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Citation

Treadwell, Michael. 1997. 1695-1995: Some tercentenary thoughts on the freedoms of the press. Harvard Library Bulletin 7 (1), Spring 1996: 3-19.

Permanent link

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1695-1995: Some Tercentenary Thoughts on the Freedoms of the Press

Michael Treadwell

Seven years ago last month saw the celebration in the United Kingdom, the Netherlands, and at the American College of William and Mary, of the three hundredth anniversary of the Glorious Revolution of 1688. Beginning always with the surprisingly bloodless character of the Revolution—even Lord Jeffreys died in bed—there was no shortage of glories to celebrate, and no shortage of scholars to celebrate them. Accordingly, the competing permanent benefits of the Toleration Act, the regular summoning of parliament, and the Anglo-Dutch Alliance were all debated at joyous length. Alas, the matter had been decided over a century and a half earlier by the young Macaulay who in 1835 had examined the rival claims and decreed that the Revolution's greatest permanent gain was the full establishment of the liberty of unlicensed printing.

This pronouncement came in the course of a review of another man's book,¹ but when, twenty years later, Macaulay came to deliver his own mature judgment on events, he had had no second thoughts. Whether, indeed, his judgment had been reinforced, or whether he had merely grown in rhetorical power, I leave it to the reader to decide. Here is Macaulay in full flight:

While the Abbey was hanging with black for the funeral of the Queen, the Commons came to a vote, which at the time attracted little attention, which produced no excitement, which has been left unnoticed by voluminous annalists, and of which the history can be but imperfectly traced in the Journals of the House, but which has done more for liberty and for civilisation than the Great Charter or the Bill of Rights.²

It might, at first glance, seem that the total failure of contemporaries to perceive that "history" was being made on this occasion would have diminished the event for Macaulay. On the contrary. Macaulay knew, if anyone has ever known, that great history is made by great historians and that contemporary bonfires in the streets would merely have dimmed the beam with which he was then illuminating the past.

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¹ Sir Charles Firth, *A Commentary on Macaulay's History of England* (London: Frank Cass, 1964), 137.

² Lord Macaulay, *The History of England from the Accession of James the Second*, 8 vols. (London: Longman, Green, 1860-62), 7:167.

There were, however, two unsatisfactory aspects of this momentous event which Macaulay could not help but deplore, the first the nature of the vote and the second the motives of the voters. Dissatisfaction over the nature of the vote arose from the simple fact that no one had ever voted for anything remotely resembling freedom of the press, the vote to which Macaulay refers being merely one in a confusing sequence, that he himself requires more than a page to summarize. Moreover, not only was this not a vote *for* freedom of the press, it was not even a vote *against* censorship, but rather a much more mundane procedural vote. This requires some explaining.

Briefly, in the spring of 1695 the press was controlled by means of an act of Parliament that had been passed more than thirty years before to run initially for two years. It had then been renewed from session to session until it lapsed with the proroguing of parliament in March 1679. After a six-year hiatus, it was then revived in June 1685 and renewed one last time in March 1693 for a term of one year and from thence to the end of the next session of parliament, due to be prorogued in the spring of 1695.³ Many so-called temporary statutes were routinely renewed in this way, and well before the end of the session a committee was struck to recommend on the renewal of all such expiring acts. The committee met and recommended the renewal of a number of acts, including what Macaulay calls the Licensing Act, but on 11 February 1695 the Commons, while accepting the others, rejected this particular recommendation without a division and instead appointed another committee to bring in a new bill to better regulate printing.⁴ It was this quite ambiguous rejection that was Macaulay's vote taken "while the Abbey was hanging with black."

It was also far from the last word on the subject; for when the renewal bill reached the Lords, their Lordships reinserted the Licensing Act in the list of those to be continued and sent the whole bill back to the Commons. The Commons demurred, and requested and got a conference with the upper house at which they carried the day.⁵ The Lords, to quote the historian, "probably expected that some less objectionable bill for the regulation of the press would soon be sent up to them,"⁶ but that bill, like many since, never emerged from committee. Accordingly, when parliament was eventually prorogued on 3 May 1695, the act lapsed; and since it so happened that it was never subsequently revived or replaced, Macaulay was justified in announcing that from that date "English Literature was emancipated, and emancipated forever, from the control of the government,"⁷ albeit by default, and, as he clearly felt, with something disappointingly like a whimper.

But if Macaulay's disappointment over the undramatic action must be deduced, his scorn for the unworthy agents is manifest. Their paper for the Lords of reasons for non-renewal, he wails,

3 The dates are usefully set out in his first footnote by Raymond Astbury, "The Renewal of the Licensing Act in 1693 and its lapse in 1695," *The Library*, 5th s., 33 (1978): 296-322.

4 Astbury, "Renewal of the Licensing Act," 309.

5 Astbury, "Renewal of the Licensing Act," 314.

6 Macaulay, *History of England*, 7:169.

7 Macaulay, *History of England*, 7:169

proves that they knew not what they were doing, what a revolution they were making, what a power they were calling into existence. . . . [A]ll their objections will be found to relate to matters of detail. On the great question of principle, on the question whether the liberty of unlicensed printing, be, on the whole, a blessing or a curse to society, not a word is said. The Licensing Act is condemned, not as a thing essentially evil, but on account of the petty grievances, the exactions, . . . the commercial restrictions . . . which were incidental to it. It is pronounced mischievous because it enables the Company of Stationers to extort money from publishers, . . . because it confines the foreign book trade to the port of London, because it detains valuable packages of books at the Custom House till the pages are mildewed Such were the arguments which did what Milton's *Areopagitica* had failed to do.⁸

A nation of shopkeepers indeed.

For Macaulay, as his language betrays, this was a matter of the highest principle. The man who, as an impoverished young parliamentarian, tendered his resignation from office at the first hint of his party's minor backsliding on the abolition question, did not speak lightly of English literature being "emancipated."⁹ And if, as Macaulay suggests, the Licensing Act did enslave the written word, then surely he is right to scorn petty complaints of commercial restrictions, let alone mildew.

For what indeed have commercial restrictions to do with press freedom? It is almost as if William's MPs and their historian are talking about a different act, a different emancipation. This, as we shall see, is very close to the truth, for although they are, in fact, talking of one and the same act, it is an act of considerable length and complexity, containing many and various clauses. And, as has perhaps already become clear from our review of Macaulay, those clauses that were anathema in principle to the nineteenth-century Whig historian were not necessarily the same as those, the application of which produced the greatest sense of irritation or even outrage in seventeenth-century MPs or those seventeenth-century authors or printers or publishers who lobbied them. Unfortunately, in order to understand which clauses were which, and how any of them could possibly lead to books mildewing in the port of London, we must turn to the act itself.

