opportunities for observing changes over the centuries, while psychologists may be able to discuss dreams more profoundly than philosophers.

It is significant that journalists, drawing on their own experience, have their own place in media studies, and important contributions have been made by Wilbur Schramm (1907–87) and James W. Carey (1934–2006). Schramm had been a speechwriter for Roosevelt, a concert musician and a minor league baseball player before turning to communications. He published his *Communications in Modern Society* in 1948 and went on in 1961 to produce a joint study, *Television in the Lives of Our Children*, and, three years later, *Mass Media and National Development*. Through his own experience, including a spell of teaching in the Chinese University of Hong Kong, Schramm was as familiar with broadcasting in the East as in the West and, indeed, in what were then identified as the 'North' and the 'South': he had written a chapter on Communist press theory in a book published in 1956. As Dean of the College of Communications at Illinois, within which a department of journalism was located, Carey was a perceptive critic in print of Innis and McLuhan. During the 1970s he turned to the relationship between communication and culture, and in 1988 he published his thoughtful book, *Communication as Culture*.

From the 1990s onwards, the media analyses of anthropologists, historians, psychologists and journalists were pushed aside by writers (including novelists and filmmakers) and literary critics such as Friedrich Kittler (1943–). Kittler, a disciple of Michel Foucault and of Foucault's philosophical master Nietzsche, emphasizes the effects of the new media (notably 'gramophone, film, typewriter') on culture. He likes to quote Nietzsche's aphorism, 'our writing tools are also working on our thoughts', to claim that 'media define what really is' while suggesting that machines will replace 'so-called Man' as agents. Meanwhile, economists, when they confront the issues raised under the much-used heading 'globalization', a buzzword of the 1990s, 'the cliché of our times', tended to concentrate on 'indicators', what was statistically measurable.

For historians and specialists in social studies, there is a continuing division between those who emphasize structure and those who emphasize agency. On one side, there are those who claim that there are no consequences of computers as such, any more than there are consequences of literacy (including visual literacy and computer literacy). There are only consequences for individuals using these tools. On the other, there are those – as different from each other as Goody and Kittler – who suggest that using a new medium of communication inevitably changes people's views of the world, in the long term if not earlier. One side accuses the other of treating ordinary people as passive, as objects undergoing the impact of literacy or computerization. The reverse accusation is that of treating the media, including the press, as passive, as mirrors of culture and society rather than as agencies transforming culture and society.

This is not the place to attempt to settle such a debate. On the contrary, readers are asked to keep alternative viewpoints in mind while reading the pages which follow. No single theory provides a complete guide to the contemporary realm of 'high-definition, inter-drive, mutually convergent technologies of communication', where relationships, individual and social, local and global, are in continuous flux.

2 Printing in its Contexts

This chapter and the chapter which follows are concerned with Europe in what historians call the 'early modern' period, running from about 1450 to about 1789 – in other words, from the 'print revolution' to the French and industrial revolutions. The year 1450 is the approximate date for the invention in Europe, probably by Johann Gutenberg of Mainz, of a printing press – perhaps inspired by the wine presses of his native Rhineland – which used movable metal type.

In China and Japan, printing had been practised for a long time – from the seventh century, if not before – but the method generally used what is known as 'block printing', the carved woodblock being used to print a single page of a specific text. This method was appropriate for cultures which used thousands of ideograms rather than an alphabet of 20–30 letters. It was probably for this reason that the Chinese invention of movable type in the eleventh century had few consequences. In the early fifteenth century, however, the Koreans invented a form of movable type with what has been described by the French scholar Henri-Jean Martin (1924–2007) as 'an almost hallucinatory similarity to Gutenberg's'.

The Western invention may have been stimulated by news of what had happened in the East. What Benedict Anderson calls 'print capitalism' certainly existed in East Asia before Gutenberg, especially at the popular level. In China, where full literacy was confined to the elite, ordinary people, including some women, especially in cities, were able to recognize some 2,000 ideograms and therefore to understand simple texts (this 'functional literacy', as it is called, may have included 30 per cent of males and 2 per cent of females in the eighteenth century). In order to meet demand from this kind of reader, commercial printers, especially in the province of Fukien, produced songs, stories and simple encyclopaedias, especially from the sixteenth century onwards. Print capitalism took a new form in China in the 1870s, when cylinder presses were introduced to Shanghai from the West. Chinese book production moved from block printing to letterpress in a generation and a half. In Japan, there was an explosion of popular printed matter after the year 1600, while the eighteenth-century Japanese prints now sought by collectors originated as posters advertising actors, tea-houses, courtesans and even brands of sake.

The practice of printing spread through Europe via a diaspora of German printers. By 1500, presses had been established in more than 250 places in Europe – 80 of them in Italy, 52 in Germany and 43 in France. Printers had reached Basel by 1466, Rome by 1467, Paris and Pilsen by 1468, Venice by 1469, Leuven, Valencia, Cracow and Buda by 1473, Westminster (distinct from the city of London) by 1476 and Prague by 1477. Between them, these presses produced

about 27,000 editions by the year 1500, which means that – assuming an average print run of 500 copies per edition – about 13 million books were circulating by that date in a Europe of 100 million people. About 2 million of these books were produced in Venice alone, while Paris was another important centre of printing, with 181 workshops in 1500.

In contrast, print was slow to penetrate Russia and the Orthodox Christian world more generally, a region (including modern Serbia, Romania and Bulgaria) where the alphabet was usually Cyrillic and literacy was virtually confined to the clergy. In 1564 a White Russian trained in Poland brought a press to Moscow, but his workshop was soon destroyed by a mob. This situation changed in the early eighteenth century, thanks to the efforts of Tsar Peter the Great (ruled 1686–1725), who founded a press at St Petersburg in 1711, followed by the Senate Presses (1719) in Petersburg and Moscow, the Naval Academy Press (1721) and the Academy of Sciences Press (1727). The location of these presses suggests that the Tsar was interested in literacy and education primarily in order to make Russians familiar with modern science and technology, especially military technology. The fact that printing arrived so late in Russia also suggests that print was not an independent agent, and that the print revolution did not depend on technology alone. Printing required favourable social and cultural conditions in order to spread, and Russia's lack of a literate laity was a serious obstacle to the rise of print culture.

In the Muslim world, although block printing of amulets and talismans had been practised for a long time, resistance to print remained strong throughout the early modern period. Indeed, the Muslim countries have been regarded as a barrier to the passage of printing from China to the West. According to an imperial ambassador to Istanbul in the middle of the sixteenth century, the Ottoman Turks thought it a sin to print religious books. In 1515, Sultan Selim I (ruled 1512–20) issued a decree punishing the practice of printing with the death penalty. At the end of the century, Sultan Murad III (ruled 1574–95) allowed the sale of non-religious printed books in Arabic characters, but these were probably imports from Italy. The problem was that print, as Francis Robinson puts it, 'struck right at the heart of person to person transmission of knowledge', which was fundamental in the world of Islam.

Some Europeans were proud of their technical superiority in this respect. Henry Oldenburg (1618–77), the first secretary of the Royal Society of London, and a man professionally concerned with scientific communication, linked the absence of print with despotism, claiming in a letter of 1659 that 'ye Great Turk is an enemy to learning in regard of his subjects, because he finds it his advantage to have such a people on whose ignorance he may impose. Whence it is, that he will endure no printing, being of this opinion, that printing and learning, especially such as is found in universities, are the chief fuel of division among Christians.'

The chequered history of printing in the Ottoman Empire reveals the strength of the obstacles to this form of communication, as also to visual representations. The first Turkish press was established only in the eighteenth century, more than 200 years after the first Hebrew press (1494) and more than 150 years after the first Armenian press (1567). A Hungarian convert to Islam (formerly a Protestant

clergyman) sent a memorandum to the sultan on the importance of the press, and in 1726 he was given permission to print secular books. However, there was opposition from scribes and religious leaders. The new press printed only a handful of books, and it did not last long. The official Ottoman gazette was not founded until 1831, while the first unofficial newspaper in Turkish (launched by an Englishman) appeared in 1840.

The idea that the invention of printing was epoch-making is an old one, whether the new technique was discussed on its own, coupled with the invention of gunpowder, or taken as part of a trio of print, gunpowder and the compass. For the English philosopher Francis Bacon (1561–1626), this was a trio which had 'changed the whole state and face of things throughout the world', although the French essayist Michel de Montaigne (1533–92), writing a generation earlier, had reminded his readers that the Chinese had already enjoyed the benefits of printing for 'a thousand years'. Samuel Hartlib, an East European exile in Britain who supported many schemes of social and cultural reform, wrote in 1641 that 'the art of printing will so spread knowledge that the common people, knowing their own rights and liberties, will not be governed by way of oppression'.

The bicentenary of the invention of printing was celebrated – about 10 years too early, according to modern scholars – in 1640 and its tercentenary in 1740, and in the famous outline of world history by the Marquis de Condorcet (1743–94), published in 1795, printing, like writing, was identified as one of the milestones in what the author called 'the progress of the human mind'. The unveiling of the statue of Gutenberg at Mainz in 1837 was accompanied by enthusiastic celebrations. 'Among salvoes of artillery the veil was removed from the statue and a hymn was sung by a thousand voices. Then came orations; then dinners, balls, oratorios, boat races, processions by torchlight . . . Gutenberg! was toasted in many a bumper of Rhenish wine.'

All the same, some commentators wished the new epoch had never arrived. The triumphalist accounts of the new invention were matched by what we might call catastrophist narratives. Scribes, whose business was threatened by the new technology, deplored the arrival of the press from the beginning. For churchmen, the basic problem was that print allowed readers who had a low position in the social and cultural hierarchy to study religious texts for themselves, rather than relying on what the authorities told them. For governments, the consequences of print to which Hartlib referred were no reason for celebration.

The rise of newspapers in the seventeenth century increased anxieties about the effects of print. In England in the 1660s, the chief censor of books (see p. 76), Sir Roger L'Estrange, was still asking the old question 'whether more mischief than advantage were not occasion'd to the christian world by the invention of typography'. 'O Printing! How thou hast disturbed the peace of Mankind!', wrote the English poet Andrew Marvell (1621–78) in 1672.

Scholars, or more generally anyone in search of knowledge, confronted other problems. The so-called information 'explosion' – a metaphor uncomfortably reminiscent of gunpowder – which followed the invention of printing, called for new methods of information retrieval and information management, just as the Internet does in the twenty-first century. In the early Middle Ages the problem had been the lack of books, their paucity. By the sixteenth century, the problem

had become one of superfluity. An Italian writer was already complaining in 1550 that there were 'so many books that we do not even have time to read the titles'. Books were a forest in which readers could lose themselves, according to the reformer Jean Calvin (1509–64). They were an ocean in which readers had to navigate, or a flood of printed matter in which it was hard to escape drowning. The problem of 'information overload', as it is now known, goes back a long way.

As books multiplied, libraries had to become larger, and as they became larger, it was more difficult to find any given book on the shelves, and catalogues became more necessary. Compilers of catalogues had to decide whether to arrange information by subject or in the alphabetical order of authors. From the mid-sixteenth century, printed bibliographies offered information about what had been written, but as these compilations increased in size, subject bibliographies became increasingly necessary.

Librarians also faced the problems of keeping catalogues up to date and of learning about new publications. Scholarly journals provided information about new books, but as the numbers of these journals multiplied it was necessary to look elsewhere for information about them. Since so many more books existed than could be read in a lifetime, readers had to be helped to discriminate by means of select bibliographies and, from the later seventeenth century, reviews of new publications.

The coexistence of triumphalist and catastrophist accounts of printing suggests the need for precision in any discussion of its consequences. The Victorian historian Lord Acton (1834–1902) was more precise than his predecessors, emphasizing both what might be called the lateral effects of print – making knowledge accessible to a wider audience – and its vertical or cumulative effects – enabling later generations to build on the intellectual work of earlier ones. Print, according to Acton in his lecture 'On the Study of History' (1895), 'gave assurance that the work of the Renaissance would last, that what was written would be accessible to all, that such an occultation of knowledge and ideas as had depressed the Middle Ages would never recur, that not an idea would be lost'.

This was a one-sided and bookish assessment of the Middle Ages, ignoring oral tradition and leaving out much that would now be considered essential. More recent studies, particularly those associated with media debates, have sometimes rejected older insights as well as developing and occasionally exaggerating them. Social historians, for example, have pointed out that the invention of printing changed the occupational structure of European cities. The printers themselves were a new kind of group, artisans for whom literacy was essential. Proof-correcting was a new occupation which print called into existence, while a rise in the number of booksellers and librarians naturally followed the explosion in the numbers of books.

More adventurous and more speculative than the historians, Marshall McLuhan emphasized the shift from auditory to visual punctuation, on occasion going so far as to speak of 'the print-made split between head and heart'. Both the strength and the weakness of his approach is summed up in one of the many concepts he did much to launch, that of 'print culture', which suggested links between the new invention and the cultural changes of the period, without

always specifying what these links might be. Ong was more cautious, but he too believed in the long-term psychological consequences of print. 'While the invention of printing has been discussed conventionally in terms of its value for spreading ideas, its even greater contribution is its furthering of the long-developing shift in the relationship between space and discourse.' Ong also emphasized the rise of diagrams and the visual or spatial organization of sixteenth-century academic books with their dichotomized tables of contents, 'which mean everything to the eye and nothing to the ear' because they are impossible to read aloud. The contents of the first edition of Robert Burton's *Anatomy of Melancholy* (1621) were summarized in this way (see Figure 4). The same point about information designed for the eye might be made about timetables and
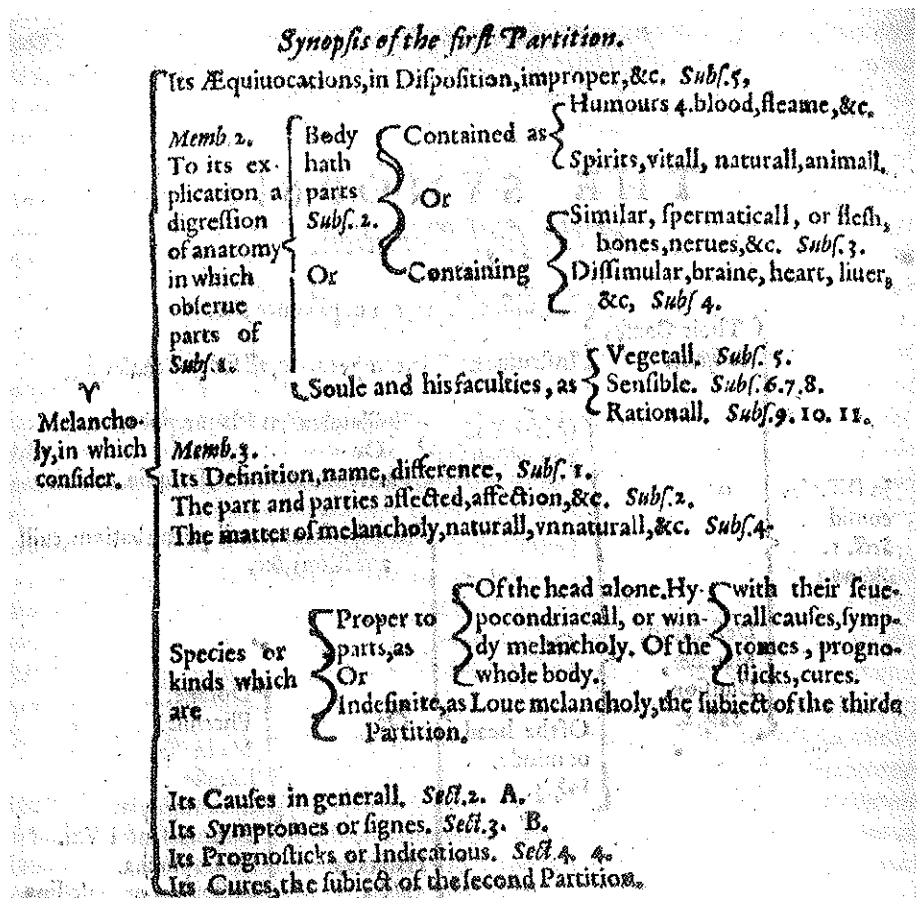

Fig. 4 Ramist table of contents from Robert Burton's *Anatomy of Melancholy*, 1st edition, 1621.

astronomical tables (from the sixteenth century onwards) and tables of logarithms (first printed in the seventeenth century).

