallel, respecting the advance traced by Michael Clanchy between 1066 and 1307, ‘from memory to written record’.⁷

In recent years, however, new research by both medievalists and early modernists has begun to unsettle old assumptions about the nature and development of communication in the period between 1300 and 1700. The interfaces between literacy and orality and between the products of the pen and the press have prompted a wealth of important and stimulating studies.⁸ In the process the ingrained contrast between ‘script’ and ‘print’ has begun to blur and fade, giving way to an emphasis on their lingering co-existence, interaction and symbiosis both before and after 1500. To change the metaphor, the division between the *terra cognita* of printing and the obscure, unmapped world of scribal culture now seems to have almost run its rhetorical course. Building on the burgeoning literature which has grown up under the rubric of ‘the history of the book’, this collection of essays seeks to promote discussion and collaboration between scholars working on either side of this long-standing divide and to transcend the constraints imposed by conventional periodisation, technical

⁷ M. T. Clanchy, *From Memory to Written Record: England 1066–1307*, 2nd edn (Oxford, 1993). S. D. White, in his review of the second edition, noted Clanchy’s indebtedness to the script-print model: *Speculum* 77 (1997), 131–3. This has earlier roots: H. J. Chaytor, *From Script to Print: An Introduction to Medieval Literature* (Cambridge, 1945).

⁸ Including G. P. Tyson and S. S. Wagonheim (eds.), *Print and Culture in the Renaissance: Essays on the Advent of Printing in Europe* (Newark, 1986); A. Grafton and A. Blair (eds.), *The Transmission of Culture in Early Modern Europe* (Philadelphia, 1990); S. Hindman (ed.), *Printing the Written Word: The Social History of Books, c.1450–1520* (Ithaca and London, 1991); A. F. Marotti and M. D. Bristol, *Print, Manuscript, and Performance: The Changing Relations of the Media in Early Modern England* (Columbus, OH, 2000). Such themes have also been explored in several festschrifts, containing essays which are largely bibliographical in character: e.g. R. Beadle and A. J. Piper (eds.), *New Science out of Old Books: Studies in Manuscripts and Early Printed Books in Honour of A. I. Doyle* (Aldershot, 1995) and A. S. G. Edwards, V. Gillespie and R. Hanna (eds.), *The English Medieval Book: Studies in Memory of Jeremy Griffiths* (2000). See also *CHBB* 3 and 4. Many of these studies perpetuate the medieval/early modern division.

specialisation, and confessional historiography. It is concerned to refine the boundaries between the cultures of speech, manuscript and print in England and to investigate the origins and implications of the historical fissures which they have come to represent. It seeks to emphasise that writing and print have overlapping but also separate histories and associations and to demonstrate the ways in which the medium not only encloses but also often encodes and engenders the message. The purpose of this introduction is to provide a backdrop for the twelve essays and the epilogue that follow.

We begin with the observation that some of the most striking challenges to the older paradigm of the printing revolution have come from historians of print themselves. Against the earlier emphasis upon the immutability of print, the late D. F. McKenzie and others have drawn attention to its ephemerality, to the ways in which it facilitated the emergence of a topical literature which was inherently transient. Meanwhile, the work of Roger Chartier has cast doubt on the uniformity which authoritative printed texts are alleged to have been able to create by underlining the diverse and infinite ways in which such objects could be appropriated, used and interpreted by their consumers.⁹ More recently, in *The Nature of the Book*, Adrian Johns has persuasively contested the assumption that fixity and fidelity were intrinsic qualities of the products of the mechanical press, arguing instead that these were features which had to be artificially grafted on to them. Printing did not possess preservative power *per se*; it did not protect texts from corruption or guarantee stability, truth or reliability any more than manuscript copying. On the contrary, it often led to the cumulative accretion of error, a point emphasised here in Scott Mandelbrote's discussion of seventeenth-century printed editions of Scripture. To combat this, mechanisms for creating the impression of definitive knowledge and credit had to be manufactured, among which we may number the footnote.¹⁰

This recognition of the contested and unstable character of printed materials is partly a function of fresh awareness of the role which entrepreneurial printers, compositors and stationers played in determining content, meaning and form. Far from transparent projections of an unmediated authorial

⁹ D. F. McKenzie, 'Speech-Manuscript-Print', *The Library Chronicle of the University of Texas at Austin*, 20 (1990), 99–100. Roger Chartier has expounded this thesis in a variety of publications: see esp. his *The Cultural Uses of Print in Early Modern France*, trans. L. G. Cochrane (Princeton, 1987); 'General Introduction: Print Culture', in R. Chartier (ed.), *The Culture of Print: Power and the Uses of Print in Early Modern Europe* (Cambridge, 1989), pp. 1–10; 'Texts, Printing, Readings', in L. Hunt (ed.), *The New Cultural History* (Berkeley, 1989), pp. 154–75.

¹⁰ A. Johns, *The Nature of the Book: Print and Knowledge in the Making* (Chicago and London, 1998), pp. 2–6, 30–6, 624–5, and *passim*. A. Grafton, *The Footnote: A Curious History* (1997).

voice, printed books need to be seen as the outcome of a complex negotiation between the commercial instincts of the businessmen who produced them and the priorities of those who had initially written and composed them. William Caxton, England's proto-typographer, is a case in point: combining the functions of editor and publisher, he 'corrected' and altered the text of Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales* in ways which significantly shaped it.¹¹ New research is likewise revealing how significantly figures like John Day contributed to the making of key works like Foxe's 'Book of Martyrs', while Ian Green's exhaustive survey of Protestant bestsellers provides further evidence of how the strategies employed by shrewd publishers in their efforts to establish a niche in a rapidly expanding market subtly distorted and diversified the messages of godly ministers and preachers.¹² The piracy and plagiarism which were rife in the book trade presented a chronic threat to the credibility of its products, so much so that as late as 1734 Jean Theophilus Desaguliers announced he would inscribe his name in each copy of his *Course of Experimental Philosophy* in order to deter unauthorised versions of this work. Ironically, the only way to ensure the authenticity of a text was to abandon typography and return to the personal seal of approval which could be bestowed upon it by the more ancient technology of the pen.¹³