It was, legally speaking, 14 Charles II, c.33 and received royal assent on 19 May 1662, to come into force three weeks later. It thus belongs to that enthusiastic period of copious and ill-drafted legislation in which royal order was restored after the Interregnum. However, in spite of its many short-comings the act was never revised, being merely renewed from time to time as we have seen.

Something of the confusion in the act is evident even from its title, "An Act for Preventing the frequent Abuses in Printing Seditious, Treasonable, and Unlicensed Books and Pamphlets; and for Regulating of Printing and Printing-Presses."¹⁰ Macaulay and most subsequent scholars call it the Licensing Act, but significantly enough contemporaries generally referred to it as the Printing Act,¹¹

⁸ Macaulay, *History of England*, 7:168-9.

⁹ G. O. Trevelyan, *The Life and Letters of Lord Macaulay*, 2 vols. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1960), 1:282-86.

¹⁰ Here and elsewhere I quote from the small folio black letter edition of the act (London: J. Bill and C. Barker, 1662). However, because this edition is scarce, and because its paragraphs are unnumbered, I have identi-

fied each citation by the number subsequently assigned to the paragraph from which it is taken in such later and more accessible collections as Danby Pickering, ed., *The Statutes at Large from Magna Charta to . . . Anno 1761*, 44 vols. (Cambridge, 1762-1804).

¹¹ One recent scholar has even referred to it as the "Censorship Act." See J. R. Western, *Monarchy and Revolution. The English State in the 1680s* (London: Blandford Press, 1972), 336.

licensing being merely one of the measures employed in it “for Preventing the frequent Abuses in Printing,” and not one which caused much raising of seventeenth-century eyebrows. The problem it aimed to address, as the preamble to the act made clear, was the usual proliferation of “Heretical, Schismatical, Blasphemous, Seditious, and Treasonable Books, Pamphlets, and Papers” (par. 1). As for a solution, it shared the convictions of the series of pre-Civil War decrees on which it was based that “no surer means can be advised, than by reducing and limiting the number of Printing-Presses, and by ordering and settling the said Art or Mystery of Printing, by Act of Parliament, in manner as herein after is expressd” (par. 1).

The act thereupon sets out in general terms that no one shall print or publish or sell or even bind such wicked books (par. 2) and then gets down the specific requirements. The first of these is, curiously, that nothing is to be printed that is not first entered in the Registers of the London Stationers’ Company though even before that it is to be “lawfully Licensed and Authorized” by a long list of specified Licensers from the Earl Marshall for heraldry, to the Secretaries of State for history and “Affairs of State” (par. 3).¹² Since the license and licenser’s name were required to be printed on every book (par. 4), the function of licensing is quite clear. The role of registration with the Stationers’ Company is less so. The printing of seditious books being thus controlled, it remained only to prevent their importation, which was done by requiring that all book imports come through London and forbidding even Customs officials to open any package containing books except in the presence of “some Scholar or learned man” appointed by the Bishop of London or Archbishop of Canterbury “with one or more of the . . . Company of Stationers, and such others as they shall call to their assistance” (par. 5).

The scholars and learned men were often in practice identical to the licensers, and it is clear that they attended to check imported printed books for the same hints of heresy or sedition for which they scanned original manuscripts. The role of the one or more members “of the . . . Company of Stationers” is again less immediately clear, though their required presence on the committee does help to explain why books might well mildew on the London docks before a quorum could be reached for an opening.

The fact is that the role of the Stationers at the Custom House, like the requirement for registration at Stationers’ Hall, had nothing to do with searching for or preventing the printing of heretical or seditious books. Rather, it had everything to do with the protection of private property and the hunt for books that, though perfectly innocuous, might nevertheless violate the monopoly- or copy-rights of the Stationers’ Company or of its more powerful members. And in case this is not already clear, there is another clause of the act specifically outlawing the importation of any works the rights of which are properly registered either by letters patent or with the Stationers’ Company—including “Forms of blank Bills or Indentures” (par. 6), which are hardly likely to be seditious. The explanation is that the cooperation of the Stationers’ Company, particularly in the matter of searching out underground printing, was valued by

¹²Exceptions are made for “Acts of Parliament, Proclamations, and such other Books and Papers as shall be appointed to be Printed” by royal or like authority (par. 3).

the government, and that that, combined with the Company's own lobbying power, had been sufficient in 1662 to persuade the government to embody in the Printing Act a whole series of clauses designed for the commercial advantage of the Company and its copyright-owning members, even though those clauses had no real connection with the ostensible purposes of the act.

The copyright-owning members of the Stationers' Company were, in large and increasing majority, the booksellers, who also dominated the Company's all-powerful and self-elective Court of Assistants (so-called because they assisted the Master and Wardens in the running of the Company).¹³ These men naturally cared for the power of the Company as a whole, and the act also contains a clause (par. 8) that aims to limit the London trade in books to Stationers, thus excluding even freemen of other City livery companies, in violation of longstanding City practice.¹⁴ Printers and booksellers outside the Company were more difficult to police, as the Stationers had obviously convinced the government, without however clarifying whether it was political or merely commercial activity that they were interested in policing. But while the interests of the Company as a whole were of course to be supported, not all segments of the Company were equally powerful, and in 1662 the copyright-owning booksellers who dominated the Court had thrown the printers to the wolves.

We noted above that the preamble to the 1662 act made the conventional seventeenth-century equation between the control of seditious printing and the limitation of the number of printing presses in use, and when the government noted that the twenty-five London printing houses of the pre-Civil War period had swollen to more than sixty during the Interregnum, the connection between proliferation and sedition must have seemed self-evidently clear. The Company feared sedition much less than it feared uncontrollable printing of other men's copies, and according to Blagden, the Company's historian, it was the Court, with only two printer-members out of eighteen at the passing of the act, which urged and possibly even bribed the government to return to the status quo ante bellum. If so they were successful; and when the desperate printers made a bid for independence as a separate livery company in the following year, that move too was defeated.¹⁵

Whatever the means used, the act is full of draconian restrictions on printing. All printing is again limited to London and the two universities—with York an almost-forgotten afterthought (pars. 11, 24) London printing houses are to be reduced to twenty besides the three King's Printers—and Col. Streater, another afterthought as the holder of a special patent (pars. 11, 23). Each printing house

¹³ For the booksellers as dominant copyright owners, see Cyprian Blagden, *The Stationers' Company: A history 1403-1959* (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1960), 150. For the booksellers' domination of the Court, see Michael Treadwell, "Printers on the Court of the Stationers' Company in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries," *Journal of the Printing Historical Society*, no. 21 (1992): 29-42, *passim*.

