Introduction

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The worldliness of print

This is a book about the worldliness of print in Britain from the final lapse of the Printing Act in 1695 to the thoroughgoing development of publishing as a specialist commercial undertaking and the industrialization of the book in 1830. The collective aim of the forty-nine contributors to this volume is 'the intrusion of more history' into the study of books and readers, copyrights and profits, censorship and advertising, technologies and trades – the manifold particulars that condition the pluriform ways in which meanings are made.[1]

This is a book about the history of 'the book', a shorthand for any recorded text: catechisms and commodity price currents, encyclopaedias and children's ABCs, manuscripts and mezzotints, serials and playbills. Just as 'there cannot be a history of ideas without a history of objects', so too is there no authentic history of objects without a dedicated effort to recover their makers.[2] And if such a history does not attend to the ever-developing circumstances of production and distribution, to the fugitive testimonies of consumption, then how may it claim a degree of historical legitimacy? Produced and distributed by networks of workers from authors to hawkers, 'the book' – and the concomitant cultures forged by its consumers – proved a powerful agent for the construction of communities and corporate identities. Nor was this constitutive power of print limited to the literate: many unlettered persons could listen to a single reader.

Observing that contemporary treatments of texts are too often 'worldless', Edward Said diagnosed that a fundamental weakness of textual theory and practice in our time is that it has routinely 'isolated textuality from the circumstances, the events, the physical senses that made it possible and render it intelligible as the result of human work'.[3] Yet, no printer, no book, no reader,

1 McKenzie 1988, Lecture 1, 'Textual Evidence', 3.
2 Tanselle 1995, 271.
3 Said 1991, 4.

no scholar is free from the conditions of material existence. When the working practices of the printer are more imagined than historically accurate, when the critic prescinds from the relationship between materiality and meaning, when the reader is an ideal construct formed from the historian's desires rather than years of working in the archive, then the enterprises of book history are seriously compromised. To the condition of textual unworldliness, this book attempts a form of redress.

The history of the book is capacious in its remit and hospitable to multi-disciplinary approaches. Books are the products of social processes and they participate in the formation and reproduction of social practices far beyond those directly associated with the creation and transmission of texts. Hence, we must cultivate an understanding of how the performances and institutions of publication, distribution and reception are imbedded in and informed by larger economic, social and political structures.

The chapters in this collection deploy many different strategies of inquiry – from analytic and enumerative bibliography to economic and social history – in order to investigate how the book and its histories are shaped and understood by the contingencies and complexities of being in the world. The main story that this volume has to tell is the efflorescence of a comprehensive 'print culture' in Britain,[4] a phenomenon that had profound effects on 'the forging of the nation' – on politics and commerce, on literature and cultural identity, on education and the dissemination of knowledge, and on the conduct of everyday life.[5] When read together, the contributions in this history not only chronicle the proliferation of print and the rise of what Samuel Johnson called 'the common reader';[6] they also delineate the commercial, social and intellectual relationships of production and consumption determining and, in part, determined by the world of print. This book about books may thus be read as a step towards constructing a geography of knowledge, as it describes and analyses the technologies, institutions, locales and substantive practices that ultimately lead to the worldly exchanges between the reader and the printed page.

In their range of subjects and methods of examination, these chapters reflect something of the extensive interests and notably various disciplinary – and interdisciplinary – ways of conducting book-historical studies. No orthodoxies have been imposed by the editors, nor have they made any attempt to resolve

4 The concept of print culture should not be taken to diminish the ongoing importance of the oral, aural and scribal transmission of ideas. Studies testifying to the continuing vitality of manuscript culture in the period include Havens 2001, 81–97 and N. Smith 2008. See also McKitterick 2003. For a survey of various models of print culture, see Love 2003.

5 See Colley 1994; Hoppit 2000; Prest 1998; and Langford 1989.

6 See Johnson 2006, I, 334–6.

conflicting viewpoints among the contributors. Writing on Bible imports and parliamentary reports, maps and music, newspapers and antiquarian treasures, the authors of this corporate history strive to make creative and responsible use of the available evidence.

