Conflict and Enlightenment

New approaches to the history of print have allowed historians of early modern Europe to re-evaluate major shifts in religious, intellectual, cultural and political life across the region. Drawing on precise and detailed study of the contexts of different types of print, including books, pamphlets, newspapers and flysheets, combined with quantitative analysis and a study of texts as material objects, Thomas Munck offers a transformed picture of early modern political culture, and through analysis of new styles and genres of writing he offers a fresh perspective on the intended readership. *Conflict and Enlightenment* uses a resolutely comparative approach to re-examine what was being disseminated in print, and how. By mapping the transmission of texts across cultural and linguistic divides, Munck reveals how far new forms of political discourse varied depending on the particular perspectives of authors, readers and regulatory authorities, as well as on the cultural adaptability of translators and sponsors.

Thomas Munck is Professor of Early Modern European History at the University of Glasgow where his research focuses on comparative European social, cultural and political history. A current member of a research group on cultural translation based in Germany, he is the recipient of research grants from the Carnegie Trust and the British Academy, and the author of *Seventeenth-Century Europe: State, Conflict and the Social Order in Europe, 1598–1700* (2005).

Conflict and Enlightenment

Print and Political Culture in Europe, 1635–1795

Thomas Munck
University of Glasgow

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Printed texts are never merely what they appear to be. In the early modern period, the versatility of printing as a means of communication opened up new possibilities, but as with the internet and social media today, authorship, intended audience, implicit content and possibilities of dissemination all require careful analysis before we can be reasonably sure we understand what is being communicated and why. Movable-type printing, when it was first developed for commercial purposes in the fifteenth century, may have been regarded primarily as a means of making religious texts more widely accessible, but these texts (and their translation) soon generated religious disagreement and controversy, and, by extension, a more critical approach to textual transmission in other fields of knowledge and imagination. Questions of a political nature, including good governance and the purpose of civil society, were unavoidable in the Reformation debates themselves, but it is one of the core arguments of this book that political controversy in print became much more sustained and belligerent from the 1630s onwards, creating imaginative new formats and styles of writing intended to reach a wider readership.

Traditional research agendas in the history of ideas, and in intellectual history, have greatly enhanced our understanding of the early modern period. But intellectual attribution is rarely an exact science, least of all in politics and the study of civil society, where less readily definable influences, symbolism and even public opinion may be equally significant. Seventeenth- and eighteenth-century writers, at least when writing for a scholarly audience, liked to cite sources from antiquity, but they tended to be less specific when writing for a wider audience and more selective in citing or attacking their own contemporaries. We may end up speculating whether Hobbes influenced Rousseau's concept of the general will, or whether Lessing was in any real sense a Spinozist, but we are unlikely to find conclusive evidence if we restrict our study solely to a narrow selection of recognised major texts in the intellectual history of the seventeenth century and the Enlightenment.

Instead, this book seeks to explain how information, ideas and opinions were disseminated, adapted and transformed through print, and how the mechanisms of the print market changed the ways in which a wider reading public might seek to understand the extraordinary political challenges during a period of 160 years, spanning both the English civil wars and the French Revolution. We may often lack precise evidence on who could access which texts and we have only sporadic indications of how readers might interact with the texts they did access. But we do have scope for re-examining the material culture of print and the circumstances of production, and we can to some degree track the physical dissemination of books, pamphlets, newspapers and other printed media. We also have a vast range of contemporary translations, responses and refutations, which help us understand how important it was (and is) to read between the lines on the page, while remaining alert to any unstated cultural assumptions and intentions relevant to the context in which each text was produced and read. If we do all that for as wide a sample of printed material as possible – well beyond the 'great works' of recognised innovators – we may be in a better position to understand how a whole range of political notions, from the highly traditional to the dangerously subversive, were interpreted by a widening reading public, many of whom (especially from the 1640s onwards) had never had access to political texts before.

While the huge growth in the use of print for political purposes in this period can hardly be disputed, it was far from linear or predictable across Europe. This book adopts a resolutely comparative and thematic approach, focusing on print as both the richest, but also the most problematic, uncontrollable and irrepressible of any media available to those who might acquire an interest in current affairs and good governance. Given the specific focus on print and dissemination, some recent historiographical debates regarding this period will not figure prominently – notably disagreements concerning the 'radical' Enlightenment, or questions surrounding the influence of certain groups such as freemasons, whose discussions were not made public in print. The focus throughout this book is on what we might see in print, even (and not least) when it was censored, popularised, fictionalised or plagiarised.

It is a great pleasure to record the inspiration, help and assistance I have received during the many years it has taken to complete this book. The editorial and production teams at Cambridge University Press have been helpful from the start, and I am very grateful both for their seemingly inexhaustible patience during many delays and their efficiency when the book was finally ready. The University of

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This book is being completed as Britain struggles to understand its relationship with the rest of Europe. The Brexit crisis has convinced me, more than ever, that a thorough understanding of our shared European history and culture is essential for all of us, including everyone in Britain. As someone who grew up in Copenhagen and in Geneva and first came to Britain when commencing undergraduate studies at the University of St Andrews, I have had the privilege of a great many friendships where a mix of languages and cultures were continuously and unforgettably enriching. Above all I have had the companionship and support of Meg (a Scot) and our son and daughter, Neil and Rhona, who now live in different countries, but are

always there when needed – as when I recently struggled to come to terms with having to reapply for 'settled status' in a country which has been my home for many decades. I hope this book may be at least a token of thanks to my family, friends and colleagues. Perhaps it may also add just a little to our understanding of the rich inheritance we all enjoy from our shared European background.