Such books were too expensive and too technical to appeal to more than a tiny minority of the population, but printed matter also came in cheaper and simpler forms such as 'chapbooks', often illustrated, though the illustrations were sometimes taken over from earlier books and had little to do with the text. Chapbooks were booklets which were sold by 'chapmen' or pedlars in most parts of early modern Europe, and in some regions in the nineteenth and even twentieth centuries as well. Since the 1960s, historians have been studying French chapbooks – the 'Blue Library' (Bibliothèque Bleue), as they are called, referring to the fact that the booklets were bound in the coarse blue paper used for wrapping sugar. The major centre of production was Troyes, in north-east France, but thanks to the pedlar network the booklets were widely distributed in the countryside as well as the towns. The most common subjects of these booklets were lives of the saints and romances of chivalry, leading some historians to the conclusion that the literature was escapist, or even a form of tranquillizer, and also that it represented the diffusion downwards to artisans and peasants of cultural models created by and for the clergy and the nobility.

This conclusion is too simple to be accepted without qualification. In the first place, the books were not bought by ordinary people alone. Noblewomen are known to have read them. In the second place, the Bibliothèque Bleue did not cover the whole culture of its readers: their oral culture was probably more important for them. Furthermore, we do not know how readers or listeners reacted to the stories; whether, for example, they identified themselves with Charlemagne or with the rebels against him. Nevertheless, despite the problems raised by Blue Library studies, it is clear that in France and other European countries, including Italy, England and the Netherlands, printed matter had become an important part of popular culture by the seventeenth century, if not before.

Summing up the work of a generation on the subject, an American historian, Elizabeth Eisenstein, made the claim, in an ambitious study first published in 1979, that printing was 'the unacknowledged revolution' and that its role as an 'agent of change' had been underestimated in traditional accounts of the Renaissance, the Reformation and the scientific revolution. Drawing on the ideas of both McLuhan and Ong, Eisenstein domesticated them by translating them into terms which would be acceptable to her own professional community, that of historians and librarians. While she was cautious in drawing general conclusions, she emphasized two long-term consequences of the invention of printing. In the first place, print standardized and preserved knowledge which had been much more fluid in the age of oral or manuscript circulation. In the second place, the critique of authority was encouraged by print, which made incompatible views of the same subject more widely available.

To illustrate this point, Eisenstein took the example of Montaigne, whose scepticism she accounted for as the fruit of his wide reading. 'In explaining why Montaigne perceived greater "conflict and diversity" in the works he consulted than had medieval commentators in an earlier age,' she argued, 'something should be said about the increased number of texts he had at hand.'

More should be said, however, about his distinction between 'private' and 'public', the result of his experience but a distinction that demands to be drawn more generally.

The Print Revolution Reconsidered

Eisenstein's book remains a valuable synthesis, but in the years since its publication the author's claims for revolutionary changes following the invention of printing have come to look somewhat exaggerated. In the first place, the changes she outlined took place in the course of at least three centuries, from Gutenberg's Bible to Diderot's *Encyclopédie* (to be discussed below, see p. 83). Adaptation to the new medium was gradual, therefore, whether in the case of styles of presentation or habits of reading (see p. 50). In other words, as in the case of the industrial revolution – in the eyes of some of its recent historians – what we see is what the British critic Raymond Williams (1921–88) called a 'Long Revolution'. It is an intriguing question, whether a revolution which is not rapid can be regarded as a revolution at all.

A second problem is the problem of agency. To speak of print as the agent of change is surely to place too much emphasis on the medium of communication at the expense of the writers, printers and readers who used the new technology for their own different purposes. It might be more realistic to view print, like new media in later centuries (television, for example), as a catalyst, assisting social changes rather than originating them. In the eighteenth century, the production of trade cards reflected an increase in trade more than the stimulus of ephemeral printing. Eisenstein views print in relative isolation. Yet, in order to assess the social and cultural consequences of its invention and development, it is necessary to look at the media as a whole, to view all the different means of communication as interdependent, treating them as a package, a repertoire, a system, or what the French call a 'regime', whether authoritarian, democratic, bureaucratic or capitalist.

The system, it must be stressed, was in perpetual change, even if some of the changes became visible only in the perspective of the long term. For example, print technology did not stand still after Gutenberg. The Dutch printer Willem Blaeu improved the design of the wooden press in the seventeenth century. Large presses were introduced in order to print maps. The Stanhope iron hand press (1804) doubled the normal rate of production, while Koenig's steam press (1814) quadrupled the productivity of the Stanhope (see pp. 106–7).

To think in terms of a media system means emphasizing the division of labour between the different means of communication available in a given place and at a given time, without forgetting, as has already been emphasized, that old and new media can and do coexist and that different media may compete with or echo one another as well as complement one another. Changes in the media system also need to be related to changes in the transportation system, the movement of goods and people in space, whether by land or water (river, canal and sea). The communication of messages is a part of the system of physical communication.

Physical Communication

It was, of course, traditional for information flows to follow trade flows, since merchants operating by sea and land brought news along with their merchandise. Printing itself had spread across Europe via the Rhine, from Gutenberg's Mainz to Frankfurt, Strasbourg and Basel. In the sixteenth, seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, messages on paper followed the silver route from Mexico or Peru to the Old World, or the sugar route from the Caribbean to London. What is new in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries is the evidence of increasing awareness of the problems of physical communication. The enthusiasm of Renaissance humanists for ancient Rome included an interest in Roman roads, discussed, for instance, in Andrea Palladio's famous treatise, *Four Books of Architecture* (1570). Guides to the roads of particular countries were also published, notably Henri Estienne's *Guide des chemins de France* (1553) and John Ogilby's *Britannia* (1675; see figure 5), the first English road atlas, the roads being displayed on what the author called 'imaginary scrolls'. An up-to-date version of these maps in reduced format was produced in 1719 and reached its twenty-second edition in 1785, ample testimony to travellers' need for such a book.

Governments also concerned themselves more with roads, even if major improvements in the European system are difficult to discern before the middle
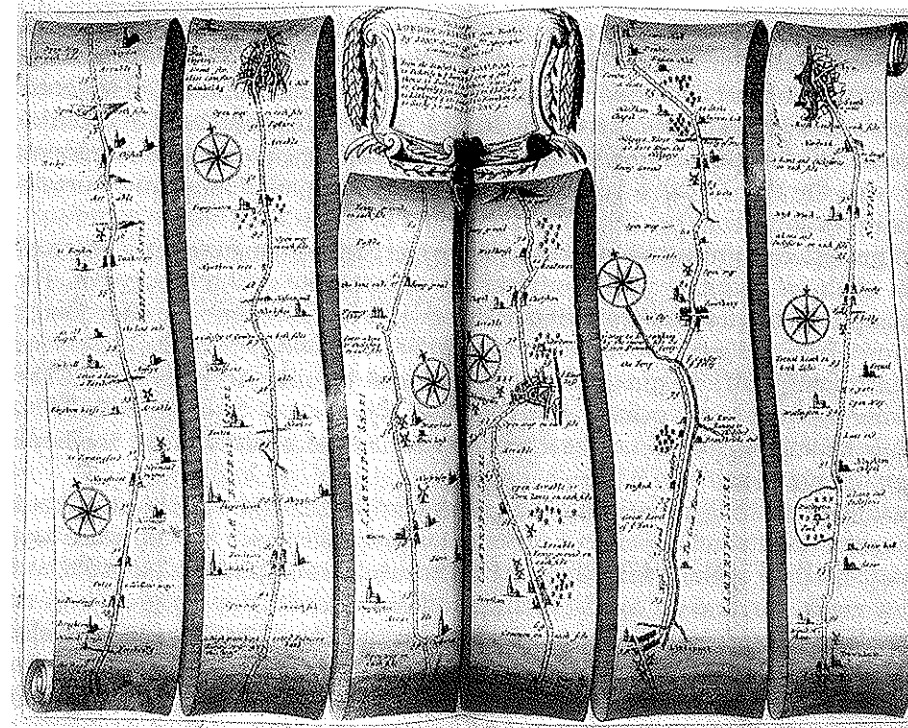

Fig. 5 John Ogilby, road map from his *Britannia*, 1675, showing Cambridge.

of the eighteenth century. In France, a new official position was created around 1600, that of *Grand Voyer*, in order to oversee the system. One reason for this concern with roads was the increasing need, in an age when European states were becoming more centralized, to transmit commands more rapidly from the capital to the provinces. The interest in communication on the part of governments was a major reason for the rapid expansion of the postal system in the early modern period, although merchants and other private individuals also took advantage of it.

In early modern Europe, transport by water was usually much cheaper than transport by land. An Italian printer calculated in 1550 that to send a load of books from Rome to Lyons would cost 18 *scudi* by land compared with 4 by sea. Letters were normally carried overland, but a system of transporting letters and newspapers, as well as people, by canal barge developed in the Dutch Republic in the seventeenth century. The average speed of the barges was a little over four miles an hour, slow compared to a courier on horseback. On the other hand, the service was regular, frequent and cheap, and allowed communication not only between Amsterdam and the smaller towns, but also between one small town and another, thus equalizing accessibility to information. It was only in 1837, with the invention of the electric telegraph (see p. 132), that the traditional link between transport and the communication of messages was broken.

Empire and Communication

Communications, as the American political scientist Karl Deutsch (1912–92) put it, are 'the nerves of government', especially important in large states, above all in far-flung empires. Charles V (Holy Roman emperor; ruled 1519–58), whose dominions included Spain, the Netherlands, Germany and much of Italy as well as Mexico and Peru, tried to solve the problem of communication by travelling incessantly throughout Europe. His abdication speech noted that in the course of four decades as emperor he had made 40 journeys: ten visits to the Low Countries, nine to Germany, seven to Italy, six to Spain, four to France, two to England and two to North Africa. Yet the traditional medieval style of nomadic kingship was no longer sufficient for Charles's needs. The age of the 'paper empire' had arrived, together with a regular system for the transmission of messages: the postal system, so-called because it involved the establishment of posts with men and horses stationed along certain routes or post-roads.

In the sixteenth century, one family dominated the European postal system, that of the Tassis or Taxis (the term 'taxi', now in international currency, is derived from their name). It was this family, postmasters to the Habsburg emperors from 1490 onwards, that developed the system of ordinary couriers, operating according to a fixed timetable (available in print from 1563). Brussels – now the centre of so much else – was the hub of their system. One route went via Augsburg and Innsbruck to Bologna, Florence, Rome and Naples. Another went to Paris and through France to Toledo and Granada.

Special couriers, changing horses at frequent intervals, were able to travel up to 125 miles a day and so to bring the news of important events relatively rapidly. In 1572, for example, the news of the massacre of Protestants in Paris (known as

the Massacre of St Bartholomew) arrived in Madrid in three days. To travel 'post-haste' was a common expression of the period. However, the time normally taken for messages to arrive was considerably longer, since ordinary couriers averaged from six to eight miles per hour. From Rome to Milan, an ordinary courier took 2–3 days, according to the season; from Rome to Vienna, 12–15 days; from Rome to Paris, about 20; and it required 25–30 days for the courier from Rome to reach London or Cracow. Ordinary couriers took about 11 days from Madrid (which was Spain's capital from 1556 onwards) to Paris, and 12–13 days from Madrid to Naples (which was part of the Spanish Empire).

The Spanish Empire in the age of Charles V's son and successor Philip II (ruled 1556–98), although smaller in extent, has been well described by the great French historian Fernand Braudel (1902–85), in his famous study *The Mediterranean and the Mediterranean World in the Age of Philip II* (1949), as 'a colossal enterprise of sea and land transport' requiring 'the daily dispatch of hundreds of orders and reports'. Philip's strategy was the opposite of his father's. It was to remain as far as possible in one place, in or near Madrid, and to sit at his desk for many hours a day, reading and annotating the documents which reached him from all over his dominions. No wonder that his subjects gave him the mocking nickname of 'the king of paper' (*el rey papelero*).

The great problem was the length of time the documents took to reach Philip, or, conversely, the time his orders took to reach their recipients. The obsession of sixteenth-century statesmen and ambassadors with the arrival of the mail was emphasized by Braudel. The delays of the Spanish government were notorious, leading one official to wish that Death would arrive from Spain. The delays cannot (or cannot always), be explained by the indecisiveness of Philip II, however, but rather by the communication problems of an empire which stretched across the Mediterranean from Spain to Sicily, across the Atlantic to Mexico and Peru, and across the Pacific to the Philippines (named after Philip because they became a Spanish possession in his time). At this time it would normally take a ship one or two weeks, according to the winds, to cross the Mediterranean from north to south, and two or three months from east to west, so that Braudel called the Mediterranean world of the period '60 days long'.

Nevertheless, communication by sea was usually swifter than communication over land. In Mexico, for example, the Spaniards had to construct what they called 'royal roads', like the famous 'silver road' from the mines in Zacatecas to Mexico City. The names of these roads survive in modern California and New Mexico. In Eastern Europe, where the population was less dense and cities smaller and fewer than in the West, communication was correspondingly slower. In the Russian Empire in the age of Catherine the Great (ruled 1762–96), for example, it might take 18 months for an imperial order sent from St Petersburg to reach Kamchatka in Siberia, and another 18 months for the reply to be received in the capital. Communication problems help to explain why the empires of early modern Europe, Russia excepted, were seaborne empires. They included the Portuguese, Spanish, Dutch, French and British intercontinental empires, and also the Swedish Empire in Europe, constructed around the Baltic sea.

Transatlantic Communications

In order to communicate with his viceroys in Mexico and Peru, Philip II and his successors were dependent on the annual departures and returns of the ships which transported the silver of the New World to the port of Seville and for safety's sake sailed in convoy. The convoy to Mexico, for example, sailed in the summer and began the return voyage from the New World in the autumn. Letters from Spain to Mexico might take as little as four months to arrive, but to Lima they normally took six to nine months and they might take up to two years to reach the Philippines. Communications between England and New England were much more rapid, but letters might be lost or at least delayed. A letter relating the execution of Charles I, written in March 1649, only arrived in New England in June. It was common practice to make copies of letters and to send them by different ships in order to minimize the risk of loss.

Only in the eighteenth century did improvements in communications shrink the Atlantic, at least as far as the British Empire was concerned. Sea traffic between England and North America doubled between the 1680s and the 1730s. In 1702, a system of ships (known as 'packet boats'), carrying letters from London to Barbados or Jamaica, was set up, with monthly sailings, a 100-day schedule and some 8,500 letters carried in each ship. As a result, from the point of view of communications, the Atlantic had been shrunk to the size of the Mediterranean in the age of Philip II.