For all this collection's limitations, *The Cambridge history of the book in Britain* is a celebration of what survives, a study whose chapters conduce towards the recovery of human labour and human leisure.[7] It is this contact with publishers, writers, patrons and artisans from the past, and our awareness of the communal processes of creation, that calls us to a humble respect and humane regard for our forebears whose lives have been sustained, like ours, by the making of books.

England: people and cities

The period 1695–1830 saw dramatic changes in the demography of Britain.[8] At the close of the seventeenth century, the population was static – births and deaths in equilibrium – but during the first thirty years of the nineteenth century, Great Britain was growing 'more rapidly than at any earlier or later period'.[9] The mandatory recording of Anglican baptisms, marriages and burials in England (from 1538 onward) allows demographers to document and analyse the population history of England reasonably well, despite deficiencies in the original data.[10] Regrettably, this is not the case for Wales or Scotland.[11]

In 1696, the population of England was approximately 5,118,000; in 1756, it had risen to 6,149,000, a gain of about 17 per cent over sixty years. Twenty-five years later, in 1781, England had some 7,206,000 inhabitants, a rise of 15 per cent in two-fifths of the earlier interval. Thereafter, population growth accelerated even more rapidly: there were 8,671,000 residents in 1801; 10,628,000 just fifteen years after that; and an astonishing 13,254,000 in 1831.[12] Between 1791 and 1831, the population rose at an annual rate of 1.32 per cent, as compared with a sluggish 0.2 per cent for the period 1681–1741. In other

7 For some of the historiographical problems and possibilities raised by book history and national histories of the book, see Suarez 2003–4 (2006).
8 On the demography of Wales, see D.W. Howell 2000; see also B.E. Howell 1973. On the Irish population, see Connell 1950; and Daultrey, Dickson and Ó Gráda 1981.
9 Wrigley 2004, 58; I am indebted to Wrigley, Britain's greatest demographer, for most of what follows on this subject.
10 *Pace* Flinn 1970, 20; cf. Wrigley and Schofield 1981, chaps. 3–5.
11 On Scottish demography, see below. Hunter, chap. 41, below, considers families and their incomes in England and Wales, 1698–1803.
12 Wrigley *et al.* 1997, table A9.1, 614–15.

words, the number of potential book buyers in England was increasing more than six times faster at the end of our period than at the beginning.[13]

The growth in the market for print was not merely a function of a larger citizenry, however; among the most important factors contributing to the tremendous rise in the production and consumption of print is the remarkable economic development that ran in tandem with the population increase.[14] Between 1680 and 1820, the population of Great Britain increased by 140 per cent.[15] The British Gross Domestic Product (GDP), or total value of goods produced and services provided, rose approximately 246 per cent, as compared with an increase of approximately 80 per cent among Britain's continental rivals.[16] One economist estimates that in 1820 the GDP per capita in Britain was 36 per cent larger than in the Netherlands and 44 per cent larger than in France.[17] Because England was significantly more prosperous than Wales or Scotland, the differences between England and its continental counterparts would have been even greater.[18]

By 1800, England had the lowest percentage of its workforce engaged in agriculture in all of Europe except the Low Countries: whereas some 55 per cent were working on the land in 1700, only about 40 per cent were doing so in 1800.[19] It was this transformation in agricultural productivity as much as any other factor that drove England's rise in population and widespread prosperity.

Between 1695 and 1830, a significant fall in infant mortality,[20] relative stasis in childhood mortality and an impressive decline in adult mortality – including maternal mortality[21] – combined with higher fertility rates[22] to produce enormous population gains from the 1780s onward.[23] The net effect of these phenomena was that – after recovering from the demographic consequences of the late 1720s, when epidemic disease resulted in England's 'last peacetime quinquennium in which there were more deaths than births'[24] – England experienced accelerating population growth, especially from 1750 onwards.

