The Book History Reader

Since the invention of the printing press in the fifteenth century, books and print culture have been central to the shaping of culture and society. *The Book History Reader* is the first comprehensive volume to bring together a variety of work – much of which is now out of print or impossible to access – examining key aspects of book history. International in scope and interdisciplinary in nature, book history studies is a rapidly growing subject which analyses books and print as cultural artefacts.

The Book History Reader is an essential collection of writings examining different aspects of the history of books and print culture: the development of the book, the move from spoken word to written texts, the commodification of books and authors, the power and profile of readers, and the future of the book in the electronic age. Arranged in thematic sections and featuring a general introduction to the Reader as well as an introduction to each section, the editors illustrate how book history studies have developed a broad approach which incorporates social and cultural considerations governing the production, dissemination and reception of print and texts.

This pioneering book will be a vital resource for all those involved in book publishing studies, library studies, book history and also those studying English literature, cultural studies, sociology and history.

Essays by: Richard Altick, Roland Barthes, C.A. Bayly, Pierre Bourdieu, John Brewer, Roger Chartier, Robert Darnton, Elisabeth Eisenstein, N.N. Feltes, Kate Flint, Stanley Fish, Michel Foucault, Wolfgang Iser, Adrian Johns, Jerome McGann, D.F. McKenzie, E. Jennifer Monaghan, Jan Dirk Müller, Walter Ong, Janice Radway, Jonathan Rose, Mark Rose, John Sutherland, Jane Tompkins, James L.W. West III.

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Chapter 1

David Finkelstein and Alistair McCleery

INTRODUCTION

In Ray Bradbury's novel *Fahrenheit 451* (1953) a society is described in which books are prohibited objects to be burnt when discovered (the title refers to the ignition point of paper). Books are regarded as carriers of social dissent; but the story ends on a generally comforting note with its description of living books, men and women who have committed classic texts to memory and preserve in themselves that cultural heritage. In pursuing his theme, Bradbury makes a common distinction between texts, composed of words, and books, composed of paper and ink, which act only as vehicles for texts. Books can be replaced by memory and oral recitation, or in contemporary terms by digitized and downloadable text. Books, from this latter viewpoint, are a passing phase, albeit one which has lasted five hundred years. The setting of Umberto Eco's novel *The Name of the Rose* (1983), a monastery before the coming of print, provides a view of the reproduction and conservation of texts in manuscript in which the authority of the author is sacrosanct. Indeed, the murders in the monastery which the Sherlock Holmes-like Baskerville (itself an allusion to the eighteenth-century English typographer) investigates originate in a concern to preserve the reputation of Aristotle. The author's authority and the accuracy of his texts represent central tenets of the textual scholars. Both these novels address issues which form part of the substance of this Reader. These are issues, on the one hand, of the significance of the book as a physical object, and, on the other, of authorial status, which in their historical development fall within the field of book history.

Book history has emerged as a field of study in relatively recent times. Although its ancestors can be traced through prior disciplines such as bibliography and social history, it achieves its relative distinctiveness from both its emphasis upon print culture and the role of the book as material object within that culture. The use of the term 'culture' also underpins a recurrent emphasis within the field upon broad social movements drawing on detailed statistical evidence, a methodology heavily influenced by the French *annales* school of historians. This aspect of book history stands in contrast to both the technical analysis of individual books or editions characteristic of bibliography in the Anglo-American tradition and the narrow remit of most publishing 'house histories', themselves also typified by an often adulatory attitude towards their subjects.

Bibliography traditionally dealt with the recension of manuscripts in order to produce the most complete and least corrupted version of a text possible. The intervention of agents other than the author in the transmission of the text was seen as part of that corrupting process. This approach was applied by scholars such as McKerrow (1927), Greg (1966) and Bowers (1949) to the printed book. The operation of agents in the printing process, including editors and proof-readers, was painstakingly retraced in order to distinguish their interference and establish the text which most accurately reflected the author's final intention. How the author's final intention was itself to be deciphered was the subject at times of a much less rigorous analysis and the doubt remains whether the author's intention existed only as an editorial concept disguising the editor's own predilections and decisions (see Tanselle 1979). However, two key elements were inherited from bibliography by book history: the very recognition that a book is a result of a collaborative, albeit for bibliographers a corrupting, process; and a detailed system for describing books on the basis of their production attributes, which provided a universal standard drawing attention to the material object rather than its contents.

The vogue for producing publishing 'house histories', on the other hand, characterized a self-satisfied industry desirous of ensuring its own immortality through promotion of its role in literature. If there is anything of value to be salvaged from these self-congratulatory tomes, it is not so much the recognition of the publisher's role in the gestation of great works but the emphasis upon the entrepreneurial and dynamic individuals responsible for the establishment of our oldest publishing houses and the slow trajectory from family to corporate ownership through succeeding generations. If book history were to be represented by these histories alone, then it would be fairly criticized as a field lacking in objectivity and rigour. That it can not may be due to the purgative value of social history.

The application of *annales* methodology, of quantitative social history drawing on detail to produce the overall pattern, was found in Robert Escarpit's *Sociologie de la Littérature* (1958) and also in the same year in Febvre and Martin's *L'Apparition du Livre* (1958). Escarpit's work is notable for his attempt to isolate models of book production, dissemination and reception from the accumulation of data in a manner taken up by Darnton (Chapter 2 in this Reader) and Adams and Barker (1993). The *annales* approach differs, moreover, from attempts such as Elizabeth Eisenstein's to relate the development of the printed book to broader social and political movements in what has more recently been criticized as an over-determinist and simplistic approach, itself indicated in the title of her major work, *The Printing Press as an Agent of Change* (1979) (see A. Johns, Chapter 6 in this Reader). Febvre and Martin are perhaps more accurate in their chapter headed 'The Book as a Force for Change'. For them, the printing press is only one of a number of actors in a social and political drama; Lucien Febvre offers the alternative title for their study, *The Book in the Service of History.* Where the book was primarily active in the promotion of change was in the language of texts; 'the unified Latin culture of Europe was finally dissolved by the rise of the vernacular languages which was consolidated by the printing press' (Febvre and Martin, English translation 1976, 332).

Book history

That book history as a field of study has come to prominence in the past few decades partly derives from both a recognition of the key role print has played in our culture for the past five hundred years and a realization that the role has now been usurped by other media. The book will continue as a cultural component (it will not die), but its dominance has disappeared and this in some way has licensed the study of its past. Perhaps the very ubiquity of printed texts in our history prevented previous scholars from appreciating and evaluating the fuller complexities of textual functions, procedures and nature.

Since Darnton's formulation of the 'communication circuit' as a means of examining the role of texts in society, and the subsequent modifications suggested by critics such as Adams and Barker, book history has begun increasingly to focus on what McGann has described as the 'socialization of texts', that is, the impact of books as artefacts travelling from private to public spaces (see Chapter 4 in this Reader). In this formulation, production becomes very much part of a process of, as Duguid notes, 'producing a public artifact and inserting it in a particular social circuit' (Duguid 1996: 81). But at the same time, the picture has become more complex and more interesting. Textual production is no longer to be viewed simply as a straightforward linear paradigm of production, progressing from composition to publication and reception. Rather, in the words of Jordan and Patten, what are now becoming increasingly important are conceptions of 'the activity of producing and consuming books that decenter the principal elements and make them interactive and inter-dependent: publishing history, in other words, as hypertext' (Jordan and Patten 1995: 11).

While past traditions in bibliographic and textual studies have sought to establish stable texts and precise textual intentions, the field of book history now operates within a context of unstable texts. With new media practices and the World Wide Web challenging the fixity of print and creating new links between visual, oral and textual communication forms, print culture studies is shifting to acknowledge the need to view texts, past and present, in wider contexts. In order to do this, book history is drawing on and borrowing from a combination of analytical tools and insights derived from various disciplines, ranging from literary studies to history, media and communication studies. Book history is no longer simply the province of bibliographers or literary critics, but rather can be seen as an integral part of the history of human communication.

The future of the book

Book history as a field of study marks both an end and a beginning. It is clear that as we move into an era marked by discussions of the 'new' electronic revolution, the 'old' print revolution, begun in the fifteenth century, assumes a clearer focus and a natural closure. Just as manuscript traditions merged with new print technologies, so too we are now seeing similar mergings and complementarities between new and old media. The embedding of visual culture in cultural formations from the twentieth century onwards (the advance of film, television, the World Wide Web) has meant also a reshaping of print culture to accommodate such media of communication. We can see this in the manner in which books now form a part of contemporary Western cultural industries, where creativity, capitalism and consumption are linked through production of mass media products based on texts (books to films and subsequent film 'novelizations'). It is also evident in the manner in which texts (newspapers, journals) are now only one among many media communication systems competing for the attention of mass audiences. One has only to survey the multiple media through which humanity now communicates to see that print culture is slowly being displaced from the centre of social communication to the periphery, still necessary but no longer the sole form of information in an electronic age.

The history of human communication can be interpreted as comprising three major revolutions: in the movements from orality to literacy, from the written text to the printed text, and from print to computer-generated content. The development of alphabets, and of writing systems generally, provided an enabling technology which empowered minorities within societies. The coming of the printing press took that technology of writing and provided materials for mass consumption within society. The third revolution, through which we are still living, has used computing, not so much desktop publishing as Internet-based applications such as e-mail and the World Wide Web, to move from mass consumption to mass creation. Unlike the book, the technologies and economies of which mean that authorship can only ever be a minority pursuit, the computer has the potential to turn us all into creators as well as consumers (see Duguid 1996; Landow 1997; and Nunberg 1993).

Conclusion

But if the book in the future will no longer be the main form of human communication, this does not signify, as some critics would have us believe, the death of the book. Nor does it lessen the impact of print on social formations. Book history is important for what it says about human development. For well over five hundred years, print has been central to the shaping of Western society, and to the transmission of its values outwards (whether imposed or voluntarily) into colonized and connected societies and territories (as extracts in this Reader by Bayly and McKenzie suggest). Without the portability and reach of print and texts, social, cultural, legal, humanistic and religious formations would not have developed, been transmitted and shaped beliefs and systems around the world.

In 1984, Robert Darnton surveyed the field of book history and declared that it was so scattered in approach that it resembled 'interdisciplinarity run riot'. At the same time, he predicted it was an area that 'seems likely to win a place alongside fields like the history of science and the history of art in the canon of scholarly discipline' (Chapter 2 in this Reader). The explosion in studies in book history since Darnton's pronouncement bears him out, as the selections in this Reader demonstrate.

The Reader is divided into four major parts covering definitions of book history, the move from oral to print culture, the development of authorship as a profession, and books and their readers. Each part has its own introduction drawing out specific themes and issues touched on briefly in this preliminary general introduction. There is also a concluding bibliography of further readings, both general and section-specific.

On reviewing the variety of texts represented in this Reader, we feel it is fair to conclude that interdisciplinarity is a key strength of book history. This may well be one of its attractions for students, as the various undergraduate and graduate studies courses in book history that are now developing attest to. At the same time, book history has emerged as a field in which common structures, methodologies and frameworks for investigating texts are now being embedded, offering a combination of empirically grounded and theoretically informed approaches to the subject. There is much here for future scholars to take advantage of.

PART ONE

What is book history?

EDITORS' INTRODUCTION

Throughout the first half of the twentieth century, the study of the nature of books in Anglo-American circles was dominated by a preoccupation with the physical materiality of books. The works of Ronald McKerrow (1927), W. W. Greg (1966), and Fredson Bowers (1949) are classic exemplars of this tradition of scholarly endeavour, still utilized today to a certain extent in courses on bibliographic methods. Book history studies has since evolved over the last half of the twentieth century to incorporate work on the social and cultural conditions governing the production, dissemination and reception of print and texts. Much of this shift is a result of critical authorities represented in this part's extracts.

Crucial to any student's understanding of book history is Robert Darnton's piece which, borrowing from French sociological models, was one of the first to suggest a practical model of study for the 'newly' constituted book history field, one which emphasized locating cultural and social investigations of texts within an overarching cycle of print production, dissemination and reception. His 'communication circuit', a processive and circular model of the 'life cycle' of books, running between and returning to author, reader and publisher, has been a point of departure for much work undertaken on print culture history. Similarly, Don McKenzie's Panizzi Lectures of 1985, of which we have extracted the first section, offered the resonating clarion call to view book history in sociological contexts, to delve into 'the sociology of texts'. This too has become central to the formation of new directions in book history studies.

An influential reassessment and redevelopment of these models (unfortunately not available for inclusion in this Reader) has since been provided by Adams and Barker (1993), who refer to McKenzie while at the same time expanding on Darnton's work to suggest stronger linkages of social investigations of print culture to textual conditions and bio-bibliographical evidence. Jerome McGann is among those whose fusion of literary history and bibliographical methods has also been influential in moving textual editing and bibliographic activity towards integrating social and cultural considerations in the shaping of the production of texts. McGann's 'socialization of the text' echoes Darnton's 'communication circuit' and Don McKenzie's 'sociology of the text' as memorable phrases used to encapsulate what book history is now about.