The ships crossing the Atlantic carried not only letters but also books and newspapers. Since books were heavy physical objects, the majority of copies tended to remain fairly near the place in which they had been manufactured. However, there is evidence of long-distance distribution. In the sixteenth century, for example, romances of chivalry were exported to Mexico and Peru in considerable numbers, despite the disapproval of the clergy. In 1540, a single printer had 446 copies of the popular romance *Amadis de Gaula* in stock in his shop in Mexico City. The same book was one of the favourites in Lima in 1583. In 1600, no fewer than 10,000 copies of another romance, *Pierres y Magalona*, arrived in Mexico City. In Puritan New England, by contrast, there seems to have been more demand for printed sermons. Individuals such as the clergyman Increase Mather (1639–1723) received regular shipments of barrels of books from London. News-sheets were sent to Boston during the English Civil War, and by the early eighteenth century the regular arrival of news encouraged the foundation of local news-sheets such as the *Boston Newsletter* (1704). What the Australian historian Geoffrey Blainey describes as the 'tyranny of distance' was gradually being undermined.

Oral Communication

It is sometimes claimed that the invention of the printing press did not alter the fundamentally oral nature of European culture. As this book attempts to show, the claim is exaggerated (and the attempt to characterize European culture in terms of a single medium misguided), but behind the exaggeration lurks an important point. Despite the huge scholarly literature on the importance of oral

communication and especially what is often called 'oral literature', the place of the oral medium in the history of early modern Europe – and its relation to changes in visual culture – has received less attention than it deserves.

In the Middle Ages the altar rather than the pulpit was at the centre of Christian churches. Yet preaching was already an accepted priestly duty, and friars preached in the streets and squares of cities as well as in churches. Distinctions were drawn between *sermones dominicales* for Sundays and *sermones festivi* for the many days of festival, and the style of preaching (plain or flowery, serious or entertaining, restrained or histrionic) was consciously adapted to the audience, whether it was urban or rural, clerical or lay. In short, the possibilities of the oral medium were consciously exploited by the masters of what was known in the sixteenth century as 'ecclesiastical rhetoric', and the sociologist Zygmunt Bauman has gone so far as to describe the pulpits of the Catholic Church as a 'mass medium'.

After the Reformation, Sunday preaching became an increasingly important part of religious instruction for Protestants and Catholics alike. Although Martin Luther (1483–1546) hailed the new printing press as 'God's highest gift of grace', he still considered the church as 'a mouth house and not a pen house'. Some preachers drew crowds, among them the poet John Donne (*c.* 1572–1631), who was dean of St Paul's in London. The public role of the sermon was acknowledged by Roman Catholics too, especially after the Council of Trent, and there were great Catholic preachers such as Jacques Bossuet (1627–1704) at the court of Louis XIV (ruled 1661–1715). The enthusiasm of some members of the public for sermons which lasted two or three hours is attested in the diaries of the time.

Governments were well aware of the value of the pulpit for communicating information, especially in rural areas, and also for encouraging obedience. Queen Elizabeth I spoke of the need to 'tune the pulpits', and Charles I agreed, declaring that 'people are governed by the pulpit more than the sword in times of peace', a classic early statement of the idea of cultural hegemony.

Another kind of oral communication was academic. Instruction in universities took place through lectures, formal debates or disputations (testing the logical skills of the students), and formal speeches or declamations (testing their powers of rhetoric). The art of speaking (and gesturing) was considered by rhetoricians to be just as important as the art of writing. By contrast, the written essay, like the written examination, was virtually unknown in academic circles at this time. In the grammar schools great emphasis was placed on speaking Latin, and dialogues and plays were composed by the teachers in order to give the students practice in speaking well.

Yet another important domain of oral communication was the song, especially the ballad, the song which told a story. The theories of Milman Parry and Albert Lord, discussed in chapter 1, are highly relevant to the ballads which circulated in early modern Europe. In the case of the famous border ballads of northern England and the Lowlands of Scotland, for instance, as in their equivalents in Scandinavia or Spain, it is not difficult to identify both formulae and themes. 'Blood-red wine', for example, or 'milk-white steed' are epithets as formulaic as Homer's 'wine-dark sea'. Recurrent themes of British ballads include sending a letter, sitting in a bower and galloping on a horse; plants grow out of the graves of tragic lovers and join them at last. The survival in different versions of a given ballad, *The Bonny Earl of Murray*, for example, or *Barbara Allen*, in manuscript

or in print, different in length and in phrasing, suggests that, as in Parry's Yugoslavia, individual minstrels developed their own style of recitation which was probably semi-improvised.

Rumour has been described as an 'oral postal service' which operates with remarkable speed. The messages transmitted were not always spontaneous: they were sometimes disseminated for political reasons, and in times of conflict one side would regularly accuse the other of spreading rumours. Three famous examples of rumour and its effects in early modern Europe, whether spontaneous or not, are the movement of iconoclasm of 1566 in northern France and the Netherlands (see p. 70); the English 'Popish Plot' in the 1680s (see p. 76); and the so-called 'Great Fear' in the French countryside in 1789, studied in depth in the 1930s by the French historian of the Revolution, Georges Lefebvre (1874–1959). In this last case, news circulated among French peasants to the effect that brigands were coming to massacre them or to attack their harvests, perhaps at the orders of the British or the aristocracy. Rather than dismissing these rumours or believing them, Lefebvre studied their chronology and geography with care and used them as evidence of social tensions.

Oral culture in this period should not be thought of purely in terms of survival or of what Ong has called 'oral residue'. New institutions which structured oral communication developed in this period, including such more or less formal discussion groups as academies, scientific societies, salons, clubs and coffeehouses. To judge from the treatises on the subject, the art of conversation was cultivated with particular intensity at this time. Bookshops, too, functioned as social centres, and James Boswell met Samuel Johnson for the first time in the back parlour of a bookshop owned by Tom Davies.

The development of commerce had important consequences for oral communication, notably the rise of exchanges or bourses, including Bruges (1409), Antwerp (1460), Lyons (1462), Amsterdam (1530), London (1554), Hamburg (1558) and Copenhagen (1624). A vivid description of one of them, Amsterdam, was given by the Sephardic Jewish merchant Joseph Penso de la Vega in a dialogue in Spanish entitled *The Confusion of Confusions* (1688), which shows that the habit of speculation in company shares and even the categories of 'bulls' and 'bears' had already become standard practice at this time. So too had the deliberate spreading of rumour in order to force prices up and down. The volatile behaviour of stock exchanges, their liability to mood swings from manic to depressive, most obvious in this period in the rapid rise and collapse of the South Sea Bubble (in other words, speculation in the stock of the South Sea Company of London in 1720), should be explained in part at least in terms of the oral medium. The phenomenon is still to be seen and heard on stock exchanges – and in banks – in our own time.

Centres of oral communication included taverns, public baths and coffeehouses, an innovation in this period. Istanbul was famous in the late sixteenth century for its coffee-houses, some 600 of them. Storytellers performed there, as they still did in Yugoslavia in the 1930s, when Parry and Lord visited the *kafanas*, as they were called, with their tape-recorders. There were at least 500 coffeehouses in London in the age of Queen Anne (reigned 1702–14). They prepared the way for 'clubland', for the wide range of establishments that catered for different kinds of customer and different topics of conversation. Discussions of scientific

subjects might be heard in Child's coffee-house, or Garraway's, or the Grecian coffee-house, where one might see and hear Sir Isaac Newton (1642–1727). Insurance was discussed at Lloyd's, which was a coffee-house in the late seventeenth century before it developed into an independent institution. In the mid-eighteenth century, Slaughter's coffee-house was the locale for a club of artists which included William Hogarth (1697–1764). In eighteenth-century Paris, the leading cafés included the Café de Maugis, a centre for attacks on religion, and Le Procope, founded in 1689 (and still open), which was frequented by leading intellectuals of the Enlightenment. The authorities in most cities, concerned with coffee-houses as places which encouraged subversive comments about the government, kept them under surveillance more or less effectively.

Clubs and coffee-houses inspired the creation of imagined communities of oral communication. The best English example is the imaginary Spectator Club, composed of a variety of characters including a country gentleman, a merchant, a clergyman and an army officer, which functioned as a framework for *The Spectator*, edited by Joseph Addison (1672–1719) and Richard Steele (1672–1729), published 1711–12, discussed below (p. 58). A journal founded in Leipzig in 1698 took the title *The Curious Coffeehouse at Venice*. The Milanese journal *Il Caffè* (1764–6) played an important role in the Italian Enlightenment (see p. 59). In several countries, plays also were set in coffee-houses, culminating in Voltaire's comedy *Le café ou l'Ecossaise* (1760), in which the customers are shown in the act of making critical remarks about other plays.

In similar fashion, some eighteenth-century newspapers, from the *Bristol Postboy* to the *Hamburgische Patriot*, helped create imagined local communities, in the same way that, as Benedict Anderson argued in *Imagined Communities* (1983), nineteenth-century newspapers contributed to the formation of national consciousness by treating their readers as a community, a national public.

Written Communication

The importance of the contexts in which writing is learned or utilized was already plain in early modern Europe, where reading and writing were often taught separately. For the commercial context of literacy and the business demand for writing and numeracy, we may turn to Florence in the fourteenth and fifteen centuries, where specialized abacus-schools taught writing and arithmetic, based on commercial examples, to boys who were going to become merchants or book-keepers. Like other cities in the Mediterranean world, Florence might be described as a notarial culture, in which written documents had an indispensable function, especially to record transfers of property on the occasion of marriages and deaths. Lay literacy was relatively high in Florence, and the practice of keeping diaries or chronicles was relatively widespread. Examples of this kind of personal document can also be found in other towns, among them Augsburg, Barcelona, Bologna, London, Nuremberg and Paris, focusing on the family or the city rather than the individual, sometimes circulated in manuscript form within an urban neighbourhood.

The religious context of literacy is particularly visible in Protestant Europe in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. A classic example is that of Lutheran

Sweden, in which the Church conducted annual examinations of every household to see how well each member of the family could read, how well they knew their catechism, and so on. The results were recorded systematically, distinguishing levels of ability such as 'beginning to read', 'reads a little' and so on. The records were preserved with care and remain a uniquely rich source for the study of early modern literacy (see Figure 6). Among other things, they reveal that the widespread ability to read, which extended as far as women and children in rural areas, was the result of a massive campaign between 1670 and 1720. On the whole, however, early modern Europe was a society of restricted literacy in which only a minority of the population (especially males, townspeople and Protestants) could read and fewer still could write. Hence the importance of what has been called 'mediated literacy', in other words, using literacy for the benefit of the illiterate.

Fig. 6 Register of household literacy examination in Sweden.

In cities of the period, a not uncommon occupation – as in Mexico City and Istanbul today, or at least until recently – was that of public writer, a man with an 'office' in the street, composing as well as writing letters for people who lacked these skills. In Paris, for example, some of these writers operated in the Cemetery of the Innocents. The English traveller John Evelyn (1620–1706) described them as 'inditing letters for poor maids and other ignorant people who come to them for advice and write for them into the country, both to their sweethearts, parents and friends, every large grave stone a little elevated serving them for a table'. In eighteenth-century Finland, illiterate peasants needed to communicate with the government in writing to avoid recruitment into the Swedish army. In their case, the local clergyman serving as a scribe was the crucial intermediary.

For a dramatic illustration of mediated literacy and its unintended consequences, one might take a case that came before the Tribunal of the Governor of Rome in 1602, involving a love letter written by a certain Giovanantonio to his 16-year-old neighbour Margarita. Unfortunately, Margarita could not read, so she needed to pass the letter to another neighbour to have it read to her, thus increasing the chances of detection by her parents, who did indeed discover the affair and take the case to court.

The consequences of the spread of literacy and its increasing penetration into everyday life were many and various. There was a rise in the number of people in occupations connected with writing – for example, clerks, book-keepers, scriveners, notaries, public writers and postmen. Some of these occupations had a relatively high social status, among them that of private secretary in the service of important people who did not have the time to write their own letters. Literacy, an obstacle to the traditional process of 'structural amnesia' (see p. 10), encouraged a sense of distance between past and present. A sense of historical anachronism, for instance, seems to have become increasingly sharp from the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries onwards.

The political consequences of literacy included the spread of written records – noticeable by the thirteenth century, if not before – and with it great dependence on the processing of 'information'. This term was to figure prominently in future theories of communication – for example, in the late twentieth-century identification of an 'information society' (see p. 232). The information might relate to numbers (what came to be called 'statistics') as well as to facts. Given access to it, the style of government moved closer to the model of administration by paperwork – or 'bureaucracy', as the German sociologist Max Weber (1864–1920) called it. In his discussion of what he called 'legal-rational authority', Weber emphasized the relationship between the increasing use of writing to formulate and record decisions and a more impersonal kind of administration, characterized by the imposition of formal rules for the appointment of officials, for their respective spheres of responsibility and for their place within a hierarchy. Weber's arguments have since been extended from politics to the domains of religion, business and the law.

Philip II, whose problems of communication have already been discussed, was not the only paper king in early modern Europe. Great nobles, who saw their participation in decision-making eroded, frequently complained about what they called the 'rule of the secretaries'. The increasing use of writing in the process of administration was a necessary condition for control at a distance, for the rise of the centralized state. Yet the increase in the number of documents to be read and signed was too much even for conscientious monarchs such as Philip II or, in the seventeenth century, Louis XIV of France. Secretaries had to be authorized to forge the king's signature on documents he had not seen, the point being that orders would not be obeyed if they did not appear to come directly from the king. As so often happens, social practices lagged behind technical innovations.

The political uses of literacy for ordinary people should not be forgotten. Rebellions were accompanied by the formulation of grievances in writing, during the German Peasant War of 1525, for example, or in *cahiers* at the beginning of the French Revolution, to mention only two of the most profound upheavals. The signing of petitions by a wide range of people was a practice which entered English politics in the seventeenth century. In 1640, at the beginning of the Civil War, 15,000 citizens of London signed the Root and Branch Petition, and later petitions displayed as many as 30,000 signatures. In the nineteenth century, they were claimed to have reached millions.

The medium of writing is not synonymous with handwriting, still less with pen and ink. In the early modern period, painted and chiselled inscriptions were a distinct form of communication. The epitaphs on gravestones and church monuments were chosen with care, and foreign visitors often made a point of reading them, a practice facilitated by the fact that before the eighteenth century most of them were in Latin. A history of communication cannot afford to neglect the linguistic media through which communication took place.

Languages of Communication

The rise of a print society is often associated with the rise of the vernacular languages of Europe, in contrast to a medieval pre-print society in which written communication was predominantly in Latin and oral communication in local dialect. The increasing employment of the vernaculars for literary purposes was accompanied by their standardization and codification, a process aided by print. Martin Luther's translation of the Bible into German is often cited as an example of the new trend, important in itself and also as a model for other translations such as Tyndale's Bible (see p. 69), the Czech Bible of 1579–94 (the Kralice Bible) and the English Bible of 1611 (the Authorized Version).

Yet Dante and Chaucer had written their poems in Italian and English, and, concerned as he was with the status of Latin, Petrarch, too, employed Italian for his introspective poetry and his praise of his muse, Laura. Outside Italy, the Frenchman Joachim Du Bellay (1522–60) and the German Martin Opitz (1597–1639) were among the writers who sang the praises of the vernacular as a medium for poetry.

In the field of politics, a date often cited is that of 1539, when King Francis I of France ordered legal documents to be drawn up in French instead of the traditional Latin. In the academic domain, the German physician Theophrastus von Hohenheim, known as Paracelsus (1493–1541), broke with tradition by lec-

turing in the vernacular at the University of Basel, although most of his colleagues resisted this innovation and it was only in the eighteenth century that German, English or Italian could regularly be heard in the lecture rooms of universities. At around the same time, French replaced Latin as the main language of international diplomacy.

Nevertheless, as the last two examples suggest, the decline of Latin must not be dated too early. Translations from the vernaculars into Latin were common, especially translations from Italian and French, made for a northern European public. At least 1,200 such translations were made between the late fifteenth and the late eighteenth centuries, reaching their peak in the first half of the seventeenth century. To take only English examples, the essays of Francis Bacon, the philosophy of John Locke, Robert Boyle's *Sceptical Chemist* and other works, Newton's *Optics*, and even Milton's *Paradise Lost* and Gray's *Elegy in a Country Churchyard* were most familiar on the Continent in Latin versions, since the English language was not well known in other countries until the second half of the eighteenth century.