Equally, historians are becoming increasingly conscious of the constraints upon the printing industry in England. Compared with the highly decentralised culture of print which was the pattern in most Continental countries, its English counterpart was overwhelmingly concentrated in London, with minor offshoots in the university towns of Oxford and Cambridge. Not until 1695 did the lifting of restrictions enable provincial presses to be legally established. Traffic in printed materials, by contrast with scribal products, thus travelled largely in one direction: from the capital outwards. Moreover, as Andrew Pettegree has recently stressed, at least for the first century after the invention of printing, England must be regarded as occupying 'the outer ring of a two-speed Europe'. Despite – even, perhaps, because of – the vast body of scholarship devoted to Caxton, it is not always recognised that early English print culture was relatively modest in scope, held back by a variety of structural and economic barriers. One measure of this is

¹¹ L. Hellinga, 'Manuscripts in the Hands of Printers', in J. B. Trapp (ed.), *Manuscripts in the Fifty Years after the Invention of Printing* (1983), pp. 3–11.

¹² E. Evenden and T. S. Freeman, 'John Foxe, John Day and the Printing of the "Book of Martyrs"', in R. Myers, M. Harris and G. Mandelbrote (eds.), *Lives in Print: Biography and the Book Trade from the Middle Ages to the Twenty-First Century* (2002), pp. 23–54; I. Green, *Print and Protestantism in Early Modern England* (Oxford, 2000), pp. 444, 590 and *passim*.

¹³ Cited in Johns, *Nature of the Book*, p. 182.

its slender output of incunables – no more than 3% of the total of 10,000 for Europe as a whole.¹⁴ Neither the monument to English bibliography which is the *STC*, nor the swift growth of the industry in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, should blind us to its limitations. The granting of a monopoly to the Stationers' Company in 1557, combined with repeated governmental efforts to regulate the press, placed considerable obstacles in the way of the development of the print trade. While debate continues about the scale and effectiveness of official censorship and internal licensing, it is clear that these mechanisms for control had an inhibiting effect upon printed publication.¹⁵ Although intermittent and spasmodic in character, they certainly persuaded some to adopt silence as the path of discretion and safety. More significantly for the preoccupations of this volume, they also helped to ensure that manuscript retained its vitality as a medium of communication long after the arrival of print.

This has been the theme of a number of important studies by Harold Love, Arthur Marotti, Peter Beal, Henry Woudhuysen, and Margaret Ezell.¹⁶ As these and other scholars have shown, unprinted texts occupied a fundamental place in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century English life. Script was absolutely central to the administrative and bureaucratic

¹⁴ A. Pettegree, 'Printing and the Reformation: The English Exception', in P. Marshall and A. Ryrie (eds.), *The Beginnings of English Protestantism* (Cambridge, 2002), esp. pp. 157–65. For recent surveys of key aspects of the early printing industry, see the essays in the section 'Technique and Trade' in *CHBB* 3; D. F. McKenzie, 'Printing and Publishing 1557–1700: Constraints on the London Book Trades', in *CHBB* 4, pp. 553–67. For the book-trade in the provinces, see J. Barnard and M. Bell, 'The English Provinces', in *ibid.*, pp. 665–86. For the broader European context, see D. McKitterick, 'The Beginning of Printing', in C. Allmand (ed.), *The New Cambridge Medieval History*, vol. vii, c.1415–c.1500 (Cambridge, 1998), pp. 287–98.

¹⁵ For emphasis on the repressiveness of the censorship system, see A. Patterson, *Censorship and Interpretation: The Conditions of Reading and Writing in Early Modern England* (Madison, WI, 1984) and C. Hill, 'Censorship and English Literature', in *Collected Essays*, vol. 1, *Writing and Revolution in Seventeenth Century England* (Brighton, 1985). For revisionist analyses see S. Lambert, 'State Control of the Press in Theory and Practice: The Role of the Stationers' Company before 1640', in R. Myers and M. Harris (eds.), *Censorship and the Control of Print in England and France, 1600–1910* (Winchester, 1992), pp. 1–32; A. B. Worden, 'Literature and Political Censorship in Early Modern England', in A. C. Duke and C. A. Tamse (eds.), *Too Mighty to be Free: Censorship in Britain and the Netherlands* (Zutphen, 1987), pp. 45–62; C. S. Clegg, *Press Censorship in Elizabethan England* (Cambridge, 1997) and *Press Censorship in Jacobean England* (Cambridge, 2001).

¹⁶ H. Love, *Scribal Publication in Seventeenth-Century England* (Oxford, 1993); A. F. Marotti, *Manuscript, Print and the English Renaissance Lyric* (Ithaca and London, 1995); H. R. Woudhuysen, *Sir Philip Sidney and the Circulation of Manuscripts 1558–1640* (Oxford, 1996); P. Beal, *In Praise of Scribes: Manuscripts and their Makers in Seventeenth-Century England* (Oxford, 1998); P. Beal, *Index of English Literary Manuscripts*, I: 1450–1625, 2 vols. (1980); II: 1625–1700, 2 vols. (1987–93); M. J. M. Ezell, *Social Authorship and the Advent of Print* (Baltimore and London, 1999). See also M. Hobbs, *Early Seventeenth-Century Verse Miscellany Manuscripts* (Aldershot, 1992). It may be noted that literary scholars have so far dominated the rediscovery of post-print scribal culture. The enterprise has also left its mark in *English Manuscript Studies 1100–1700* (1989–). Scribal publication was also the abiding concern of the late and much lamented Jeremy Maule.