¹⁴ An exception is made for those members of other City companies *already* engaged in the book trades and their successors, since it exempts those "having been Seven years Apprentice to the Trade of Book-seller, Printer,

or Book-binder" or having been made free of the City by patrimony as the child of a freeman (of a company other than the Stationers is implicit in context) practicing one of these three trades (par. 8).

¹⁵ Roger Norton I having died on 1 April 1662, Miles Flesher and Evan Tyler were the only printers on the Court when the act received royal assent on 19 May 1662. For Court support for the act, financial and other, and for the defeat of the printers' attempt at separate incorporation, see Blagden, *Stationers' Company*, 148 and 149-52.

is to be limited to two or at most three printing presses and one, two, or at most three apprentices (pars. 12, 13). And no one is to rent out the space for a printing press, or make iron work or cast a single sort of type for one, without first informing the Stationer's Company (par. 10). And as if to add insult to injury, all these restrictions appear in a section of the act beginning with the observation "that Printing is, and for many years hath been an Art and Manufacture of this Kingdom, [and] Therefore for the better encouraging thereof" decrees that no one shall import any overseas-printed English book into the Kingdom on pain of forfeiture (par. 9).

This last clause, which again adds nothing to earlier inspection procedures to exclude seditious works, is a piece of pure protectionist economic legislation in defense of English—that is to say London—manufactures, and it is not the only clause of the 1662 Act that has nothing to do either with licensing or with the control of heretical or seditious printing. There is, for example, the famous deposit copy clause, which finally added the Cambridge and Royal libraries to Laud's beloved Bodleian (par. 17). And most bizarre of all, though here purporting to control illicit printing by countering the devil's well known tendency to find work for idle hands, is a primitive piece of right-to-work legislation requiring any master printer without a journeyman to find work for any honest, well-behaved journeyman who requests it or face a £5 fine (par. 14).¹⁶ More might still be said about this extraordinary act, but I hope I have said enough to explain not only why the Stationers' Company always referred to it as the Printing and not the Licensing Act, but also to make clear why those MPs who opposed its renewal in 1695 may quite legitimately have thought they were opposing many things besides preprinting licensing in doing so.

The parliamentary opposition, that had already threatened continuation of the act at an earlier prorogation in 1693, and which finally brought about its downfall two years later, has been thoroughly explored in a fine article by Raymond Astbury on "The Renewal of the Licensing Act in 1693 and its lapse in 1695," which appeared in *The Library* in 1978. In that account, in which he also reviews the pamphlet literature aimed at influencing the outcome in parliament, Astbury attempts to determine the precise nature of the objections to the act and to weigh the relative importance that hostility to particular clauses bore in the overall opposition.

Where the 1693 renewal is concerned, Astbury is reluctantly forced to admit that "the evidence . . . does not enable one to assess with certainty whether the opponents of the Act were motivated primarily by a conviction that there should be greater freedom within the book trade or by a realization of the potential significance of the freedom of the press."¹⁷ These opponents were, in any case, unsuccessful. But even where the successful opposition of 1695 is concerned, Astbury, while conceding that "scholars who have most recently concerned themselves with the evidence . . . have tended to agree with Macaulay's view that

¹⁶ The one attempt known to me to invoke this extraordinary clause comes in a letter of 1691 from the Stationers to the Oxford University authorities in which the former try to blacken the reputations of the university's delegated printers Parker and Guy. The context is the competition between the Stationers and Parker and Guy for the renewal of the lease of the

university printing privilege, which is discussed below. The letter is quoted at length in John Johnson and Strickland Gibson, *Print and Privilege at Oxford to the Year 1700* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1946), 126.

¹⁷ Astbury, "Renewal of the Licensing Act," 300.

the principle of the freedom of the press was not the central issue . . . ,”¹⁸ clearly prefers to leave the question open. In particular he suggests that the draft bill for a revised statute which died in committee in 1695 might, even if it had emerged, have failed to pass the Commons, specifically because it still contained provisions for prepublication licensing, albeit in modified form.¹⁹ We will, of course, never know what might have been the essential motivation of the “no” side in a vote which never took place, but even Astbury’s own summary of the evidence suggests that hostility to “the restraints which were placed upon printers, book-sellers, and ancillary tradesmen under the Act constitute the main tenor of the Commons’ objections against its renewal,”²⁰ at least as they expressed those objections to the Lords.

Ironically, one man largely responsible for pointing out many of the petty tyrannies and absurdities of the 1662 act was John Locke, whose crucial behind-the-scenes role as consultant to an active group of Whig parliamentarians with close ties to Lord Keeper Somers is fully examined by Astbury. Not that Locke’s paper of clause-by-clause objections to the Printing Act written for this group is devoid of higher principle, for he, in fact, begins with the classic protest: “I know not why a man should not have liberty to print what ever he would speake. and to be answerable for the one just as he is for the other if he transgresses the law in either.”²¹ But just as most of the act is not concerned with licensing, so most of Locke’s objections are aimed at clauses in defense of monopoly or in restraint of trade. For example, the clause of the act outlawing the importation of any English book printed “beyond the sea” is greeted with the flat assertion that it “serves only to confirme and enlarge the Stationers Monopoly,” while that reducing the Master printers to twenty invites the query whether what “hinders a man who has served out his time the benefit of setting up his trade . . . be not . . . contrary to common equity.” But perhaps most telling of all is Locke’s simple ironic observation that the hysterical regulations governing the joiner, the smith, or anyone else involved in the construction of a printing press exhibit greater caution than was exercised over the construction of presses used for coining—a crime for which men were hanged, drawn, and quartered and women burned at the stake.²²

Because Locke’s objections to the act were written for private rather than public consumption, he makes no effort to disguise the fact that they occasionally arise from private grievance. And what emerges clearly over the course of the document is Locke’s extreme resentment over the way in which the wide powers ceded to the Stationers’ Company on the pretext of their being necessary if the Company is to police seditious printing are systematically abused for the private commercial advantage of the Company and its ruling elite. A perfect example both of the tone of Locke’s comments and of the source of his evidence against the Company is the following reflection on the clause in the act prohibiting the printing of any work not first entered in the Company’s Register. “Whereby it

18 Astbury, “Renewal of the Licensing Act,” 315.

19 Astbury, “Renewal of the Licensing Act,” 316.

20 Astbury, “Renewal of the Licensing Act,” 314–15.

21 Locke’s untitled memorandum which takes the form of a clause-by-clause commentary on the act is dated

“about January” 1695 by E. S. de Beer, who prints it as an appendix to vol. 5 of his great edition of *The Correspondence of John Locke*, 8 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1976–89), 5:785–91.