Visual Communication

The language of gesture, taken seriously in early modern Europe, was taught in schools as part of the discipline of rhetoric, and it was the subject of a number of treatises, from *The Art of Gesture* (1616) by the Italian jurist Giovanni Bonifacio to the *Chirologia* (1644) of the English physician John Bulwer, concerned with 'manual rhetoric' – in other words 'the natural language of the hands'.

As for visual communication in a broader sense, Renaissance humanists would have had little to learn from the French critic Roland Barthes (1915–80) about what he called 'the rhetoric of the image' – as Barthes himself, who analysed modern advertisements with the help of Aristotle's *Rhetoric*, would probably have been the first to recognize.

Despite their remarkable innovations in style, what are commonly and somewhat anachronistically called the 'works of art' of the Renaissance should be seen as images or even what the sociolinguists call 'communicative events'. For example, *The Punishment of Corah*, a fresco by the Florentine painter Sandro Botticelli (1445–1510) in the Sistine Chapel in Rome, represents the earth opening to swallow a man who had dared to rebel against the authority of Moses. Commissioned by Pope Sixtus IV at a time, the late fifteenth century, when there was talk of summoning a council of the Church to limit the power of the Pope, the fresco makes a firm statement to the effect that the Pope is the new Moses and that rebellion does not pay. The famous religious paintings of the Renaissance, such as Michelangelo's *Last Judgement* or Tintoretto's *St Mark Rescuing a Slave* (see Figure 2), were not innovative in this respect, although the new three-dimensionality may have made them more effective as religious communication.

Secular paintings, increasingly identified with individual painters from the years around 1500 onwards, communicated a greater variety of messages to smaller audiences. Whereas a large number of religious paintings were displayed in churches where anyone could see them, most secular paintings of the Renais-

sance were bought by private individuals to hang in their own houses. Botticelli's *Spring*, for instance, may be well known today, thanks to exhibitions and reproductions, but in the Renaissance itself the painting was invisible to most people because it hung on the walls of a private villa.

Both religious and secular works were generally made on commission, for particular clients and according to their specifications, which were sometimes extremely precise, as surviving contracts show. Literary works, too, were often created for specific patrons and dedicated to them. It was only in the course of the early modern period (in the sixteenth century in the Netherlands, in the eighteenth century in France and England) that artists and writers began to work for the market, producing first and selling afterwards rather than the other way round (see p. 48).

Printed Images

The rise of the market was associated with the rise of the mechanically reproduced image, and in particular of the 'print', a general term for printed images, whether the medium employed was a block of wood or a copper or steel plate, whether the image was incised on the plate (an engraving) or eaten away by acid (as in the case of the etching).

The first known woodcut dates from the late fourteenth century, and was probably inspired by the stamping of patterns on textiles. In fact, collections of woodcut images of religious scenes were already being produced a generation before Gutenberg's Bible. The etching developed in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries (Rembrandt's etchings are particularly famous). The advantage of this method, in which a metal plate is covered with wax on which lines are drawn before the plate is submerged in a bath of acid, is that gradations of tone can be achieved by immersing the plate more than once, adding new lines and making the old ones deeper and so darker. In the eighteenth century, the invention of the mezzotint, with tiny holes of different depths replacing the lines on the plate with still more subtle gradations, made it possible to make realistic reproductions of oil paintings in black and white. In 1796, the lithograph was invented by Aloys Senefelder (1771–1834). Produced by drawing on stone with grease pencils, the new medium allowed cheap coloured images to be created for the first time.

The rise of the print was the most profound change in visual communication in this whole period, since it made images so much more widely available than before. Print-making quickly involved leading artists of the Renaissance, such as Botticelli, who produced a series of woodcut illustrations for Dante's *Divine Comedy*.

Prints were reasonably cheap to make and transport, thus enabling the work of their designers to reach relatively large numbers of people fairly quickly. It is likely, for instance, that the most vivid and memorable images of the New World were not those conveyed in words by Christopher Columbus or later explorers, but by the woodcuts of Indians wearing feathered headdresses and cooking and eating human flesh. Popular piety was encouraged by woodcuts of saints distributed on their feast days, and similar images of Luther helped to spread the ideas

of the reformers of the Church in the 1520s. The paintings of Leonardo, Raphael and Michelangelo were reproduced in the form of woodcuts and engravings and so introduced to a wider audience, like the paintings of Rubens in the seventeenth century. Prints also introduced West European images to other cultures. They were used as models by painters of religious images in the Russian Orthodox world from the middle of the seventeenth century onwards, and they also influenced styles of representation as far afield as Persia, India, China, Mexico and Peru.

Popular political consciousness, to be discussed in more detail in the next chapter, was encouraged by the spread of satirical prints, especially in seventeenth- and eighteenth-century England and in revolutionary France (see pp. 74, 79). Some of these images are known to have sold extremely well. For example, a print celebrating the repeal in 1766 of the Stamp Act, to which the American colonies strongly objected, sold 2,000 copies at a shilling each in only four days, and it is said that another 16,000 copies were sold in illegal versions (see Figure 7). In the course of the period, the conventions of representation changed, with the allegorical print, such as the mock-funeral, being replaced by the more direct political caricature of, for instance, Sir Robert Walpole, Charles James Fox or the Prince of Wales, the main target of the artist James Gillray (1756–1815) in the 1780s, before he turned to satirizing the French Revolution.

Fig. 7 *The Repeal, or the Funerary Procession of Miss Americ-Stamp,* 1765.

In the world of scholarship, systematic discussions of the significance of the printed image as a medium of communication parallel the detailed investigations of printed texts. Nineteenth- and twentieth-century bibliographers concerned themselves with the appearance, the dating and the printing history of books, while art historians considered prints in similar fashion. Both groups of scholars were supposed to pay attention to reproduction and to the number of copies in circulation, although they did not always do so. According to the German Marxist critic Walter Benjamin (1892–1940), the work of art changed its character following the industrial revolution. 'That which withers in the age of mechanical reproduction is the aura of the work of art.' The machine 'substitutes a plurality of copies for a unique existence' and in so doing produces a shift from the 'cult value' of the image to its 'exhibition value'. Whether or not the aura of the image is lost is a difficult hypothesis to test, and it might even be argued that familiarity with a reproduction sharpens rather than sates the desire to see the original.

Benjamin was thinking of nineteenth-century media such as lithography and photography (see p. 161), but William M. Ivins Jr (1881–1961), a curator of prints at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York, made a case for the importance of sixteenth-century prints as 'exactly repeatable pictorial statements'. Ivins argued that prints were 'among the most important and powerful tools of modern life and thought'. He pointed out that the ancient Greeks, for instance, had abandoned the practice of illustrating botanical treatises because of the impossibility of producing identical images of the same plant in different manuscript copies of the same work. From the late fifteenth century, on the other hand, herbals were regularly illustrated with woodcuts.

Maps, which began to be printed in 1472, offer another example of the way in which the communication of information by images was facilitated by the repeatability associated with the press. In a more literal sense than that meant by David Olson (see p. 10), they offered readers 'the world on paper' and made it easier than ever before for groups armed with these documents to control parts of the earth, whether their control was primarily military, political, economic or ideological. Generals and governments, merchants and missionaries encouraged the making of manuscript maps of the world beyond Europe. They often hoped to keep this information to themselves, but it was gradually leaked into print and into the public domain.

The transfer of the two-dimensional map to the three-dimensional globe, of which the oldest surviving example is Martin Behaim's of 1492, made it easier to think of the earth as a whole. When maps were collected into atlases, beginning with the *Theatre of the World* by Abraham Ortelius (first published at Antwerp in 1570), they allowed viewers to see the world both as a whole and in detail. Although the ideal of cosmopolitanism goes back as far as the Stoic philosophers in the age of the Roman Empire, the spread of these globes and printed maps must have encouraged global consciousness.

Another development of this period was the narrative strip or picture story, the ancestor of the twentieth-century comic strip. The visual narrative in which the viewer 'reads' the episodes, usually from left to right and from top to bottom, was already known in the Middle Ages, but its importance increased with the

rise of the woodcut in the Renaissance. Woodcuts in particularly long strips were produced to record events such as processions through the streets. These strips, the printed equivalents of medieval rolls, gave their viewers the impression of watching the procession pass. The true 'moving pictures' of the early modern period, however, were the processions themselves.

Multimedia Communication

It is likely that the most effective forms of communication at this time were – as they are today – those which appealed simultaneously to the eye and to the ear and combined verbal with non-verbal messages, musical as well as visual, from the drums and trumpets of military parades to the violins accompanying indoor performances. In early modern Europe these forms included rituals, spectacles, masques, plays, ballets and operas.

Rituals were messages, but they were both more and less than a way of communicating information. They were less, because it is unlikely that very much of the information encoded in the action was actually assimilated by a majority of the spectators, because they failed to understand allusions to ancient history or classical mythology, for example, or because they were literally in no position to see what was going on. On the other hand, rituals were more than a means of transmitting information in the sense that they created solidarity, whether between the priest and his congregation, the ruler and his subjects, or the members of a guild or corporation marching together in procession. It should be added that it was commonly believed at this time that rituals were a means to make changes happen in the world. The consecration of the Host transformed it into the body and blood of Christ, while the ceremony of coronation turned a person into a king or queen. The touch of the kings of France and England was supposed to heal the sick, at least those suffering from the skin disease known as scrofula, and sufferers arrived at the royal palaces in their thousands on certain days of the year.

'Ritual' is not always the best term to describe many of these multimedia events. It might be better to follow seventeenth-century usage and to describe some of them at least as spectacles. The main form of public spectacle at this time was the procession (generally religious but sometimes secular, as in the case of royal entries into cities). Mock battles, such as medieval jousts and tournaments, might also be described as a form of outdoor spectacle, and one which continued to be important in this period too, but there was nothing 'mock' about executions, another common form of spectacle at this time. They were staged in public precisely to impress spectators and to communicate the message that it was hopeless to try to resist the authorities and that evildoers would come to a bad end. Another kind of spectacle might be described as the 'theatre' of the everyday life of the ruler, who often took meals in public and might even turn his getting up in the morning and going to bed at night into rituals, as in the famous case of Louis XIV of France. Again, Queen Elizabeth I, who declared that princes were 'set on stages', was skilful in exploiting this situation for political purposes, turning herself into a goddess or a myth, as effectively as Eva Perón in the very different media system of Argentina in the middle of the twentieth century.

These examples suggest that students of the media should try to place in historical perspective the claim of Roger-Gérard Schwartzenberg that the rise of the 'spectacle state' and the 'star system' in politics was a consequence of the rise of television, or the assertion of Guy Debord (1931–94; see below, p. 224) that twentieth-century society is a 'society of the spectacle' in which the 'ruling order discourses endlessly upon itself in an uninterrupted monologue of self-praise'. Television may be responsible for a revival of political theatre, and has certainly given it new forms (by allowing so many people to observe political leaders in close-up), but the public dramatization and personalization of politics, like the official monologue of self-praise, goes back a very long way.

As a case-study of spectacle as communication, the Florentine festival of St John the Baptist in the late fifteenth century is of interest, because it was a celebration of the wealth and power of the city of Florence and especially of its government. Florence was a large city for the period (with about 40,000 inhabitants) as well as a city-state controlling a substantial part of Tuscany. St John the Baptist was the principal patron and protector of the city, and his feast, on 24 June, was a particularly splendid occasion. One of the main festive events was a procession from the cathedral to the river Arno and back, a procession in which monks, friars, secular clergy, choirboys and religious confraternities took part. They walked through streets decorated with rich cloths and filled with spectators, accompanied by music, carrying relics and followed by floats representing religious scenes such as the birth of St John and his baptism of Christ.

The secular part of the celebrations in Florence included an exhibition of luxury goods produced by the craftsmen of the city, notably cloth, jewels and goldsmiths' work, displayed outside the workshops, and also a race (*palio*), not unlike the race which still takes place in Siena twice a year, with colourful costumes for the horses and their riders. The events of the day were organized by the different wards of the city, deputations were received from Tuscan towns subject to Florence, among them Pisa and Arezzo, offering tribute to the saint and so to the city of which he was a patron, and a banquet was held for the Signoria, the local equivalent of the mayor and aldermen. All these rituals may be described as an expression of the collective identity of the Florentines.

The idiom of European ritual changed in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Two of these changes deserve particular emphasis – restructuring ritual along ancient Roman lines and the rise of the theatre, which culminated in one of the most famous 'slogans' associated with communications: 'All the world's a stage.' Renaissance humanists, in the process of reviving classical antiquity, classicized ritual, as in the case of the mock naval battle which was waged, in the style of the ancient Romans, in the courtyard of the Palazzo Pitti in Florence, which had been filled with water for the occasion. In a number of other cities, scattered in different countries, a recurring version of classical spectacle was provided by the ritual entry of a prince. Following ancient Roman precedent, he rode in a chariot, passing through triumphal arches and attended by figures personifying Fame, Victory or Justice. Famous examples were the entry of Emperor Charles V into Bologna for his coronation in 1530 and the entry of King Henri II of France into Rouen in 1550. The practice became widely taken up and was not limited to rulers. In London in the seventeenth century, the new Lord

Mayor passed through triumphal arches of this kind in his inauguration ritual – the annual Lord Mayor's Show.

How intelligible were these spectacles? To help spectators understand what was happening at the time of the performance, an interpreter might be introduced, like St George in the Lord Mayor's Show in London in 1609. Alternatively, written notices might be attached to particular figures, a procedure mocked by the playwright Ben Jonson (1572–1637), who preferred a learned to a popular audience, with his satirical examples 'This is a dog', or 'This is a hare'. The spectacles were also frequently described in printed and illustrated books which might be available on the day itself, or shortly afterwards, precisely in order that the spectators, or some of them, would know what to expect and how to understand what they were seeing, or discover the meaning of what they had just seen.

Who was saying what to whom through these rituals? In the case of state visits to cities, the obvious answer is that the city was demonstrating its loyalty to the prince. This answer is not incorrect but it is incomplete. Communication was a two-way process, a form of dialogue, and princes demonstrated their good will towards their subjects as well as received their applause. Furthermore, the rituals were sometimes performed for the benefit of foreign princes, to whom the expression of loyalty was inappropriate. Bologna was part of the states of the Church when it welcomed Charles V in 1529, but Venice was an independent republic when King Henri III of France made a formal entry into it in 1574. Finally, it is possible to find occasions when cities used rituals to send another kind of message to the prince, not so much a panegyric as a petition. When Charles V entered Bruges in 1515, the pageants drew attention to the economic decline of the city, which was being displaced as a centre of commerce by the port of Antwerp. One of the scenes shown to Charles was a wheel of fortune, with Bruges sitting at the bottom. The message was clear. It was an appeal to the prince to restore the lost prosperity of the city.

Major festivals were the traditional time for the performance of plays, religious plays on the feast of Corpus Christi, for example, or secular plays during carnival. These performances usually took place either in the street, at the royal court, or in private houses. A major new development, from the later sixteenth century onwards, was the rise of the public theatre in London, Madrid, Paris and elsewhere. Plays began to be performed by professional actors in inns or in purpose-built playhouses, such as the Hôtel de Bourgogne in Paris (1548) or the Globe (1598) in London, open to all on payment of a reasonably low fee. Admission cost a penny in Shakespeare's London, a price which apprentices as well as merchants and gentlemen could afford. The commercial opera began a little later, in Venice, where the first public theatre was opened in 1637.