culture of the period, the basic instrument of record-keeping in the late Tudor and Stuart state and Church and the chief means of issuing executive instructions, as it had been in Lancastrian England. More intimate and flexible in character than the abstract and impersonal organ of print, it was also the preferred method for reproducing and disseminating a wide range of other texts. Poets like Sir Philip Sidney and Andrew Marvell scorned the press, regarding resort to it as ‘a lapse in gentlemanly taste and decorum’. Some, like John Donne, who revered God himself as scrivener, felt obliged to apologise for ever having ‘descended’ to it at all.¹⁷ Script was the choice of writers who sought to communicate with an exclusive circle of readers or retain a reserved status for the knowledge they conveyed: it flattered patrons, concealed secrets, and surrounded religious revelations with an aura of sacredness. The Bristol prophetess Grace Carrie, for instance, refrained from printing a narrative of a vision she received in 1635 on the grounds that it was ‘very unfitt, that such divine & miracalous truth shuld be made common in these times wherin so manie falasies and false printed papers are set fourth’.¹⁸ Gender and geography also played their part: women and provincial writers without access to the patronage networks and presses of the capital gravitated quite naturally towards the scribal medium.¹⁹ And often reluctance to communicate through the device of movable type may have merely reflected unease and anxiety about the rapid pace of technological change.²⁰

There was also a thriving trade in handwritten legal crib books and educational texts and, right up to the end of the seventeenth century, commercial scriptoria played an active role in the circulation of ‘separates’ recounting parliamentary affairs and overseas news. Offering more latitude for the expression of subversive, heterodox and unacceptable ideas, manuscript was the natural medium for obscene verse and for critical political commentary. Flourishing in times of governmental repression, scribal publication of such material tended to falter only during periods when the machinery of censorship crumpled or collapsed.²¹ It was also a trusty ally of religious dissent: as Thomas Freeman’s exploration of the epistolary activity of the

¹⁷ P. Beal, ‘John Donne and the Circulation of Manuscripts’, in *CHBB* 4, p. 122. See also A. F. Marotti, *John Donne, Coterie Poet* (Madison, WI, 1986).

¹⁸ Quoted by M. J. M. Ezell, *The Patriarch’s Wife: Literary Evidence and the History of the Family* (Chapel Hill, NC, 1987), p. 65.

¹⁹ See *ibid.* and Ezell, *Social Authorship*, esp. p. 18 and chs. 1, 5; *English Manuscript Studies 1100–1700*, vol. 9, *Writings by Early Modern Women*, ed. P. Beal and M. Ezell (2000).

²⁰ McKenzie, ‘Speech-Manuscript-Print’, p. 109.

²¹ Woudhuysen, *Circulation of Manuscripts*, p. 391.

Marian martyrs shows below, it could be a powerful weapon in the hands of the persecuted and dispossessed.²²

Crucially, these new studies have demonstrated that long after the introduction of the mechanised press scribal copying remained economically viable. It should not be assumed that typographical reproduction was necessarily more cost effective: the high initial investment required in typesetting made print uncompetitive in the case of small numbers of texts. Manuscripts, by contrast, could be produced to order, without the problem of disposing of unsold copies.²³ As Woudhuysen concludes, 'for at least two centuries the proactive pen and its many different and individual offspring complemented and at times rivalled the press's more uniform products'. Far from a 'curious anachronism', scribal copying remained a competitive technology for transmitting texts even after 1700.²⁴

This discovery has encouraged scholars of early modern communication to approach the manuscript book with greater sophistication and sensitivity, to become more closely attuned to the fluidity and malleability of texts, to the ways in which the acts of creation and duplication are interwoven. As a consequence, historians of sixteenth- and seventeenth-century culture have begun to embrace and absorb assumptions and expectations which have long underpinned the study of medieval textuality. As in 'the medieval manuscript matrix' described by Stephen Nichols, the copying of texts is increasingly seen as 'an adventure in supplementation rather than faithful imitation', a dynamic, open-ended process in which consumers merge with producers and in which concepts like 'authorship' and 'originality' are rendered virtually meaningless.²⁵ The disciplinary frontline between historians of medieval and early modern culture is steadily withering away.

In questioning received wisdom about the occlusion of script by print and the relative roles and merits of the two media, furthermore, the work

²² See also M. Greengrass, 'Informal Networks in Sixteenth-Century French Protestantism', in R. A. Mentzer and A. Spicer (eds.), *Society and Culture in the Huguenot World 1559–1685* (Cambridge, 2002) and Alexandra Walsham's essay, below.

²³ McKenzie, 'Speech-Manuscript-Print', p. 94; Love, *Scribal Publication*, pp. 126–34.

²⁴ Woudhuysen, *Circulation of Manuscripts*, p. 391; Beal, *In Praise of Scribes*, p. v; Ezell, *Social Authorship*, p. 12.

²⁵ S. G. Nichols, 'Introduction: Philology in a Manuscript Culture', *Speculum* 65 (1990), 1–10, at 8 and 3 respectively. See also E. H. Reiter, 'The Reader as Author of the User-Produced Manuscript: Reading and Rewriting Popular Latin Theology in the Late Middle Ages', *Viator* 27 (1996), 151–69; G. L. Bruns, 'The Originality of Texts in a Manuscript Culture', in his *Inventions: Writing, Textuality, and Understanding in Literary History* (New Haven, 1982), pp. 44–59; S. Reynolds, *Medieval Reading: Grammar, Rhetoric and the Classical Text* (Cambridge, 1996). For early modernists acknowledging these points, see Marotti, *Manuscript*, ch. 3; Woudhuysen, *Circulation of Manuscripts*, pp. 15–16; Beal, *In Praise of Scribes*, pp. 24–5; Ezell, *Social Authorship*, p. 40.

