Introduction

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Milan Kundera warns us that ‘metaphors are dangerous’.[1] But let us, for a moment, live dangerously. For it is difficult to think of books other than metaphorically; or, more precisely, metonymically. When asked about our favourite books, the books that have inspired us, the books we feel guilty for not having read, we treat ‘books’ as a metonym. In proper accordance with the rules of this particular language-game, we understand that our questioner wants to know about favourite, inspirational or guilt-inducing texts; about semiotic structures; about what books contain. Were we to treat ‘books’ literally – to talk about favourite, inspirational, or guilt-inducing objects – we would fail to play by the rules, fail to acknowledge the space between container and contained. But scholarship abhors a vacuum and in recent decades has begun to fill the space between the literal and the metonymic book, between the physical object and the text which it transmits. For many years, the history of the book was a field for specialists in material bibliography, paper manufacture, the history of library catalogues and the like. Such concerns are no less indispensable to the advancement of learning than other kinds of scholarship, but in recent times intellectual and cultural developments in Europe and North America have transformed the discipline into something much more vigorous and multifaceted, enriched by productive exchange with economic history, literary history, sociology, art history and much else besides.[2] The history of the book has come to occupy an important position in the humanities and shows every sign of continuing to flourish and expand.

But another space is now opening up, this time methodological rather than rhetorical. If specific research projects are proliferating, they are largely underpinned by a body of theoretical reflection which is itself controversial, and which has stimulated investigation into the very nature of the relationship between print culture and the operation of power structures at all levels of society. Much of this reflection derives from a variety of Continental traditions, which have stimulated as much

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1 Milan Kundera, *The Unbearable Lightness of Being*, trans. Michael Henry Heim (London: Faber and Faber, 1985), p. 11.

2 Among the positive signs of this development are the steadily expanding conferences of the Early Book Society and significant publications such as *Ma(r)king the Text: The Presentation of Meaning on the Literary Age*, eds Joe Bray, Miriam Handley and Anne Henry (London: Ashgate, 2000).

dissent as agreement, notably in the English-speaking world. Marxism as interpreted by the Frankfurt School, the philosophies of Nietzsche and Heidegger, the structuralist anthropology of Lévi-Strauss and others.[3] In other words, the history of the book is deeply influenced by some of the most radical thinking of the past century: the thinking usually, and often misleadingly, homogenized in literary and cultural studies under the umbrella term ‘theory’. The diversity and sophistication of ‘theory’ hardly lends itself to adequate exposition even in a large-scale volume, let alone a brief introduction. Nevertheless, it is essential to outline in summary form, and as neutrally as possible, the most important conceptions of the relationship between discourse and power, since these provide the intellectual context within which are conceived not only the history of the book as a discipline, but also many of the individual studies in this volume.

Among the recent thinkers who have dealt with the relationship between power and discourse (a subject which of course goes back at least as far as Plato’s *Republic*), the pre-eminent figure is perhaps Michel Foucault (1926–84). Foucault is normally placed among the writers directly or indirectly inspired by structuralism, and particularly by the later developments collectively – and, again, often misleadingly – designated as post-structuralism.[4] In reality, however, his work ranges much more widely than the textual analysis with which these terms are often associated. Like other post-structuralists, he argues that language can never reach the condition of objectivity, or even be fully adequate to convey meaning. All discourse, Foucault maintains, is ‘a totality in which the dispersion of the subject and his discontinuity with himself may be determined.’[5] It is governed by rules which are both anonymous and historical, an emanation of the ‘episteme’ which unites all types of knowledge in a given period, imposing on them ‘the same norms and postulates […] a certain structure of thought that the men of a particular period cannot escape – a great body of legislation written once and for all by some anonymous hand’.[6]

This view of language, according to which the subject is manipulated by language as much as s/he manipulates it, is entirely consonant with Foucault’s notion of what constitutes power. Power, he claims, is not coterminous with the laws and regulations governing everyday social activity, oppressive as these often are. Rather, power is constituted by the whole corpus of devices, values and beliefs through which society disciplines, controls and confines all its members, whether through legal prohibitions or through what is generally acknowledged at a given time to be proper, sane, and permissible. This oppressive power manifests itself primarily in discourse, that is to say, in language:

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3 See M. Jay, *The Dialectical Imagination* (London and Boston: Little, Brown, 1973), and P. Connerton, *The Tragedy of Enlightenment: An Essay on the Frankfurt School* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980).