22 Locke, *Correspondence*, 5:788–89.

comes to passe,” Locke observes, “that sometimes when a booke is brought to be entred . . . they entre it there as theirs, whereby the other person is hinderd from printing and publishing it an Example whereof can be given by Mr Awnsham Churchill.”²³ Awnsham Churchill was Locke’s bookseller or, as we would say, publisher, and with his entry on the scene we begin to approach the underlying reasons why the Printing Act lapsed in 1695.

The eldest of four sons of a Dorchester bookseller, all apprenticed to the London trade, Awnsham Churchill was rumored to be the man who had been willing to publish and distribute the Prince of Orange’s manifesto in 1688 “which nobody would print after Monmouth’s.”²⁴ If so, it would certainly explain why he appears (albeit briefly) as one of the “Printers to the King and Queen’s Most Excellent Majesties” in February 1689, the same month in which his younger brother William was appointed Stationer to the King for unspecified services.²⁵ All four brothers eventually acquired country estates, and three of them, including Awnsham, also sat as MPs in the Whig interest in the parliaments of Anne or George I. However, for reasons we may never fully understand, the Churchills’ relations with the leadership of the Stationers’ seem to have been as bad as their relations with the Williamite political elite were good. John Churchill, another younger brother who was Awnsham’s longtime partner, was neither formally bound nor freed as a Stationer; and when Awnsham and William, were both called to the livery in 1691, William apparently ignored the call, while Awnsham first refused, and, when chosen again later that year and subsequently, ignored the election.²⁶ With such a history, it is perhaps not surprising that when, on 11 June 1694, on the eve of the final battle for renewal of the act, Churchill sent his brother to the Court with a proposal to publish a Latin-English edition of Aesop, edited by John Locke, the Company would not even discuss what they claimed as the Company’s copyright, even though the project came with a letter of support from Pembroke, Lord Privy Seal. That being so, Churchill must have felt that yet another attempt to draft him and his £20 onto the livery only three months later was particularly ill-timed. Certainly he ignored it.²⁷

Such inept dealing with one whom the elders of the Company ought to have known had the power to do their cause considerable damage with the very men who would be considering the renewal of the Printing Act within the year is telling. Above all it shows how far the Company had sunk since the days when its effective lobbying and discreet distribution of funds had seen its commercial

23 Locke, *Correspondence*, 5:786.

24 John Hutchins, *The History . . . of the County of Dorset*, 3d ed. (London: Nichols & Sons, 1861-73), 3:353. For the information on the Churchills, see Michael Treadwell, “The English Book Trade,” in Robert P. Maccubbin and Martha Hamilton Phillips, eds., *The Age of William III and Mary II: Power, Politics, and Patronage 1688-1702* (Williamsburg, Va.: The College of William and Mary, 1989), 360-61.

25 The unique item to bear this imprint is *His Majesties most gracious speech in the House of Lords*...[18 February], 1688/9 (New Wing W2372F). The other royal “printer” (both men were in fact booksellers) who

shares the imprint with Churchill is John Starkey who had spent much of the 1680s in political exile abroad and whose war with the Stationers’ in 1690 is described in Treadwell, “Printers on the Court,” 33.

26 Stationers’ Company, Court Book F, 6 July, 2 November, and 7 December 1691, and 5 March 1694.

27 Stationers’ Company, Court Book F, 11 June and 10 September 1694. £20 was the fine required of those called to the livery, and Churchill did not finally agree to pay it until six years later, and then only a month after he had been elected to the Court and was about to be sworn in and take his seat. See Court Book G, 8 April and 6 May 1700.

interests so pervasively embodied in the original act in 1662. The reason seems to be that by the autumn of 1694 the Company was impoverished and reeling under an unprecedented series of deaths and personal bankruptcies among the members of its governing Court. The very success of its earlier lobbying efforts, and the advantages those efforts had brought, had by now earned it thirty years of accumulated resentment. Nevertheless, with the Crown and the Church still in support of press licensing it seems likely that more astute behavior on the part of the Company might still have preserved the essentials of the old system—and thus of the commercial advantages which it brought to the Company.

However, the almost four years of James's reign had brought radical uncertainty and with it a depression in trade of all kinds, not least in books, and the Company had encountered even more serious financial problems after the Revolution. These problems were precipitated by the expiry in September 1691 of Oxford University's agreement with two wealthy and powerful London Stationers, Peter Parker and Thomas Guy. Oxford, by special grants, had the right to print classes of books otherwise covered by monopoly rights belonging either to the King's Printer (essentially for Bibles and Books of Common Prayer) or to the Stationers' Company (essentially for almanacs, school texts, and the metrical psalms) which administered its rights through an internal joint-stock company called the English Stock.²⁸ Sometimes university policy was to exploit its rights either directly or through tenants like Parker and Guy who paid to sublet the rights; sometimes the university was content merely to be paid off by the London monopolists *not* to exercise its rights either directly or otherwise. Paying off the university not to print English Stock books had been the normal strategy of the Stationers' Company until 1691. In that year, however, with the rights up for renewal, and presumably inspired by the large profits apparently made by Parker and Guy in farming Oxford's Bible privilege, the Company bid successfully against the incumbents for the entire package of the university's rights and themselves took over Bible printing at Oxford. The immediate result of this initiative was to enrage Parker and Guy, who first resisted the loss of their enterprise, thus bidding up the price, and later revenged it by supporting the group of independent booksellers and stationers who opposed the renewal of the act in 1693—and presumably also in 1695.²⁹ Moreover, as a result of the bidding war, the Company found themselves committed not only to the previous annual rent but also to a number of side deals such as guaranteeing to purchase large numbers of slow-selling books, both existing and future, produced by the university's other, or "learned" press. And all this ongoing expense was over and above the cost of acquiring the printing equipment at Oxford and laying in paper, the whole cost being estimated in November 1692 at £3059/14/4½.³⁰

28 For the Oxford privilege and the university's handling of it, see *Print and Privilege*, esp. chaps. iv-vii; for the English Stock of the Stationers' Company, see Blagden, *Stationers' Company*, esp. chaps. vi and x.