of early modernists converges with the insights which have emerged from accounts of scribal activity before 1500. As Michael Clanchy emphasised twenty years ago, we need to see the invention of printing not so much as the starting point of a new age as the culmination of a millennium, during which the displacement of the scroll by the codex in late antiquity was perhaps the most critical landmark. To speak of 'the coming of the book' in the 1450s is to ignore ten centuries of its long and complex history. To understand the success of the press we must investigate the social and intellectual soil from which it sprang.²⁶ The foundation of the European universities in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries placed new demands on the supply and even structure of books. Concentrations of scholars in need of texts were served by a book trade capable of large-scale production, detectable in the French capital as early as the last quarter of the twelfth century, and in Oxford a hundred years later. Richard and Mary Rouse have recently reconstructed in vivid detail the life of the scribal quarters of late medieval Paris, which revolved around dynasties of professional scribes supplemented by the casual labour of priests and students, who were loaned out corrected exemplars for copying in quires (*pecia*).²⁷ In England, before 1250 the city of St Albans sought to regulate the employment of scribes and in late fourteenth-century York they formed a guild of their own.²⁸

Meanwhile, as Malcolm Parkes has argued, the patterns of reasoning and interrogation of authorities integral to scholastic learning caused changes in the organisation and layout of texts, as well as the evolution of increasingly sophisticated systems of glossing and mechanisms of reference, including the use of running titles, indexes and tables of contents.²⁹ Nurtured in the circles of Italian humanist scholars and in the renewed religious orders of northwestern Europe, these technical developments promoted enhanced utility and clarity and facilitated increasing accessibility to the written word.

²⁶ M. Clanchy, 'Looking Back from the Invention of Printing', in D. P. Resnick (ed.), *Literacy in Historical Perspective* (Washington, 1983), pp. 7–22. For equation of the age of print with the 'coming of the book', see Febvre and Martin, *The Coming of the Book*; M. B. Stilwell, *The Beginning of the World of Books, 1450–1470* (New York, 1972); and H. Bekker-Nielson et al. (eds.), *From Script to Book: A Symposium* (Odense, 1986). See also D. Pearsall, 'Introduction', in J. Griffiths and D. Pearsall (eds.), *Book Production and Publishing in Britain 1375–1475* (Cambridge, 1989), pp. 1–10, and A. Grafton's criticism of Eisenstein in 'The Importance of Being Printed', *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 11 (1980), 273–5.

²⁷ R. H. Rouse and M. A. Rouse, *Manuscripts and their Makers: Commercial Book Producers in Medieval Paris 1200–1500*, 2 vols. (Turnhout, 2000), vol. 1, p. 26. M. B. Parkes, 'The Provision of Books', in J. I. Catto and R. Evans (eds.), *The History of the University of Oxford* (Oxford, 1992), vol. 11, pp. 418–21.

²⁸ Chaytor, *From Script to Print*, p. 17, and ch. 2 *passim*.

²⁹ M. B. Parkes, 'The Influence of the Concepts of *Ordinatio* and *Compilatio* on the Development of the Book', in J. J. G. Alexander and M. T. Gibson (eds.), *Medieval Learning and Literature: Essays presented to Richard William Hunt* (Oxford, 1976), pp. 115–41.

Within this collection David d'Avray argues that the volume of medieval scribal production has been greatly underestimated. Questioning the commonplace that commercial scribes had effectively superseded the regular clergy, he points to the key role of the friars and emphasises the ability of script to operate as a mass medium. Certainly, the physical evidence of books attests speed of production. Since the twelfth century an entire hierarchy of cursive scripts had been developed to facilitate the rapid copying of sought after texts³⁰ and the replacement of parchment by paper gradually made book production faster and cheaper.³¹ As the Rouses have remarked, the period witnessed the birth of a book which in certain respects had more in common with the products of the mechanical press than it did with its earlier manuscript precursors.³²

In England, as elsewhere, there was an unprecedented explosion in the availability and ownership of books in the late fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, an expansion which both sustained and was sustained by the rise of a literate laity. This boom owed much to the growing desire of laypeople to acquire their own copies of devotional works like primers and to the increasing tendency for university students and parish priests to transcribe key Latin texts for their personal use. However, the literate ambitions of private individuals ranged beyond the acquisition of immediately utilitarian texts into the preparation and collection of domestic commonplace books and 'household miscellanies' containing verse, religious prose, and a variety of other items.³³ These trends inspired amateur manuscript production on a scale which surely contributed to the textual instability taken by Eisenstein as typical of late medieval scribal culture. Individuals and institutions also had easy recourse to the services of professional scribes employed by workshops and stationers. In 1448–9, for example, twenty new professionals were purchased from a stationer to equip the newly founded All Souls College in Oxford³⁴ and the same century saw the routine commercial production

³⁰ M. B. Parkes, *English Cursive Book Hands 1250–1500* (1969), pp. xiii–xxv.

³¹ But see the caveats of N. Barker, 'The Trade and Manufacture of Paper before 1800', in S. Cavaciocchi (ed.), *Produzione e commercio della carta e del libro secc. xiii–xviii* (Prato, 1992), p. 214.

³² M. A. Rouse and R. H. Rouse, 'Backgrounds to Print: Aspects of the Manuscript Book in Northern Europe of the Fifteenth Century', in their *Authentic Witnesses: Approaches to Medieval Texts and Manuscripts* (Notre Dame, 1991), p. 451 and pp. 449–66 *passim*. See more generally C. Bühler, *The Fifteenth Century Book: The Scribes, the Printers, the Decorators* (Philadelphia, 1960); P. Saenger, 'Colard Mansion and the Evolution of the Printed Book', *The Library Quarterly*, 45 (1975), 405–18; B. Bischoff, *Latin Palaeography: Antiquity and the Middle Ages*, trans. D. Ó Cróinín and D. Ganz (Cambridge, 1990), pp. 224–9, 235–8.