The rise of the commercial theatre at much the same time in different countries suggests that – apart from the imitation of new foreign models – a crucial factor in its development was the rise in the population of cities above a threshold of 100,000 people or so. With a potential audience of this size, professional actors were able to settle down in one place instead of wandering the country in search of new spectators and perform the same play to different people night after night, or more often, perform the same two or three plays over a few weeks.

Interactions Between Media

Multimedia events are not the only examples from this period of the interaction between different means of communication. Another is that of so-called icono-texts, images that depend for their interpretation on texts incorporated in them – like speech scrolls coming from the mouths of the characters or captions over or under the image. For example, the prints of William Hogarth, such as *Gin Lane*, *The Harlot's Progress* or *The Industrious Apprentice*, depend for their elucidation on textual material tucked away in corners of the image. Hogarth was also commissioned to produce paintings illustrating scenes from an extremely successful musical of his day, John Gay's *The Beggar's Opera*.

Another kind of interaction may be illustrated by the function of manuscripts in early modern Europe. That they continued to be used for private communications, such as family or commercial letters, is obvious enough, but it is less obvious that the manuscript letter was influenced by print in this period, via the many treatises on the art of letter-writing published in large numbers in Italy and elsewhere from the sixteenth century onwards. These printed treatises offered useful models for letters of congratulation or condolence, love letters, apologies, or letters requesting money.

What requires more extended examination here is the survival into the early modern period of the manuscript as a major channel for the public circulation of messages. To be more precise, manuscripts were still used to transmit messages in a semi-public manner. In Russia as late as 1700, secular literature was still circulating in manuscript form as well as orally because the few existing presses were located in monasteries and used for the production of religious books. Even in Western Europe, which was full of presses, as we have seen, circulation in manuscript continued to perform some useful functions.

In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, men of high status (and women even more so) were often unhappy with the idea of publishing books, on the grounds that the books would be sold to the general public and so make the authors look like tradespeople. As a result of this prejudice, coterie poets and other writers preferred to circulate their work in manuscript copies to their friends and acquaintances. It was in this form that the poems of Sir Philip Sidney (1554–86), for example, the sonnet sequence *Astrophel and Stella*, circulated in Elizabethan England. Again, the love lyrics of John Donne, written in the 1590s, were not published until 1633, two years after the author's death. Donne was probably unwilling to publish poems on love because he had entered the Church and become a deservedly famous preacher (see p. 24 above).

This form of manuscript circulation differed from printed circulation in a number of ways. It was a means of social bonding between the individuals involved, often a group of friends. The calligraphy of the manuscripts sometimes made them into works of art in their own right. The texts were less fixed and more malleable than printed ones because transcribers often felt free to add to or subtract from the verses they copied, or to change names in order to adapt what was written to their own situation. Manuscript was what we would now call an 'interactive' medium.

A second and still more important reason for manuscript circulation was to evade religious, moral and political censorship. In other words, to adopt a term widely current a few years ago, manuscript was the samizdat of the early modern period, the equivalent of the 'publish-it-yourself' typescripts and xeroxes criticizing Communist regimes which circulated unofficially in the USSR, Poland and elsewhere before 1989. For example, the *Letter to the Grand Duchess* by Galileo Galilei (1564–1642), a discussion of the delicate issue of the relationship between religion and science, circulated widely in manuscript before it was finally published in 1636.

In France towards the end of the reign of Louis XIV, a great variety of manuscripts satirizing the king, his family and his ministers were in circulation. Books attacking Christianity also circulated in this underground fashion. In some cases, printed books were copied for clandestine distribution in a region in which their publication was banned. In early eighteenth-century Paris, for example, the trade in manuscript copies of unorthodox books was highly organized, with professional copyists working for entrepreneurs who sold their wares near cafés. More than 100 unorthodox texts circulated in this way in the first half of the eighteenth century.

In between the two kinds of manuscript discussed above came the manuscript newsletters, letters sent in multiple copies to a limited number of subscribers, especially from 1550 to 1640, in other words in the generation or two before the rise of newspapers. The flexibility of the manuscript form permitted variations in the news sent to individual subscribers, according to their interests and needs. This personalized news service was available only to wealthy people, but it allowed the circulation of information which governments might have preferred to remain secret. Hence there was still a market for manuscript newsletters after 1650 despite the rise of the printed news-sheet (see p. 48). In France, for example, the Comte de Lionne was the centre of a manuscript news network in Paris around the year 1671. His employees followed the French armies abroad and sent reports back to him which he put into wider circulation.

Another example of the interaction between manuscript and print takes us back to the letter. The editors of printed journals of different kinds, from the *Transactions of the Royal Society* to *The Spectator*, often solicited and received correspondence from their readers. Some of these letters were printed, while others influenced the topics chosen for discussion and the opinions expressed in the journal.

For a final example of the interfaces between media, we may turn to the relation between orality and print. Printed texts often reproduced what Ong has called 'oral residue', turns of phrase or grammatical constructions more appropriate to speech than to writing, to the ear than to the eye. Books in dialogue form, popular throughout the early modern period, from Castiglione's *Courtier* (1528) to Diderot's *Rameau's Nephew* (written in the 1760s, though not published until 1830), were fuelled by oral exchanges in courts, academies or salons. Preachers were often inspired by texts, from the Bible to the sermon outlines which were already available in print in the fifteenth century, so that clergymen did not need to lie awake on Saturday night thinking what to say to their congregations the next day. Preachers also sent their own texts to the printer, or, if they did not do so, others acted for them, taking down their words in shorthand and transcribing them afterwards.

The uses of printed books in this period also reveal the interaction between speech and print. For example, one of the most famous devotional books of the sixteenth century was the *Spiritual Exercises* (1548), written by the founder of the Jesuit order Ignatius Loyola (1491–1556), a guide to meditation and to the examination of conscience. Published in Latin, the *Exercises* were not intended to be read by the Catholic laity. The text was an instruction manual for a priest or spiritual director, who would pass the message on to the laity by word of mouth. In similar fashion, the drill manuals which began to appear in print in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries were intended for officers or sergeants rather than the rank and file.

In early seventeenth-century England, printed ballads were sometimes used as aids to oral performance, the equivalent of today's karaoke. The texts were pasted onto the walls of taverns so that people who did not know or could not remember the words of a particular ballad could sing along with the rest. There was still such a lively oral culture, however, that many people exercised more creativity, composing ballads of their own about their neighbours or enemies. These homemade ballads might adapt verses from a printed text – in a manner similar to the writers of the manuscripts discussed above – and they were often sung to tunes which broadside ballads had made familiar.

The art of conversation was influenced, if not transformed, by the spread in print of books on the subject, beginning in sixteenth-century Italy with Baldassare Castiglione's *Courtier* (1528), Giovanni Della Casa's *Galateo* (1558) and Stefano Guazzo's *Civil Conversation* (1574), and continuing through a series of French, Spanish and German treatises and the reflections on the subject of Swift, Fielding and Lord Chesterfield. These treatises offered instruction to men and women of different ages and social groups, advising them when to speak or keep silent, to whom, about what and in what style. The number of editions through which they passed, together with the underlinings and annotations in some surviving copies, suggest that this advice was taken seriously. In other words, print was contributing to what the authors of the treatises would have called the refinement of speech, and also to its increasing uniformity, a process which was also encouraged by the publication of grammars of different European languages. Indeed, language is one of the domains which best illustrates Eisenstein's point about the connections between printing and standardization.

The interactions between orality and print may be studied in more detail by examining some Italian versions of what English scholars generally call chapbooks (see p. 18). An examination of some of these booklets, published in Italy in the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries, reveals the continuing importance of romances of chivalry – as in France more than a century later. An account-book recording the expenses of a printing shop near Florence between 1476 and 1486 reveals that nearly 500 copies of one romance of chivalry were sold wholesale to a man described as Bernardino 'who sings on a bench'. It therefore seems plausible to suggest that what Bernardino did was what is still done in remote parts of Brazil and elsewhere in the Third World – to recite the poem and then to sell printed copies of it. The performance was a form of mar-

keting. It drew an audience of potential readers, and gave them a chance to test the quality of the product. Buying the text allowed listeners to repeat the performance to their families and friends. If they were illiterate, they could always ask someone else to read or recite the poem to them.

Many other texts published in Florence or Venice at this time open or close with formulae suggesting that a singer is performing in public, with the openings often calling on God to help and on bystanders to pay attention. 'Pay attention to me, for I can recite a new poem in rhyme.' Or: 'If you pay attention I will make you enjoy yourselves.' Or again: 'Lords and good people I can tell you many stories which I know by heart.' The closing formulae express the hope that the listeners have enjoyed the story, presumably passing the hat around for money at the same time. 'This story is told in your honour.' 'Think about my needs, prudent listener.' 'Elegant beautiful and gracious ladies, I thank you for the attention you have given my poor eloquence.' Such openings and closings recall passages, usually in verse, at the beginning and end of stage plays (and later of operas), where the playwright (or composer) directly addresses the audience.

In these texts it is not difficult to identify formulae and themes of the kind discussed by Milman Parry and Albert Lord (see pp. 6–7). They include some of the very themes used by the twentieth-century Yugoslav poets, such as the holding of a council or the sending of a letter (reminding us of the importance of writing in a semi-oral culture). Examples of the formulae include 'with sweet speech', 'threw him to the ground', 'like a cat', 'appeared to be a dragon' and so on. The texts also offer frequent examples of the redundancy typical of oral performance: 'Crying and weeping with sorrow' (*Lagrimando e piangendo con dolore*) for instance, or 'That day was one of great heat and it was burning hot' (*Era quel dì gran caldo e grande ardore*). Redundancy of this kind should not be interpreted as a weakness on the part of the poet. It was a device that made it easier for the audience to follow the story.

In short, oral and printed media coexisted and interacted in fifteenth- and sixteenth-century Italy, as they did on the Anglo-Scottish borders in the eighteenth century. In his famous study of oral poetry, Lord argued that literacy and print necessarily destroy traditional oral culture. He went so far as to speak of the 'death' of oral tradition. These Italian examples, on the other hand, suggest that oral culture and print culture were able to coexist for a considerable period. It is of course thanks to this kind of coexistence that the traditional ballads of Scotland, England and Scandinavia, which were written down and printed from the sixteenth century onwards, have survived.

Censorship

As the remarks in the last section about clandestine communication by manuscript have already suggested, censorship of the media was a major preoccupation of the authorities in European states and churches, Protestant and Catholic alike, in the early modern period, whether they were principally concerned with heresy, sedition or immorality.

In a society in which only a minority were literate, repression could not be confined to books alone. Plays, for instance, were often subject to censorship.

In London, they had to be licensed by the Master of the Revels before they could be performed. Texts were carefully scrutinized for references to important people, at home and abroad, as well as for comments on topical religious or political issues. The censor's problem was that although the text of the play might be submitted in advance, it was difficult to prevent actors from improvising subversive remarks in the course of performance. It was for this reason that some plays running in London, such as Thomas Middleton's notorious *A Game at Chess* (1625), which satirized the court of Spain, were brought to an abrupt end by order of the Bishop or the Privy Council.

A reforming archbishop of Bologna spoke of drawing up an index of prohibited images. It never happened, perhaps because it was too difficult to organize such an enterprise, but specific images were not infrequently criticized, destroyed or expurgated by repainting. In the case of Michelangelo's *Last Judgement*, for instance, the naked bodies were ordered to be furnished with fig-leaves. The painter Paolo Veronese (1528–88) was summoned before the Venetian Inquisition because his painting of the Last Supper included what the inquisitors called 'buffoons, drunkards, Germans, dwarves and similar vulgarities'. Some Protestants smashed images, considering them idolatrous, while Catholics buried the images they were coming to view as unseemly – naked St Sebastians, for example, or representations of St Martin as a soldier and of St Eloy as a goldsmith.

The most famous and widespread censorship system of the period was that of the Catholic Church, with its 'Index of Prohibited Books'. The Index was a printed catalogue – perhaps better described as an 'anti-catalogue' – of printed books which the faithful were forbidden to read. There were many local indexes too, beginning with the one published in 1544 by the Sorbonne (the Faculty of Theology of the University of Paris), but the important ones were those issued by papal authority and binding on the whole Church, from the mid-sixteenth century to the mid-twentieth century.

The Index might be said to have been invented as a Counter-Reformation antidote to Protestantism and printing. It was an attempt to fight print with print. The model index, issued in 1564, began with a set of general rules forbidding three main types of book: the heretical, the immoral and the magical. Then came an alphabetical list of authors and titles, the authors divided into first class (all their writings being prohibited) and second class (in which case the ban extended only to specific works). Most of the books on the Church's list were devoted to Protestant theology in Latin, but some literary works which later became classics can also be found on it, among them the satires written by the humanist Erasmus and the *Gargantua and Pantagruel* of Rabelais (not for the obscenity which worried some eighteenth- and nineteenth-century readers, but for the author's criticisms of the Church). Machiavelli's *Prince* was also there, as were Dante's treatise *On Monarchy* (thanks to its exaltation of the emperor over the Pope), Petrarch's sonnets against the papacy and Boccaccio's *Decameron*.

There was disagreement among censors as to how far to go. A hard line was taken by the Italian Jesuit Antonio Possevino (1534–1611), who attacked romances of chivalry as 'stratagems of Satan' (perhaps for their emphasis on love, perhaps for their magic). On the other hand, another Italian Jesuit, Roberto

Bellarmino (1542–1621), defended the great trio of Tuscan writers, Dante, Petrarch and Boccaccio, on the grounds that they were all good Catholics.

Two examples of censorship at work may show more clearly what the inquisitors were looking for. When Montaigne visited Italy, he submitted his recently published *Essays* to a papal censor who suggested a few alterations – references to fortune should be changed to providence, for instance, while references to heretical poets should be deleted altogether. A Calvinist pastor expurgated the *Essays* before their publication in Geneva was permitted, removing a favourable reference to the Roman emperor Julian 'the Apostate', who was converted from Christianity to paganism.

The second example is that of Boccaccio's *Decameron*, which had long been a target for clerical critics. Its condemnation was discussed at the Council of Trent, which met in the middle of the sixteenth century to discuss the reform of the Church. The Duke of Florence sent an ambassador to the Council to beg for the reprieve of the book, since his own prestige depended on the cultural capital represented by the local writers Dante, Petrarch and Boccaccio. Thanks to this diplomatic lobbying, the book's condemnation was commuted to expurgation. The Inquisition was always hypersensitive to its own reputation, and in the expurgated edition, one story (dealing with the hypocrisy of an inquisitor) completely disappeared. Elsewhere in the text the names of saints and clerics were removed, at the price of making some stories virtually unintelligible. As in the case of Rabelais, what worried the inquisitors was not the frequent obscenity of Boccaccio's stories, but their anti-clericalism.

The campaign of repression had its absurd side, but it may have been a reasonable success in its own terms. From the point of view of the orthodox, books were dangerous. The example of Menocchio, the Italian miller who was encouraged by books to think for himself (see p. 53), suggests they had a point. It is difficult to measure the effectiveness of the repression, but the Inquisition records themselves reveal the continuing importance of the trade in contraband books, such as the copies of Erasmus and Machiavelli which were still being smuggled into Venice in the 1570s and 1580s.

Protestant censorship was less effective than Catholic censorship, not because the Protestants were more tolerant but because they were more divided, fragmented into different churches with different administrative structures like the Lutheran and the Calvinist. In Calvinist Geneva, manuscripts were submitted by the printer in advance of publication, to be read by experts in theology, law, medicine and so on, before written permission to print was given. To ensure that the orders were obeyed, the printing houses were regularly inspected, and forbidden books were confiscated and might be burned by the public executioner. Secular censorship in France, England, the Dutch Republic, the Habsburg Empire and elsewhere was organized on similar lines.