4 A basic guide to the complexities of this field (together with a detailed bibliography) can be found in Christopher Norris, *Deconstruction*, 3rd edition (London and New York: Routledge, 2002),

5 *The Archæology of Knowledge*, trans. A.M. Sheridan Smith (London: Tavistock Publications, 1972), pp. 54–5.

6 Ibid., p. 191.

> we must not understand by it a great anonymous voice that must, of necessity, speak through the discourses of everyone; but we must understand by it the totality of things said, the relations, the regularities, and the transformations that may be observed in them, the domain of which certain figures, certain intersections indicate the unique place of a speaking subject and may be given the name of author. 'Anyone who speaks', but what he says is not said from anywhere. It is necessarily caught up in the play of an exteriority.[7]

The individual subject, so Foucault claims, is thus entrapped unconsciously in the pre-existing 'episteme' which writes all knowledge, all discourse; oppressive power, in all its forms, pervades every area of life. From this perspective, the use of print media to further the interests of power is both inevitable and inescapable, but these media are only one facet of the all-enveloping discourse of power which guides, informs, and dictates our view of the essential operations of society at all levels. Once again, we must beware of homogenization, for Foucault's reflections on power evolved significantly. It was in his early, relatively 'structuralist' works, such as *The Archæology of Knowledge*, that he conceived of power as essentially oppressive. His more 'post-structuralist' writings, such as *Discipline and Punish*, present power as not only oppressive, but also productive. It is upon this double-sided quality of power that many post-structuralist commentators have focused, though assessments of Foucault's theories are as diverse as his own writing on the subject.[8] Yet it is his more oppressive conception of power which has exerted most influence on the work of other writers on the discourse-power relationship, and it is with this analysis of what he called 'the capillary effects' of power (in that it seeps into every part of the human organism) that Foucault is now most closely associated.[9]

Responses to these ideas have been particularly perceptible in the work of the German philosopher Jürgen Habermas (b.1929), who has examined the social and intellectual context in which the printed word, since the end of the seventeenth century, has become a determinant of social change in countries such as France, Germany and Great Britain. Habermas' central concern, to develop what he called 'a social theory concerned to validate its own critical standard',[10] entailed a synthesis of two forms of

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7 Ibid., p. 122.

8 Foucault's ideas in this respect have been strongly criticised by, among others, Frank Lentricchia, in his *Ariel and the Police: Michel Foucault, William James, Wallace Stevens* (Madison, WN: University of Wisconsin Press, 1988). For a general (if sometimes hostile) analysis of Foucault's ideas, see J.G. Merquior, *Foucault* (London: Fontana Modern Masters, 1985). A wide-ranging series of articles for and against Foucault can be found *The Cambridge Companion to Foucault*, ed. Gary Gutting (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994).

9 *The History of Sexuality*, trans. Robert Hurley, 3 vols (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1990), I, p. 139.

10 Habermas, *The Theory of Communicative Action*, trans. Thomas McCarthy, 2 vols (Boston: Beacon Press, 1984), I, p. xli.