³³ J. Boffey and J. J. Thompson, 'Anthologies and Miscellanies: Production and Choice of Texts', in Griffiths and Pearsall (eds.), *Book Production*, pp. 279–315. See also M. Vale, 'Manuscripts and Books', in Allmand (ed.), *New Cambridge Medieval History*, vol. vii, pp. 278–86.

³⁴ A. Wathey, 'The Production of Books of Liturgical Polyphony', in Griffiths and Pearsall (eds.), *Book Production*, p. 150.

of books of poetry in London alongside continuing provincial production in religious houses and elsewhere.³⁵

Collectively, these observations underline the artificiality of drawing hard and fast boundaries between script and print. Instead we need to see the intermixture and hybridity of these two media as a keynote of the culture of communication in this period. Scholars and antiquarians owned texts printed from manuscript and manuscripts transcribed from printed texts. Aesthetics sometimes intervened. Forty-eight of fifty-eight surviving volumes in the library of the wealthy Flemish bibliophile Raphael de Marcatellis (1437–1508), for instance, were copied in part from print: extravagantly bound texts inscribed on white vellum in Gothic bookhand, their luxurious physical appearance disguised their typographical origins.³⁶ Such habits persisted. A mid-seventeenth-century English manuscript miscellany associated with Christ Church, Oxford, now preserved in the Bodleian Library contains transcriptions of two Wynkyn de Worde pamphlets which seek to recreate the impression of the printed text, complete with title-page, woodcuts, colophon and printer's device (Illustrations 2 and 3).³⁷

It must also be recognised that for a long time print was simply regarded as a surrogate for manuscript. The aim of the producers of the earliest printed books was to reproduce the features of medieval literate culture as exactly as possible. Thus Gutenberg's famous 42-line bible was printed in a Gothic font (mimicking the formal book hand employed in the transcription sacred texts) and a psalter produced in 1457 involved three colours of ink and included mechanically generated calligraphic ornamentation.³⁸ Early sixteenth-century printed books of hours likewise sought to resemble precisely their illuminated manuscript cousins: they were less expensive replicas of texts readers regarded above all as holy objects (Illustration 4). Bureaucratic documents such as indulgence certificates and legal contracts, by contrast, simulated medieval chancery hands³⁹ and both incunables and

³⁵ A. S. G. Edwards and D. Pearsall, 'Manuscripts of the Major English Poetic Texts', in Griffiths and Pearsall (eds.), *Book Production*, pp. 258, 267.

³⁶ A. Derolez, 'The Copying of Printed Books for Humanistic Bibliophiles in the Fifteenth Century', in H. Bekker-Nielsen *et al.*, *From Script to Print: A Symposium* (Odense, 1986), pp. 144–6, and 140–60 *passim*. See also Bühler, *Fifteenth-Century Book*, pp. 34–9; C. E. Lutz, 'Manuscripts Copied from Printed Books', *Yale University Library Gazette*, 49 (1974–5), 261–7; M. D. Reeve, 'Manuscripts Copied from Printed Books', in Trapp (ed.), *Manuscripts*, pp. 12–20.

³⁷ For other examples, see Marotti, *Manuscript*, pp. 326–30.

³⁸ See N. F. Blake, 'From Manuscript to Print', in Griffiths and Pearsall (eds.), *Book Production*, pp. 404–7; Rouse and Rouse, *Manuscripts*, vol. 1, p. 328; McKitterick, 'Beginning of Printing', pp. 294–6.

³⁹ See Clanchy, 'Looking Back', pp. 12–13; R. Hirsch, 'Scribal Tradition and Innovation in Early Printed Books', in his *The Printed Word: Its Impact and Diffusion* (1978).



Illustration 2 Manuscript transcription of printed pamphlet in a mid-seventeenth-century verse miscellany probably associated with Christ Church, Oxford: 'Here begynneth a lyttel propre Jette Called cryste crosse me spede. a. b. c.' (STC 14546.5, Wynkyn de Worde [c.1534?]), title-page. (Bodleian Library, MS Eng. Poet. e. 97, p. 207.)