29 For the independents' opposition to the 1693 renewal and the support they received from Parker and Thomas Guy's brother John, see Astbury, "Renewal of the Licensing Act," 300-01 and 301-02.

30 Stationers' Company, Court Book F, 25 November 1692. Details of the Company's commitments are given in *Print and Privilege*, 122-23 and note 3, which also reprints (p. 131) a letter of 21 February 1692 that quotes the judgment of a friend of Parker and Guy "That No Tradesmen in England would have made a Contract so advantageous to the University; but he cannot tell, how the agreement can turn to account to the Stationers; & is sorry, That his Friends had not the press on other terms; but not that they lost it on those."

The deal with Oxford was finalized about the end of 1691, and at the first meeting of the new year, it was announced to the Court, along with the fact that borrowing on the Company's account had already begun.³¹ Moreover, because of Oxford's suspicion of the Company per se, the deal had had to be made in the names of the Master, Ambrose Isted, Henry Mortlock the Under Warden, and John Bellinger, a Past Master. This was on 1 February 1692, and on the following 25 June Luttrell records that "this morning Mr. Ambrose Isted, master of the stationers' company, and lately a justice of peace of Middlesex, in a melancholy fitt shot himselfe into the head with a pistoll, and then died immediately."³² Isted's suicide, though it may not, of course, have been motivated by the Company's affairs, certainly did them no good.

In the succeeding months and indeed years, the Company's need to borrow and to renew loans as they expired is a constant theme in the minutes of the Court. And in a market where the government was also constantly trying to raise huge sums to finance a costly and hitherto unsuccessful war with France, the Company was lucky to pay only 5 per cent on most loans, though they were obliged to pay 6 per cent in February 1695.³³

Even more serious than the need to borrow was the need to forgo income. The Company's English Stock was normally an absolutely dependable source of revenue for its roughly 125 shareholders and since 1670 had paid an annual dividend of a whopping 12½ per cent. At the meeting of 6 February 1693, however, it was reported that the money for the dividends which would normally have been paid out at the end of December 1692 had gone to buy new printing materials and paper for the Oxford business. The Master's suggestion was to create and sell new English Stock shares, but the proposed 6⅔ per cent increase in capital would have watered the stock while raising less than half of what was needed. Wiser heads prevailed, and instead, the dividend for December 1692 was delayed until October 1693, and that for December 1693 to December 1694—after which it was conveniently forgotten that an entire year's dividends—normally £1800—had been silently swallowed up. Moreover, although the Court had declined to increase the capital of the English Stock by £960 in February 1693, later that same year they were forced to float an entirely new joint-stock to finance the Oxford business.³⁴ By Articles of Agreement dated 6 October 1693 sixty-seven partners committed a total of £4550 in return for the Company's Oxford rights, and the coincidence in dates strongly suggests that it was only this infusion of new money that made possible the payment of the long-delayed English Stock dividend of 9 October 1693. Since widows (though not orphans) could continue to hold

31 Stationers' Company, Court Book F, 1 February 1692. The sum was £400 and was needed to pay the university for stock (presumably books) bought from them under the agreement.

32 Narcissus Luttrell, *A Brief Historical Relation of State Affairs from September 1678 to April 1714*, 6 vols. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1857), 2:494.

33 Stationers' Company, Court Book F, records Company borrowing on 23 March (£500), 2 May (£1000-Oxf and £200), 27 May (£600-Oxf), 1 August (£250-Oxf), 7 November (£200) in 1692 alone, those

sums followed by "Oxf" being explicitly for Oxford purposes.

34 For this so-called New Stock, see Blagden, *Stationers' Company*, 201-04, and *Print and Privilege*, 181-96. As Blagden notes (p. 201), the New Stock was in fact endowed with the Company's printing rights at both the universities, but since its setting up was necessitated by the Oxford debacle and since my concern is with the drain on the Company's (and on individual Stationers') finances, I have ignored the Cambridge side of the business, which seems to have at least broken even.

English Stock shares until their own death or remarriage, dividends were considered pensions by the shareholders and were seen almost as a sacred trust. Even in the years immediately following the Great Fire no dividend had been missed, though there was once a five-month delay and the dividend once went as low as $9\frac{3}{8}$ per cent.³⁵ The skipping of one entire year's dividend and the sell-off of assets to finance another is thus some measure of the catastrophic state of the Company's finances between 1692 and 1695.

The one thing that could be said for the Company's sad financial plight in the four years leading up to the lapse was that it provided a perfect excuse for denying the Crown's incessant requests for loans to support the war—at least five in 1691 and 1692 alone.³⁶ Or so it must have seemed until the Company began looking for support for the renewal of its clauses in the act. Significantly, in the government-supported draft Bill that died in Committee in 1695, the licensing provisions resurface in modified form, but many of the Company's advantages are stripped away.³⁷

Nor were the Company's woes all corporate. On 9 May 1694 the Court minutes reveal the necessity of electing a new Upper Warden in the room of Mr. Thomas Bassett "whose circumstances they know of by his own information to be such as incapacitated him for serving that office any longer" and who never attended Court again though he was not officially Gazetted bankrupt until two years later.³⁸ In July it was the turn of Henry Clarke, once an assistant alderman but who had not attended the Court since the end of 1691 and was now reported dead and bankrupt at once.³⁹ In September it was Dorman Newman's turn for bankruptcy, though he too had ceased attending some months previously,⁴⁰ and altogether, with deaths added to bankruptcies, the Court lost ten of its originally twenty-eight members in the twenty months immediately prior to the lapsing of the act.⁴¹

35 The dividend that would normally have been due on 24 December 1666 was only paid on 24 May 1667 and at the reduced rate of $9\frac{3}{8}$ per cent. Thereafter annual dividends were paid on time, but at the still reduced rates of 10 percent in 1667 and 1668 and $11\frac{1}{4}$ per cent in 1669 before finally returning to the normal $12\frac{1}{2}$ per cent in 1670.

36 Stationers' Company, Court Book F, 2 March, 25 June and 23 September 1691, 23 March and 12 September 1692.

37 Astbury, "Renewal of the Licensing Act," 310-11.

38 Stationers' Company, Court Book F, 9 May 1694; *London Gazette*, 22-25 June 1696. Thomas Bassett, "pauper," was buried in St Dunstan in the West from the Fleet prison 23 October 1699. In this context it is interesting to note that Bassett had been the original publisher of Locke's *Essay Concerning Humane Understanding*, almost the only one of Locke's works not first published by the Churchills, and that the half share in the work, which Awnsham Churchill eventually acquired and entered in the Stationers' Registers on 29 April 1695, four days before the lapsing of the act, was Churchill's by assignment of 5 March 1693/4

from Thomas Dring II, a relation of Bassett's wife Judith (née Dring).