One of the most influential and prolific exponents of book history as a physical and social phenomenon over the past twenty years has been the French analyst Roger Chartier. Chartier's work on reading and the reception of texts in particular follows the traditions of the *annales* school of literary historiography, and has been tremendously influential in focusing attention on the importance of integrating readership studies into book history studies. The extract included here is one of his best-known pieces. Taking his inspiration from the historian and ethnologist Michel de Certeau, Chartier offers an examination of the possibilities for a history of reading. His proposal for a definition of print culture intertwined with studies of readership expresses and explores some of the tensions to be found between the material and cultural analyses of textual production which demarcate bibliographic and sociological views of book history.

More recently, Adrian Johns's prize-winning work challenges whether there can be such a thing as print culture studies. Johns argues in particular against Elisabeth Eisenstein's groundbreaking 1978 assessment of the revolutionary impact of the printing press on Western Renaissance culture (extracted in Part Two), suggesting that the effect was less overwhelming than we believe. The result is a radical reworking of previously uncontested views of Western print culture history.

Finally, an extract is included of Pierre Bourdieu's sociological theorization of the 'literary field'. Bourdieu's theory of the field has gained much currency recently among book historians, stressing as it does the juncture between culture, society and material production. In this case, the literary field is seen as representing self-contained literary, artistic and social microcosms with their own structures and codes, operating within and affected indirectly by changing social, economic, political and technological conditions. Like Darnton, Bourdieu is interested in the material production and distribution of textual culture; unlike him, however, Bourdieu uses these as a starting point for investigating how 'cultural status' is acquired and retained for aesthetic products and by literary elites.

There is no doubt that current approaches to the study of book history will continue to evolve as further work is done in the areas demarcated in these extracts. What is also true is that book history studies no longer relies solely on the simple paradigm of linear production from author to publishers to reader. In an era dominated by new technology, the study of texts acquires new significance, as a recent survey effectively suggests: book historians now have theoretical models to choose from that offer 'conceptions of the activity of producing and consuming books that decenter the principal elements and make them interactive and interdependent: publishing history, in other words, as hypertext' (Jordan and Patten 1995: 11).

Chapter 2

Robert Darnton

WHAT IS THE HISTORY OF BOOKS?

'*Histoire du livre*' in France, '*Geschichte des Buchwesens*' in Germany, 'history of books' or 'of the book' in English-speaking countries – its name varies from place to place, but everywhere it is being recognized as an important new discipline. It might even be called the social and cultural history of communication by print, if that were not such a mouthful, because its purpose is to understand how ideas were transmitted through print and how exposure to the printed word affected the thought and behavior of mankind during the last five hundred years. Some book historians pursue their subject deep into the period before the invention of movable type. Some students of printing concentrate on newspapers, broadsides, and other forms besides the book. The field can be extended and expanded in many ways; but for the most part, it concerns books since the time of Gutenberg, an area of research that has developed so rapidly during the last few years that it seems likely to win a place alongside fields like the history of science and the history of art in the canon of scholarly disciplines.

Whatever the history of books may become in the future, its past shows how a field of knowledge can take on a distinct scholarly identity. It arose from the convergence of several disciplines on a common set of problems, all of them having to do with the process of communication. Initially, the problems took the form of concrete questions in unrelated branches of scholarship: What were Shakespeare's original texts? What caused the French Revolution? What is the connection between culture and social stratification? In pursuing those questions, scholars found themselves crossing paths in a no-man's land located at the intersection of a half-dozen fields of study. They decided to constitute a field of their own and to invite in historians, literary scholars, sociologists, librarians, and anyone else who wanted to understand the book as a force in history. The history of books began to acquire its own journals, research centers, conferences, and lecture circuits. It accumulated tribal elders as well as Young Turks. And although it has not yet developed passwords or secret handshakes or its own population of Ph.D.s, its adherents can recognize one another by the glint in their eyes. They belong to a common cause, one of the few sectors in the human sciences where there is a mood of expansion and a flurry of fresh ideas.

To be sure, the history of the history of books did not begin yesterday. It stretches back to the scholarship of the Renaissance, if not beyond; and it began in earnest during the nineteenth century when the study of books as material objects led to the rise of analytical bibliography in England. But the current work represents a departure from the established strains of scholarship, which may be traced to their nineteenth-century origins through back issues of *The Library* and *Börsenblatt für den Deutschen Buchhandel* or theses in the Ecole des Chartes. The new strain developed during the 1960s in France, where it took root in institutions like the Ecole Pratique des Hautes Etudes and spread through publications like *L'Apparition du livre* (1958), by Lucien Febvre and Henri-Jean Martin, and *Livre et société dans la France du XVIII^e siècle* (two volumes 1965 and 1970) by a group connected with the VI^e section of the Ecole Pratique des Hautes Etudes.

The new book historians brought the subject within the range of themes studied by the '*Annales* school' of socioeconomic history. Instead of dwelling on fine points of bibliography, they tried to uncover the general pattern of book production and consumption over long stretches of time. They compiled statistics from requests for *privilèges* (a kind of copyright), analyzed the contents of private libraries, and traced ideological currents through neglected genres like the *bibliothèque bleue* (primitive paperbacks). Rare books and fine editions had no interest for them; they concentrated instead on the most ordinary sort of books because they wanted to discover the literary experience of ordinary readers. They put familiar phenomena like the Counter Reformation and the Enlightenment in an unfamiliar light by showing how much traditional culture outweighed the avant-garde in the literary fare of the entire society. Although they did not come up with a firm set of conclusions, they demonstrated the importance of asking new questions, using new methods, and tapping new sources.[1]

Their example spread throughout Europe and the United States, reinforcing indigenous traditions, such as reception studies in Germany and printing history in Britain. Drawn together by their commitment to a common enterprise, and animated by enthusiasm for new ideas, book historians began to meet, first in cafés, then in conferences. They created new journals – *Publishing History*, *Bibliography Newsletter*, *Nouvelles du livre ancien*, *Revue française d'histoire du livre* (new series), *Buchhandelsgeschichte*, and *Wolfenbütteler Notizen zur Buchgeschichte*. They founded new centers – the Institut d'Etude du Livre in Paris, the Arbeitskreis für Geschichte des Buchwesens in Wolfenbüttel, the Center for the Book in the Library of Congress. Special colloquia – in Geneva, Paris, Boston, Worcester, Wolfenbüttel, and Athens, to name only a few that took place in the late 1970s – disseminated their research on an international scale. In the brief span of two decades, the history of books had become a rich and varied field of study.

So rich did it prove, in fact, that it now looks less like a field than a tropical rain forest. The explorer can hardly make his way across it. At every step he becomes entangled in a luxuriant undergrowth of journal articles and disoriented by the crisscrossing of disciplines – analytical bibliography pointing in this direction, the sociology of knowledge in that, while history, English, and comparative literature stake out overlapping territories. He is beset by claims to newness – '*la nouvelle bibliographie matérielle*', 'the new literary history' – and bewildered by competing methodologies, which would have him collating editions, compiling statistics, decoding copyright law, wading through reams of manuscript, heaving at the bar of a reconstructed common press, and psychoanalyzing the mental processes of readers. The history of books has become so crowded with ancillary disciplines that one can no longer see its general contours. How can the book historian neglect the history of libraries, of publishing, of paper, type, and reading? But how can he master their technologies, especially when they appear in imposing foreign formulations, like *Geschichte der Appellstruktur* and *Bibliométrie bibliologique*? It is enough to make one want to retire to a rare book room and count watermarks.

To get some distance from interdisciplinarity run riot, and to see the subject as a whole, it might be useful to propose a general model for analyzing the way books come into being and spread through society. To be sure, conditions have varied so much from place to place and from time to time since the invention of movable type that it would be vain to expect the biography of every book to conform to the same pattern. But printed books generally pass through roughly the same life cycle. It could be described as a communications circuit that runs from the author to the publisher (if the bookseller does not assume that role), the printer, the shipper, the bookseller, and the reader. The reader completes the circuit because he influences the author both before and after the act of composition. Authors are readers themselves. By reading and associating with other readers and writers, they form notions of genre and style and a general sense of the literary enterprise, which affects their texts, whether they are composing Shakespearean sonnets or directions for assembling radio kits. A writer may respond in his writing to criticisms of his previous work or anticipate reactions that his text will elicit. He addresses implicit readers and hears from explicit reviewers. So the circuit runs full cycle. It transmits messages, transforming them en route, as they pass from thought to writing to printed characters and back to thought again. Book history concerns each phase of this process and the process as a whole, in all its variations over space and time and in all its relations with other systems, economic, social, political, and cultural, in the surrounding environment.

That is a large undertaking. To keep their task within manageable proportions, book historians generally cut into one segment of the communications circuit and analyze it according to the procedures of a single discipline – printing, for example, which they study by means of analytical bibliography. But the parts do not take on their full significance unless they are related to the whole, and some holistic view of the book as a means of communication seems necessary if book history is to avoid being fragmented into esoteric specializations cut off from each other by arcane techniques and mutual misunderstanding. The model shown in Figure 2.1 provides a way of envisaging the entire communication process. With minor adjustments, it should apply to all periods in the history of the printed book (manuscript books and book illustrations will have to be considered elsewhere), but I would like to discuss it in connection with the period I know best, the eighteenth century, and to take it up phase by phase, showing how each phase is related to (1) other activities that a given person has underway at a given point in the circuit, (2) other persons at the same point in other circuits, (3) other persons at other points in the same circuit, and (4) other elements in society. The first three considerations bear directly on the transmission of a text, while the last concerns outside influences, which could vary endlessly. For the sake of simplicity, I have reduced the latter to the three general categories in the center of the diagram.

Models have a way of freezing human beings out of history. To put some flesh and blood on this one, and to show how it can make sense of an actual case, I will apply it to the publishing history of Voltaire's *Questions sur l'Encyclopédie*, an important work of the Enlightenment, and one that touched the lives of a great many eighteenth-century bookmen. One could study the circuit of its transmission at any point – at the stage of its composition, for example, when Voltaire shaped its text and orchestrated its diffusion in order to promote his campaign against religious intolerance, as his biographers have shown; or at its printing, a stage in which bibliographical analysis helps to establish the multiplication of editions; or at the point of its assimilation in libraries, where, according to statistical studies by literary historians, Voltaire's works occupied an impressive share of shelf space.[2] But I would like to consider the least familiar link in the diffusion process, the role of the bookseller, taking Isaac-Pierre Rigaud of Montpellier as an example, and working through the four considerations mentioned above.[3]

I

On August 16, 1770, Rigaud ordered thirty copies of the nine-volume octavo edition of the *Questions*, which the Société typographique de Neuchâtel (STN) had recently begun to print in the Prussian principality of Neuchâtel on the Swiss side of the French–Swiss border. Rigaud

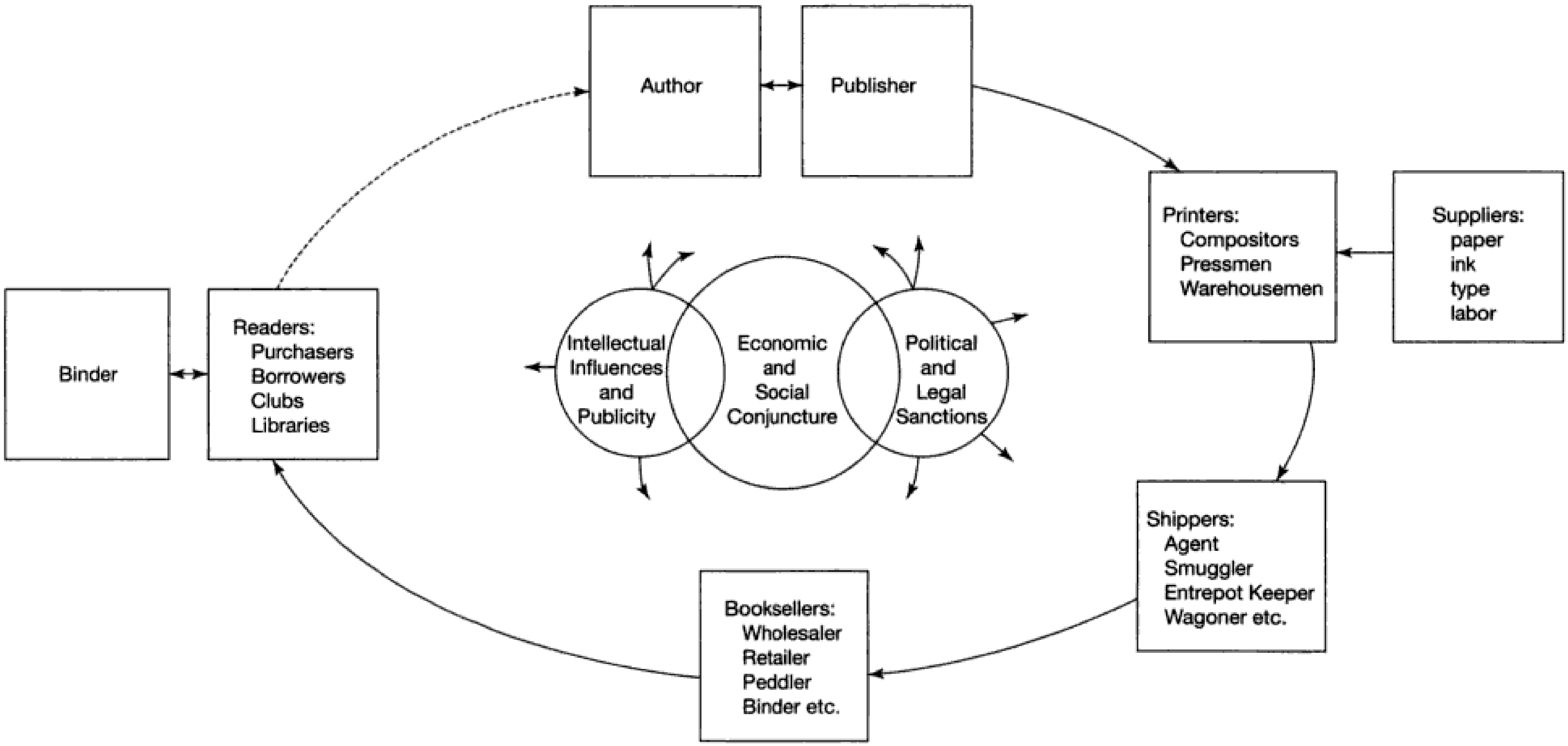

Author
Publisher
Printers:
Compositors
Pressmen
Warehousemen
Suppliers:
paper
ink
type
labor
Shippers:
Agent
Smuggler
Entrepot Keeper
Wagoner etc.
Booksellers:
Wholesaler
Retailer
Peddler
Binder etc.
Readers:
Purchasers
Borrowers
Clubs
Libraries
Binder
Intellectual Influences and Publicity
Economic and Social Conjuncture
Political and Legal Sanctions