critique: Marxist, directed against bourgeois capitalist values, and Kantian, focusing upon the conditions of possibility for meaningful communication. In particular, it is Habermas' assumptions about the nature of communication which underpin his interpretation of the power-struggles of the eighteenth century, especially (but not exclusively) in France. He posited the development, during the Enlightenment, of three 'spheres': that of the private citizen; that of public authority; and, between them, the 'authentic public sphere' in which debate took place.[11] It is in the public sphere that issues are discussed and tested, in a process which testifies to a crucial principle: that communication at a social level is not only possible, but also effective. To be valid, every communicative act must necessarily be able to withstand critical scrutiny of its claim to be true, sincere and (in the relevant context) correct. The norms by which such acts must be judged are, in essence, the Enlightenment criteria of universal rationalism, the assertion of individual autonomy, and reciprocal respect for the autonomy of others.[12] Hence, while rational analysis may reveal an individual communicative act to be logically flawed, incomplete or otherwise open to criticism, Habermas assumes that the act is performed in good faith, can be analyzed in good faith and can if necessary be amended on the basis of criteria agreed by all parties concerned. The indispensable political context for this process is a tolerant democracy, which alone can allow a full measure of individual freedom and the exercise of critical judgement for oneself, while accepting the right to formulate critiques without fear of retribution.[13] Like earlier members of the Frankfurt School, such as Theodor Adorno (1903–69) and Max Horkheimer (1895–1973), Habermas considered that Enlightenment values such as individual liberty, intellectual self-assertion, and democracy had ultimately become mythologised and turned into their opposites, into fascism and totalitarian repression of all kinds.[14] Unlike them, however, he retained a belief in the power of discourse to challenge and rectify any oppressive tendency, by subjecting its inadequacies and dangers to the rational criticism which, in his view, remains the bedrock of human intellectual activity.

Some commentators, especially in France, have regarded Habermas's basic assumptions as historically naïve; Jean-François Lyotard (1924–98) took him vigorously to task for his unremitting, Enlightenment-based defence of moral

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11 See Robert C. Holub, *Jürgen Habermas: Critic in the Public Sphere* (New York: Routledge, 1991).

12 These ideas have been central to Habermas' system since its inception, and are expressed in a number of his publications. See, for example, 'Toward a Theory of Communicative Competence', in *Recent Sociology* No. 2, ed. Hans-Peter Dreitzel (New York: Macmillan, 1970), pp. 114–48.

13 For further discussion of these points, see *Habermas and the Public Sphere*, ed. Craig Calhoun (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1992)

14 See Adorno and Horkheimer, *Dialectic of Enlightenment* (written 1944) (New York: Herder and Herder, 1972), and Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1989).

absolutes, universal rationalism, individual freedom and intellectual independence.[15] Yet Habermas has remained firm in his beliefs, and he has been at particular pains to contest Foucault's ideas, despite the personal friendship which developed between them. While recognizing that Foucault had identified real problems in his attempts to account for the development of the individual consciousness in post-Renaissance Western society, Habermas accused him of subordinating facts to theory. Because Foucault had inadequately understood the historical conditions operating at specific times and places for ascertainable reasons, his investigations, so Habermas asserted, essentially confirm a pre-existing theory, rather than explaining why and how societies and attitudes evolved as they did.[16] Such a conflict is hardly surprising: Habermas' humanist values sharply contrast with Foucault's more structuralist reading of history in which humans are the tools of supra-personal forces, which may be analysed but not definitively overcome.[17] The two thinkers' views have engendered vigorous debates, though their ontological assumptions are so fundamentally different that no final resolution can be expected. Nevertheless, these ongoing arguments usefully focus attention upon the problems inherent in attempts to account for the responses of different societies to self-expression and internal criticism. Although Habermas's ideas have been particularly influential in the study of eighteenth-century culture, for instance, a historical perspective might suggest that his theory of communication is incompatible with the realities of European official discourse in that period, dominated as it often was by authoritarian dogmas of church and state. Such discourse could not accept dispassionate analysis of its claims to truth, correctness or sincerity; it tended to respond to critique by asserting the (usually) divine origins of its doctrines, and to discourage further challenge by punishing dissent, sometimes by death.[18]

Scholars emerging from cultural contexts less deeply characterised by the search for an over-arching theory have taken a different view of the relationship between discourse and power. In the Anglo-Saxon world at least, their investigations have often been based more on empirical practice than on theoretical constructs.[19] This approach typifies the

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15 Cf. Richard Rorty, 'Habermas and Lyotard on Postmodernity, in *Habermas and Modernity*, ed. Richard J. Bernstein (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1985), pp. 159–75.

16 Habermas's most thoroughgoing critique of postmodernism can be found in *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity: Twelve Lectures*, trans. F.G. Lawrence (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1990). The book was first published as *Der Philosophische Diskurs der Moderne: Zwölf Vorlesungen*, Frankfurt-am-Main, 1985). See also *Foucault contra Habermas*, eds Samantha Ashenden and David Owen (London: Thousand Oaks, 1999).