39 Stationers' Company, Court Book F, 6 August 1694. For the involvement in City politics of Clarke, who was buried at St Mildred Bread Street on 1 July 1694, see J. R. Woodhead, *The Rulers of London 1660-1689* (London: London and Middlesex Archaeological Society, 1965), 47-48.

40 *London Gazette*, 24-27 September 1694, and Court Book F, 1 October 1694. Newman's last attendance had been on 20 December 1693.

41 In addition to Bassett, Clarke, and Newman, the Court lost William Miller (bur. 3 September 1693, St Gregory), Christopher Wilkinson (bur. 3 September 1693, St Dunstan in the West), Nathaniel Ranew (bur. 15 March 1694, St Faith), Thomas Dring (bur. 7 July 1694, St Dunstan in the West), John Bellinger (d. between 2 July and 6 August 1694, Court Book F), John Towse (d. between 26 March when he last attended the Court and 16 April 1695 when his will was probated, Court Book F/Probate), and John Clarke ("lately" d., 8 April 1695, Court Book F).

Even then, such losses might have provided the opportunity for electing to the Court a few cool heads and long pockets at a moment of crisis, but for this Court it was to be another opportunity lost. On 7 May 1694, almost exactly a year before the lapse, they did elect four new members to the Court, and two of these, the printer Bennet Griffin and the bookseller Charles Harper, were sensible if not spectacular choices. The other two, however, were disastrous. One was the ballad publisher William Thackeray who attended only five times after his election, and never after December 1694, being finally listed as “not to be summoned” (generally a sign of insolvency) in May 1696. The second was the bookseller and publisher William Whitwood who attended only six times after his election and never after October 1694, though he did turn up one last time six years later to protest that since he had never compounded with his creditors, and had finally paid 20 shillings in the pound, he should be welcomed back onto the Court.⁴² Since the Court always sought to elect prosperous leaders in the trade, their election of two near bankrupts out of four at so crucial a time is clear evidence that they were as badly informed about affairs in their own business as they were about the moves soon to be made against them in the wider political world. Only after the battle had been lost did they begin to change their ways, and, in October 1695, with a new session of parliament and the possibility of a new bill in the offing, they finally elected to the Court their old adversary Thomas Guy, the richest bookseller and one of the richest men in London. Guy, himself elected to that parliament, did not deign to take his seat on the Court for twelve and a half years, though it is a credit to the good sense of that later Court that when he finally did so, not a voice was raised in protest.⁴³

Clearly, therefore, Macaulay and those who have followed him were right to stress the role that opposition to the petty grievances, exactions, and, above all, commercial restrictions played in the eventual lapsing of the Printing Act in 1695. There was, of course, opposition to licensing *per se*, but it was not overwhelmingly strong in 1695, and a determined government could probably have obtained grudging support for it in some modified form, as Somers seems to have obtained the support of the Locke circle for the revised Bill, in spite of Locke’s own stand against licensing.⁴⁴ The wheel that had fallen off the coach, as I have tried to argue, was the Stationers’ Company itself. For if the government may still have been capable of selling its part of this admittedly difficult package, a weak, debt-ridden, and directionless Company seems to have been completely incapable of defending its own very real interests, either through argument or influence—financial or other. And since the clauses in the act that had attracted the most criticism as aiming not at the national interest but merely at the commercial advantage of a particular group, were manifestly the Company’s to defend, its incapacity ultimately proved fatal to the whole.

But if Macaulay was ready to admit the real motives behind the overthrow of the act, he never wavered for a moment in his view of what had been achieved. The votes may have been cast against keeping a man from practicing his trade or

⁴² Stationers’ Company, Court Book G, 5 February 1700.

⁴³ It is surely also significant that Guy was elected on his own rather than as one of a group as was normally

done. He finally took his oath as an Assistant at the meeting of 12 April 1708 (Court Book G).

⁴⁴ Astbury, “Renewal of the Licensing Act,” 307, 312.

against requiring him to file a report every time he cast type, but in the eyes of history (or at least of the historian), they were votes cast *for* the liberty of unlicensed printing. The vote against mildewed books was ultimately a vote for freedom of the press, and Macaulay's account was heavy with the note of "Exalt them Lord, though they knew not what they did."

What I would like to suggest in this final section is that Macaulay, in his quite understandable desire to hail unlicensed printing, seriously underestimated some of the other freedoms that came with the lapse, those freedoms that I believe justify the use of the plural in my title, and that contemporaries sometimes valued even more than they valued unlicensed printing itself.

The first and most convoluted of those freedoms was the freedom to print the news, a freedom for which the lapse of the licensing clauses of the act was a necessary but not sufficient condition, the elimination of the trade-restrictive clauses being perhaps equally important. The second was the freedom from numerical restrictions on printing houses in London. And the third was the freedom from geographical restrictions on printing elsewhere in England and Wales.

The cause-effect relationship between the lapsing of the act and the free printing of news seems on the surface clear enough. In the months preceding the lapse, the only *newspaper*—as opposed to general interest sheets like Dunton's *Athenian Mercury* or commercial sheets like Houghton's *Collection for the Improvement of . . . Trade*—was the government-sponsored *London Gazette*. The first month after the lapse of the act, however, saw the launch of at least five additional newspapers in London, two of which, *The Post Boy* and *The Flying Post*, survived well into the eighteenth century.⁴⁵ And it is true that had these new papers appeared unlicensed—and they would never have been licensed—before 3 May 1695 they would have been successfully prosecuted under the licensing clauses of the act. However, what is less well known is that these same new papers could still have been prosecuted, and been prosecuted for being unlicensed, *after* 3 May 1695, not, obviously, on the basis of the now-expired statute, but on the basis of a common law judgment of 1680 that laid down a Royal prerogative right to license news. This judgment, as the legal historian Philip Hamburger has ably demonstrated,⁴⁶ was dragged out of a compliant judiciary to provide a legal foundation for the Crown's desperate need for powers of censorship during the earlier six-year lapse of the act at the time of the Exclusion Crisis. The basis for the judges' opinion, which passed into law with the 1680 finding in *Rex vs. Henry Carr* (or *Care*), is confused. Hamburger reports the judges' view that unlicensed news would tend "to the Breach of the Peace," but he notes that their opinion may "have been based as well on the King's prerogative to grant printing monopolies, including that for printing news"—presumably, in this case, to the publishers of *The Gazette*.⁴⁷ If this *was* still the view of the government in 1695,

45 A sixth paper, *An historical account of the public transactions*, also reappeared on 4 May after a lapse of eight months and could thus almost be considered a new publication. The appearance of new periodicals may be followed on a month-by-month basis in the extremely useful "Chronological Index" to Carolyn Nelson and Matthew Seccombe, eds., *British Newspapers and Periodicals 1641-1700* (New York: Modern Language Association, 1987).