Figure 2.1 The Communications Circuit

generally preferred to read at least a few pages of a new book before stocking it, but he considered the *Questions* such a good bet that he risked making a fairly large order for it, sight unseen. He did not have any personal sympathy for Voltaire. On the contrary, he deplored the philosophe's tendency to tinker with his books, adding and amending passages while cooperating with pirated editions behind the backs of the original publishers. Such practices produced complaints from customers, who objected to receiving inferior (or insufficiently audacious) texts. 'It is astonishing that at the end of his career M. de Voltaire cannot refrain from duping booksellers', Rigaud complained to the STN. 'It would not matter if all these little ruses, frauds, and deceits were blamed on the author. But unfortunately the printers and still more the retail booksellers are usually held responsible'.[4] Voltaire made life hard for booksellers, but he sold well.

There was nothing Voltairean about most of the other books in Rigaud's shop. His sales catalogues show that he specialized somewhat in medical books, which were always in demand in Montpellier, thanks to the university's famous faculty of medicine. Rigaud also kept a discreet line of Protestant works, because Montpellier lay in Huguenot territory. And when the authorities looked the other way, he brought in a few shipments of forbidden books.[5] But he generally supplied his customers with books of all kinds, which he drew from an inventory worth at least forty-five thousand livres, the largest in Montpellier and probably in all Languedoc, according to a report from the intendant's *subdélégué*.[6]

Rigaud's way of ordering from the STN illustrates the character of his business. Unlike other large provincial dealers, who speculated on a hundred or more copies of a book when they smelled a best seller, he rarely ordered more than a half dozen copies of a single work. He read widely, consulted his customers, took soundings by means of his commercial correspondence, and studied the catalogues that the STN and his other suppliers sent to him (by 1785 the STN's catalogue included seven hundred and fifty titles). Then he chose about ten titles and ordered just enough copies of them to make up a crate of fifty pounds, the minimum weight for shipment at the cheaper rate charged by the wagoners. If the books sold well, he reordered them; but he usually kept his orders rather small, and made four or five of them a year. In this way, he conserved capital, minimized risks, and built up such a large and varied stock that his shop became a clearinghouse for literary demand of every kind in the region.

The pattern of Rigaud's orders, which stands out clearly from the STN's account books, shows that he offered his customers a little of everything – travel books, histories, novels, religious works, and the occasional scientific or philosophical treatise. Instead of following his own preferences, he seemed to transmit demand fairly accurately and to live according to the accepted wisdom of the book trade, which one of the STN's other customers summarized as follows: 'The best book for a bookseller is a book that sells'.[7] Given his cautious style of business, Rigaud's decision to place an advance order for thirty nine-volume sets of the *Questions sur l'Encyclopédie* seems especially significant. He would not have put so much money on a single work if he had not felt certain of the demand – and his later orders show that he had calculated correctly. On June 19, 1772, soon after receiving the last shipment of the last volume, Rigaud ordered another dozen sets; and he ordered two more two years later, although by then the STN had exhausted its stock. It had printed a huge edition, twenty-five hundred copies, approximately twice its usual press run, and the booksellers had fallen all over themselves in the rush to purchase it. So Rigaud's purchase was no aberration. It expressed a current of Voltaireanism that had spread far and wide among the reading public of the Old Regime.

II

How does the purchase of the *Questions* look when examined from the perspective of Rigaud's relations with the other booksellers of Montpellier? A book-trade almanac listed nine of them in 1777:[8]

Printer-Booksellers:	Aug. Franç Rochard
	Jean Martel
Booksellers:	Isaac-Pierre Rigaud
	J. B. Faure
	Albert Pons
	Tournel
	Bascon
	Cézary
	Fontanel

But according to a report from a traveling salesman of the STN, there were only seven.[9] Rigaud and Pons had merged and completely dominated the local trade; Cézary and Faure scraped along in the middle ranks; and the rest teetered on the brink of bankruptcy in precarious boutiques. The occasional binder and under-the-cloak peddler also provided a few books, most of them illegal, to the more adventuresome readers of the city. For example, the demoiselle Bringand, known as 'the students' mother', stocked some forbidden fruit 'under the bed on the room to the right on the second floor', according to the report of a raid that was engineered by the established booksellers.[10]The trade in most provincial cities fell into the same pattern, which can be envisaged as a series of concentric circles: at the center, one or two firms tried to monopolize the market; around the margin, a few small dealers survived by specializing in chapbooks and old volumes, by setting up reading clubs (*cabinets littéraires*) and binderies, or by peddling their wares in the back country; and beyond the fringe of legality, adventurers moved in and out of the market, selling forbidden literature.

When he ordered his shipment of the *Questions*, Rigaud was consolidating his position at the center of the local trade. His merger with Pons in 1770 provided him with enough capital and assets to ride out the mishaps – delayed shipments, defaulting debtors, liquidity crises – that often upset smaller businesses. Also, he played rough. When Cézary, one of the middling dealers, failed to meet some of his payments in 1781, Rigaud drove him out of business by organizing a cabal of his creditors. They refused to let him reschedule the payments, had him thrown in prison for debt, and forced him to sell off his stock at an auction, where they kept down the prices and gobbled up the books. By dispensing patronage, Rigaud controlled most of Montpellier's binderies; and by exerting pressure on the binders, he produced delays and snags in the affairs of the other booksellers. In 1789 only one of them remained, Abraham Fontanel, and he stayed solvent only by maintaining a *cabinet littéraire*, 'which provokes terrible fits of jealousy by the sieur Rigaud, who wants to be the only one left and who shows his hatred of me every day',[11] as Fontanel confided to the STN.

Rigaud did not eliminate his competitors simply by outdoing them in the dog-eat-dog style of commercial capitalism of early modern France. His letters, theirs, and the correspondence of many other booksellers show that the book trade contracted during the late 1770s and 1780s. In hard times, the big booksellers squeezed out the small, and the tough outlasted the tender. Rigaud had been a tough customer from the very beginning of his relations with the STN. He had ordered his copies of the *Questions* from Neuchâtel, where the STN was printing a pirated edition, rather than from Geneva, where Voltaire's regular printer, Gabriel Cramer, was producing the original, because he had extracted better terms. He also demanded better service, especially when the other booksellers in Montpellier, who had dealt with Cramer, received their copies first. The delay produced a volley of letters from Rigaud to the STN. Why couldn't the STN work faster? Didn't it know that it was making him lose customers to his competitors? He would have to order from Cramer in the future if it could not provide quicker shipments at a lower price. When volumes one through three finally arrived from Neuchâtel, volumes four through six from Geneva were already on sale in the other shops. Rigaud compared the texts, word for word, and found that the STN's edition contained none of the additional material that it had claimed to receive on the sly from Voltaire. So how could he push the theme of 'additions and corrections' in his sales talk? The recriminations flew thick and fast in the mail between Montpellier and Neuchâtel, and they showed that Rigaud meant to exploit every inch of every advantage that he could gain on his competitors. More important, they also revealed that the *Questions* were being sold all over Montpellier, even though in principle they could not circulate legally in France. Far from being confined to the under-the-cloak trade of marginal characters like 'the students' mother', Voltaire's work turned out to be a prize item in the scramble for profits at the very heart of the established book trade. When dealers like Rigaud scratched and clawed for their shipments of it, Voltaire could be sure that he was succeeding in his attempt to propel his ideas through the main lines of France's communications system.

III

The role of Voltaire and Cramer in the diffusion process raises the problem of how Rigaud's operation fits into the other stages in the life cycle of the *Questions*. Rigaud knew that he was not getting a first edition; the STN had sent a circular letter to him and its other main customers explaining that it would reproduce Cramer's text, but with corrections and additions provided by the author himself, so that its version would be superior to the original. One of the STN's directors had visited Voltaire at Ferney in April 1770 and had returned with a promise that Voltaire would touch up the printed sheets he was to receive from Cramer and then would forward them to Neuchâtel for a pirated edition.[12] Voltaire often played such tricks. They provided a way to improve the quality and increase the quantity of his books, and therefore served his main purpose – which was not to make money, for he did not sell his prose to the printers, but to spread Enlightenment. The profit motive kept the rest of the system going, however. So when Cramer got wind of the STN's attempt to raid his market, he protested to Voltaire, Voltaire retracted his promise to the STN, and the STN had to settle for a delayed version of the text, which it received from Ferney, but with only minimal additions and corrections.[13] In fact, this setback did not hurt its sales, because the market had plenty of room to absorb editions, not only the STN's but also one that Marc Michel Rey produced in Amsterdam, and probably others as well. The booksellers had their choice of suppliers, and they chose according to whatever marginal advantage they could obtain on matters of price, quality, speed, and reliability in delivery. Rigaud dealt regularly with publishers in Paris, Lyon, Rouen, Avignon, and Geneva. He played them off against each other and sometimes ordered the same book from two or three of them so as to be certain of getting it before his competitors did. By working several circuits at the same time, he increased his room for maneuver. But in the case of the *Questions*, he was outmaneuvered and had to receive his goods from the circuitous Voltaire–Cramer–Voltaire–STN route.

That route merely took the copy from the author to the printer. For the printed sheets to reach Rigaud in Montpellier from the STN's shop in Neuchâtel, they had to wind their way through one of the most complex stages in the book's circuit. They could follow two main routes. One led from Neuchâtel to Geneva, Turin, Nice (which was not yet French), and Marseilles. It had the advantage of skirting French territory – and therefore the danger of confiscation – but it involved huge detours and expenses. The books had to be lugged over the Alps and pass through a whole army of middlemen – shipping agents, bargemen, wagoners, entrepôt keepers, ship captains, and dockers – before they arrived in Rigaud's storeroom. The best Swiss shippers claimed they could get a crate to Nice in a month for thirteen livres, eight sous per hundredweight; but their estimates proved to be far too low. The direct route from Neuchâtel to Lyon and down the Rhône was fast, cheap, and easy – but dangerous. The crates had to be sealed at their point of entry into France and inspected by the booksellers' guild and the royal book inspector in Lyon, then reshipped and inspected once more in Montpellier.[14]

Always cautious, Rigaud asked the STN to ship the first volumes of the *Questions* by the roundabout route, because he knew he could rely on his agent in Marseilles, Joseph Coulomb, to get the books into France without mishap. They left on December 9, 1771, but did not arrive until after March, when the first three volumes of Cramer's edition were already being sold by Rigaud's competitors. The second and third volumes arrived in July, but loaded down with shipping charges and damaged by rough handling. 'It seems that we are five or six thousand leagues apart', Rigaud complained, adding that he regretted he had not given his business to Cramer, whose shipments had already reached volume six.[15] By this time, the STN was worried enough about losing customers throughout southern France to set up a smuggling operation in Lyon. Their man, a marginal bookdealer named Joseph-Louis Berthoud, got volumes four and five past the guild inspectors, but then his business collapsed in bankruptcy; and to make matters worse, the French government imposed a tax of sixty livres per hundredweight on all book imports. The STN fell back on the Alpine route, offering to get its shipments as far as Nice for fifteen livres per hundredweight if Rigaud would pay the rest of the expenses, including the import duty. But Rigaud considered the duty such a heavy blow to the international trade that he suspended all his orders with foreign suppliers. The new tariff policy had made it prohibitively expensive to disguise illegal books as legal ones and to pass them through normal commercial channels.