13 See 'Literacy', below.
14 See Twyman, chap. 2, below, for the increasing predominance of print as a feature of everyday life in Britain.
15 Wrigley 2004, 93.
16 Wrigley 2004, 93.
17 Maddison 1982, table 1.4, 8 and 167; cited in Wrigley 2004, 93.
18 Wrigley 2000, 118–19.
19 Wrigley 1987, 170–2; Wrigley 1986, table 11.12, 332.
20 Wrigley 1998, table 6, 454.
21 Wrigley 2004, 82.
22 Wrigley *et al.* 1997, table 5.3, 134; Wrigley 2004, 74.
23 See also Wrigley 2004, 75, and Wrigley *et al.* 1997, 422.
24 Wrigley 2004, 65; Wrigley and Schofield 1981, table A3.3, 531–5.

Along with this growth came an unprecedented rise in England's urban population. In 1700, 17 per cent of all residents, about 870,000 people, were living in towns with 5,000 or more inhabitants; by 1750, the figure was 21 per cent (the total population had risen by more than a million). In 1800, 28 per cent were urban dwellers[25] – a figure in excess of 2,427,000, or roughly 2.8 times the total for 1700. To put this surge of urbanization into perspective, Wrigley observes that 'England alone accounted for 57 per cent of the net gain in the urban population in western Europe as a whole in the first half of the eighteenth century and as much as 70 per cent in the second half.'[26]

In 1701, approximately 200,000 English people lived in urban settings outside London; by the beginning of the nineteenth century, that figure was rapidly approaching 1.5 million. In 1801, England had six cities with populations greater than 50,000: London (959,000), Manchester (89,000), Liverpool (83,000), Birmingham (74,000), Bristol (60,000) and Leeds (53,000). Following closely behind were Sheffield (46,000), Plymouth (43,000) and Newcastle (42,000). Norwich, the tenth most populous city in England, had 36,000 citizens.[27] To the north, Edinburgh (83,000) was about the same size as Liverpool; Glasgow (77,000) was the fifth largest city in Great Britain and growing rapidly.[28]

London did not grow much faster than the country as a whole: in 1700, Londoners comprised roughly 9 per cent of the nation, as against about 11 per cent in 1801. In marked contrast, however, other urban centres came to a new prominence, rising from just 4 per cent of the national populace in 1700 to 16.5 per cent in 1801.[29] Thus, there were more urban dwellers in England residing outside of the capital than in London itself. The implications for the book trade of this demographic shift were far-reaching indeed.

Scotland: population and trade

Scotland's demographic history is less clear than England's because there are fewer extant records. In 1695, the population of Scotland numbered a little more than one million inhabitants, with some 88 per cent living in the countryside or in towns with fewer than 2,000 citizens.[30] Aberdeen and Dundee each had about 10,000 residents. Glasgow, situated to the west, was half again as

25 Wrigley 1987, table 7.2 on 162; Wrigley 2004, table 3.11, 88.
26 Wrigley 2004, 90; cf. Wrigley 1987, 177–80.
27 Wrigley 2004, 90; Wrigley 1987, table 7.2, 162; cf. Langton 2000, 473, table 14.1.
28 See Scotland, below.
29 Cf. Wrigley 1987, 162.
30 Devine 2000, 151–64; Smout 1987, 204; cf. Houston and Whyte 1989; Houston 1985.

large, with a population of around 15,000, but was growing in size and importance – in part because of its burgeoning trade with Ireland and the Atlantic economy,[31] a connection that would in time become essential for the export of Scottish books. Edinburgh was twice as large as Glasgow, boasting approximately 30,000 souls, a population roughly 5 per cent that of London.