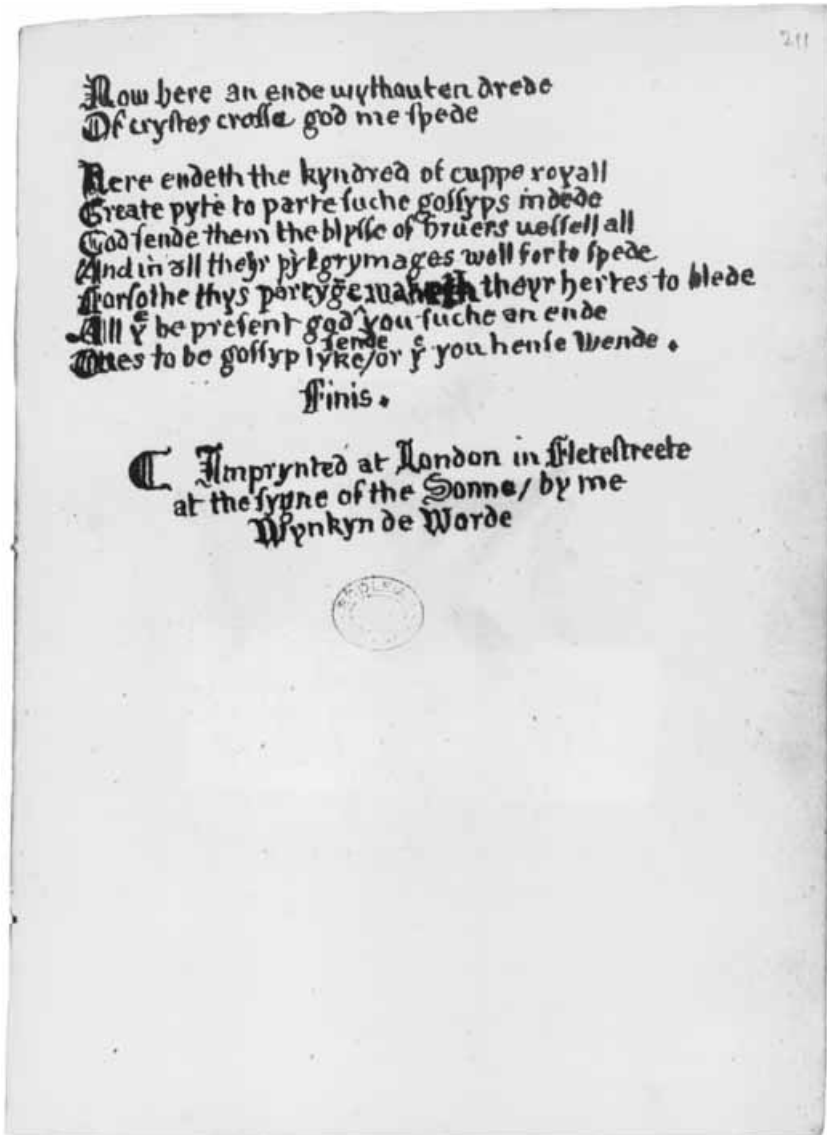


Illustration 3 Manuscript transcription of printed pamphlet in a mid-seventeenth-century verse miscellany probably associated with Christ Church, Oxford: 'Here begynneth a lyttel propre Jeste Called cryste crosse me spede. a.b.c.' (*STC* 14546.5, Wynkyn de Worde [c.1534?]), colophon. (Bodleian Library, MS Eng. Poet. e. 97, p. 211.)



Illustration 4 Page from an incunable book of hours (Salisbury use) showing the Adoration of the Magi, imitating an illuminated manuscript written in Burgundian cursive. The initials have been inserted in red and blue ink by hand. *Hore beate Marie v[ir]gi[ni]s secundu[m] usum Sarum* ([Paris: I. Philippe for] Thielman Kerver, 1497), *STC* 15885, sigs. e 2v-e 3r.

marriage charters sometimes left the printers unfinished, with the expectation that initials, decoration and even text would be added by hand.⁴⁰

As these examples suggest, neither script nor print can be taken as an undifferentiated whole: different registers within them had always conveyed different messages and carried different values. The highly abbreviated cursive of scholastic Latin communicated distinctly from the outsize textura of a liturgical manuscript, just as printing in black letter reached a wider audience than Roman type. The shift in the seventeenth century from the former to the latter may be seen as one symptom of the growing prestige of print. Even so, a residual sense of the superior intimacy and presence intrinsic to manuscript persisted, not least in the device of entitling books *An epistle* and *A copy of a letter*. It is also perhaps evident in the characteristic impulse of owners to personalise printed texts by filling their margins with annotations, a practice which might be seen as a transmutation of the medieval art of glossing.⁴¹

It may also be remarked that in some respects the new technology reinforced older ways of thinking by ensuring they were more uniformly diffused. The *Golden Legend* is one staple of the age before print to which the press gave a new lease of life. John Foxe himself extolled the role of print in preserving and rejuvenating texts which had been buried in the darkness of the past, insisting that God had sent this ‘excellent art’ ‘to revive agayne the lost lyght of knowledge to these blynde tymes, by renuing of holsome and auncient writers: whose doinges and teachings otherwise had lyen in oblivion . . .’⁴² His own massive tome, which prints many manuscript ‘monuments’ to the trials and sufferings of proto-Protestant sects, is a testament to this process, as is the frequent reproduction in the Reformation era of the fifteenth-century Lollard text *Wycliffes Wycket*.⁴³ In this volume Julia Crick shows how Anglo-Saxon charters (not a few of them forgeries) gained a new readership in the era of print.

⁴⁰ E. König, ‘The Influence of the Invention of Printing on the Development of German Illumination’, in Trapp (ed.), *Manuscripts*, p. 85. R. Chartier, ‘From Ritual to the Hearth: Marriage Charters in Seventeenth-Century Lyons’, in Chartier (ed.), *The Culture of Print*, p. 187.

⁴¹ See P. Saenger and M. Heinlen, ‘Incunable Description and its Implications for the Analysis of Fifteenth-Century Reading Habits’, in Hindman (ed.), *Printing the Written Word*, pp. 225–58. For later examples, see J. Morrill, ‘William Dowsing, the Bureaucratic Puritan’, in J. Morrill, P. Slack, and D. Woolf (eds.), *Public Duty and Private Conscience in Seventeenth-Century England* (Oxford, 1993), esp. pp. 182–7; W. H. Sherman, *John Dee: The Politics of Reading and Writing in the English Renaissance* (Amherst, MA, 1995), esp. ch. 4.

⁴² J. Foxe (ed.), *The Whole Workes of W. Tyndall, John Frith, and Doct. Barnes, three Worthy Martyrs* (1573), sig. A2r.

⁴³ A text known only from surviving printed editions. See A. Hudson, ‘“No Newe Thyng”: The Printing of Medieval Texts in the Early Reformation Period’, in her *Lollards and their Books* (London and Ronceverte, 1985), pp. 227–48.