In December, the STN's agent in Nice, Jacques Deandreis, somehow got a shipment of volume six of the *Questions* to Rigaud through the port of Sète, which was supposed to be closed to book imports. Then the French government, realizing that it had nearly destroyed the foreign book trade, lowered the tariff to twenty-six livres per hundredweight. Rigaud proposed sharing the cost with his suppliers: he would pay one third if they would pay two thirds. This proposal suited the STN, but in the spring of 1772 Rigaud decided that the Nice route was too expensive to be used under any conditions. Having heard enough complaints from its other customers to reach the same conclusion, the STN dispatched one of its directors to Lyon, and he persuaded a more dependable Lyonnais dealer, J.-M. Barret, to clear its shipments through the local guild and forward them to its provincial clients. Thanks to this arrangement, the last three volumes of Rigaud's *Questions* arrived safely in the summer.

It had required continuous effort and considerable expense to get the entire order to Montpellier, and Rigaud and the STN did not stop realigning their supply routes once they had completed this transaction. Because economic and political pressures kept shifting, they had constantly to readjust their arrangements within the complex world of middlemen, who linked printing houses with bookshops and often determined, in the last analysis, what literature reached French readers.

How the readers assimilated their books cannot be determined. Bibliographical analysis of all the copies that can be located would show what varieties of the text were available. A study of notarial archives in Montpellier might indicate how many copies turned up in inheritances, and statistics drawn from auction catalogues might make it possible to estimate the number in substantial private libraries. But given the present state of documentation, one cannot know who Voltaire's readers were or how they responded to his text. Reading remains the most difficult stage to study in the circuit that books follow.

IV

All stages were affected by the social, economic, political, and intellectual conditions of the time; but for Rigaud, these general influences made themselves felt within a local context. He sold books in a city of thirty-one thousand inhabitants. Despite an important textile industry, Montpellier was essentially an old-fashioned administrative and religious center, richly endowed with cultural institutions, including a university, an academy of sciences, twelve Masonic lodges, and sixteen monastic communities. And because it was a seat of the provincial estates of Languedoc and an intendancy, and had as well an array of courts, the city had a large population of lawyers and royal officials. If they resembled their counterparts in other provincial centers,[16] they probably provided Rigaud with a good many of his customers and probably had a taste for Enlightenment literature. He did not discuss their social background in his correspondence, but he noted that they clamored for the works of Voltaire, Rousseau, and Raynal. They subscribed heavily to the *Encyclopédie*, and even asked for atheistic treatises like *Système de la nature* and *Philosophie de la nature*. Montpellier was no intellectual backwater, and it was good book territory. 'The book trade is quite extensive in this town', an observer remarked in 1768. 'The booksellers have kept their shops well stocked ever since the inhabitants developed a taste for having libraries.'[17]

These favorable conditions prevailed when Rigaud ordered his *Questions*. But hard times set in during the early 1770s; and in the 1780s Rigaud, like most booksellers, complained of a severe decline in his trade. The whole French economy contracted during those years, according to the standard account of C. E. Labrousse.[18] Certainly, the state's finances went into a tailspin: hence the disastrous book tariff of 1771, which belonged to Terray's unsuccessful attempt to reduce the deficit accumulated during the Seven Years' War. The government also tried to stamp out pirated and forbidden books, first by more severe police work in 1771–74, then by a general reform of the book trade in 1777. These measures eventually ruined Rigaud's commerce with the STN and with the other publishing houses that had grown up around France's borders during the prosperous mid-century years. Foreign publishers produced both original editions of books that could not pass the censorship in Paris and pirated editions of books put out by the Parisian publishers. Because the Parisians had acquired a virtual monopoly over the legal publishing industry, their rivals in the provinces formed alliances with the foreign houses and looked the other way when shipments from abroad arrived for inspection in the provincial guild halls (*chambres syndicales*). Under Louis XIV, the government had used the Parisian guild as an instrument to suppress the illegal trade: but under Louis XV it became increasingly lax, until a new era of severity began with the fall of Choiseul's ministry (December 1770). Thus Rigaud's relations with the STN fit perfectly into an economic and political pattern that had prevailed in the book trade since the early eighteenth century and that began to fall apart just as the first crates of the *Questions* were making their way between Neuchâtel and Montpellier.

Other patterns might show up in other research, for the model need not be applied in this manner, nor need it be applied at all. I am not arguing that book history should be written according to a standard formula but trying to show how its disparate segments can be brought together within a single conceptual scheme. Different book historians might prefer different schemata. They might concentrate on the book trade of all Languedoc, as Madeleine Ventre has done; or on the general bibliography of Voltaire, as Giles Barber, Jeroom Vercruysse, and others are doing; or on the overall pattern of book production in eighteenth-century France, in the manner of François Furet and Robert Estivals.[19] But however they define their subject, they will not draw out its full significance unless they relate it to all the elements that worked together as a circuit for transmitting texts. To make the point clearer, I will go over the model circuit once more, noting questions that have been investigated successfully or that seem ripe for further research.

I Authors

Despite the proliferation of biographies of great writers, the basic conditions of authorship remain obscure for most periods of history. At what point did writers free themselves from the patronage of wealthy noblemen and the state in order to live by their pens? What was the nature of a literary career, and how was it pursued? How did writers deal with publishers, printers, booksellers, reviewers, and one another? Until those questions are answered, we will not have a full understanding of the transmission of texts. Voltaire was able to manipulate secret alliances with pirate publishers because he did not depend on writing for a living. A century later, Zola proclaimed that a writer's independence came from selling his prose to the highest bidder.[20] How did this transformation take place? The work of John Lough begins to provide an answer, but more systematic research on the evolution of the republic of letters in France could be done from police records, literary almanacs, and bibliographies (*La France littéraire* gives the names and publications of 1,187 writers in 1757 and 3,089 in 1784). The situation in Germany is more obscure, owing to the fragmentation of the German states before 1871. But German scholars are beginning to tap sources like *Das gelehrte Teutschland*, which lists four thousand writers in 1779, and to trace the links between authors, publishers, and readers in regional and monographic studies.[21] Marino Berengo has shown how much can be discovered about author–publisher relations in Italy.[22] And the work of A. S. Collins still provides an excellent account of authorship in England, although it needs to be brought up to date and extended beyond the eighteenth century.[23]

II Publishers

The key role of publishers is now becoming clearer, thanks to articles appearing in the *Journal of Publishing History* and monographs like Martin Lowry's *The World of Aldus Manutius*, Robert Patten's *Charles Dickens and His Publishers*, and Gary Stark's *Entrepreneurs of Ideology: Neoconservative Publishers in Germany, 1890–1933*. But the evolution of the publisher as a distinct figure in contrast to the master bookseller and the printer still needs systematic study. Historians have barely begun to tap the papers of publishers, although they are the richest of all sources for the history of books. The archives of the Cotta Verlag in Marbach, for example, contain at least one hundred fifty thousand documents, yet they have only been skimmed for references to Goethe, Schiller, and other famous writers. Further investigation almost certainly would turn up a great deal of information about the book as a force in nineteenth-century Germany. How did publishers draw up contracts with authors, build alliances with booksellers, negotiate with political authorities, and handle finances, supplies, shipments, and publicity? The answers to those questions would carry the history of books deep into the territory of social, economic, and political history, to their mutual benefit.

The Project for Historical Biobibliography at Newcastle upon Tyne and the Institut de Littérature et de Techniques Artistiques de Masse at Bordeaux illustrate the directions that such interdisciplinary work has already taken. The Bordeaux group has tried to trace books through different distribution systems in order to uncover the literary experience of different groups in contemporary France.[24] The researchers in Newcastle have studied the diffusion process through quantitative analysis of subscription lists, which were widely used in the sales campaigns of British publishers from the early seventeenth to the early nineteenth centuries.[25] Similar work could be done on publishers' catalogues and prospectuses, which have been collected in research centers like the Newberry Library. The whole subject of book advertising needs investigation. One could learn a great deal about attitudes toward books and the context of their use by studying the way they were presented – the strategy of the appeal, the values invoked by the phrasing – in all kinds of publicity, from journal notices to wall posters. American historians have used newspaper advertisements to map the spread of the printed word into the back reaches of colonial society.[26] By consulting the papers of publishers, they could make deeper inroads in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.[27] Unfortunately, however, publishers usually treat their archives as garbage. Although they save the occasional letter from a famous author, they throw away account books and commercial correspondence, which usually are the most important sources of information for the book historian. The Center for the Book in the Library of Congress is now compiling a guide to publishers' archives. If they can be preserved and studied, they might provide a different perspective on the whole course of American history.

III Printers

The printing shop is far better known than the other stages in the production and diffusion of books because it has been a favorite subject of study in the field of analytical bibliography, whose purpose, as defined by R. B. McKerrow and Philip Gaskell, is 'to elucidate the transmission of texts by explaining the processes of book production.'[28] Bibliographers have made important contributions to textual criticism, especially in Shakespearean scholarship, by building inferences backward from the structure of a book to the process of its printing and hence to an original text, such as the missing Shakespeare manuscripts. That line of reasoning has been undercut recently by D. F. McKenzie.[29] But even if they can never reconstruct an Ur-Shakespeare, bibliographers can demonstrate the existence of different editions of a text and of different states of an edition, a necessary skill in diffusion studies. Their techniques also make it possible to decipher the records of printers and so have opened up a new, archival phase in the history of printing. Thanks to the work of McKenzie, Leon Voet, Raymond de Roover, and Jacques Rychner, we now have a clear picture of how printing shops operated throughout the handpress period (roughly 1500–1800).[30] More work needs to be done on later periods, and new questions could be asked: How did printers calculate costs and organize production, especially after the spread of job printing and journalism? How did book budgets change after the introduction of machine-made paper in the first decade of the nineteenth century and Linotype in the 1880s? How did the technological changes affect the management of labor? And what part did journeymen printers, an unusually articulate and militant sector of the working class, play in labor history? Analytical bibliography may seem arcane to the outsider, but it could make a great contribution to social as well as literary history, especially if it were seasoned with a reading of printers' manuals and autobiographies, beginning with those of Thomas Platter, Thomas Gent, N. E. Restif de la Bretonne, Benjamin Franklin, and Charles Manby Smith.

IV Shippers

Little is known about the way books reached bookstores from printing shops. The wagon, the canal barge, the merchant vessel, the post office, and the railroad may have influenced the history of literature more than one would suspect. Although transport facilities probably had little effect on the trade in great publishing centers like London and Paris, they sometimes determined the ebb and flow of business in remote areas. Before the nineteenth century, books were usually sent in sheets, so that the customer could have them bound according to his taste and his ability to pay. They traveled in large bales wrapped in heavy paper and were easily damaged by rain and the friction of ropes. Compared with commodities like textiles, their intrinsic value was slight, yet their shipping costs were high, owing to the size and weight of the sheets. So shipping often took up a large proportion of a book's total cost and a large place in the marketing strategy of publishers. In many parts of Europe, printers could not count on getting shipments to booksellers in August and September because wagoners abandoned their routes to work the harvest. The Baltic trade frequently ground to a halt after October, because ice closed the ports. Routes opened and shut everywhere in response to the pressures of war, politics, and even insurance rates. Unorthodox literature has traveled underground in huge quantities from the sixteenth century to the present, so its influence has varied according to the effectiveness of the smuggling industry. And other genres, like chapbooks and penny dreadfuls, circulated through special distribution systems, which need much more study, although book historians are now beginning to clear some of the ground.[31]

V Booksellers

Thanks to some classic studies – H. W. Bennett on early modern England, L. C. Wroth on colonial America, H.-J. Martin on seventeenth-century France, and Johann Goldfriedrich on Germany – it is possible to piece together a general picture of the evolution of the book trade.[32] But more work needs to be done on the bookseller as a cultural agent, the middleman who mediated between supply and demand at their key point of contact. We still do not know enough about the social and intellectual world of men like Rigaud, about their values and tastes and the way they fit into their communities. They also operated within commercial networks, which expanded and collapsed like alliances in the diplomatic world. What laws governed the rise and fall of trade empires in publishing? A comparison of national histories could reveal some general tendencies, such as the centripetal force of great centers like London, Paris, Frankfurt, and Leipzig, which drew provincial houses into their orbits, and the countervailing trend toward alignments between provincial dealers and suppliers in independent enclaves like Liège, Bouillon, Neuchâtel, Geneva, and Avignon. But comparisons are difficult because the trade operated through different institutions in different countries, which generated different kinds of archives. The records of the London Stationers' company, the Communauté des Libraires et Imprimeurs de Paris, and the Leipzig and Frankfurt book fairs have had a great deal to do with the different courses that book history has taken in England, France, and Germany.[33]

Nevertheless, books were sold as commodities everywhere. A more unabashedly economic study of them would provide a new perspective to the history of literature. James Barnes, John Tebbel, and Frédéric Barbier have demonstrated the importance of the economic element in the book trades of nineteenth-century England, America, and France.[34] But more work could be done – on credit mechanisms, for example, and the techniques of negotiating bills of exchange, of defense against suspensions of payment, and of exchanging printed sheets in lieu of payment in specie. The book trade, like other businesses during the Renaissance and early modern periods, was largely a confidence game, but we still do not know how it was played.