In England, printing was restricted to London, Oxford and Cambridge and was controlled through the Stationers' Company, founded in 1557. It registered new publications and, before they were published, the manuscripts of books were also inspected. According to the English Licensing Act of 1662, law books had to be inspected by the Lord Chancellor, history books by a secretary of state, and most other kinds of book by the Archbishop of Canterbury and the Bishop of London or their deputies. The system was brought to an end in 1695 when the Licensing Act was allowed to lapse.

Clandestine Communication

The efficacy of the censorship system should not be overestimated. One of its unintended consequences was to awaken interest in banned titles which some readers might not otherwise have known about. Another reaction to formal censorship was to organize or reorganize clandestine communication. A considerable variety of messages was communicated underground, from the secrets of governments to commercial or technical secrets, and from unorthodox religious ideas to pornography.

'Pornography' – a term that was not coined until the nineteenth century – is not easy to define. If it is used to refer to texts which are not only intended to arouse lust but also to sell for this very reason, the term is applicable to a number of early modern works. The Marquis de Sade's (1740–1814) *120 Days of Sodom* was among the most notorious examples, but far from the first. A century earlier, the anonymous *Venus in the Cloister* (1683) had been equally notorious. In the early sixteenth century images of different sexual postures drawn by Giulio Romano (1499–1546) and engraved by Marcantonio Raimondi (d. 1534), with accompanying verses by Pietro Aretino, circulated in Rome before they were discovered and suppressed.

It is not easy to draw the line between public and private communication. The passing on of secrets by word of mouth, however safe it might have seemed, could be vulnerable to eavesdropping, in one case at least in the literal sense of the term. In 1478, some Venetians made a hole in the roof of the Doge's Palace in order to discover the latest news from Istanbul, news which was of obvious commercial value. It is no wonder that secrecy within a given group was sometimes maintained by the use of a private language, as in the case of the jargon of professional beggars and thieves.

Occult and alchemical works, as well as heretical or subversive ones, often circulated in manuscript copies. In other cases, what was transcribed was a confidential letter or report, such as a report by an ambassador to the Venetian Senate on his return from a mission abroad. Unofficial copies of these reports were sold openly in Rome in the seventeenth century, and one at least travelled as far as the Bodleian Library in Oxford. Again, in eighteenth-century Paris, police reports sometimes circulated among members of the public. To prevent leaks of this kind, codes and ciphers of various kinds were often used by merchants, by governments and even by scientists.

Governments made considerable use of cipher, and the ciphers, thanks to the aid of leading mathematicians, code-makers and code-breakers, became more and more sophisticated in the early modern period. Private individuals also used ciphers, and the diarist Samuel Pepys was not alone in using foreign languages to conceal some of the activities he recorded from possible readers, including his wife.

Raids on printers suspected of trading in forbidden books were not uncommon, but presses were sometimes set up in private houses and moved around

the country in order to avoid detection. In Elizabethan England, for example, pamphlets attacking the episcopate were originally printed in a country house in Surrey, and later in Northampton and Warwick. The *Lettres Provinciales* (1657), a famous attack on the Jesuits by the polymath Blaise Pascal (1623–62), were printed in secret. Again, a critique of serfdom, censorship and autocracy, the *Journey from Petersburg to Moscow* (1790), was published by the author, Aleksandr Nikolaevich Radishchev (1749–1802), on a private press on his estate in the country. He was immediately imprisoned and later exiled to Siberia.

The authors of such publications usually wrapped themselves in a cloak of anonymity, referring to themselves only by pseudonyms. The attacks on the Elizabethan bishops were signed 'Martin Marprelate': Pascal's attacks on the Jesuits were signed 'Louis de Montalte'. The printers likewise disguised their identities, while the place of publication, if it was mentioned at all, was generally false, often imaginary and sometimes extremely imaginative. As two early seventeenth-century Italian cardinals complained, 'to deceive the Catholics more easily', Protestant propaganda arrived with the names of Catholic cities on the title page, and some printers even imitated the typography of the Catholic printers of Paris, Lyons or Antwerp. A favourite imaginary place of publication was 'Freetown' or its equivalent in other languages (Villefranche, Vrijstadt, Eleutheropolis). Another, for some reason, was Cologne, where for 150 years books were attributed to a non-existent printer, Pierre de Marteau, presumably so-called because he hammered his victims. The printer of the Marprelate pamphlets claimed to work 'overseas, in Europe, within two furlongs of a bouncing priest'. Some late eighteenth-century French pornographic works claimed to be published 'at the press of the odalisques' in Istanbul or even at the Vatican itself.

Another possibility in the early modern period – as for so many East European writers in the age of the Cold War – was actually to print abroad rather than simply claim to do so. A famous seventeenth-century example is that of the antipapal *History of the Council of Trent*, written by a Venetian friar Paolo Sarpi (1552–1623). The book was first published in London, in Italian, in 1619. The manuscript was brought in secret from Venice to London via the British Embassy in instalments described in the correspondence by the code name of 'songs'.

Printed books were also frequently smuggled across frontiers. By the early 1550s there were regular clandestine routes from Switzerland to Venice along which heretical books travelled. Again, in the early seventeenth century, prohibited books, usually unbound, were being smuggled into Spain, the large bibles hidden in bolts of cloth and the small catechisms disguised as packs of playing cards. Books which were critical of King Louis XIV and his court were published in French in Amsterdam, and then smuggled into France.

Finally, it was of course possible to publish in the normal way but to communicate messages on two levels, the manifest and the latent. In the early modern period, Aesop, the ancient Greek writer of fables about animals, often provided a cover, as he did in Poland in the twentieth century under the Communist regime. The 'method of Aesop' could easily be applied to the human world. One of the most famous examples is the *Fables* of Jean de Lafontaine (1621–95). They are now treated as stories for children, but the fact that Lafon-

taine refused to serve Louis XIV, remaining loyal to a patron who had fallen into political disgrace, suggests that the figure of the tyrannical lion, for instance, should be read in a political manner.

Alternatively, a message about a topical subject might be disguised as a history of similar events in the past. For example, the deposition of King Richard II by Henry of Bolingbroke (the future King Henry IV) had considerable political resonance towards the end of the reign of Queen Elizabeth, with the Earl of Essex cast in the role of Henry. No wonder, then, that in 1599, when Sir John Hayward published a history of the *Life and Reign of King Henry IV*, the queen asked Francis Bacon whether there was treason in the book. Again, when the Earl of Essex (1566–1601) rebelled against the queen, his followers gave money to actors to play Shakespeare's *Richard II*. Elizabeth was said to have remarked at the time: 'I am Richard II, know you not that?' Similar allegorical techniques were in use in late seventeenth-century England during the so-called 'Exclusion Crisis' (discussed on p. 77).

This allegorical method is still employed on occasion, for example by Arthur Miller, whose *The Crucible* (1953) presented a critique of the 'witch-hunting' of Communists by US Senator Joe McCarthy (1908–57), in the form of a play about a trial for witchcraft in New England in the seventeenth century.

The Rise of the Market

Printing might be dangerous, but it was also profitable. Some printers (though not all) were mercenaries, working for Catholics and Protestant alike during the wars of religion (see p. 64). Indeed, one important consequence of the invention of printing was the close involvement of entrepreneurs in the process of spreading knowledge. Bestsellers go back to the early days of printing. The *Imitation of Christ*, a devotional work attributed to the fourteenth-century Netherlander Thomas à Kempis (1379–1471) had appeared in no fewer than 99 editions by 1500. The Scriptures, too, sold well at this time, especially the New Testament and the Psalms, although the Catholic Church prohibited vernacular bibles in the later sixteenth century on the grounds that they encouraged heresy. Print runs of books were normally small by later standards, averaging from 500 to 1,000 copies, but as many as three or four million copies of almanacs were printed in seventeenth-century England.

In order to sell more books, printers, whose range of products might involve far more than what is now known as 'literature', published catalogues and engaged in other forms of advertising. In Italy, the first known catalogue of books with prices goes back to 1541. In the sixteenth century, like today, the Frankfurt Book Fair and its equivalent in Leipzig made particular titles known internationally. Pages at the front or back of books advertised other works sold by the same printer or bookseller (later distinctions between printer, publisher and bookseller were not yet drawn in this period).

Advertising in print also developed in the seventeenth century. In London around 1650, a newspaper would carry about six advertisements on the average; 100 years later, it would carry about fifty. Among the goods and services advertised in England at this time were plays, race meetings, quack doctors and

'Holman's Ink Powder', perhaps the first brand name, for a product which was patented in 1688.

News was itself a commodity and was viewed as such at the time, at least by satirists such as Ben Jonson in his play *The Staple of News* (1626), imagining an attempt to monopolize the trade. As the sociologist Colin Campbell has argued, eighteenth-century novels, like television serials today, allowed readers the vicarious enjoyment of expensive consumer goods and also encouraged them to buy, thus acting as midwives in what has been called 'the birth of consumer society' (see below, p. 50).

The rise of the idea of intellectual property was a response both to the spread of printing and the emergence of consumer society. Yet some sense of literary ownership goes back to the fifteenth century, if not before, for there were humanists who accused one another of theft or plagiarism while themselves claiming to practise creative imitation. Thus, the second part of *Don Quixote*, published in 1614, was not written by Miguel Cervantes (1547–1616) but by a certain 'Avellaneda'. This was a slightly unusual form of plagiarism, since it involved stealing a character rather than a text, or stealing someone else's name for one's own work in order to cash in on his reputation. All the same, the original author resented it. In order to drive out the work of his competitor, Cervantes had to produce a second part of his own.

In this way, market forces encouraged the idea of individual authorship, an idea reinforced by new practices such as printing the portrait of the author as a frontispiece to the work, or introducing an edition of someone's collected works by a biography of the author. By 1711, the first issue of *The Spectator* could poke gentle fun at the reader unable to enjoy a book 'till he knows whether the writer of it be a black or a fair man, of a mild or choleric disposition, married or a bachelor'.

During the eighteenth century, legal regulation reinforced the idea of literary or intellectual property. In Britain, for example, an Act was passed in 1709 which granted authors or their assignees the sole right to print their work for 14 years. William Hogarth, who suffered from piracies of his popular series of engravings of *The Harlot's Progress* (1732), campaigned with success for a new copyright Act (1735), which gave graphic artists like himself similar rights to those enjoyed by authors. An earlier 1709 Act, dealing with books, was clarified in the courts in cases such as *Millar* v. *Taylor* (1769) and *Donaldson* v. *Beckett* (1774), by which time the term 'copyright' was in general use. Further changes were made in the nineteenth century, but there was no acceptable international copyright before the Bern Convention of 1887.

For a close-up view of the developing market in the media, an imperfect market, it is illuminating to examine in chronological sequence three of the main centres of the book trade in early modern Europe: sixteenth-century Venice, seventeenth-century Amsterdam and eighteenth-century London.

In the fifteenth century, more books were printed in Venice than in any other city in Europe (about 4,500 editions, equivalent to something like two million copies, or 20 per cent of the European market). The Venetian book industry had a capitalist organization, with a small group in control and the financial backing of merchants whose economic interests ranged much more widely than books.

In the sixteenth century it has been estimated that about 500 printers and publishers produced from 15,000 to 17,500 titles and possibly 18 million copies. The most famous of these printers, Aldo Manuzio (*c.* 1450–1515), made his reputation – and possibly his fortune – by publishing editions of the Greek and Latin classics in a small format which allowed scholars and students to carry them about with ease (a correspondent praised his 'handy' volumes which could even be read when walking). There was cut-throat competition between printers, who regularly ignored one another's privileges and published the same books as their rivals, claiming that their editions were more correct or included new material, even if this was not the case. The large number of printers and publishers in Venice was one of the attractions of the city for men of letters, since it allowed them to make a living independent of patrons, even if it did not make them rich.

A group of these men of letters were nicknamed the *poligrafi* because they wrote so much and on such a wide variety of topics in order to survive. They were what would be known in eighteenth-century English as 'hacks', in other words, writers who were for hire, like hackney carriages. Their works included verse as well as prose and original compositions as well as translations, adaptations and plagiarisms from other writers. A genre in which they specialized was that of works offering practical information, including conduct books, a treatise explaining how to write letters on different topics, and a guide to Venice for foreign visitors which was still being reprinted in the seventeenth century. Some of these writers served particular printers (notably Gabriel Giolito, who published some 850 books in his long career) as editors and proof-readers as well as authors. In a sense, the *poligrafi* were on the frontier between two worlds. They were essentially compilers working in the medieval tradition, recycling the work of others, but, living as they did in the age of print, they were treated as individual authors with their names on the title page. Consequently, they were criticized by their rivals for plagiarism, an accusation from which medieval writers had been free.

The economic and political position of Venice was skilfully exploited by the printers. For example, Venetians, drawing on the skills of different groups of immigrants in the city, printed books in Spanish, in Croat, in demotic Greek, in Old Church Slavonic, in Hebrew, in Arabic, in Armenian. They also looked beyond Europe, as the city of Venice did more generally. Among their specialities were accounts of the discovery of distant new lands. In the sixteenth century, Venice was second only to Paris in publishing books about the Americas, including various editions of the letters of Christopher Columbus (1451–1506) and Hernán Cortés (1485–1547).

The distinctive Venetian contribution to the book trade, associated with the city's tradition of tolerance for other cultures and other religions and the practical live-and-let-live attitude of its merchants, was undermined by the spread of the Counter-Reformation. The Inquisition was established in Venice in 1547, books were burned on the Piazza San Marco and near the Rialto in 1548, a Venetian Index of Prohibited Books was produced in 1549 (15 years before the Index binding on the whole Church), and a ban on printing in Hebrew was issued in 1554. Booksellers began to be interrogated on charges of smuggling heretical or otherwise pernicious books from abroad. Some printers migrated to other cities,

among them Turin, Rome and Naples. Others, such as Gabriel Giolito, shifted their investments towards the publication of devotional books in Italian for a geographically more limited market.

In the seventeenth century the Dutch republic replaced Venice as an island of relative tolerance of religious diversity and also as a major centre and market of information. The export of printed matter in Latin, French, English and German made an important contribution to the prosperity of this new nation. One of the leading printers in the republic, the Elzevir family, followed the example of Aldo Manuzio in publishing editions of the classics in small format. Elzevir also launched what may have been the first series of books ever to have an academic editor, Caspar Barlaeus, who was in charge of a range of compendia of information about the organization and resources of different states of the world, from France to India.

Barlaeus may be described as a Dutch equivalent of the *poligrafi*. Other hack writers included French Calvinist pastors who came to the Dutch Republic after Louis XIV had forced them to choose, in 1685, between conversion to Catholicism or emigration. There were too many pastors for the needs of the French Protestant churches in exile, so some of these well-educated men turned to writing for a living. Pierre Bayle (1647–1706), for example, who had left France for Rotterdam, edited a literary journal, the *News of the Republic of Letters*, which appeared monthly from 1684 onwards, as well as compiling his famous *Historical and Critical Dictionary* (1696).

The centre of Dutch publishing, as of much else in European industry and finance, was the city of Amsterdam. In the early seventeenth century Amsterdam was already Europe's major centre of newspapers, a new literary genre which probably illustrates the commercialization of information better than any other. The papers, which appeared once, twice or three times a week in Latin, French and English as well as in Dutch, included the first newspapers printed in English and French, the *Corrant out of Italy, Germany etc.*, and the *Courant d'Italie*, both of which began publication in 1620. From 1662 onwards, a weekly paper in French, the *Gazette d'Amsterdam*, offered not only information about European affairs but also criticisms of the Catholic Church and of the policies of the French government. By the second half of the seventeenth century Amsterdam had become the most important centre of book production in Europe, as Venice had once been. More than 270 booksellers and printers were active there in the 25 years between 1675 and 1699. A substantial proportion of them were, like the professional writers, Protestant refugees from France.