The Bank of Scotland, founded 1695, eventually became a great boon to manufacturing and trade, but many of its more immediate salutary effects were vitiated by the 'Lean Years' (1693–7), a sequence of crop failures causing famine and consequent population loss by emigration and death of some 15 per cent. The Union of 1707 would in the long run also invigorate production and exports, though its bringing together of two economies at very different stages in their development inevitably produced an asymmetrical relationship that, in its first four decades, was often not to Scotland's advantage. Yet, the Union gave Scottish vessels the protection of the British Navy, and made possible legal trade with American markets for such valuable commodities as sugar, rum, indigo and – most lucrative of all – tobacco. In many respects, Scotland's thriving book trade with the American colonies would come to ride the coat tails of the traffic in these goods, which ensured regular, reliable and affordable shipping, and directly led to improvements in overseas finance, marine insurance and cargo handling.[32]

Throughout the first half of the century, the Scottish economy was chiefly agricultural; subsistence farming was more the rule than the exception. During the early decades of the 1700s, a mere 25 per cent of farmers were producing goods chiefly for sale.[33] A number of factors – including war with France (1689–97, 1701–13), the demographic challenges brought on by five years of famine, and competition with financially more developed English markets – help to account for the slow rate of growth in the Scottish economy – and, hence, the book trades – during the first half of the century.[34]

Atlantic trade and exports to Ulster and northern England were helping to animate the Scottish economy, but its structure in 1750 was largely the same as it had been in 1700. Although the towns had grown, about 88 per cent of the population was living in the countryside or in communities with fewer than 4,000 citizens; hence, the economy continued to be predominately agricultural.[35] Moreover, the workforce remained relatively small; the estimated

31 Smout 1963, 194–236; *vide* Lynch 1989, 85–117; Devine 2000, 151–64. Cf. Benson, chap. 17, and Green, chap. 28, both below.
32 Cf. Beavan and McDougall, chap. 16 and Green, chap. 28, both below.
33 Dodgshon 1981, 243; cf. Devine 1994, 15–16.
34 Devine 2004.
35 Crafts 1985.

population had increased since 1700 by a mere 260,000. How then did Scotland come to play such an important role in the printing and publishing trades? In the 1760s, England's northern neighbour began to experience economic growth hitherto unprecedented in Europe.[36]

Industrial development included coal mining, iron, brewing and distilling, and – significantly for the book trades – papermaking, which grew rapidly between 1779 and 1790 and again post-1824.[37] It was in textiles, however, that Scotland came to excel: cotton, linen, wool and silk (in that order) became the nation's most important products. By the beginning of the nineteenth century, the textile industry 'accounted for nearly 90 per cent of all Scottish manufacturing employment'.[38] Another key factor in Scotland's fiscal growth was the tobacco trade. By 1760, Scotland was routinely exceeding England in the annual value of its tobacco imports, with Glasgow holding pre-eminence among all the cities of western Europe in this respect.[39] Scotland's well-developed banking structure nourished these commercial enterprises and was, in turn, strengthened by them.

A government programme of land enclosure (1760–1815) consolidated many smaller holdings, resulting in greater agricultural yields and, hence, higher revenues for the landed classes. The population increased by more than 250,000 between mid-century and 1800 (at a modest growth rate of 0.6 per cent per annum, about half that of England for the same period); a greater proportion of the populace lived in cities and towns, engaging in commercial activity. Of vital importance to the book trades was the fact that, although most Scottish wages remained significantly below those in England,[40] the professional and wealthy mercantile classes were growing both in size and in disposable income.

In 1750, only 10 to 15 per cent of Scotland's still-small urban population belonged to the middle class; by 1830, this important group of consumers constituted 20 to 25 per cent of its burgeoning towns and cities.[41] Cotton manufacturers, lawyers and advocates, and merchants in overseas trade were among the members of this class that increased most rapidly. Because books were luxury goods,[42] the local market was predominantly confined to the landed establishment, the rising commercial elites and their aspiring lesser

36 Crafts 1985; Smout 1987; Mokyr 1993.
37 Thomson 1974, 77, 192. Cf. Bidwell, chap. 8, below.
38 Devine 2004 relating the observation of Sir John Sinclair; on Sinclair, see *ODNB*.
39 Devine 1995.
40 Hunt 1986; cf. Gibson and Smout 1995.
41 Nenadic 1988, 115.
42 See Raven, chap. 3, below.