VI Readers

Despite a considerable literature on its psychology, phenomenology, textology, and sociology, reading remains mysterious. How do readers make sense of the signs on the printed page? What are the social effects of that experience? And how has it varied? Literary scholars like Wayne Booth, Stanley Fish, Wolfgang Iser, Walter Ong, and Jonathan Culler have made reading a central concern of textual criticism because they understand literature as an activity, the construal of meaning within a system of communication, rather than a canon of texts.[35] The book historian could make use of their notions of fictitious audiences, implicit readers, and interpretive communities. But he may find their observations somewhat time-bound. Although the critics know their way around literary history (they are especially strong on seventeenth-century England), they seem to assume that texts have always worked on the sensibilities of readers in the same way. But a seventeenth-century London burgher inhabited a different mental universe from that of a twentieth-century American professor. Reading itself has changed over time. It was often done aloud and in groups, or in secret and with an intensity we may not be able to imagine today. Carlo Ginsburg has shown how much meaning a sixteenth-century miller could infuse into a text, and Margaret Spufford has demonstrated that still humbler workmen fought their way to mastery over the printed word in the era of *Areopagitica*.[36] Everywhere in early modern Europe, from the ranks of Montaigne to those of Menocchio, readers wrung significance from books; they did not merely decipher them. Reading was a passion long before the '*Lesewut*' and the '*Wertherfieber*' of the romantic era; and there is *Sturm und Drang* in it yet, despite the vogue for speed-reading and the mechanistic view of literature as the encoding and decoding of messages.

But texts shape the response of readers, however active they may be. As Walter Ong has observed, the opening pages of *The Canterbury Tales* and *A Farewell to Arms* create a frame and cast the reader in a role, which he cannot avoid no matter what he thinks of pilgrimages and civil wars.[37] In fact, typography as well as style and syntax determine the ways in which texts convey meanings. McKenzie has shown that the bawdy, unruly Congreve of the early quarto editions settled down into the decorous neoclassicist of the *Works* of 1709 as a consequence of book design rather than bowdlerization.[38] The history of reading will have to take account of the ways that texts constrain readers as well as the ways that readers take liberties with texts. The tension between those tendencies has existed wherever men confronted books, and it has produced some extraordinary results, as in Luther's reading of the Psalms, Rousseau's reading of *Le Misanthrope*, and Kierkegaard's reading of the sacrifice of Isaac.

If it is not possible to recapture the great rereadings of the past, the inner experience of ordinary readers may always elude us. But we should at least be able to reconstruct a good deal of the social context of reading. The debate about silent reading during the Middle Ages has produced some impressive evidence about reading habits,[39] and studies of reading societies in Germany, where they proliferated to an extraordinary degree in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, have shown the importance of reading in the development of a distinct bourgeois cultural style.[40] German scholars have also done a great deal in the history of libraries and in reception studies of all kinds.[41] Following a notion of Rolf Engelsing, they often maintain that reading habits became transformed at the end of the eighteenth century. Before this '*Leserevolution*', readers tended to work laboriously through a small number of texts, especially the Bible, over and over again. Afterwards, they raced through all kinds of material, seeking amusement rather than edification. The shift from intensive to extensive reading coincided with a desacralization of the printed word. The world began to be cluttered with reading matter, and texts began to be treated as commodities that could be discarded as casually as yesterday's newspaper. This interpretation has recently been disputed by Reinhart Siegert, Martin Welke, and other young scholars, who have discovered 'intensive' reading in the reception of fugitive works like almanacs and newspapers, notably the *Noth- und Hülfsbüchlein* of Rudolph Zacharias Becker, an extraordinary best seller of the *Goethezeit*.[42] But whether or not the concept of a reading revolution will hold up, it has helped to align research on reading with general questions of social and cultural history.[43] The same can be said of research on literacy,[44] which has made it possible for scholars to detect the vague outline of diverse reading publics two and three centuries ago and to trace books to readers at several levels of society. The lower the level, the more intense the study. Popular literature has been a favorite topic of research during the last decade,[45] despite a growing tendency to question the notion that cheap booklets like the *bibliothèque bleue* represented an autonomous culture of the common people or that one can distinguish clearly between strains of 'elite' and 'popular' culture. It now seems inadequate to view cultural change as a linear, or trickle-down, movement of influences. Currents flowed up as well as down, merging and blending as they went. Characters like Gargantua, Cinderella, and Buscon moved back and forth through oral traditions, chapbooks, and sophisticated literature, changing in nationality as well as genre.[46] One could even trace the metamorphoses of stock figures in almanacs. What does Poor Richard's reincarnation as *le Bonhomme Richard* reveal about literary culture in America and France? And what can be learned about German–French relations by following the Lame Messenger (*der hinkende Bote, le messager boiteux*) through the traffic of almanacs across the Rhine?

Questions about who reads what, in what conditions, at what time, and with what effect, link reading studies with sociology. The book historian could learn how to pursue such questions from the work of Douglas Waples, Bernard Berelson, Paul Lazarsfeld, and Pierre Bourdieu. He could draw on the reading research that flourished in the Graduate Library School of the University of Chicago from 1930 to 1950, and that still turns up in the occasional Gallup report.[47] And as an example of the sociological strain in historical writing, he could consult the studies of reading (and nonreading) in the English working class during the last two centuries by Richard Altick, Robert Webb, and Richard Hoggart.[48] All this work opens onto the larger problem of how exposure to the printed word affects the way men think. Did the invention of movable type transform man's mental universe? There may be no single satisfactory answer to that question because it bears on so many different aspects of life in early modern Europe, as Elizabeth Eisenstein has shown.[49] But it should be possible to arrive at a firmer understanding of what books meant to people. Their use in the taking of oaths, the exchanging of gifts, the awarding of prizes, and the bestowing of legacies would provide clues to their significance within different societies. The iconography of books could indicate the weight of their authority, even for illiterate laborers who sat in church before pictures of the tablets of Moses. The place of books in folklore, and of folk motifs in books, shows that influences ran both ways when oral traditions came into contact with printed texts, and that books need to be studied in relation to other media.[50] The lines of research could lead in many directions, but they all should issue ultimately in a larger understanding of how printing has shaped man's attempts to make sense of the human condition.

One can easily lose sight of the larger dimensions of the enterprise because book historians often stray into esoteric byways and unconnected specializations. Their work can be so fragmented, even within the limits of the literature on a single country, that it may seem hopeless to conceive of book history as a single subject, to be studied from a comparative perspective across the whole range of historical disciplines. But books themselves do not respect limits either linguistic or national. They have often been written by authors who belonged to an international republic of letters, composed by printers who did not work in their native tongue, sold by booksellers who operated across national boundaries, and read in one language by readers who spoke another. Books also refuse to be contained within the confines of a single discipline when treated as objects of study. Neither history nor literature nor economics nor sociology nor bibliography can do justice to all the aspects of the life of a book. By its very nature, therefore, the history of books must be international in scale and interdisciplinary in method. But it need not lack conceptual coherence, because books belong to circuits of communication that operate in consistent patterns, however complex they may be. By unearthing those circuits, historians can show that books do not merely recount history; they make it.

Notes

This essay first appeared in *Daedalus* (Summer 1982): 65–83. Since then I have attempted to develop its themes further in an essay on the history of reading (Chapter 9 this volume) and in 'Histoire du livre–Geschichte des Buchwesens: An Agenda for Comparative History', *Publishing History*, no. 22 (1987): 33–41.

1 For examples of this work, see, in addition to the books named in the essay, Henri-Jean Martin, *Livre, pouvoirs et société à Paris au XVII^e siècle (1598–1701)* (Geneva, 1969), 2 volumes; Jean Quéniart, *L'Imprimerie et la librairie à Rouen au XVIII^e siècle* (Paris, 1969); René Moulinas, *L'Imprimerie, la librairie et la presse à Avignon au XVIII^e siècle* (Grenoble, 1974); and Frédéric Barbier, *Trois cents ans de librairie et d'imprimerie: Berger-Levrault, 1676–1830* (Geneva, 1979), in the series 'Histoire et civilisation du livre', which includes several monographs written along similar lines. Much of the French work has appeared as articles in the *Revue française d'histoire du livre*. For a survey of the field by two of the most important contributors to it, see Roger Chartier and Daniel Roche, 'Le livre, un changement de perspective', *Faire de l'histoire* (Paris, 1974), III: 115–36, and Chartier and Roche, 'L'Histoire quantitative du livre', *Revue française d'histoire du livre* 16 (1977): 3–27. For sympathetic assessments by two American fellow travelers, see Robert Darnton, 'Reading, Writing, and Publishing in Eighteenth-Century France: A Case Study in the Sociology of Literature', *Daedalus* (Winter 1971): 214–56, and Raymond Birn, 'Livre et Société After Ten Years: Formation of a Discipline', *Studies on Voltaire and the Eighteenth Century* 151 (1976): 287–312.

2 As examples of these approaches, see Theodore Besterman, *Voltaire* (New York, 1969), pp. 433–34; Daniel Mornet, 'Les Enseignements des bibliothèques privées (1750–1780)', *Revue d'histoire littéraire de la France* 17 (1910): 449–92; and the bibliographical studies now being prepared under the direction of the Voltaire Foundation, which will replace the outdated bibliography by Georges Bengesco.

3 The following account is based on the ninety-nine letters in Rigaud's dossier in the papers of the Société typographique de Neuchâtel, Bibliothèque de la ville de Neuchâtel, Switzerland (henceforth referred to as STN), supplemented by other relevant material from the vast archives of the STN.

4 Rigaud to STN, July 27, 1771.

5 The pattern of Rigaud's orders is evident from his letters to the STN and STN's 'Livres de Commission', where it tabulated its orders. Rigaud included catalogues of his major holdings in his letters of June 29, 1774, and May 23, 1777.

6 Madeleine Ventre, *L'Imprimerie et la librairie en Languedoc au dernier siècle de l'Ancien Régime* (Paris and The Hague, 1958), p. 227.

7 B. André to STN, August 22, 1784.

8 *Manuel de l'auteur et du libraire* (Paris, 1777), p. 67.

9 Jean-François Favarger to STN, August 29, 1778.

10 The *procès-verbal* of the raids is in the Bibliothèque Nationale, Ms. français 22075, fo. 355.

11 Fontanel to STN, March 6, 1781.

12 STN to Gosse and Pinet, booksellers of The Hague, April 19, 1770.

13 STN to Voltaire, September 15, 1770.

14 This account is based on the STN's correspondence with intermediaries all along its routes, notably the shipping agents Nicole and Galliard of Nyon and Secrétan and De la Serve of Ouchy.

15 Rigaud to STN, August 28, 1771.

16 Robert Darnton, *The Business of Enlightenment: A Publishing History of the Encyclopédie 1775–1800* (Cambridge, Mass., 1979), pp. 273–99.

17 Anonymous, 'Etat et description de la ville de Montpellier, fait en 1768', in *Montpellier en 1768 et en 1836 d'après deux manuscrits inédits*, edited by J. Berthelé (Montpellier, 1909), p. 55. This rich contemporary description of Montpellier is the main source of the above account.

18 C. E. Labrousse, *La Crise de l'économie française à la fin de l'Ancien Régime et au début de la Révolution* (Paris, 1944).

19 Ventre, *L'Imprimerie et la librairie en Languedoc*; François Furet, 'La "librairie" du royaume de France au 18^e siècle', *Livre et société*, 1, 3–32; and Robert Estivals, *La Statistique bibliographique de la France sous la monarchie au XVIII^e siècle* (Paris and The Hague, 1965). The bibliographical work will be published under the auspices of the Voltaire Foundation.

20 John Lough, *Writer and Public in France from the Middle Ages to the Present Day* (Oxford, 1978), p. 303.

21 For surveys and selections of recent German research, see Helmuth Kiesel and Paul Münch, *Gesellschaft und Literatur im 18. Jahrhundert. Voraussetzung und Entstehung des literarischen Marktes in Deutschland* (Munich, 1977); *Aufklärung, Absolutismus und Bürgertum in Deutschland*, edited by Franklin Kopitzsch (Munich, 1976); and Herbert G. Göpfert, *Vom Autor zum Leser* (Munich: 1978).

22 Marino Berengo, *Intellettuali e librai nella Milano della Restaurazione* (Turin, 1980). On the whole, however, the French version of *histoire du livre* has received a less enthusiastic reception in Italy than in Germany: see Furio Diaz, 'Metodo quantitativo e storia delle idee', *Rivista storica italiana* 78 (1966): 932–47.

23 A. S. Collins, *Authorship in the Days of Johnson* (London, 1927) and *The Profession of Letters (1780–1832)* (London, 1928). For more recent work, see John Feather, 'John Nourse and His Authors', *Studies in Bibliography* 34 (1981): 205–26.