The part played by print in reviving and propagating the products of scribal culture neatly parallels the manner in which it served to nourish and reinvigorate unwritten tradition. As Adam Fox and others have demonstrated, at least in the short term typography (and indeed chirography) popularised long cherished beliefs that had hitherto been confined to the sphere of speech. Fox argues that the development of print and the spread of writing in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries led to a tremendous enriching of the verbal and vernacular repertoire and to a renewal of many traditions hitherto confined to the realm of the spoken word. It preserved legends, rhymes, and pieces of proverbial wisdom on paper and in the guise of the broadsheet rescued many songs from near extinction. Old stories and romances of Robin Hood, King Arthur, Bevis of Southampton, and Guy of Warwick – some of which had flowed out of literate culture themselves – were likewise revitalised.⁴⁴

This brings us to a further theme which can be traced through the pages of this collection, and that is that script and print must be explored in relation to speech. To echo Keith Thomas, for all their imperialistic potential, they never displaced the spoken word. The relationship between these three media was one of mutual infusion and reciprocal interaction, symbiosis and dynamic continuum. Sight and sound, hearing and seeing, were equally important in the creation of meaning. Oral communication remained central to the day-to-day workings of English society, in the form of speeches delivered in parliament, pleadings in law courts, teaching in schools, and preaching and catechising in church.⁴⁵ As Isaac Barrow declared in 1678, 'tis the force of this little machine', the tongue, 'that turneth all the humane world about'.⁴⁶ Contemporaries privileged speech as the paradigm of authentic language use: godly ministers reluctantly consigned their sermons to print, speaking disparagingly of the 'dead letter' of the text in the absence of the 'lively' organ of the voice.⁴⁷ Michael Clanchy's

⁴⁴ A. Fox, *Oral and Literate Culture in England 1500–1700* (Oxford, 2000), esp. pp. 8–10, 50, 410–11. See also P. R. Coss, 'Aspects of Cultural Diffusion in Medieval England: The Early Romances, Local Society and Robin Hood', *P&P* 108 (1985), 35–79.

⁴⁵ K. Thomas, 'The Meaning of Literacy in Early Modern England', in Gerd Baumann (ed.), *The Written Word: Literacy in Transition* (Oxford, 1986), p. 113 and pp. 97–131 *passim*; Fox, *Oral and Literate Culture*; B. R. Smith, *The Acoustic World of Early Modern England: Attending to the O-Factor* (Chicago, 1999); A. Fox and D. Woolf (eds.), *The Spoken Word: Oral Culture in Britain, 1500–1850* (Manchester, 2002).

⁴⁶ Quoted in Love, 'Oral and Scribal Texts', p. 100.

⁴⁷ See D. R. Woolf, 'Speech, Text and Time: The Sense of Hearing and the Sense of the Past in Renaissance England', *Albion* 18 (1986), esp. 173–6; and the examples cited in A. Walsham, *Providence in Early Modern England* (Oxford, 1999), p. 54. Playwrights expressed similar anxieties: McKenzie, 'Speech-Manuscript-Print', p. 90.

analysis of how oral habits of thought lingered on in the presence of writing applies to the period between 1300 and 1700 no less than to the two centuries which preceded it.

Literacy of all kinds was closely intertwined with aurality. If fifteenth-century elites engaged in recreational reading aloud of Chaucer and other English poetic and prose works, sixteenth-century Protestants manifested a similar instinct for 'the social experience of literature', placing the recitation of sermons, bibles and devotional treatises at the very heart of household devotion.⁴⁸ In chapter 9 Christopher Marsh reminds us that we must attune our ears to the sound of print: detached from the melodies and tunes to which they were sung, half the message of early modern ballads is lost. Furthermore, material texts of all types must also be recognised as an adjunct of the 'art of memory': many functioned primarily as an aid to remembering information filed away inside their readers' minds.⁴⁹

The oral performance of written texts was a powerful factor in defining communities. The tendency to align written culture with privacy and individualism belies the way in which, either verbally rehearsed or silently perused, books forged links between scattered individuals and groups of people. They cemented bonds between members of religious sects from the Cathars in the thirteenth century through to the Quakers in the seventeenth and in the form of the liturgy provided a focal point for communal worship within the established Church.⁵⁰ Within late medieval urban contexts, as Andrew Butcher suggests in chapter 8 in a foretaste of a fuller study in preparation, the scribal rituals of bureaucracy helped to synthesise and sustain a sense of corporate identity. Borrowing insights from linguistic anthropology, he argues that the macaronic records generated by the clerks of Hythe and other Kentish towns gave oral and ceremonial expression to civic custom, tradition and consciousness in a manner which questions any sharp distinction between 'pragmatic' and 'literary' texts. In the latter half of our period, the circulation of printed pamphlets and handwritten separates around networks of readers like that linked with the Cheshire gentleman William Davenport fostered a shared set of political assumptions and values, while the reading practices of Samuel Hartlib and his circle indicate

⁴⁸ J. Coleman, *Public Reading and the Reading Public in Late Medieval England and France* (Cambridge, 1996), p. xiv. For puritan household devotion, see, e.g., D. M. Meads (ed.), *Diary of Lady Margaret Hoby 1599–1605* (1930).

⁴⁹ F. Yates, *The Art of Memory* (1966); M. J. Carruthers, *The Book of Memory: A Study of Memory in Medieval Culture* (Cambridge, 1990).