colleagues, and members of the three traditional professions (doctors, lawyers and the clergy). The Scottish middle class was proportionately smaller than England's; Glasgow and Dundee lacked substantial numbers of professionals, though Edinburgh and Aberdeen were more favourable in this respect.[43] Scotland's trading ties with Atlantic markets, its paper mills, lower wage scales for compositors and pressmen,[44] and inexpensive commercial transport to London, Ulster and the north of England, all made it a particularly attractive centre of the reprint trade.[45]

Figures from the Census of 1841, the first systematic accounting of the Scottish workforce, provide a rough estimate of employment statistics for 1830. In Edinburgh, 3.88 per cent of all workers were engaged in the printing and publishing trades – a higher percentage than were labouring in shipbuilding, coachbuilding, furniture and woodworking, chemicals, or 'general labouring'. Glasgow's printing and publishing workers comprised 1.12 per cent of the total workforce, followed by Aberdeen with 0.91 and Dundee with 0.56 per cent.[46] Although the census results are far from exact for 1841, much less a decade earlier, they nonetheless indicate the Scottish book trade's relative importance.

One reason for the robustness of Scotland's print culture in 1830 was the tremendous urbanization that had taken place during the previous seventy years. According to the 1841 Census, 52 per cent of Scots now inhabited urban-industrial parishes, a remarkable rise of about 40 per cent from the 1750 figure. By 1800, Glasgow and Edinburgh alone accounted for 60 per cent of all Scotland's citizens dwelling in cities and towns. Edinburgh invariably led the way, but between 1800 and 1830 the population of Glasgow was growing faster than that of any other European town of comparable size.[47]

Education and literacy

Literacy in England at the beginning of the eighteenth century was sufficiently high that nearly all those in occupations in which 'literacy was likely to have been of considerable functional value' were able to read and write.[48] At the time of Queen Anne's death, literacy rates in England – calculated from the

43 Nenadic 1988, 111.
44 See Beavan and McDougall, chap. 16 below; cf. Gibson and Smout 1995; Hunt 1986. In contrast, the rate of pay for compositors in Dublin was on a par with their London counterparts, and the wages of Dublin pressmen were only marginally lower than those in London; M. Pollard 1989, 124–6.
45 See Bonnell, chap. 37, below.
46 Rodger 1985.
47 De Vries 1984, 39–48; Devine and Jackson 1995.
48 Mitch 2004, 354; cf. Graff 1987, 234, 242–3.

ability of individuals to sign their names in marriage registers – were approximately 45 per cent for men and 25 per cent for women.[49] The use of signature rates as an index of literacy is sometimes contested, but a number of studies have found that, over time, trends in literacy are positively correlated with signature data.[50] Such figures are best understood as estimates, however, and do not take into account significant variations by region, class or occupation – factors of which the importance has increasingly been recognized.[51]

Many children, even those from labouring-class families, were schooled long enough to acquire basic reading ability.[52] Teaching at home by parents and/or private tutors 'was more important than any group of schools',[53] but the large number of independent, single-teacher schools also had a significant educational impact.[54] Home learning was particularly important for girls. Charity schools too were highly influential in developing literate citizens: in 1723, the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge (SPCK),[55] which ran the majority of such institutions, had 23,421 students in 1,329 schools. Bibles, catechisms and edifying tracts were, of course, distributed to these institutions, and to many others from the 'lower' classes.[56] Other religious groups and, to a lesser degree, secular benevolent organizations also sponsored schools (e.g. the public grammar schools), but only about 3 or 4 per cent of the school-age population pursued any post-primary formal education.[57]

In Wales, gains in literacy were closely allied to the growth of Methodism, though the Welsh Trust, SPCK and their charity schools were also influential.[58] Although reliable data about literacy levels in Wales are unavailable for our period, general inferences can be made from the growth of printing. In 1718, Wales had one printer (Shrewsbury printers dominating what market there was); by 1820 more than fifty printers were at work, an indication of how much the demand for print – and the market for matter in Welsh and English – had expanded.[59] Although English and Welsh charity schools appear to have