24 Robert Escarpit, *Le littéraire et le social. Eléments pour une sociologie de la littérature* (Paris, 1970).

25 Peter John Wallis, *The Social Index: A New Technique for Measuring Social Trends* (Newcastle upon Tyne, 1978).

26 William Gilmore is now completing an extensive research project on the diffusion of books in colonial New England. On the political and economic aspects of the colonial press, see Stephen Botein, ' "Meer Mechanics" and an Open Press: The Business and Political Strategies of Colonial American Printers', *Perspectives in American History* 9 (1975): 127–225; and *The Press and the American Revolution*, edited by Bernard Bailyn and John B. Hench (Worcester, Mass., 1980), which contain ample references to work on the early history of the book in America.

27 For a general survey of work on the later history of books in this country, see Hellmut Lehmann-Haupt, *The Book in America*, rev. ed. (New York, 1952).

28 Philip Gaskell, *A New Introduction to Bibliography* (New York and Oxford, 1972), preface. Gaskell's work provides an excellent general survey of the subject.

29 D. F. McKenzie, 'Printers of the Mind: Some Notes on Bibliographical Theories and Printing House Practices', *Studies in Bibliography* 22 (1969): 1–75.

30 D. F. McKenzie, *The Cambridge University Press 1696–1712* (Cambridge, 1966), 2 volumes; Leon Voet, *The Golden Compasses* (Amsterdam, 1969 and 1972), 2 volumes; Raymond de Roover, 'The Business Organization of the Plantin Press in the Setting of Sixteenth-Century Antwerp', *De gulden passer* 24 (1956): 104–20; and Jacques Rychner, 'A L'Ombre des Lumières: coup d'oeil sur la main-d'oeuvre de quelques imprimeries du XVIII^e siècle', *Studies on Voltaire and the Eighteenth Century*, 155 (1976): 1925–55, and 'Running a Printing House in Eighteenth-Century Switzerland: the Workshop of the Société typographique de Neuchâtel', *The Library*, sixth series, 1 (1979): 1–24.

31 For example, see J.-P. Belin, *Le Commerce des livres prohibés à Paris de 1750 à 1789* (Paris, 1913); Jean-Jacques Darmon, *Le Colportage de librairie en France sous le second empire* (Paris, 1972); and Reinhart Siegert, *Aufklärung und Volkslektüre exemplarisch dargestellt an Rudolph Zacharias Becker und seinem 'Noth- und Hülfsbüchlein' mit einer Bibliographie zum Gesamtthema* (Frankfurt am Main, 1978).

32 H. S. Bennett, *English Books and Readers 1475 to 1557* (Cambridge, 1952) and *English Books and Readers 1558–1603* (Cambridge, 1965); L. C. Wroth, *The Colonial Printer* (Portland: 1938);

Martin, *Livre, pouvoirs et société*; and Johann Goldfriedrich and Friedrich Kapp, *Geschichte des Deutschen Buchhandels* (Leipzig, 1886–1913), 4 volumes.

33 Compare Cyprian Blagden, *The Stationers' Company, A History, 1403–1959* (Cambridge: 1960); Martin, *Livre, pouvoirs et société*; and Rudolf Jentzsch, *Der deutsch-lateinische Büchermarkt nach den Leipziger Ostermesskatalogen von 1740, 1770 und 1800 in seiner Gliederung und Wandlung* (Leipzig, 1912).

34 James Barnes, *Free Trade in Books: A Study of the London Book Trade Since 1800* (Oxford, 1964); John Tebbel, *A History of Book Publishing in the United States* (New York, 1972–78), 3 volumes; and Barbier, *Trois cents ans de librairie et d'imprimerie.*

35 See, for example, Wolfgang Iser, *The Implied Reader: Patterns of Communication in Prose Fiction from Bunyan to Beckett* (Baltimore, 1974); Stanley Fish, *Self-Consuming Artifacts: The Experience of Seventeenth-Century Literature* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1972) and *Is There a Text in This Class? The Authority of Interpretive Communities* (Cambridge, Mass., 1980); Walter Ong, 'The Writer's Audience Is Always a Fiction', *PMLA (Publication of the Modern Language Association of America)* 90 (1975): 9–21; and for a sampling of other variations on these themes, Susan R. Suleiman and Inge Crosman, *The Reader in the Text: Essays on Audience and Interpretation* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980).

36 Carlo Ginzburg, *The Cheese and the Worms: The Cosmos of a Sixteenth-Century Miller* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1980); Margaret Spufford, 'First Steps in Literacy: The Reading and Writing Experiences of the Humblest Seventeenth-Century Spiritual Autobiographers, *Social History* 4 (1979): 407–35.

37 Ong, 'The Writer's Audience Is Always a Fiction'.

38 D. F. McKenzie, 'Typography and Meaning: The Case of William Congreve', *Wolfenbütteler Schriften zur Geschichte des Buchwesens* (Hamburg: Dr. Ernst Hauswedell, 1981), IV: 81–125.

39 See Paul Saenger, 'Silent Reading: Its Impact on Late Medieval Script and Society', *Viator* 13 (1982): 367–414.

40 See *Lesegesellschaften und bürgerliche Emanzipation. Ein Europäischer Vergleich*, edited by Otto Dann (Munich: C. H. Beck, 1981), which has a thorough bibliography.

41 For examples of recent work, see *Öffentliche und Private Bibliotheken im 17. und 18. Jahrhundert: Raritätenkammern, Forschungsinstrumente oder Bildungsstätten?* edited by Paul Raabe (Bremen and Wolfenbüttel, 1977). Much of the stimulus for recent reception studies has come from the theoretical work of Hans Robert Jauss, notably *Literaturgeschichte als Provokation* (Frankfurt am Main, 1970).

42 Engelsing, *Analphabetentum und Lektüre. Zur Sozialgeschichte des Lesens in Deutschland zwischen feudaler und industrieller Gesellschaft* (Stuttgart, 1973), and *Der Bürger als Leser. Lesergeschichte in Deutschland 1500–1800* (Stuttgart, 1974); Siegert, *Aufklärung und Volkslektüre*; and Martin Welke, 'Gemeinsame Lektüre und frühe Formen von Gruppenbildungen im 17. and 18. Jahrhundert: Zeitungslesen in Deutschland', in *Lesegesellschaften und bürgerliche Emanzipation*, pp. 29–53.

43 As an example of this alignment, see Rudolf Schenda, *Volk ohne Buch* (Frankfurt am Main, 1970), and for examples of more recent work, *Leser und Lesen im Achtzehnten Jahrhundert*, edited by Rainer Gruenter (Heidelberg, 1977) and *Lesen und Leben*, edited by Herbert G. Göpfert (Frankfurt am Main, 1975).

44 See François Furet and Jacques Ozouf, *Lire et écrire: L'Alphabétisation des français de Calvin à Jules Ferry* (Paris, 1978); Lawrence Stone, 'Literacy and Education in England, 1640–1900', *Past and Present* 42 (1969): 69–139; David Cressy, *Literacy and the Social Order: Reading and Writing in Tudor and Stuart England* (Cambridge, 1980); Kenneth A. Lockridge, *Literacy in Colonial New England* (New York, 1974); and Carlo Cipolla, *Literacy and Development in the West* (Harmondsworth: 1969).

45 For a survey and a synthesis of this research, see Peter Burke, *Popular Culture in Early Modern Europe* (New York, 1978).

46 As an example of the older view, in which the *bibliothèque bleue* serves as a key to the understanding of popular culture, see Robert Mandrou, *De la culture populaire aux XVII*^{e} *et XVIII*^{e} *siècles: La Bibliothèque bleue de Troyes* (Paris, 1964). For a more nuanced and up-to-date view, see Roger Chartier, *Figures de la gueuserie* (Paris, 1982).

47 Douglas Waples, Bernard Berelson, and Franklyn Bradshaw, *What Reading Does to People* (Chicago, 1940); Bernard Berelson, *The Library's Public* (New York, 1949); Elihu Katz, 'Communication Research and the Image of Society: The Convergence of Two Traditions', *American Journal of Sociology* 65 (1960): 435–40; and John Y. Cole and Carol S. Gold, eds., *Reading in America 1978* (Washington, D.C., 1979). For the Gallup report, see the volume published by the American Library Association, *Book Reading and Library Usage: A Study of Habits and Perceptions* (Chicago, 1978). Much in this older variety of sociology still seems valid, and it can be studied in conjunction with the current work of Pierre Bourdieu; see especially his *La distinction: Critique sociale du jugement* (Paris, 1979).

48 Richard D. Altick, *The English Common Reader: A Social History of the Mass Reading Public 1800–1900* (Chicago, 1957); Robert K. Webb, *The British Working Class Reader* (London, 1955); and Richard Hoggart, *The Uses of Literacy* (Harmondsworth, 1960; 1st edition, 1957).

49 Elisabeth L. Eisenstein, *The Printing Press as an Agent of Change* (Cambridge, 1979), 2 volumes. For a discussion of Eisenstein's thesis, see Anthony T. Grafton, 'The Importance of Being Printed', *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 11 (1980): 265–86; Michael Hunter, 'The Impact of Print', *The Book Collector* 28 (1979): 335–52; and Roger Chartier, 'L'Ancien Régime typographique: Réflexions sur quelques travaux récents', *Annales: Economies, sociétés, civilisations* 36 (1981): 191–209.

50 Some of these general themes are taken up in Eric Havelock, *Origins of Western Literacy* (Toronto, 1976); *Literacy in Traditional Societies*, edited by Jack Goody (Cambridge, 1968); Jack Goody, *The Domestication of the Savage Mind* (Cambridge, 1977); Walter Ong, *The Presence of the Word* (New York, 1970); and Natalie Z. Davis, *Society and Culture in Early Modern France* (Stanford, 1975).

Chapter 3

D. F. McKenzie

THE BOOK AS AN EXPRESSIVE FORM

My purpose in these lectures – one I hope that might be thought fitting for an inaugural occasion – is simply to consider anew what bibliography is and how it relates to other disciplines. To begin that inquiry, I should like to recall a classic statement by the late Sir Walter Greg. It is this: 'what the bibliographer is concerned with is pieces of paper or parchment covered with certain written or printed signs. With these signs he is concerned merely as arbitrary marks; their meaning is no business of his'.[1] This definition of bibliography, or at least of 'pure' bibliography, is still widely accepted, and it remains in essence the basis of any claim that the procedures of bibliography are scientific.

A recent study by Mr Ross Atkinson supports that view by drawing on the work of the American semiotician, C. S. Peirce.[2] It can be argued, for example, that the signs in a book, as a bibliographer must read them, are simply iconic or indexical. Briefly, iconic signs are those which involve similarity; they represent an object, much as a portrait represents the sitter. In enumerative bibliography, and, even more so in descriptive, the entries are iconic. They represent the object they describe. Textual bibliography, too, may be said to be iconic because it seeks, as Mr Atkinson puts it, 'to reproduce the Object with maximum precision in every detail'. In that way, enumerative, descriptive, and textual bibliography may be said to constitute a class of three *referential* sign systems. Analytical bibliography, however, would form a distinct class of indexical signs. Their significance lies only in the physical differences between them as an index to the ways in which a particular document came physically to be what it is. It is their *causal* status that, in Peirce's terms, makes the signs *indexical*. In the words of Professor Bowers, writing of analytical bibliography, the physical features of a book are 'significant in the order and manner of their shapes but indifferent in symbolic meaning'.[3]

I must say at once that this account comes closer than any other I know to justifying Greg's definition of the discipline. I am also convinced, however, that the premise informing Greg's classic statement, and therefore this refinement of it, is no longer adequate as a definition of what bibliography is and does.

In an attempt to escape the embarrassment of such a strict definition, it is often said that bibliography is not a subject at all but only, as Mr G. Thomas Tanselle once put it, 'a related group of subjects that happen to be commonly referred to by the same term'.[4] Professor Bowers virtually concedes as much in dividing it into enumerative or systematic bibliography, and descriptive, analytical, textual, and historical bibliography.[5] The purity of the discipline which Greg aspired to is to that extent qualified by its particular applications and these in turn imply that the definition does not fully serve its uses.

The problem is, I think, that the moment we are required to explain signs in a book, as distinct from describing or copying them, they assume a symbolic status. If a medium in any sense affects a message, then bibliography cannot exclude from its own proper concerns the relation between form, function and symbolic meaning. If textual bibliography were merely iconic, it could produce only facsimiles of different versions. As for bibliographical analysis, that depends absolutely upon antecedent historical knowledge, for it can only function 'with the assistance of previously gathered information on the techniques of book production'.[6] But the most striking weakness of the definition is precisely its incapacity to accommodate history. Mr Atkinson is quite frank about this. Accepting the bibliographer's presumed lack of concern for the meaning of signs, he writes: 'we are left now only with the problem of historical bibliography'. He cites with approval the comment by Professor Bowers that the numerous fields concerned with the study of printing and its processes both as art and craft are merely 'ancillary to analytical bibliography'.[7] He is therefore obliged to argue that

> historical bibliography is not, properly speaking, bibliography at all. This is because it does not have as its Object material sign systems or documents. Its Object rather consists of certain mechanical techniques and as such it must be considered not part of bibliography but a constituent of such fields as the history of technology or, perhaps, information science.