17 See especially *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity*, pp. 255–8.

18 For a succinct account, see Jonathan Israel, *Radical Enlightenment: Philosophy and the Making of Modernity 1650–1750* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), pp. 218–29.

19 Even the most empirical approach to history, of course, relies on theoretical assumptions of its own: assumptions concerning, for example, the validity of the documentary evidence and the proper ways in which it can be assessed. However, the place of theory is very different in research which explicitly develops a conceptual framework to account for historical processes.

third major intellectual historian who has engaged in this field, Robert Darnton (b.1939). His work has centred on the French Enlightenment, on the ways in which individuals, and particularly writers, sought to challenge the limitations placed upon them, and on the effectiveness of these challenges. Darnton has been concerned with the ways in which critical or subversive texts of all kinds circulated, whether in print, in manuscript or by word of mouth. In looking at the practical questions of how, where, by and for whom books were printed in eighteenth-century France, he has radically altered many previous assumptions concerning the accessibility, and even the stability, of the written and printed word. Even a public which was largely illiterate could, for example, hear court gossip in Paris and elsewhere through readily available oral sources. Darnton emphasizes the need to understand, through the analysis of documentary evidence, not what events and ideas mean to historians today, but what they meant to contemporaries. As such, he looks with scepticism at the theory-oriented historiography of Habermas and Foucault, regarding the former as emanating ultimately from an outdated Marxist view of history,[20] and rejecting Foucault's diminution of the notion of the 'free' author on the grounds that it ignored the realities underlying the publication and distribution of texts.[21] More recently, however, Darnton has expressed a more sympathetic view of the notion of the public sphere.[22] Indeed, like Habermas, he has been preoccupied with the 'public space' as a central factor in the diffusion of Enlightenment ideas; and, like Foucault, he has underlined (perhaps overmuch) the crucial repressive rôle of the state during the Ancien Régime. There is, then, a considerable overlap in these three authors's interpretations of the conditions of eighteenth-century intellectual life, even if they have little in common in conceptual terms.

Foucault, Habermas and Darnton have been subjected to intense critical scrutiny, and many of their basic premises have been challenged from a variety of standpoints.[23] Yet they have stimulated a great deal of reflection on the relationship between discourse, especially printed discourse, and the power-structures prevailing in Europe since the Middle Ages. Much research is still conducted within the perspectives which they have established, and they have opened up wide areas of debate on the nature of power and on the ways in which it exercises control. Hence, even when their conclusions can be regarded as too narrowly systematic, their writings have provided a focus for the investigation of power-relationships which few other writers have afforded.

While the work of these three scholars has been crucial in the re-evaluation of the relationship between power and discourse, questions remain to be addressed in broad areas which have not been central to their concerns. While they would agree that the medium of print readily lends itself to exploitation by the forces of authority, in the

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20 Cf. *The Forbidden Best-sellers of Pre-Revolutionary France* (London: HarperCollins, 1996), p. 414n.

21 Cf. ibid., pp. 13, 59.

22 See *George Washington's False Teeth: An Unconventional Guide to the Eighteenth Century* (London and New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 2003), pp. 180–81, n42.

23 See particularly *The Darnton Debate: Books and Revolution in the Eighteenth Century*, eds H.T. Mason et al. (Oxford: The Voltaire Foundation, 1998).

interests of social control, they have not always distinguished between the types of printed material through which this control was exercised. In some cases, such as accounts of royal festivities, printing allows a spectacular power to extend its visibility; in others, such as cheaply produced conduct books, it permits the wider diffusion of discourses and practices which constitute what Foucault has called 'biopower'.[24]