49 Cressy 1980, 176.
50 Schofield 1973; Houston 1988; Reay 1991; cf. Cressy 1980, 53–61. On the limitations of signature data, see Houston 1982, 82 n 8; Graff 1987, 34, 435 n 2.
51 Sanderson 1972; Schofield 1973; Laqueur 1974; Cressy 1977; Houston 1982, 1985; Stephens 1987, 1998, 31–5; Withrington 1988.
52 M. G. Jones 1938, 73–84; Hans 1950; Schofield 1968, 317; J. Simon 1968; Lawson and Silver 1973, 192–5; O'Day 1982; Mitch 1993a, 1993b. Cf. Immel, chap. 40, below, for children's books and school-books.
53 Hans 1951, 22.
54 Lawson and Silver 1973, 202–9.
55 Founded 1698.
56 M. G. Jones 1938, 24; cf. O'Day 1982, 252–5; Lawson and Silver 1973, 181–9, 238–9. Cf. Rivers, chap. 30, McMullin, chap. 31; and Mandelbrote, chap. 32, all below.
57 Roach 1986; Stephens 1998, 40–7; Lawson and Silver 1973, 195–202, 250–6.
58 Jenkins 1998, 113–16.
59 Rees 1998, 132. See also *BBTI*. Cf. Myers, chap. 39, below, for Welsh almanac printing.

declined in importance as the decades progressed,[60] Sunday schools and weekday schools on the monitorial system rose to prominence late in the century.[61] By 1830, there were more students in Sunday schools than in day schools.[62] The resurgent effort to educate the poor in the early nineteenth century was by no means limited to Sunday schools, however.[63] In 1818, there were an estimated 18,500 day schools in England and Wales, with some 644,000 pupils.[64]

Secondary education made no major gains either in enrolments or in curricular development during the century.[65] Much the same could be said for Oxford and Cambridge, though Gibbon's account of his alma mater – probably the most famous assessment of eighteenth-century higher education in England – should not be taken wholly at face value.[66] A sign of the vibrancy of the Scottish universities – in Glasgow, Edinburgh, St Andrews and Aberdeen – is that their enrolments nearly tripled during the eighteenth century.[67] By around 1800, there were more young men studying in the Scottish universities than the combined total number at Oxford, Cambridge and Trinity College, Dublin.[68]

Dissenting academies, though small in number, generally maintained high standards in training ministers and men of commerce.[69] Apprenticeships grew shorter over the century,[70] and the Statute of Artificers had already become largely inoperative before its repeal in 1814.[71] Except in a few circumstances, this decline in formal training probably did not have a significant effect on literacy rates, however.

Throughout the century, literacy continued to rise, with rates for women improving faster than those for men.[72] In most schools, 'instruction itself consisted mainly of spelling, word recognition, and practice reading in the New Testament'.[73] Examining the signatures of grooms in marriage registers,

60 J. Simon 1968.
61 Lawson and Silver 1973, 239–50.
62 See M. G. Jones 1938, 26; Laqueur 1976; Dick 1980; O'Day 1982, 255–8; Mitch 1992; Snell 1999.
63 Lawson and Silver 1973, 239–50.
64 Jones 1938, 27.
65 Lawson and Silver 1973, 177–80; O'Day 1982, 196–216.
66 Stephens 1998, 50–2; O'Day 1982, 258–70; Lawson and Silver 1973, 209–18, 256–8.
67 Stephens 1998, 51.
68 Whatley 1997, 49; O'Day 1982, 275–9.
69 McLachlan 1931; Lawson and Silver 1973, 205–6; O'Day 1982, 212–15; Mercer 2001.
70 Snell 1985; McKenzie 1978 and Turner, chap. 14, below, for book-trade apprenticeships in the eighteenth century.
71 Dunlop and Denman 1912, 240ff.; Derry 1930. See Shaw, chap. 29, below, for young men escaping apprenticeships by going to India.
72 See Grundy, chap. 6, below, for women readers and the growing print markets for them.
73 R. S. Thompson 1971, 21.