Such comments, although recent, and indeed advanced in seeking to accommodate bibliography to semiotics as the science of signs, are oddly out of touch with such developments as, for example, the founding of The Center for the Book by the Library of Congress, the American Antiquarian Society's Programme for the History of the Book in American Culture, or proposals for publication of national histories of the book, of which the most notable so far is *L'Histoire de l'Édition Française*.

I am not bold enough to speak of paradigm shifts, but I think I am safe in saying that the vital interests of most of those known to me as bibliographers are no longer fully served by description, or even by editing, but by the historical study of the making and the use of books and other documents. But is it right that in order to accomplish such projects as, for example, a history of the book in Britain, we must cease to be bibliographers and shift to another discipline? It is here, if anywhere, that other disciplines such as history, and especially cultural history, are now making demands of bibliography. Far from accepting that 'historical bibliography is not, properly speaking, bibliography at all', it is tempting to claim, now, that all bibliography, properly speaking, is historical bibliography.

In such a world, Greg's definition of the theoretical basis of bibliography is too limited. As long as we continue to think of it as confined to the study of the non-symbolic functions of signs, the risk it runs is relegation. Rare book rooms will simply become rarer. The politics of survival, if nothing else, require a more comprehensive justification of the discipline's function in promoting new knowledge.

If, by contrast, we were to delineate the field in a merely pragmatic way, take a panoptic view and describe what we severally *do* as bibliographers, we should note, rather, that it is the only discipline which has consistently studied the composition, formal design and transmission of texts by writers, printers, and publishers; their distribution through different communities by wholesalers, retailers, and teachers; their collection and classification by librarians; their meaning for, and – I must add – their creative regeneration by, readers. However we define it, no part of that series of human and institutional interactions is alien to bibliography as we have, traditionally, practised it.

But, like Panizzi himself, faced with everything printed in a world in change, we reach a point where the accretion of subjects, like the collection of books, demands that we also seek a new principle by which to order them. Recent changes in critical theory, subsuming linguistics, semiotics, and the psychology of reading and writing, in information theory and communications studies, in the status of texts and the forms of their transmission, represent a formidable challenge to traditional practice, but they may also, I believe, give to bibliographical principle a quite new centrality.

The principle I wish to suggest as basic is simply this: bibliography is the discipline that studies texts as recorded forms, and the processes of their transmission, including their production and reception. So stated, it will not seem very surprising. What the word 'texts' also allows, however, is the extension of present practice to include all forms of texts, not merely books or Greg's signs on pieces of parchment or paper. It also frankly accepts that bibliographers should be concerned to show that forms affect meaning. Beyond that, it allows us to describe not only the technical but the social processes of their transmission. In those quite specific ways, it accounts for non-book texts, their physical forms, textual versions, technical transmission, institutional control, their perceived meanings, and social effects. It accounts for a history of the book and, indeed, of all printed forms including all textual ephemera as a record of cultural change, whether in mass civilization or minority culture. For any history of the book which excluded study of the social, economic and political motivations of publishing, the reasons why texts were written and read as they were, why they were rewritten and redesigned, or allowed to die, would degenerate into a feebly degressive book list and never rise to a readable history. But such a phrase also accommodates what in recent critical theory is often called text production, and it therefore opens up the application of the discipline to the service of that field too.

In terms of the range of demands now made of it and of the diverse interests of those who think of themselves as bibliographers, it seems to me that it would now be more useful to describe bibliography as the study of the sociology of texts. If the principle which makes it distinct is its concern with texts in some physical form and their transmission, then I can think of no other phrase which so aptly describes its range. Both the words 'texts' and 'sociology', however, demand further comment.

I define 'texts' to include verbal, visual, oral, and numeric data, in the form of maps, prints, and music, of archives of recorded sound, of films, videos, and any computer-stored information, everything in fact from epigraphy to the latest forms of discography. There is no evading the challenge which those new forms have created.

We can find in the origins of the word 'text' itself some support for extending its meaning from manuscripts and print to other forms. It derives, of course, from the Latin *texere*, 'to weave', and therefore refers, not to any specific material as such, but to its woven state, the web or texture of the materials. Indeed, it was not restricted to the weaving of textiles, but might be applied equally well to the interlacing or entwining of any kind of material. The Oxford Latin Dictionary suggests that it is probably cognate with the Vedic 'tāṣṭi', to 'fashion by carpentry', and consequently with the Greek τέκτων and τέχνη.

The shift from fashioning a material medium to a conceptual system, from the weaving of fabrics to the web of words, is also implicit in the Greek ὕφος 'a web or net', from ὑφαίνω 'to weave'. As with the Latin, it is only by virtue of a metaphoric shift that it applies to language, that the verb 'to weave' serves for the verb 'to write', that the web of words becomes a text. In each case, therefore, the primary sense is one which defines a process of material construction. It creates an object, but it is not peculiar to any one substance or any one form. The idea that texts are written records on parchment or paper derives only from the secondary and metaphoric sense that the writing of words is like the weaving of threads.

As much could now be said of many constructions which are not in written form, but for which the same metaphoric shift would be just as proper. Until our own times, the only textual records created in any quantity were manuscripts and books. A slight extension of the principle – it is, I believe, the same principle – to cope with the new kinds of material constructions we have in the form of the non-book texts which now surround, inform, and pleasure us, does not seem to me a radical departure from precedent.

In turning briefly now to comment on the word 'sociology', it is not perhaps impertinent to note that its early history parallels Panizzi's. A neologism coined by Auguste Comte in 1830, the year before Panizzi joined the staff of the British Museum, it made a fleeting appearance in Britain in 1843 in *Blackwood's Magazine*, which referred to 'a new Science, to be called Social Ethics, or Sociology'. Seven years later it was still struggling for admission. *Fraser's Magazine* in 1851 acknowledged its function but derided its name in a reference to 'the new science of sociology, as it is barbarously called'. Only in 1873 did it find a local habitation and a respected name. Herbert Spencer's *The Study of Sociology*, published in that year, provides a succinct description of its role: 'Sociology has to recognize truths of social development, structure and function'.

As I see it, that stress on structure and function is important, although I should resist its abstraction to the point where it lost sight of human agency. At one level, a sociology simply reminds us of the full range of social realities which the medium of print had to serve, from receipt blanks to bibles. But it also directs us to consider the human motives and interactions which texts involve at every stage of their production, transmission and consumption. It alerts us to the roles of institutions, and their own complex structures, in affecting the forms of social discourse, past and present. Those are the realities which bibliographers and textual critics as such have, until very recently, either neglected, or by defining them as strictly non-bibliographical, have felt unable to denominate, logically and coherently, as central to what we do. Historical bibliography, we were told, was not strictly bibliography at all.

A 'sociology of texts', then, contrasts with a bibliography confined to logical inference from printed signs as arbitrary marks on parchment or paper. As I indicated earlier, claims were made for the 'scientific' status of the latter precisely because it worked only from the physical evidence of books themselves. Restricted to the non-symbolic values of the signs, it tried to exclude the distracting complexities of linguistic interpretation and historical explanation.

That orthodox view of bibliography is less compelling, and less surprising, if we note its affinities with other modes of thinking at the time when Greg was writing. These include certain formalist theories of art and literature which were concerned to exclude from the discussion of a work of art any intended or referential meaning. They were current not only in the years when Greg was formulating his definitions but were still active in the theory of the New Criticism when Professor Fredson Bowers was developing his. The congruence of bibliography and criticism lay precisely in their shared view of the self-sufficient nature of the work of art or text, and in their agreement on the significance of its every verbal detail, however small. In neither case were precedent or subsequent processes thought to be essential to critical or bibliographical practice. The New Criticism showed great ingenuity in discerning patterns in the poem-on-the-page as a self-contained verbal structure. It is not I think altogether fanciful to find a scholarly analogy in analytical bibliography. Compositor studies, for example, have shown a comparable virtuosity in discerning patterns in evidence which is entirely internal, if not wholly fictional.

I shall return to that analogy with the New Criticism, but I am more concerned for the moment to emphasize the point that this confinement of bibliography to non-symbolic meaning, in an attempt to give it some kind of objective or 'scientific' status, has seriously impeded its development as a discipline. By electing to ignore its inevitable dependence upon interpretive structures, it has obscured the role of human agents, and virtually denied the relevance to bibliography of anything we might now understand as a history of the book. Physical bibliography – the study of the signs which constitute texts and the materials on which they are recorded – is of course the starting point. But it cannot define the discipline because it has no adequate means of accounting for the processes, the technical and social dynamics, of transmission and reception, whether by one reader or a whole market of them.

In speaking of bibliography as the sociology of texts, I am not concerned to invent new names but only to draw attention to its actual nature. Derrida's 'Grammatology', the currently fashionable word 'Textuality', the French 'Textologie', or even 'Hyphologie' (a suggestion made, not altogether seriously, by Roland Barthes) would exclude more than we would wish to lose. Nor is bibliography a sub-field of semiotics, precisely because its functions are not merely synchronically descriptive. Our own word, 'Bibliography', will do. It unites us as collectors, editors, librarians, historians, makers and readers of books. It even has a new felicity in its literal meaning of 'the writing out of books', of generating new copies and therefore in time new versions. Its traditional concern with texts as recorded forms, and with the processes of their transmission, should make it hospitably open to new forms. No new names, then; but to conceive of the discipline as a sociology of texts is, I think, both to describe what the bibliography is that we actually do and to allow for its natural evolution.

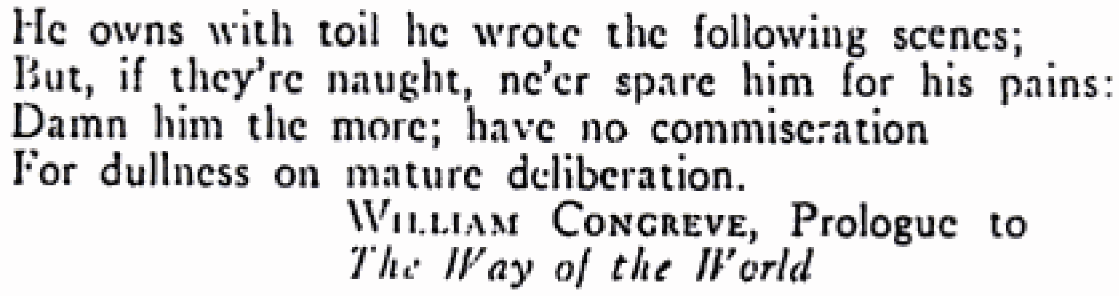
Nevertheless, I must now turn to consider the special case of printed texts. In doing so, the particular inquiry I wish to pursue is whether or not the material forms of books, the non-verbal elements of the typographic notations within them, the very disposition of space itself, have an expressive function in conveying meaning, and whether or not it is, properly, a bibliographical task to discuss it.

Again, I sense that theory limps behind practice. At one end of the spectrum, we must of course recognize that Erwin Panofsky on perspective as symbolic form has long since made the theme familiar; at the other end, we find that Marshall McLuhan's *Understanding Media* has made it basic to media studies. In our own field, Mr Nicolas Barker, on 'Typography and the Meaning of Words: The Revolution in the Layout of Books in the Eighteenth Century'; Mr David Foxon on Pope's typography; Mr Giles Barber on Voltaire and the typographic presentation of *Candide*; Mr Roger Laufer on 'scripturation' or 'the material emergence of sense' are all distinguished bibliographers demonstrating in one way or another, not the iconic or indexical, but the symbolic function of typographic signs as an interpretive system.[8] Words like the 'articulation' or 'enunciation' of the book in this sense make similar assumptions. Discussions of the morphology of the book in relation to genre or to special classes of readers and markets assume a complex relation of medium to meaning. Journals like *Visible Language* and *Word & Image* were founded specifically to explore these questions. The persistent example of fine printing and the revival of the calligraphic manuscript, and numerous recent studies of the sophisticated displays of text and illumination in medieval manuscript production, also share a basic assumption that forms affect sense.[9]

Perhaps on this occasion the simplest way of exploring some of these issues as they relate to the expressive function of typography in book forms, as they bear on editing, and as they relate to critical theory, is to offer an exemplary case. I have chosen the four lines which serve as epigraph to 'The Intentional Fallacy', the distinguished essay by W. K. Wimsatt Jr. and M. C. Beardsley which was first published in *The Sewanee Review* in 1946.[10] It would, I think, be hard to name another essay which has so influenced critical theory and the teaching of literature in the past forty years. Briefly, they argued that it was pointless to use the concept of an author's intentions in trying to decide what a work of literature might mean, or if it was any good. And of course exactly the same objection must apply, if it holds at all, to the interpretation of a writer's or printer's intentions in presenting a text in a particular form, or a publisher's intentions in issuing it at all.