46 Philip Hamburger, "The Development of the Law of Seditious Libel and Control of the Press," *Stanford Law Review* 37 (1984-85): 661-765. I am grateful to Don McKenzie for bringing this account to my attention.

47 Hamburger, "Development of the Law of Seditious Libel," 687.

then we can see why they were unwilling to test a dubious precedent in the courts at a time when a very public debate had focused so much hostile attention on monopoly rights, rights based upon self-serving Stuart definitions of the Royal prerogative. The new freedom to print *some* of the news thus derives from a combination of the lapse of licensing, the hostility engendered by the trade-restrictive clauses of the act, and ultimately to a reformed judiciary with cleaner hands than those of Sir William Scroggs.⁴⁸ And I stress the word “some” as a simple reminder that not all news became free game even with the lapse of licensing. For many decades after 1695, journalists and printers who were tempted to regard the proceedings of parliament as news needing no license very quickly found themselves on their knees before the bar of the House to be reminded that members regarded those proceedings as protected by a privilege in no way weakened by the lapsing of official press censorship, statutory or otherwise.

The second important freedom to derive from the lapsing of the act was the freedom from its various numerical limitations on London printing. This was neither more nor less than the freedom to set up in business as a printer, the sine qua non of all other freedoms of the press as we recall from the modern quip that the press is only free to the man who owns one. The act had called for the number of London master printers to be reduced to twenty plus the three King’s Printers and Col. Streater, while the number of presses which each of the twenty was allowed was limited to two, or three if the owner had been Master or Upper Warden of the Company. Since only four printers, aside from the King’s Printers, ever reached such eminence during the period the act was in force and since their combined years of eligibility amounted to just over thirty, this special proviso permitted, on average, only one extra press per year in London.⁴⁹ This gives a total of forty-one presses for the twenty master printers, plus the unspecified number belonging to the four Royal nominees. Since, in 1668, (the only year for which we have good figures), those four together had eighteen presses, the total number of presses licensed for London under the Act could be thought of as no more than sixty.⁵⁰

48 Scroggs appears to have been the most compliant of the judges supporting the Royal prerogative in 1680 (certainly he signed first). He was also the trial judge in the Carr case. See Hamburger, “Development of the Law of Seditious Libel,” 687 and note 83. Significantly, one of the competing permanent benefits of the Revolution canvassed by Macaulay was “the purification of the administration of justice in political cases” (Firth, *Commentary on Macaulay’s History*, 137), and Astbury, “Renewal of the Licensing Act,” reports (317) that although “the Privy Council was able to intimidate Benjamin Harris” into ceasing publication of his “newly born *Pacquet boat from Holland*,” “John Salusbury continued to publish his *Flying post* despite the Council’s order that he should be prosecuted”; no prosecution followed.

49 Those entitled to a third press, with their period of entitlement beginning from their election as Upper Warden were: 1) Miles Flesher (who had been Upper Warden as long ago as 1649) for 2½ years from the coming into force of the act in June 1662 until his

death in November 1664; 2) Evan Tyler for 14¼ years from July 1664 until the lapse of the act in March 1679 (Tyler died in 1682 before the act was revived); 3) Robert White for 5 years from July 1673 until his death in August 1678; 4) John Macock for 8¼ years from August 1677 until the lapse of the act in March 1679 and then from its revival in June 1685 until his death in June 1692. The total is thus 31 years of entitlement spread over the 27 years the act was in force. The census of presses of 1668 cited below shows that at that date the Flesher house, under Miles’s son James, had three more presses than allowed, and White and Macock one more each. Only Tyler had the prescribed number.

50 In the list of 29 July 1668, which is preserved in the Public Record Office, SP 29/243/181, the main King’s Printers, those for English, have 6 presses; Roger Norton, the King’s Printer for Latin, Greek, and Hebrew, has 3; Thomas Roycroft, the King’s Printer “in ye Orientall tongues,” has 4; and Col. John Streater has 5.

By 1705, a decade after the lapsing of the Act, the number of printing *houses* in London was close to seventy and the number of presses well over 150,⁵¹ so that it seems at first glance that the effect of the lapse of these restrictive clauses was to release a veritable flood of new trade printing in the capital. This, however, is only partly true, for the actual number of London printing houses had never been reduced to anything close to the twenty-four envisaged by the act and in 1695 had probably been close to double that number.⁵² The reason was that the Act had set out no firm directives for the reduction but spoke rather of no new master printers being “admitted” until the number had been reduced to twenty “by death or otherwise” from the sixty in operation in 1662. The plague and subsequent Fire of London did cut that number almost in half, and a census in 1668 uncovered only thirty-three printing houses, a number that remained stable for almost a decade. However, the temporary lapse of the act in 1679 saw a rapid increase, and by the time the act was revived in 1685, the number had grown to between fifty-five and sixty.⁵³ Moreover, the reduction to around forty-five by 1695 was achieved as much through recession as oppression. For the fact was that the Stationers’ Company, though happy to have such a threat to hold over the heads of disorderly printers—particularly non-Stationers—was not really interested in reducing its own membership. Quite apart from the fact that the London book trade could hardly have survived on only twenty-four printing houses by 1695, it was in the interests of the bookseller majority in the Company to have some over-capacity in the printing trade so as to keep printing prices down. Accordingly, the effect of the lapse of the trade-restrictive clauses of the act was not only to allow for an increase in the printing trade, but perhaps more importantly to ensure that those who now entered it could do so without threat of petty harassment or threat of possible confiscation. Not merely those with little to lose, but printers ready to make a serious investment might now contemplate setting up in business. It is questionable, for example, whether a printer like the elder William Bowyer, free of his articles in 1686 but not established as a master until 1699, would, with his non-juring sympathies, have risked opening a printing house in the extremely uncertain conditions that prevailed for so-called supernumerary printers prior to 1695.