⁵⁰ For the concept of 'textual communities', see B. Stock, *The Implications of Literacy: Written Language and Models of Interpretation in the Eleventh and Twelfth Centuries* (Princeton, 1983), esp. pt II.

the ways in which texts both in manuscript and print helped to engender a republic of letters.⁵¹

Such evidence highlights another conceptual problem inherent in the historiography of print culture: how we define the word ‘publication’. Too often publication has been treated as synonymous with printing, without thought for how texts reached the reading public in highly literate and sophisticated scribal cultures such as Augustan Rome or fifth-century Africa, not to say Western Europe before 1500, where it was often equated with the act of presenting a work to a patron.⁵² In the light of recent work, the parameters of the term are expanding. Harold Love has used it to describe ‘a movement from a private realm of creativity to a public realm of consumption’, a formulation which explicitly avoids equating the process with a transition from script to print.⁵³ Here, in her investigation of the dissemination of the fourteenth-century mystic Julian of Norwich’s *A Revelation of Love* Felicity Riddy argues that in medieval England the term ‘publication’ related not to writing but speech. In utilising it, therefore, we must accommodate not only the duplication of books by scribal copying but also the posting of placards on church doors and in market-places, the oral proclamation of news, the singing and scattering of vernacular libels and scurrilous rhymes. At critical junctures such as the Peasants’ Revolt of 1381, the Reformation in the 1530s, the years prior to the outbreak of the Civil War in 1642, and the Exclusion Crisis in the late 1670s, the whole range of such ‘texts’ played their part in the making of public opinion.⁵⁴

Historians have often linked the development of what Jürgen Habermas, writing of the eighteenth century, called ‘the public sphere’, with the advent of print culture itself and a recent study by David Zaret rather reinforces the tendency to see the new technology as ‘democracy’s

⁵¹ See Love, *Scribal Publication*, pp. 179–84; J. S. Morrill, ‘William Davenport and the “Silent Majority” of Early Stuart England’, *Journal of the Chester Archaeological Society*, 18 (1975), 115–29; M. Greengrass, ‘Samuel Hartlib and Scribal Communication’, *Acta Comeniana*, 12 (1997), 47–62.

⁵² See R. K. Root, ‘Publication before Printing’, *PMLA*, 28 (1913), 417–31; H. S. Bennett, ‘The Production and Dissemination of Vernacular Manuscripts in the Fifteenth Century’, *The Library*, 5th ser., 1 (1946–7), 167–78; Chaytor, *From Script to Print*, ch. 6; B. Guenée, *Histoire et culture historique dans l’Occident médiéval* (Paris, 1980), pp. 248–99, esp. 285–95.

⁵³ Love, *Scribal Publication*, p. 36.

⁵⁴ See key studies by S. Justice, *Writing and Rebellion: England in 1381* (Berkeley and London, 1994); E. H. Shagan, *Popular Politics and the English Reformation* (Cambridge, 2002); R. Cust, ‘News and Politics in Early Seventeenth-Century England’, *P&P*, 112 (1986), 60–90; D. Freist, *Governed by Opinion: Politics, Religion and the Dynamics of Communication in Stuart London 1637–1645* (London and New York, 1997); A. Bellany, *The Politics of Court Scandal in Early Modern England: News Culture and the Overbury Affair, 1603–1660* (Cambridge, 2002); T. Harris, *London Crowds in the Reign of Charles*, vol. II, *Propaganda and Politics from the Restoration to the Exclusion Crisis* (Cambridge, 1987).

handmaiden'.⁵⁵ But this may be to accord printing exaggerated importance, to be beguiled by the high rate of survival of the artefacts to which it gave rise, and to ignore the fact that it remained closely interwoven with oral and written forms of controversy and discussion. Jonathan Barry's essay on late seventeenth-century Bristol rejects any simple linkage between political debate and consciousness and the proliferation of print and Ann Hughes' examination of Thomas Edwards' *Gangraena* likewise emphasises that in Civil War London the use of print as a polemic weapon continued to be embedded in relationships based on personal ties and face-to-face encounters. Both also remind us that 'authority' was not an intrinsic feature of the typographical medium, but rather a quality dependent upon particular local circumstances and contexts. Print did not necessarily guarantee the 'credit' of information or news: indeed it was frequently accused of disseminating fictions and falsehoods. As an early sixteenth-century Italian critic of the new technology declared, '*Est virgo hec penna, meretrix est stampificata*' ('The pen is a virgin, the printing press a whore').⁵⁶

There is a danger, however, of muddying the waters of historiographical tradition too much, of emphasising continuity at the expense of a due appreciation of change. It cannot be denied that dramatic as well as gradual shifts were taking place in the culture of communications in the four centuries under investigation and it is important to retain an awareness of the impact of the new art of mechanical printing. Print spread texts in a different way from manuscript: it multiplied them not consecutively but simultaneously, in consequence widening the social milieu within which they circulated, both horizontally and vertically. The anxieties which surrounded the publication of translations of the Bible, among some early Protestants as well as medieval and Tridentine Catholics, attest the recognition that the press had the capacity to lift sacred knowledge and scriptural exegesis out of the hands of the clerical elite and, to create, as never before, a priesthood of all believers.⁵⁷ Print probably accelerated the development of

⁵⁵ J. Habermas, *Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere* (Cambridge, MA, 1962); D. Zaret, *Origins of Democratic Culture: Printing, Petitions and the Public Sphere in Early-Modern England* (Princeton, 2000), p. 254.

⁵⁶ Quoted in R. Chartier, 'The Practical Impact of Writing', in R. Chartier (ed.), *A History of Private Life*, vol. III, *Passions of the Renaissance* (Cambridge, MA and London, 1989), p. 123. See also D. Woolf, 'News, History and the Construction of the Present in Early Modern England', in B. Dooley and S. Baron (eds.), *The Politics of Information in Early Modern Europe* (London and New York, 2001), esp. pp. 100–4.

⁵⁷ See J.-F. Gilmont, 'Protestant Reformations and Reading' and D. Julia, 'Reading and the Counter-Reformation', in G. Cavallo and R. Chartier (eds.), *A History of Reading in the West* (Cambridge, 1999), pp. 219–23 and 243–50 respectively; B. Scribner, 'Heterodoxy, Literacy and Print in the Early German Reformation', in P. Biller and A. Hudson (eds.), *Heresy and Literacy 1000–1500* (Cambridge, 1994), pp. 255–78; A. Walsham, 'Unclasping the Book? Post-Reformation English Catholicism and the Vernacular Bible', *JBS*, 42 (2003), 141–66.