

THE  
STATIONERS'  
COMPANY  
AND THE  
PRINTERS  
OF LONDON  
1501–1557



PETER W. M. BLAYNEY



## THE STATIONERS' COMPANY AND THE PRINTERS OF LONDON, 1501–1557

This major, revisionist reference work explains for the first time how the Stationers' Company acquired both a charter and a nationwide monopoly of printing. In the most detailed and comprehensive investigation of the London book trade in any period, Peter W. M. Blayney systematically documents the story from 1501, when printing first established permanent roots inside the City boundaries, until the Stationers' Company was incorporated by royal charter in 1557. Having exhaustively re-examined original sources and scoured numerous archives unexplored by others in the field, Blayney radically revises accepted beliefs about such matters as the scale of native production versus importation, privileges and patents, and the regulation of printing by the Church, Crown, and City. His persistent focus on individuals – most notably the families, rivals, and successors of Richard Pynson, John Rastell, and Robert Redman – keeps this study firmly grounded in the vivid lives and careers of early Tudor Londoners.

PETER W. M. BLAYNEY is an independent scholar widely considered to be the leading expert on the book trade in Tudor and early Stuart London. His publications include *The Texts of King Lear and their Origins* (1982), which reconstructed the printing of the First Quarto in unprecedented detail, and his ground-breaking monograph, *The Bookshops in Paul's Cross Churchyard* (1990), which pioneered the field of book-trade topography. His controversial article on 'The Publication of Playbooks', which demonstrated that Victorian literary scholars were mistaken in believing Tudor and Stuart play-quartos to have been among the bestselling books of their day, won the Sohmer-Hall Prize for 1997. He has been awarded fellowships by Trinity College, Cambridge, the National Endowment for the Humanities, the Folger Shakespeare Library, the Guggenheim Foundation, and the Bibliographical Society.



THE STATIONERS'  
COMPANY AND THE  
PRINTERS OF LONDON,

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VOLUME I

Chapters 1–8 (1501–1546)

PETER W. M. BLAYNEY



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*TO THE MEMORY OF  
KATHARINE F. ('KITZI') PANTZER  
FRIEND, MENTOR, AND ROLE MODEL*

*She always spelled my surname correctly  
and put my initials in the right order.*

*Go and do thou likewise.*



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## *Preface*

Of all negative book-reviews, the least justifiable are those that castigate books for not being entirely different books. It is reasonable to criticize a book for reaching what the reviewer believes are erroneous conclusions, but seldom appropriate to condemn it for being about the wrong subject, focusing on the wrong aspect of the right subject, or having the wrong date-range. The only books that deserve to be so treated are those whose titles promise more than their contents deliver. To prevent anyone from beginning this book with false expectations, therefore, I should like to explain both what it is and what it is not.

The title precisely defines my subject: the Stationers' Company of London and the master printers who worked in that city in 1501–57. What stationers and companies were will be explained in [Chapter 1](#), but for now let it suffice that in 1501 the Stationers' Company was a trade organization and that the majority of its members were in the book trade, principally as booksellers and binders. This book is partly about the Company *as* a company – but it is also about the individual men and women who belonged to it: about what can be learned about their lives, as well as their work. It is also about the early printers of London (fewer than a third of whom were Stationers) and how the Company came to be granted a monopoly of their craft.

If my own opinion counts, this is not a work of bibliography. Three decades ago I might have called it an essay in historical bibliography, but no longer. It was then still acceptable to define *bibliography* as the study of books as material objects without regard to their contents. The word had, of course, been twisted out of shape by W. W. Greg, who suggested in 1912 that textual criticism ought to be called 'critical bibliography'.<sup>1</sup> Twenty years later he completed the bait-and-switch by retiring the weasel-word 'critical', and claiming that 'bibliography – or, if you will, critical bibliography, that essence of the subject that alone justifies its claim to rank as a serious science – is in fact the same as textual criticism'.<sup>2</sup> I have

never fully understood how Greg convinced himself and others that textual criticism (a study of the contents of books) could possibly be the *essence* of the study of books without regard to their contents. But despite his word-games the earlier definition remained an acceptable alternative for several decades, and until 1985 those actually studying books as material objects were still allowed to shelter their eccentricity under the edge of bibliography's big new textual umbrella.<sup>A</sup>