Decades of illuminating research into the dissident potential of printing can hardly be ignored; yet in privileging this potential, scholars risk leaving the picture incomplete in both historiographical and conceptual terms. Historiographical, because the complexities of publishing culture require 'thick' description, accounts which attempt to address all the possibly significant historical circumstances or 'webs of significance' out of which any culture is woven.[25] Conceptual, because the subtle interplay of control, conformity, consent and dissidence demands to be thought through in appropriately sophisticated ways.[26] In allowing a focus on the nonconformist to determine our assessments, we risk perpetuating a binarized, indeed romanticized, conception of a monolithic Establishment and the heroic individuals who struggle against it.[27] To understand properly the exercise of social control, it is essential to grasp the fine grain of processes – economic, rhetorical, technological, ideological – whereby control can be exercized, and the ways in which it is (and is not) possible to negotiate these processes and the contradictions between them.[28] Our ultimate goal should be a more disabused and fuller appreciation of the 'democratization' widely (and often inaccurately) ascribed to print culture and the struggles to assert or oppose

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24 A shift in early modern culture, from the exercise of spectacular power to that of 'biopower', is charted in Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, trans. Alan Sheridan (London: Allen Lane, 1977).

25 The term is coined in Clifford Geertz, 'Thick Description: Toward an interpretive theory of culture', in Geertz, *The Interpretation of Culture* (New York: Basic Books, 1973), pp. 3–30 ('webs of significance', p. 5). For an excellent example of 'thick' description in the field of publishing history, see Joseph Loewenstein, *The Author's Due: Printing and the Prehistory of Copyright* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002).

26 In the field of philosophy, for example, various critiques of Habermas rely on alternative readings of the Kantian notions underlying his concept of the public sphere. See, for example, Kimberly Hutchings, *Kant, Critique and Politics* (New York: Routledge, 1996).

27 Various studies, for instance, have been devoted to the censorship and regulation of printing: see especially *Censorship and the Control of Print in England and France 1600–1910*, ed. Robin Myers and Michael Harris (Winchester: St Paul's Bibliographies, 1992); Francis M. Higman, *Censorship and the Sorbonne, Travaux d'Humanisme et Renaissance*, 172 (Genève: Slatkine, 1979). However, while illuminating the complexities of censorship, such studies ultimately presume that the relationship between social control and printing was essentially one of repression; they do not explore the ways in which printing may *produce* techniques of control.

28 On 'negotiation', the productive interaction of different discourses and the tensions between them, see Christine Gledhill, 'Pleasurable Negotiations', in *Female Spectators: Looking at Film and Television*, ed. E. Deidre Pribram (London and New York: Verso, 1988), pp. 64–89.

repression, which this process has always entailed. This appreciation involves more than a clear understanding of the past, for the interplay between media technologies and mechanisms of social control has rarely been a more urgent issue. The double-edged potential of new technologies – the potential of the internet, for instance, for both *samizdat* and surveillance – becomes ever clearer, and ever more closely related to socio-political developments.[29] Of course, findings cannot simply be transplanted from one cultural context to another: this risks concealing rather than revealing the processes at work. But the more acute our awareness of the principles, the better able we shall be to grasp present and indeed future trends.

These are the issues which this volume addresses. It examines the ways in which socially-privileged groups or those who identified with them, especially in France and England, exploited print media in attempts to maintain or reinforce their position over a period of some three centuries from around 1500 to 1800. The complementary articles enable an optimum balance to be struck between, on the one hand, the 'thick' description vital to any effective study of this kind, and on the other, the breadth which permits this study to be something more than a set of discrete investigations, and allows the contributors' findings to be generalized – if only partially and provisionally.

The volume's chronological scope corresponds to what is commonly referred to as the 'hand-press period'. This is a wide enough time-span to permit a coherent collective investigation: whereas printing technology changed little during this period,[30] there were significant socio-cultural developments, in politics, economics and ideologies. Geographically, the focus is on Western Europe, across which print culture became established within a relatively brief time-span, so that simultaneous developments in different parts of the region can legitimately be compared.[31] Within Western

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29 On the implications of new technologies, see especially Peter Wollen, *Raiding the Icebox: Reflections on Twentieth-century Culture* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1993), pp. 60–67; Sinikka Sassi, 'The Transformation of the Public Sphere?' in *New Media and Politics*, eds Barrie Axford and Richard Huggins (London: Sage Publications, 2001), pp. 89–108.