It may still seem that the lapse of numerical controls on printers and presses is insignificant beside the lapse of licensing. If so we may recall that when, in the anti-Jacobin panic of the late 1790s, the government moved to control the press through the Seditious Societies Act (30 George III, c.79), it did so not through the reimposition of licensing, but through the compulsory registration of printing presses—and of press-makers and type founders for good measure.⁵⁴

I come finally to my third freedom, the freedom from the geographical restrictions that had limited printing to London, the two universities, and York. Unlike

51 For the number of printing houses in London in 1705 and for figures for the average numbers of presses per house (for those houses for which the numbers are known or can be estimated) of 2.36 in 1668 and 2.57 in 1686, see Michael Treadwell, “Lists of Master Printers: The Size of the London Printing Trade, 1637–1723,” in Robin Myers and Michael Turner, eds., *Aspects of Printing From 1600* (Oxford: Oxford Polytechnic Press, 1987), 153, 151.

52 Treadwell, “Lists of Master Printers,” 152.

53 For the figures for 1662, 1668, and 1685, see Treadwell, “Lists of Master Printers,” 146, 148, 150.

54 William B. Todd, *A Directory of Printers . . . London and Vicinity 1800–1840* (London: Printing Historical Society, 1972), xix.

the numerical restrictions on London printing, the geographical restrictions were strictly enforced since both the government and the Stationers' Company had a serious interest in enforcing them. Ironically, no one understood this better than King William, who had broken this particular law himself by landing at Torbay in 1688 with a printing press that he subsequently set up at Exeter.⁵⁵ It had played an essential part in the success of the Glorious Revolution, and William and his ministers were determined that this example *not* be imitated by any political opponent. Accordingly, the only press outside the prescribed centers of which we hear was a private one in Chester on which the antiquary Randle Holme's *Academy of Armory* was printed in 1688. It was still in Chester in 1694 but was not then known to be in use.⁵⁶

There was, however, serious pressure for expansion, and its source was not political but commercial. The revised draft bill that had died in committee with the prorogation in 1695 had already proposed allowing printing in any "City or Town Corporate" in England provided mere notice had first been given to the chief magistrate.⁵⁷ This was perhaps too permissive, and in another bill presented to the new parliament six months after the lapsing of the act and again designed to replace it, we find a clause that singled out York, Bristol, and Norwich (a later amendment added Exeter as well) as places where either the mayor or the bishop could license a press. All other centers were also to be open to printing, but a special license from either the king or the bishop of the diocese was required, the crucial distinction being the power granted to the mayor alone in the case of the great commercial centers.⁵⁸ Clearly, the drafters of the bill were concerned, at least in the cases of York, Bristol, and Norwich, that the outdated religious and political anxieties which had haunted the seventeenth century should not exclude the great merchant communities from the freedoms they valued. And high among those freedoms was free access to the new technology and its products, so essential to expanding eighteenth-century commerce, those "Forms of blank Bills or Indentures," which under the old act had been a London monopoly, illegal to print locally, illegal to import from abroad.

For freedom ultimately finds its definition in thwarted desire, a commonplace enough notion to men bred up to worship, in the lucid paradox of the *Book of Common Prayer*, that God "whose service is perfect freedom." With all respect to Macaulay, the Bristol merchants knew perfectly which of their real desires had been thwarted by the Printing Act, and if they had had to choose between an unlicensed press restricted to London and a licensed press in Bristol they would not have been long in making up their minds. In the event, of course, Bristol got its own press and an unlicensed one to boot, the first of the newly qualified provincial cities to do so, though Shrewsbury, Exeter, Norwich, and a number of others soon followed.

⁵⁵ Ian Maxted and Michael Treadwell, "The Exeter Printer of 1688," *Devon and Cornwall Notes and Queries* 36, (1990): 255-59.

⁵⁶ In spite of the date in his title, Derek Nuttall in his *History of Printing in Chester from 1688 to 1965* (Chester: by the Author, 1969) cannot finally decide about "Randle Holme's printing plant, if indeed he ever had any in Chester" (p. 13). The Stationers, however, seem

to have had no doubts, and when Ichabod Dawkes complained of the press at Chester, they agreed at once to refer the matter to one of the Secretaries of State (Court Book F, 3 December 1694).

⁵⁷ Locke, *Correspondence*, 5:792.

⁵⁸ Astbury, "Renewal of the Licensing Act," 317-18.

Bristol's first printer was William Bonny who petitioned the city's Common Council for the freedom to establish a printing house there, and for the city freedom, in late April 1695, apparently in anticipation of the lapsing of the act.⁵⁹ Bonny was a freeman of London, but not a Stationer, and he had acquired his printing house by marriage to a printer's widow. His relations with the Stationers' Company had never been good, and he must have known that even without the backing of the act the Company had ample powers to make his life hell.⁶⁰ Previously he had had no choice but to put up with the Stationers' harassment if he wished to print at all; now he believed that in Bristol he would be free to practice his chosen trade without restriction. He was almost right. The Council was quick to accede to his request. He was free and welcome to establish a printing press in Bristol, and the freedom of the City was his. There was, however, one restriction. So determined was Bristol to seize this opportunity that they laid down that Bonny was free to exercise no other trade than that of printer.⁶¹ Would Lord Macaulay, I wonder, have considered that "freedom of the press"?

ENVOY

May I record here my profound thanks to Hugh Amory, for the inspiration which his scholarship has been to me over many years, for his eminently practical help and advice on many occasions, and finally for his kindness in including me on this wonderful occasion. And thanks to Richard Wendorf and Hugh's colleagues at the Houghton for making it possible for me to join in their celebration of Hugh's scholarship. And finally, closer to home, my thanks to the University of Toronto's Centre for the Book whose earlier invitation first led me to reflect on the fact that the year 1995 marked an important anniversary in the history of the book—as well as the end of an era at the Houghton Library.

⁵⁹ Elizabeth Ralph and Mary E. Williams, *The Inhabitants of Bristol in 1696* (Bristol: Bristol Record Society, 1968), xviii and note 42.

⁶⁰ Bonny had married Elizabeth Webster, daughter of the printer James Grover, and widow of the printer Richard Webster, in 1689. In October 1690 he had been stripped of all his Company printing work for

slandering the Company and was summoned a month later to answer the same charge, and three months later still for printing works that had not first been entered in the Register; see Court Book F, 6 October and 3 November 1690, and 9 February 1691.

⁶¹ See note 59, above.