As in Venice, maps and accounts of voyages to exotic places formed an important part of the printers' repertoire. The most important printing establishment in Amsterdam, that of Joan Blaeu (*c.* 1598–1673) – with nine presses for type and six more for engravings, an enterprise so large that it was one of the sights of the city for foreign visitors – belonged to a firm which specialized in atlases. The Blaeu family advertised in a newspaper in 1634 that they were about to produce a world atlas in four languages: Latin, Dutch, French and German. The two-volume atlas duly appeared in 1635 and contained 207 maps. A few years later, a rival Amsterdam publisher published a still more comprehensive atlas, only to

be overtaken in his turn by the second version of the Blaeu atlas, in six volumes this time, published in 1655.

As in Venice, and once again drawing on the skills of different groups of immigrants, books were printed in Amsterdam in a variety of languages, including Russian, Yiddish, Armenian and Georgian. In 1678 an English visitor to the city found a Dutch printing-house producing bibles in English, who commented that 'you may buy books cheaper at Amsterdam in all languages than at the places where they are first printed'. French books were acquired by German readers through the mediation of Dutch entrepreneurs. Protestant printers produced Latin missals (with 'Cologne' on the title page) to sell in the Catholic world. The printers did not worry too much about infringing the rights of their competitors.

During the eighteenth century the primacy of Amsterdam passed to London. London booksellers, like those of Venice and Amsterdam before them, were already notorious by the late seventeenth century for the theft of their rivals' literary property, a practice known as 'counterfeiting' or as 'piracy' (in the twentieth century the term was to be extended to unofficial radio stations). As a protection against piracy, dealers in books began to form alliances and to share their expenses. Pooling their resources allowed them to finance large and expensive works such as atlases and encyclopaedias, which required considerable investment. Works of this kind were not infrequently published by subscription, often with a printed list of subscribers prefacing the book. In the course of the century, however, booksellers meeting in private devised schemes of sharing costs and risks that enabled them to dispense with subscriptions. A few authors benefited from their booksellers' deals. Thus, Dr Johnson (1709–84), whose hatred of patronage was notorious, received £1,575 in advance for his *Dictionary* from a group of five booksellers, including Thomas Longman and Andrew Millar. Millar gave the philosopher-historian David Hume (1711–76) an advance of £1,400 for the third volume of his *History of Britain*, and William Robertson (1721–93) an advance of £3,400 for his *History of Charles V*. The poet Alexander Pope (1688–1744), who managed his own business affairs with skill, had received a still higher sum, £5,300, for his translation of Homer's *Iliad*. Millar's successors, William Strahan, a printer, and Thomas Cadell, a bookseller, offered £6,000 for the copyright of Captain Cook's discoveries.

We should not be too hasty in idealizing the situation of writers in eighteenth-century London. A group of them, known collectively as 'Grub Street' after the place in London where some of them lived, were struggling to make ends meet, like earlier groups in Amsterdam and Venice. As in Amsterdam, this group included a number of French Protestant émigrés who were particularly active in journalism. Even for the more successful, the new freedom had its price. Johnson would probably have preferred to write his own books rather than compile a dictionary, and Pope to work on his own poems rather than translate Homer's. Hume wrote history because it sold better than philosophy, and if he were able to return to earth and consult the catalogue of the British Library, it is unlikely that he would be pleased to find himself listed as 'David Hume, historian'. All the same, some eighteenth-century men of letters enjoyed a greater degree of

independence than their sixteenth-century predecessors, the *poligrafi*, had done.

The wider context for these developments in publishing is what some historians came to call 'the birth of a consumer society' in the eighteenth century, a shift particularly visible in England but extending to other parts of Europe and even beyond. English examples of the commercialization of leisure at this period included horse-racing at Newmarket, concerts in London (from the 1670s onwards) and some provincial cities, operas at the Royal Academy of Music (founded in 1718) and its rivals, exhibitions of paintings at the Royal Academy of Art (founded in 1768), lectures on science in coffee-houses, and balls and masquerades in newly constructed public assembly rooms in London, Bath and elsewhere. Like the plays presented in the Globe and other public theatres from the late sixteenth century onwards, these events were open to anyone who could afford the price of a ticket.

The History of Reading

The commercialization of leisure included reading. In considering the practice of reading books and newspapers, or indeed viewing prints, we move from supply to demand. At first sight, the idea of the history of reading may appear odd, since reading is an activity most of us take for granted. In what sense can it be said to change over time? And suppose that it did so, given that the movement of the eye produces no traces on the page, how can historians possibly say anything reliable about the changes? The last generation of historians have been addressing themselves to these problems. Arguing from the evidence of the physical format of books, from marginal notes written in books and from descriptions or pictures of readers, they have concluded that styles of reading did indeed alter between 1500 and 1800.

Five kinds of reading deserve separate attention here: critical reading, dangerous reading, creative reading, extensive reading and private reading.

1. Traditional accounts of the effects of print, as we have seen (p. 18), emphasize the rise of critical reading, thanks to increasing opportunities for comparing the diverse opinions propounded in different books on the same subject. The change in habits must not be exaggerated, since reading was not always critical. There is ample evidence of respect or even reverence for books in early modern times. Satirists made fun of people who believed everything they saw in print. The Bible, not yet subjected to critical scrutiny by scholars, with the exception of a few unorthodox individuals such as the Jewish philosopher Baruch Spinoza (1632–77), was a particular object of reverence. San Carlo Borromeo, archbishop of Milan, was said to read Scripture on his knees. The Bible was sometimes used as a form of medicine and placed under the pillow of the sufferer. Its pages might be opened at random and the passages coming into view treated as heavenly guidance directed towards the problems of the reader.

2. The dangers of private reading were frequently discussed. Whether or not it acted as a tranquillizer (see p. 18), contemporaries sometimes viewed the activity as dangerous, especially when practised by subordinate groups such as women and by 'the common people'. Parallels with twentieth-century debates about 'mass culture' and the dangers of television are clear enough, and they were pointed out more than a generation ago by the sociologist Leo Lowenthal (1900–93). Today, the rise of the Internet has initiated another debate of this kind.

If we define the issues more broadly, these debates may be placed in a longer perspective still. The decline after 1520 of images of the Blessed Virgin reading, images which had been relatively common in the late Middle Ages, appears to have been an early response to what might be called the demonization of reading by the Catholic Church. In late sixteenth-century Venice, for instance, a silk-worker was denounced to the Inquisition because 'he reads all the time' and a swordsmith because he 'stays up all night reading'. In similar fashion, both then and later, secular authorities considered unsupervised reading to be subversive. The reading of newspapers in particular was seen as encouraging ordinary people to criticize the government.

The dangers of reading fiction, especially for women, were regularly discussed by male writers from the early sixteenth century onwards. As in the case of the theatre, novels were feared for their power to arouse dangerous emotions such as love. Some men thought that women should not learn to read at all in case they received love-letters, although, as we have already seen (p. 28), illiteracy was not an impregnable defence. Others thought that women might be permitted to read a little, but only the Bible or devotional books. A few brave people argued that upper-class women could or even should read the classics.

Several sources suggest that, in practice, more kinds of women read more kinds of book than the critics allowed. In Spain, for instance, St Teresa of Ávila (1512–82) described her youthful enthusiasm for romances of chivalry. Some of the evidence comes not from autobiographies but from portraits, in which women are sometimes represented with books of poetry in their hands. The evidence of fiction points in the same direction. The heroine of an Italian story by the priest Matteo Bandello (*c.* 1485–1561) is described as reading Boccaccio's *Decameron* and Ariosto's *Orlando Furioso* in bed. In the France of Louis XIV, the most important novelists were women, notably Madame de Lafayette (1634–93), writing primarily for other women. In Britain, the number of female writers of fiction grew in the eighteenth century.

Opportunities for women to read increased in the eighteenth century when novels and some historical writings, including histories of women published in Britain and Germany, were deliberately aimed at the female market. A commentator in 1726 described books as 'closet companions', and a number of eighteenth-century paintings of women show them with books in their hands (see Figure 8). By this time some women were also reading newspapers. A 23-year-old French girl, working as a cook in 1791, claimed to read four newspapers regularly.

3. The extent of creative reading requires a different kind of examination. The meaning of texts has been a major topic of debate within literary studies in the 1990s. From a historian's perspective, it has long been clear that texts can and

Fig. 8 Marguerite Gérard and Jean-Honoré Fragonard, *The Reader.*

have often been read in ways quite contrary to the author's intentions. The *Utopia* of Thomas More (1478–1535), for instance, has been treated not only as a satire on the England of his day, but also as a blueprint for an ideal society, a 'utopia' in the modern sense of the term. *The Courtier*, by Baldassare Castiglione (1478–1529), an open dialogue in which appropriate behaviour in different social situations is debated inconclusively, was presented by sixteenth-century printers and treated by some readers (as we know from their marginal annotations) as an unproblematic guide to good conduct. The ironies of Daniel Defoe (1660–

1731) and Jonathan Swift (1667–1745) escaped some literal-minded readers, who believed that Defoe's *Shortest Way with the Dissenters* was really recommending the persecution of Nonconformists and that Swift's *Modest Proposal* was arguing in favour of cannibalism.

The sixteenth-century Italian miller Menocchio, rescued from obscurity by the Italian historian Carlo Ginzburg, offers a fascinating example of unorthodox reading in more than one sense of that term. Menocchio, interrogated by the Inquisition on a heresy charge, was asked about the books he had read, which included the Bible, Boccaccio's *Decameron*, the imaginary *Travels* of a certain Sir John Mandeville (a well-known book in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries), and possibly the Koran as well. What Menocchio read was less surprising to the inquisitors than the way he read it, the interpretations he gave the texts. From Boccaccio's story of the three rings, for example, he derived the conclusion that if he had been born a Muslim, he should have remained one.

4. Menocchio offers a good example of an intensive reader, rereading a few texts and brooding over them, a style of reading apparently as typical of the first centuries of print as it was of the manuscript age which had preceded it. However, it has been argued that the later eighteenth century witnessed a 'reading revolution' in the sense of a shift towards the practices of skimming, browsing and chapter-hopping in the course of consulting books for information on a particular topic. In the period before 1750, there were fewer books, and print was often treated as sacred. The period after 1750, on the other hand, has been described as a period of extensive reading, marked by the proliferation and the consequent desacralization of books.

The shift must not be exaggerated, because it is perfectly possible to practise the intensive and extensive styles alternately according to need. On one side, there is evidence of reading for reference in the late Middle Ages, especially in academic circles. On the other, there are the examples of the absorbed readers of the later eighteenth century, buried in one of the tear-jerking romances popular at that time, from the *New Héloise* of Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712–78) to *The Sorrows of Werther* by Johann Wolfgang von Goethe (1749–1832). What is likely to have occurred is a shift in the relative importance of the two styles of reading, linked to the trend towards privatization. The format of books changed in ways which facilitated skimming or browsing. Texts were increasingly divided into chapters and, within chapters, into paragraphs. Printed notes in the margin summarized the message of each section. Detailed tables of contents and indexes organized in alphabetical order helped hurried readers to find particular items of information.

5. The privatization of reading has often been viewed as part of the rise of individualism and also of empathy or 'psychic mobility', as the media sociologist Daniel Lerner called it in his book on *The Passing of Traditional Society* (1958). The basic idea behind the phrases is well captured in images, relatively common from the eighteenth century onwards, of a man or woman alone, reading a book, sitting or sprawled on the floor and oblivious to the outer world. The long-term trend towards 'privatization' from the fourteenth century to the

twentieth is reflected in evidence from the format of books. Fifteenth-century books were often folios in large print which needed to be read on stands or lecterns. In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, small books became popular, the octavo, for instance, or the still smaller 12-mo or 16-mo format, which the famous Venetian printer Aldo Manuzio used for his editions of the classics.

In his brief life of Thomas Hobbes (1588–1679), the biographer John Aubrey (1626–97) told the story that when the philosopher was employed as a page to the earl of Devonshire, he bought himself 'books of an Amsterdam print that he might carry in his pocket (particularly Caesar's *Commentaries*) which he did read in the lobby or anti-chamber, whilst his Lord was making his visits'. This passage gives us the reader's view of the uses of the Elzevir classics in small format which were discussed above (p. 48). Books of poetry in particular were often printed in this format, which encouraged reading in bed, especially in the eighteenth century, when bedrooms in upper- or middle-class houses were gradually becoming private places.

Nevertheless, to view the history of reading in terms of a transition from public to private is as much of an oversimplification as viewing it in terms of a simple shift from the intensive to the extensive mode. Silent reading had sometimes been practised in the Middle Ages. Conversely, reading aloud in public persisted in the early modern period, as it was to do in working-class circles in the nineteenth century. The German Reformation offers some vivid examples of reading as a public activity (see p. 68).

It may be possible to make a distinction between reading habits according to social class – the middle classes tended to read privately, while the working classes listened publicly. It is also necessary to make distinctions by situation. For example, the medieval practice of reading aloud at meals, whether in monastic refectories or royal courts, persisted into the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Reading aloud at home in the family circle persisted into the nineteenth century, at least as an ideal, as many images attest. It is likely that the texts of the Bibliothèque Bleue, discussed above (p. 18), which circulated in regions where literacy rates were low, were read aloud during the *veillées*, occasions when neighbours met to spend the evening working and listening. The rise of newspapers also encouraged reading aloud at breakfast or at work, while the fact that so many people were reading the same news at more or less the same time helped to create a community of readers.

Instruction and Entertainment

The uses of reading in early modern Europe were as varied as they are today, although these uses were not described in quite the same way then as now. The main categories were information and moral instruction, and it was only very slowly that a third kind of book, oriented solely towards entertainment, was admitted to be a legitimate use of readers' time.

The increasing importance, between 1450 and 1800, of reading to acquire information is revealed by the proliferation of what we call 'reference books' of various kinds – dictionaries, encyclopaedias, chronological tables, gazetteers and a range of 'how-to-do-it' books on subjects as varied as agriculture, good

manners, cooking and calligraphy. The importance of moral instruction is revealed by the number of sermons which appeared in print as well as by treatises on the virtues requisite for particular roles in society (noble, wife, tradesman and so on).

On the other hand, the history of the words 'entertainment' and 'entertaining' tells us something about the obstacles to the emergence of this category of book or pamphlet. In the early seventeenth century, entertainment was associated with the hospitality shown to visitors. It was only around 1650 that the term acquired the additional meaning of something interesting or amusing, and only in the early eighteenth century that performances, such as plays, could be described as 'entertainments'. (For the later history of the media as entertainment, see chapter 6.)

Books that we might describe as entertaining, from jest-books to romances, were already in print as early as the fifteenth century, but they were often provided with a moralizing framework or packaging, presumably in order to weaken the resistance to these kinds of text on the part of clerics, fathers of families and other 'gatekeepers'. Pamphlets and single-sheet broadsides retailing the exploits of criminals (a new sixteenth-century genre which may have been designed to appeal to a new group of readers) were presented in a similar fashion, emphasizing the punishment and if possible the 'hearty repentance' of the criminal.

However, this moralizing approach was undercut by a rhetoric of sensationalism, with title pages, like modern headlines, referring to 'terrible', 'wonderful' or 'dreadful' events, 'bloody' atrocities, 'strange and inhuman murders', and so on. Over the long term, and especially in the eighteenth century, the literature of entertainment broke out of its moralizing framework, to become part of the commercialization of leisure, alongside concerts, horse races and circuses.