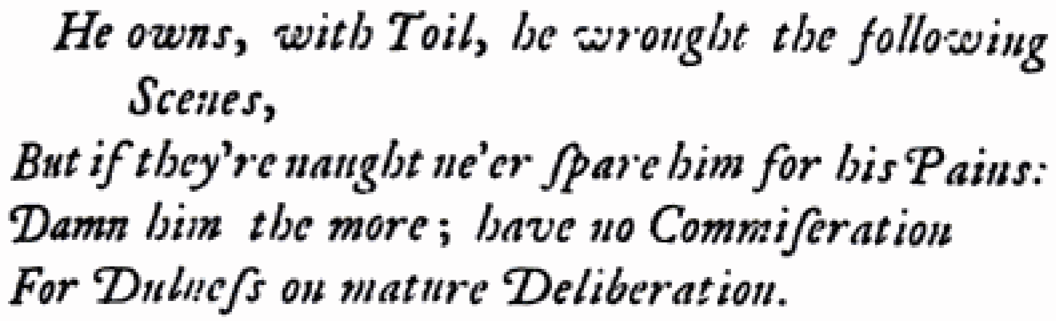
Let me say at once that my purpose in using an example from this essay is to show that in some cases significantly informative readings may be recovered from typographic signs as well as verbal ones, that these are relevant to editorial decisions about the manner in which one might reproduce a text, and that a reading of such bibliographical signs may seriously shape our judgement of an author's work. I think it is also possible to suggest that their own preconceptions may have led Wimsatt and Beardsley to misread a text, that their misreading may itself have been partly a function of the manner in which it was printed, and that its typographic style was in turn influenced by the culture at large. My argument therefore runs full circle from a defence of authorial meaning, on the grounds that it is in some measure recoverable, to a recognition that, for better or worse, readers inevitably make their own meanings. In other words, each reading is peculiar to its occasion, each can be at least partially recovered from the physical forms of the text, and the differences in readings constitute an informative history. What writers thought they were doing in writing texts, or printers and booksellers in designing and publishing them, or readers in making sense of them are issues which no history of the book can evade.

'The Intentional Fallacy' opens with an epigraph taken from Congreve's prologue to *The Way of the World* (1700). In it, as Wimsatt and Beardsley quote him,



He owns with toil he wrote the following scenes;
But, if they're naught, ne'er spare him for his pains:
Damn him the more; have no commiseration
For dullness on mature deliberation.
William Congreve, Prologue to
The Way of the World

Congreve's authorized version of 1710 reads:



He owns, with Toil, he wrought the following Scenes,
But if they're naught ne'er ſpare him for his Pains:
Damn him the more; have no Commiſeration
For Dulneſs on mature Deliberation.

It has not, I think, been observed before that, if we include its epigraph, this famous essay on the interpretation of literature opens with a misquotation in its very first line. Wimsatt and Beardsley say that Congreve 'wrote' the following scenes, but Congreve was a deliberate craftsman. He said he '*wrought*' them. Since the words quoted are ascribed to Congreve, I think we are clearly meant to accept them as his, even if the essay later persuades us that we cannot presume to know what Congreve might have intended them to mean. By adopting that simple change from '*wrought*' to 'wrote', Wimsatt and Beardsley oblige us to make our meaning from their misreading. The epigraph thereby directs us to weaken the emphasis that Congreve placed on his labour of composition: he writes of the '*Pains*' it cost him to hammer out *his* meaning. The changed wording destroys the carefully created internal rhyme, the resonance between what, in the first line, Congreve said he '*wrought*' and, in the second line, its fate in being reduced to '*naught*' by those who misquote, misconstrue, and misjudge him. Congreve's prologue to *The Way of the World* put, in 1700/1710, a point of view exactly opposite to the one which the lines are cited to support.

Less noticeable perhaps are the implications of the way in which the epigraph is printed. For Congreve's precise notation of spelling, punctuation and initial capitals, the 1946 version offers a flat, even insidiously open form. Congreve wrote that '*He owns*' – comma – '*with Toil*' – comma – '*he wrought the following Scenes*'. In their performance of the line, Wimsatt and Beardsley drop the commas. By isolating and emphasizing the phrase, Congreve may be read as affirming his seriousness of purpose, the deliberation of his art. Wimsatt and Beardsley speed past it, their eyes perhaps on a phrase more proper to their purpose in the next line. What their reading emphasizes instead, surrounding it with commas where Congreve had none, is the phrase 'if they're naught'. By that slight change they highlight Congreve's ironic concession that an author's intentions have no power to save him if an audience or reader thinks he is dull. Congreve, without commas, had preferred to skip quickly past that thought. Wimsatt and Beardsley allow us to dwell on it, for in their reading it would seem to justify their rather different argument.

Those shifts of meaning which result from the variants noted are, I believe, serious, however slight the signs which make them. But there are more. In his second couplet, Congreve writes:

> *Damn him the more; have no Commiseration*
> *For Dulness on mature Deliberation.*

Again, it suits the purpose of the epigraph to remove Congreve's irony, but as irony is crucially dependent upon context, the loss is perhaps inevitable. Reading the words literally, Wimsatt and Beardsley must take them to mean: 'If you really think my scenes are dull, don't waste your pity on their author'. But you will note that Congreve gives upper case '*D*'s for '*Dulness*' and '*Deliberation*'. Those personified forms allow two readings to emerge which tell us something of Congreve's experience. The first is that these abstractions have human shapes (they were sitting there in the theatre); the second alludes to the age-old combat between Dulness and Deliberation, or Stupidity and Sense. By reducing all his nouns to lower case and thereby destroying the early eighteenth-century convention, the epigraph kills off Congreve's personified forms, and by muting his irony, it reverses his meaning. Where Congreve's irony contrasts his own '*mature Deliberation*' with the '*Dulness*' of his critics, their meaning has him saying the reader knows best.

If we look again at the form and relation of the words '*Toil*', '*Scenes*' and its rhyme-word '*Pains*', we note that they, too, have initial capitals. The convention thereby gives us in print a visual, semantic and ultimately moral identity between Congreve's own description of his labours ('*Toil* . . . *Pains*') and their human products who people his plays. The text as printed in the epigraph breaks down those visual links by depriving the words of their capitals. One set of meanings, which stress a writer's presence in his work, is weakened in favour of a preconceived reading which would remove him from it.

Small as it is, this example is so instructive that I should like to explore it further. It bears on the most obvious concerns of textual criticism – getting the right words in the right order; on the semiotics of print and the role of typography in forming meaning; on the critical theories of authorial intention and reader response; on the relation between the past meanings and present uses of verbal texts. It offers an illustration of the transmission of texts as the creation of the new versions which form, in turn, the new books, the products of later printers, and the stuff of subsequent bibliographical control. These are the primary documents for any history of the book. By reading one form of Congreve's text (1700/1710), we may with some authority affirm certain readings as his. By reading other forms of it (1946), we can chart meanings that later readers made from it under different historical imperatives.

I may believe – as I do – that Wimsatt and Beardsley have mistaken Congreve's meaning; that they have misconceived his relation to his tradition; that they have misreported his attitude to his own audience and readers. At the same time, their misreading has become an historical document in its own right. By speaking to what they perceived in 1946 to be the needs of their own time, not Congreve's in 1700/1710, they have left a record of the taste, thought and values of a critical school which significantly shaped our own choice of books, the way we read them and, in my own case, the way I taught them. The history of material objects as symbolic forms functions, therefore, in two ways. It can falsify certain readings; and it can demonstrate new ones.

To extend that line of argument, I should like to comment briefly on the word '*Scenes*'. We recall first that Congreve's '*Scenes*' cost him '*Pains*'. Next, we should note that his editors and critics have, almost without exception, replaced his meaning of the word with a commoner one of their own. They have defined them by geography and carpentry, as when a scene shifts from a forest to the palace. For Congreve, by contrast, they were neoclassical scenes: not impersonal places in motion, but distinct groups of human beings in conversation. These made up his scenes. For him, it was the intrusion of another human voice, another mind, or its loss, that most changed the scene. The substance of his scenes, therefore, what he '*wrought with Toil*', were men and women. Once we recover that context and follow Congreve's quite literal meaning in that sense, his rhyme of '*Scenes*' with '*Pains*' glows with an even subtler force. What he hints at is a serious critical judgement about all his work: beneath the rippling surface of his comedy there flows a sombre undercurrent of human pain. In a more mundane way, that perception may direct an editor to adopt a typography which divides Congreve's plays into neoclassical scenes, as he himself did in his edition of 1710.

With that last example, it could be argued that we reach the border between bibliography and textual criticism on the one hand and literary criticism and literary history on the other. My own view is that no such border exists. In the pursuit of historical meanings, we move from the most minute feature of the material form of the book to questions of authorial, literary and social context. These all bear in turn on the ways in which texts are then re-read, re-edited, re-designed, re-printed, and re-published. If a history of readings is made possible only by a comparative history of books, it is equally true that a history of books will have no point if it fails to account for the meanings they later come to make.

Though at times they may pretend otherwise, I suspect that few authors, with the kind of investment in their work that Congreve claims, are indifferent to the ways in which their art is presented and received. There is certainly a cruel irony in the fact that Congreve's own text is reshaped and misread to support an argument against himself. Far from offering a licence for his audience and readers to discount the author's meaning, Congreve is putting, with an exasperated irony, the case for the right of authors, as he says in another line of the prologue, '*to assert their Sense*' against the taste of the town. When Jeremy Collier wrenched to his own purposes the meaning of Congreve's words, Congreve replied with his *Amendments of Mr Collier's False and Imperfect Citations*. He too had a way with epigraphs and chose for that occasion one from Martial which, translated, reads: 'That book you recite, O Fidentinus, *is* mine. But your vile *re*-citation begins to make it your own'.

With that thought in mind, I should like to pursue one further dimension of the epigraph's meaning which is not in itself a matter of book form. It nevertheless puts Congreve in the tradition of authors who thought about the smallest details of their work as it might be printed, and who directed, collaborated with, or fumed against, their printers and publishers. One such author is Ben Jonson. As it happens, Wimsatt and Beardsley might with equal point have quoted him to epitomize their argument that an author's intentions are irrelevant. This, for example:

> *Playes in themselues haue neither hopes, nor feares,*
> *Their fate is only in their hearers ears . . .*[11]

It chimes in perfectly with the very end of Congreve's prologue although, here, his irony is too heavy to miss:

In short, our Play shall (with your leave to show it),

Give you one instance of a Passive Poet.
Who to your Judgments yields all Resignation;
So Save or Damn, after your own Discretion.

To link Congreve with Jonson is to place his prologue and what it says in a developing tradition of the author's presence in his printed works. In that context, Congreve's lines become a form of homage to his mentor, an acceptance of succession, and a reminder that the fight for the author's right not to be mis-read can ultimately break even the best of us. For not only had Jonson inveighed against the usurpation of *his* meanings by those of his asinine critics, but he was a dramatist who for a time virtually quit the public stage to be, as he put it, 'Safe from the wolues black iaw, and the dull asses hoofe'. Jonson's rejection of free interpretation is venomous:

  Let their fastidious, vaine
  Commission of the braine
Run on, rage, sweat, censure and condemn:
They were not meant for thee, lesse, thou for them.[12]

Congreve's ironies allow him a more tactful, more decorous, farewell. Less tough, more delicate, than Jonson, he did leave the stage, sensing himself expelled by the misappropriation of his works, convinced that *his* meanings would rarely survive their reception. The imminence of that decision informs his prologue to *The Way of the World*. It was to be his last play. On '*mature Deliberation*', he found he could no longer bear the deadly '*Dulness*' of his critics. By respecting not only the words Congreve uses – a simple courtesy – but also the meanings which their precise notation gives, we can, if we wish, as an act of bibliographical scholarship, recover his irony, and read his pain.

In that long series of Pyrrhic victories which records the triumphs of critics and the deaths of authors, 'The Intentional Fallacy' has earned a distinguished place for the argument which follows its feat of misprision. Its epigraph is no celebration of Congreve's perspicacity in foreseeing a new cause; it is, rather, an epitaph to his own dismembered text. A vast critical literature has been generated by this essay, but I am unaware of any mention of the textual ironies which preface it. With what seems an undue reverence for the tainted text printed by Wimsatt and Beardsley, the epigraph has been reproduced in reprint after reprint with exceptional fidelity, its errors resistant to any further reworking of a classic moment of mis-statement, resistant even to the force of the argument which follows it. It is now incorporate with Congreve's history and with that of our own time.

Yet if the fine detail of typography and layout, the material signs which constitute a text, do signify in the ways I have tried to suggest, it must follow that any history of the book – subject as books are to typographic and material change – must be a history of misreadings. This is not so strange as it might sound. Every society rewrites its past, every reader rewrites its texts, and, if they have any continuing life at all, at some point every printer redesigns them. The changes in the way Congreve's text was printed as an epigraph were themselves designed to correct a late Victorian printing style which had come to seem too fussily expressive. In 1946, 'good printing' had a clean, clear, impersonal surface. It left the text to speak for itself.

This newly preferred form of printing had conspired with shifts in critical opinion. Eliot's theory of the impersonality of the poet affected to dissociate the writer from his text. The words on the page became what Wimsatt called a 'verbal icon', a freestanding artefact with its own inner coherence, what Cleanth Brooks was to call (as it happens) a '*well-wrought Urn*', a structure

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