30 On the technological stasis during this period, see Jeanne Veyrin-Forrer, 'Fabriquer un livre au XVIe siècle', in *Histoire de l'édition française*, ed. Henri-Jean Martin and Roger Chartier, 4 vols (Paris: Promodis, 1982–86), I, pp. 279–301 (p. 279).

31 Printing took root much more gradually in Eastern Europe. Although a printing press was established in Kraków as early as 1474, no books were printed in Russia until a press was set up in Moscow in 1552. In Croatia, printing began in 1491 at the latest, though production in the hand-press period was on a very small scale; in Hungary, printing started in 1473 but abruptly ceased after the Turkish defeat of Hungarian forces at Mohács in 1526. See S.H. Steinberg*, Five Hundred Years of Printing* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1979), pp. 45, 65; Aleksandar Stipãeviç, 'Le livre imprimé et le livre manuscrit dans la Croatie de la Renaissance', in *Le Livre dans l'Europe de la Renaissance: Actes du XXVIII*e *colloque international d'études humanistes de Tours*, ed. Pierre Aquilon and Henri-Jean Martin (Paris: Promodis, 1988), pp. 106–11; Gédéon Borsa, 'L'activité et les marques des éditeurs de Buda avant 1526', in ibid., pp. 170–81.

Europe, the articles concentrate upon two major nation-states whose public spheres overlapped to a significant extent, and within which centralised power structures developed: England/Great Britain and France. Findings for these states are more genuinely comparable than for areas which were politically more fragmented, such as the Italian- and German-speaking lands, where social control was exercised in much more diffuse fashion, or Spain, whose public sphere remained relatively distinct and largely immune to outside influences. The collection as a whole comprises literary, historical, and theological studies, whose wide-ranging concerns nevertheless overlap; the following brief synthesis indicates the extent to which the individual contributions coalesce into a 'joined-up' treatment of the field.

It is clear, in the first place, that the notion of writers as belonging to an élite was widespread in Europe during the hand-press period. One such élite comprises those occupying a high position in the social and political hierarchy of their society. Their dominance might take spectacular form, as with the luxurious festival books discussed by Alison Saunders, which reinforce the image of the powerful ruler and celebrate his life in words and images designed to impress even the very small readership – itself a social élite – which could afford them or obtain access to them. Yet such an élite is more characteristic of the sixteenth century than of later times, at least in France. One of the most significant sociopolitical developments of the period is the process by which a single élite gradually gave way to a plurality of (sometimes conflicting) élites; as the Revolution of 1789 approached, each group sought to demonstrate its power, as Simon Burrows argues, by sponsoring the publication of pamphlets hostile not only to other factions, but also to royal absolutism. Consequently, the challenge to central authority was well under way some years before that climactic period, but it emanated more from within privileged circles than from the lower orders, as respect for any central royal authority under Louis XVI ebbed away. Control was reasserted in the political arrangements which emerged out of the chaos in the 1790s; a reassertion enacted not through words alone, but also through images, as David Adams argues in his study of the costumes designed for members of the Directory. The failure of the authors of this ambitious enterprise can be traced to inner contradictions of which they themselves were unaware but which testify eloquently to the persistence of pre-Revolutionary perceptions and mentalities; in true Hegelian fashion, these residual attitudes in turn paved the way for a different kind of élite to emerge under Napoleon.

But élites are not identifiable solely in socioeconomic terms. During this period there were also intellectual élites, which undoubtedly overlapped with the upper reaches of the political and social order, but were sometimes in opposition to them. Several contributions to this volume explore the often uneasy position of intellectual élites, which frequently saw themselves as entitled not just to offer resistance but also to dictate to others. In various ways, writers and publishers attempted to neutralize the threat to the social fabric which they feared would result from wider access to knowledge, a development in which printing played a crucial part. Adrian Armstrong argues that French publishers began to adopt distinctly patriotic approaches to texts, often modifying works by late medieval authors whose political allegiance was to the court of Burgundy, rather than to France. Other cultural élites targeted communities

