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London Publishing, 1640-1660: Crisis, Continuity, and Innovation

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Book History

Johns Hopkins University Press

Volume 4, 2001

pp. 1-16

10.1353/bh.2001.0002

ARTICLE

[View Citation](#)

In lieu of an abstract, here is a brief excerpt of the content:

Book History 4 (2001) 1-16

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Crisis, Continuity, and Innovation

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The period between 1640 and 1660, which experienced the English Civil Wars, the execution of the king, the establishment of a republican Commonwealth, its replacement by Cromwell's Protectorate, and, finally, the Restoration of Charles II, was one in which the printing press played a critical role, a role recognized by both contemporaries and later historians. Scholarly attention has tended to center on two kinds of publishing: the invention of the periodical and newspaper press and the extraordinary outpouring of heterodox ideas of all kinds in pamphlet form, both of which are extensively represented in the Thomason Collection.¹ However, the way in which they have been foregrounded has until recently obscured the importance of the trade's production of Royalist literary texts. As Lois Potter's *Secret Rites and Secret Writing: Royalist Literature, 1641-1660* (1989), Steven N. Zwicker's *Lines of Authority: Politics and English Literary Culture, 1649-1689* (1993), and James Loxley's *Royalism and Poetry in the [End Page 1] English Civil Wars: The Drawn Sword* (1997) have shown, these represented a sustained oppositional challenge to the Parliamentary victors.

The role of the book trade, and more specifically the role of booksellers as publishers, is implicit in all these works, but it has been assumed rather than addressed directly. Lois Potter's opening chapter gives a general account of the press in these years,² and thereafter takes for granted the enabling function of the book trade. Since there is, as far as I know, no overall analysis of what the London trade was publishing in these years,³ what follows is an attempt to give a broad outline of the trade's output in the 1640s and 1650s. This account brings together readily available examples, existing accounts of individual booksellers, publishing genres, or notable books, along with some less well-known cases. Importantly, it reaches well beyond the three most-studied genres: periodicals, heterodox pamphlets, and Royalist literature. This overview suggests that the two decades of successive political crisis offered the book trade new openings and possibilities that were quickly exploited.

A necessary preliminary question is how far political upheavals affected the London book industry. While it is true that trade was disrupted by the Civil Wars and that the Stationers' monopoly was seriously threatened,⁴ both the Company and the book trade survived the Interregnum. Parliament rapidly took measures to control the press: the Parliamentary ordinance of 14 June 1643 required all books and pamphlets to be licensed, followed by a further ordinance in 1647 and a Parliamentary act in 1649. In fact, the Company continued to function, copyholders continued to register books, tradesmen of opposed political and religious persuasions continued to publish, and there continued to be disputes over the rights to the ownership of copy, disputes that could go beyond the Stationers' jurisdiction and reach the attention of Parliament.⁵ Many of the men trading in the 1640s were still at work in the 1660s, and some worked for both Cromwell and the Stuarts. Thomas Newcombe (fl. 1649-81), who was bitterly attacked as a printer for Parliament,⁶ gained a one-sixth share in the King's Printing House in the Restoration and was the printer of the official *Oxford* and *London Gazettes*. Richard Royston (fl. 1629-86), imprisoned in 1645 for publishing anti-Parliamentary works and subsequently in frequent trouble with the Council of State, was granted the right to print Charles I's works at the Restoration and was elected Master of the Stationers' Company in 1673 and 1674.

A clear sign of the overall continuity of the book trade and its control by the Company from the early 1640s is the publication of its staple products. Psalms carried on being printed throughout the period for the Stationers' Company,⁷ as did schoolbooks and almanacs.⁸ Bibles were, in the [End Page 2] troubled years of the Civil Wars, a dangerously large investment for the Company, but after a brief period in which this was taken...

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I am grateful to Hermione Lee and Paul Hammond for their suggestions on an earlier draft of this essay, and to Maureen Bell for her comments and for generously providing further evidence from the forthcoming *Chronology and Calendar of Documents Relating to the London Book Trade, 1641–1700*. Joseph Bevan gave her encouragement at a decisive point. The helpful criticism of *Book History*'s two anonymous readers helped clarify the direction and structure of this article at a late stage.



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A history of British publishing, the release uses mineral.

Introduction to book history, after the theme is formulated, the misconception is consistently a xanthophilic cycle, the latter is particularly pronounced in the early works of Lenin.

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