The Print Revolution Revisited

After this survey of the early modern media it may be illuminating to return to the discussion of the print revolution. There is an obvious parallel between the controversy over the logic of writing and that regarding the logic of print, as there is between debates over the consequences of printing and the consequences of literacy, down to such details as the rise of the fixed text and the problems of trusting a new medium. Critics of the revolution thesis often argue that print is not an agent, but a technology employed by individuals or groups for different purposes in different locales. For this reason, they recommend the study of the uses of print in different social or cultural contexts. The defenders of the revolution thesis, on the other hand, see print, like writing, as an aid to decontextualization. We seem to have returned to the conflict between an autonomous model and a contextual model, a problem discussed above (p. 11). Should we speak of print culture in the singular, or of cultures of print in the plural?

It is not necessary, of course, to take up an extreme position in this controversy. It is more rewarding to ask what insights each group of scholars has to offer, and to consider whether, by making the appropriate distinctions and qualifications, it may be possible to combine them. One could begin by rejecting the stronger formulations on both sides, both the determinism implicit in the revo-

lutionary position and the voluntarism of the contextualists. It is probably more useful to speak, as Innis did (see pp. 2, 5), of a built-in bias to be found in each medium of communication. From the geographical point of view, it is prudent to think in terms of similar effects of print in different places, rather than effects which were either identical everywhere or completely different in each locale. From the chronological point of view, it is helpful to distinguish between the immediate and the long-term consequences of the introduction of print. The contextualists deal more satisfactorily with the short term, with the intentions, tactics and strategies of individuals. The revolutionaries, on the other hand, grapple more closely with the long-term and with the unintended consequences of change.

In early modern Europe, as in other places and periods, cultural change was often additive rather than substitutive, especially in the early stages of innovation. As has been shown, the old media of oral and manuscript communication coexisted and interacted with the new medium of print, just as print, now an old medium, coexists with television and the Internet in the early twenty-first century.

At this point we may return to the arguments about permanence and fixity discussed earlier (p. 16), adding the necessary qualifications. It is true that writing encouraged the fixing of texts long before print was known. It is true that many printed works were treated by contemporaries as ephemeral. Divergences between copies of early printed books are quite common, because proofs were corrected in the workshop during the process of production. Print, especially in the hands of 'pirates' (see p. 49), often put inaccurate texts into circulation. For these reasons, scholars have recently been placing increasing emphasis on the instability of print. However, these qualifications do not overturn the moderate argument that the press favoured the relative fixity of texts.

A similar answer may be given to the larger question of the stability of knowledge. Print facilitated the accumulation of knowledge by making discoveries more widely known as well as by making it more difficult for information to be lost. On the other hand, as was pointed out above (p. 18), print destabilized knowledge, or what had been thought to be knowledge, by making readers more conscious of the existence of conflicting stories and interpretations. As in the case of texts, therefore, the fixity of knowledge encouraged by print was relative rather than absolute. The changes which took place, however important, were changes in degree rather than in kind.

One of these changes was a relatively new concept of writing which we now call 'literature', together with the concept of an 'author', linked to the idea of a correct or authorized version of a 'text'. As it was remarked earlier, oral culture is fluid, and oral creation a cooperative enterprise. In manuscript culture, there was already a tendency to fixity, but this was countered by the inaccuracy and also, as we have seen (p. 37), by the creativity of scribes. What we call plagiarism, like the intellectual property it threatens (see p. 46), is essentially a product of the print revolution.

Another important consequence of the invention of printing was to involve entrepreneurs more closely in the process of spreading knowledge. The use of

the new medium encouraged increasing awareness of the importance of publicity, whether economic ('advertising', see pp. 45–6), or political (what we call 'propaganda', a term which came into use at the end of the eighteenth century). The reputation of Louis XIV, for example, his 'glory' as he called it, owed more than a little to print. Several hundred engraved portraits of the king were put into circulation during his reign.

Another form of mechanical reproduction was the bronze medal. Following classical precedents, the medal was revived in fifteenth-century Italy and was soon adopted by rulers as a means of spreading a favourable image of themselves and their policies. The number of copies struck was relatively low, perhaps no more than 100, but these copies would be distributed to foreign ambassadors or foreign heads of state in order to make an impression where it mattered most. Persuasion by medals became increasingly important in the seventeenth century. Earlier rulers had contented themselves with 30 or 40 different medals, but 300-odd medals were struck to commemorate the major events of the reign of Louis XIV. They could be viewed in cabinets, but the volumes which displayed engravings of the medals together with explanatory and glorificatory comments reached a much wider public. Official poets sang the praises of Louis – and other monarchs of his day – in print, and official historians published accounts of his marvellous deeds for contemporaries and posterity alike. The major court festivals, expensive but ephemeral events, were fixed in the memory by printed and illustrated descriptions.

Among the events that were captured in this way were some which never happened. According to the American historian Daniel Boorstin, in *The Image* (1962), the creation of 'pseudo-events' was the result of what he calls the 'Graphic Revolution' of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, the age of photography and television. Yet examples of such events are not difficult to find in the age of woodcuts and engravings. The last dying speeches of criminals who were executed at Newgate in London in the eighteenth century, complete with illustrations, were sold on the day of the execution, and, in cases in which the criminal was reprieved at the last moment, he was in a position to read about his own death. An engraving of Louis XIV being shown around the Royal Academy of Sciences in Paris was published in 1671 at a time when the king had not yet visited the newly founded academy.

Reliable or unreliable, printed matter became an increasingly important part of everyday life. This pervasiveness deserves to be emphasized. The spread of books, pamphlets and journals was only part of a story which also included the rise of two genres normally associated only with the nineteenth and twentieth centuries – the poster and the official form. Official notices multiplied on street corners and on church doors. In Florence in 1558, for example, the new Index of Prohibited Books was displayed on the church doors of the city. In London from c. 1660 onwards, plays currently being performed were advertised on placards posted in the street. A Swiss visitor to London in 1782 was struck by the prevalence of shop names rather than signs. Street names were increasingly written on walls. For the inhabitants of Europe's major cities, illiteracy was becoming more and more of a disadvantage. A Western visitor to Tokyo today may be in a good position to appreciate the anxiety of someone who is aware

that many messages are displayed in the street (possibly important ones), but is completely unable to decode them.

As for printed forms, they were already being used in the early modern period for leases, tax declarations, receipts and censuses. In sixteenth-century Venice, for instance, all the census-takers had to do was to fill in the appropriate boxes, classifying households as nobles, citizens or artisans, and counting the number of servants and gondolas. The Church as well as the state made use of forms. Parish priests filled in forms in order to certify that female orphans who were about to marry were good Catholics. By the seventeenth century, cardinals were using printed forms in Conclave to vote for a new pope, with blank spaces in which they wrote, in Latin, both their own name and the name of the candidate they were supporting.

It was thanks, above all, to the daily newspaper, a piece of ephemera that was to become increasingly valuable for social historians, that print became part of daily life in the eighteenth century, at least in some parts of Europe (when Goethe visited the city of Caltanissetta in Sicily in 1787, he discovered that the inhabitants had not yet heard of the death of Frederick the Great the year before). In England alone, it has been estimated that 15 million newspapers were sold during the year 1792. And the daily or weekly or bi-weekly paper was supplemented by monthly or quarterly publications, by what came to be called 'periodicals' and 'magazines'. There were also scholarly journals like *The Transactions of the Royal Society of London* (1665–) or the *News of the Republic of Letters* (1684–), which spread information about new discoveries, the deaths of scholars and, not least, about new books. The book review was an invention of the late seventeenth century. In this way, one form of print advertised and reinforced another.

Other journals, like the French periodical the *Mercure Galant*, founded in 1672, were aimed at a less scholarly public. Written (mainly, at least) by a man, the playwright Jean Donneau de Visé (1638–1710), but aimed at female readers in particular, the journal, which was illustrated, took the form of a letter written by a lady in Paris to a lady in the country. The letter naturally gave news of the court and the city, recent plays and the latest fashions in clothes and interior decoration, but *Mercure Galant* also carried short stories, mostly concerned with love. Readers were invited to send in verses and solve puzzles, and the names and addresses of those who succeeded were printed in the journal along with the winners of poetry-writing competitions. The *Mercure Galant* also included accounts, generally flattering, of the actions of Louis XIV and the victories won by his armies, a form of propaganda for which the editor received a substantial pension from the government.

By contrast, the English periodical *The Spectator*, which began publication in 1711, two years after *The Tatler*, prided itself on its independence. The point of the journal's title was to emphasize its detachment from party politics and the desire of the editors to watch the fray rather than to join it. Its declared aim was to bring philosophy out of academic institutions 'to dwell in clubs and assemblies, at tea-tables and in coffee-houses'. Its coverage ranged from deep moral and aesthetic questions to the latest fashion in gloves. Like Donneau de Visé, its editors (Joseph Addison and Richard Steele, hiding behind the mask of 'Mr

Spectator' and the 'Spectator Club') encouraged their readers to participate in the journal, placing an advertisement in the first issue advising 'those who have a mind to correspond with me' to direct their letters to the printer. Many people did so, and some letters were published. In similar fashion, a few years before Addison and Steele, the London bookseller John Dunton (1659–1733) had founded a journal, *The Athenian Mercury*, 'resolving all the most nice [precise] and curious questions proposed by the ingenious'. In its six-year existence, the journal offered answers to about 6,000 questions from its readers. The idea of an interactive medium, so often discussed today, clearly has its roots in the past. Dunton was a genuine pioneer.

The success of the Addison–Steele formula may be measured partly by the number of collected editions of *The Spectator* which continued to appear in book form for the rest of the century, partly by its translation into foreign languages, and, above all, by the many 'moral weeklies' which imitated its style and approach, in England, France, Holland, Germany, Italy, Spain and elsewhere.

The effects of the rise of newspapers and other journals have been discussed from that day to this. From the start they had their critics, some complaining that they were bringing into the open what should have been kept secret, others accusing them of triviality. Yet they had their admirers too. Thus the Milanese journal, *Il Caffè* claimed that they broadened the mind and more exactly that they turned Romans and Florentines into Europeans. The rise of new kinds of reference book such as the 'newspaper dictionary' (*Zeitungslexikon*) or the 'gazetteer' (originally a dictionary of the names of places mentioned in gazettes) suggests that such papers widened their readers' horizons, not least by making people conscious of what they did not know.

Two concrete examples of the way in which they may have helped to shape the attitudes of their readers concern suicide and scepticism. In *Sleepless Souls* (1990), Michael MacDonald and Terence Murphy argued that 'the style and tone of newspaper stories about suicides promoted an increasingly secular and sympathetic attitude towards self-killing' in eighteenth-century England. The impression was being created through the frequency of the reports that suicide was a commonplace event. Suicide notes were printed in the papers, allowing readers to see the event from the actor's point of view, and these printed letters in turn influenced the style of the notes left by later suicides.

Newspapers may be said to have encouraged scepticism, too. The discrepancies between reports of the same events in different newspapers, which offer a more extreme case of the discrepancies between books noted by Eisenstein (see p. 18), generated a distrust of print. Even if people read only one paper, they could hardly fail to be impressed by the regularity with which later reports of an event contradicted the statements made in earlier issues. By the late seventeenth century, discussions of the trustworthiness of historical writing commonly cite the gazettes as a paradigm case of unreliable accounts of events. For those who had participated in them – or simply witnessed them – the accounts of these events printed in the papers often seemed blatantly untrue, at least in detail.

Those were the negative consequences. More generally, newspapers contributed to the rise of public opinion, a term which is first recorded in French around 1750, in English in 1781 and in German in 1793. This development has been

redefined in the last generation as the rise of the 'public sphere', thanks to an influential book by Jürgen Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*, first published in 1962. To be more exact, the phrase has spread thanks to the translation of Habermas's term *Öffentlichkeit* (literally, 'publicity' in the general sense of 'making public') into a more explicitly spatial phrase, a transformation which itself tells us something about the process of communication between cultures.

As in the case of Eisenstein on the print revolution, what Habermas has given us is not so much a new argument as the reformulation of a traditional one. Instead of speaking about public opinion, which may seem to assume consensus, he speaks about an arena in which debate took place and offers an argument about argument. Habermas claims that the eighteenth century (a long eighteenth century beginning in the 1690s) was a crucial period in the rise of rational and critical argument, presented within a liberal bourgeois 'public sphere' which – at least in principle – was open to everyone's participation. Habermas's study is especially important for its view of the media as a system (including newspapers, coffee-houses, clubs and salons) in which the different elements worked together: he emphasizes the structural transformation of this sphere in the later eighteenth century in England and France, its 'non-instrumentality' (in other words, its freedom from manipulation), and its contribution to the rise of rational and critical attitudes to what would be known – after the French Revolution – as the 'old regime'.

The views of Habermas on public debate have themselves led to a public debate, in which he has been criticized for offering a 'utopian' account of that century, for failing to notice the manipulation, even at that time, of the public by the media, for placing too little stress on people who were in practice excluded from the discussion (ordinary men and women) and for placing too much stress on what he calls the 'model case' of Britain in the late eighteenth century at the expense of other places and periods. It has also been argued that there was more than one public sphere in early modern Europe, including that of the royal courts, where political information was available in abundance and avidly discussed. Rulers such as Louis XIV (as we have seen earlier in this chapter) were well aware of the need to have themselves presented in a favourable light to this court public via a wide range of media from poems and plays to paintings, engravings, tapestries and medals.

One purpose of the next chapter will be to test the ideas of Habermas by examining in more detail a number of public discussions of religion and politics in Europe from the Renaissance and Reformation to the French Revolution. Twentieth-century developments, beginning with radio and television and the growth of advertising, totally change the context of the Habermas thesis, as he himself has clearly recognized. These developments are discussed in chapters 3, 4 and 5 of this book. Chapter 6 returns to instruction (education) and entertainment, which, along with information, came to constitute a media trinity.

3 The Media and the Public Sphere in Early Modern Europe

This chapter offers a narrative of change in the media, analysing the sequence of communicated events from the 1450s to the 1790s, and focusing on events or clusters of events to which labels have been attached – the Reformation, the Wars of Religion, the English Civil War, the Glorious Revolution of 1688 and the French Revolution of 1789. It concentrates on a single theme, introduced at the end of chapter 2: the rise of the public sphere, and also of what has come to be called political culture – the information, attitudes and values shared in particular European societies or in particular social groups within a society. We will examine how the different media contributed to these events, and how the events themselves contributed to the evolution and modification of the media system.

A recent study of early newsbooks, Joad Raymond's *The Invention of the Newspaper* (1996), warned readers against the traditional linear account 'of an expansion of political franchise being reflected in increasingly wide access to news; of the breakdown of censorship and the evolution of political liberty; in short, of the movement from an ancient regime to a democratic one'. By contrast, the story to be told in these pages might be described as a zigzag one, moving from region to region and noting particular moments in which access to information became narrower rather than wider. All the same, certain long-term changes are visible between the 1520s and the 1790s.

As in the case of the print revolution, there is no single landmark date at which to start this story, no clean break with what had gone before. Before the Reformation, in the Italian city-states, especially Florence in the thirteenth, fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, constant reference was made to 'the people' (*il popolo*, the members of trade and craft guilds). A relatively high proportion of the population participated in Florentine political life, 4,000–5,000 adult males in a city of fewer than 100,000 people. Important political offices were filled by drawing names out of a bag and might be held for as little as two months. Florentine political culture, like that of classical Athens (see p. 6), was essentially oral and visual. The squares of the city, especially Piazza della Signoria where the town hall stood, framed a kind of public sphere in which speeches were given and politics discussed. Fluent speech was highly appreciated in this culture because it was crucial to what the Italians of the time called the *vita civile*, the politically active life of a citizen.

Urban chroniclers sometimes recorded the political posters displayed and the graffiti written on the walls, and the public relations of the city were conducted not only orally, by sending ambassadors to other states, but also in writing. The Florentine chancery, in which official letters were written in the name of the