of readers which were defined in linguistic rather than political terms. As Kenneth Austin suggests, the deeply learned translation of the Bible from Hebrew into Latin by Immanuel Tremellius (1575–79) was instrumental in spreading the authoritarian, spiritually-élitist message of Calvinism internationally. At such a time, when religious factionalism brought accusations of unorthodoxy from all sides, especially from the Catholic Church, competing sects needed to struggle unceasingly to win adherents and converts. When Latin began to be challenged by the vernacular in the seventeenth century, the threat to its supremacy stimulated many scholarly writers to spring to its defence. Sarah Knight shows that, at least in Protestant England, the growing dominance of English was due to the commercial ambitions of printers, who became increasingly reluctant to publish books in Latin, which would not sell; as a result, the intellectual traditionalists, especially in the universities, were challenged by commercial pressures to which they were inevitably to succumb. But whatever their language, the increasing availability of printed publications led to the frequently expressed fear that the common people would start to read and interpret books for themselves, or that they would draw the wrong conclusions from them. Lee Morrissey documents this concern in English writing from the 1640s until the end of the eighteenth century, and concludes that, rather than reinforcing the Habermasian model of the emerging public sphere facilitating debate, literary criticism was widely regarded as a means of quelling dissent by offering interpretations of texts which would reconcile quarrelling political factions by proposing a definition of 'charity' which would help the less fortunate reader to understand the text through the work of the 'altruistic' critic. As Ann Dean's study shows, charity was not much in evidence, however, in the polemical exchanges of mid-eighteenth-century British politics, as reflected through the prism of contemporary newspapers. On the contrary, conflicting interpretations of current events and personalities were juxtaposed for maximum effect. Conflicts between competing factions were thereby continued by proxy, through articles written by paid spokesmen in the pages of newspapers. Readers were thus invited to witness a political debate with the terms of which they were presumed to be familiar. Dean's study has the merit of refining the Habermasian explanation of the changes in public discussion which took place in England during the eighteenth century. In an age when party politics in the modern sense had yet to emerge, and when few members of the population had the vote, print media could be used to broadcast factional in-fighting to a wider public than hitherto, without enabling that audience to influence these interpretations in turn.

In one way or another, then, all these studies deal with attempts to impose on the public values, attitudes or modes of conduct deriving from an assertion of superior knowledge, wisdom or authority on the part of those involved in creating the printed product. In order to convey a sense of historical development, the studies are arranged along chronological lines, though they also have a thematic relationship. The articles by Armstrong and Saunders engage with the rhetorics of power and their reception. Armstrong makes clear the (often subtle) ways in which shifting allegiances were reflected by textual changes in printed works; Saunders reveals the extent to which appeals to the populace relied on an undisguised assertion of intellectual or political

authority requiring and expecting acceptance by the people as a whole. Austin and Knight explore the economic and political implications of publishing in the context of intellectual élites, examining not so much the Habermasian 'public sphere', which scarcely existed at this time, as the competing claims of rival theologies and linguistic traditions. Morrissey's essay traces the development of a particular notion, under the influence of printing, in intellectual circles: the secularisation of the concept of 'charity' and its transformation from a spiritual to an intellectual or interpretative act. Dean, Burrows and Adams examine the competing political discourses and pressures which influenced widely differing forms of (often ephemeral) publications such as newspapers and factional brochures.

What emerges from this wide-ranging group of studies is that, while no one form of power-discourse characterised English and French culture during this period (how could it, with two such distinct civilisations, especially after the Reformation?), those in power, or those who sought power, often used remarkably similar techniques in their attempts to assert themselves or their cause. These studies move from the early period of the printed book to the dawn of the modern era and the birth of the mass media at the time of the French Revolution. What they trace across this period, in brief, is the mutually reinforcing process whereby the attempt to control print, or to control opinion through print, could often stimulate resistance to any such control, creating additional tensions.

Ample scope remains for further investigation into the exercise of power through print in the hand-press period. Like any product of academic research, this volume is an intervention into what Habermas might recognize as a public sphere: an arena of discourse, by no means innocent of vexed power-relations, within which statements are exposed to scrutiny and critique. We hope, indeed, that the enterprise will in its turn initiate a process of debate and investigation which may enrich our understanding of the relations between writing, reading, publishing and diverse forms of power; a more productive result than the intellectual martyrdom suggested by the imagery of exposure and arenas. Metaphors, after all, are dangerous.