But in his 1985 Panizzi lectures, D. F. McKenzie influentially insisted that despite etymology, bibliography was not really the study of books at all. It was (or should be) the study of 'texts as recorded forms, and the processes of their transmission, including their production and reception', and ought therefore 'to include all forms of texts, not merely books'.<sup>3</sup> For McKenzie, then, bibliography included not only textual criticism but also the study of authorship and reading; of the making, recording, and hearing of music; of the scripting, shooting, and viewing of films; of the carving of epitaphs, the sending and receiving of e-mail, and so on ad infinitum. 'In short,' as Trevor Howard-Hill acerbically put it, 'all knowledge is one and its name is bibliography'.<sup>4</sup> Given the reduced role of books in McKenzie's expanded universe I find it odd that he wanted to use a word beginning with *biblio-* at all, but instead of coining a new term such as *textology* he offered yet another definition of the old one: 'the study of the sociology of texts'.<sup>B</sup> Had he said 'textual transmission' instead of 'texts' I might have fewer reservations. But since texts are neither sentient nor social they can have no sociology, and to my mind 'the sociology of texts' is as intrinsically meaningless as 'the embryology of fire-extinguishers' or 'the geology of custard'.

The word *bibliography* has been stretched so far beyond all useful limits, and has been said to include such a confusing variety of barely related meanings, that it has lost its ability to mean anything very specific at all. As an answer to the question, 'What do you study?', it has become as nebulously uncommunicative as 'Humanity', 'Life', or 'Thought'. Even more regrettably, the study of books without regard to their contents no longer has a name of its own. I do not dispute the right of McKenzie and

<sup>A</sup> Lorene Pouncey suggests that the original definition was 'a fallacy because the intent of the producer of printed books is not now, nor ever has been, the production of a material object. The intent of the producer of printed books is the publication of texts' ('The Fallacy of the Ideal Copy', 112). But that claim confuses the publisher (intent on publishing texts) with the printer (intent on manufacturing the material books to the specifications set by the person paying for them). Moreover, any book that *is* a material object can be studied as one.

<sup>B</sup> McKenzie, *Bibliography and the Sociology of Texts*, 5. McKenzie should probably not be blamed for the tendency of his followers to omit 'the study of' from this definition.

his disciples to label their studies by whatever words they choose.<sup>A</sup> But I too have that right – and if bibliography is the study of the sociology of texts then I am not now, and have never been, a bibliographer.

This book is not about texts: it is about printed books, and the people who manufactured, distributed, and retailed them in London between 1 January 1501 and 4 May 1557. I have found, both in archives and in the books themselves, more than a little neglected evidence that challenges accepted conclusions about the evolution of press-control and about the proprietary rights that would one day be transmuted (two centuries after the close of this study) into what we now call ‘copyright’. I have also found it all too easy, all too often, to recognize familiar claims and assumptions as either groundless or demonstrably false. Parts of this book may therefore be of interest or use to scholars in other fields – perhaps even textual and literary studies, where both inventors and consumers of book-trade fallacies have flourished. Any such usefulness, however, is merely a by-product. I flatly reject Greg’s view that what used to be called bibliography ‘ranks as a serious study just in so far, and only in so far, as it relates to the essential function of books, namely the transmission of literary documents’.<sup>5</sup> The study of books and the book trade has no need to justify itself by pretending to serve only the allegedly higher purpose of furthering someone else’s interests. It would be considered foolish to suggest that the only acceptable reason for studying the texts of *Hamlet* is to shed light on the life and career of the Stationer Nicholas Ling. To suggest the reverse is no less so.

If I need to define this book by discipline I consider it a work of history, and in particular, the history of the book trade. It does not, however, belong to the genre that translates from French as ‘the history of the book’, and I have made no attempt to consider the social or intellectual impact on English culture of either ‘the book’ or the publication of particular books. I am not qualified to pronounce on such matters, and contentedly leave them to those who are.<sup>B</sup>

The geographical and chronological limits are deliberately chosen. My focus is London – neither England as a whole nor any anachronistic abstraction such as ‘Britain’ or ‘Europe’. A study of London’s printers necessarily includes a consideration of their colleagues and rivals who printed outside the City in Middlesex and Surrey. London’s book-traders were sometimes affected by (or involved in) the activities of printers and

<sup>A</sup> But do musicologists or filmographers typically show either gratitude or delight when accused of bibliography?

<sup>B</sup> The only sentence in this book in which the words *print* and *culture* both appear is this one.

publishers elsewhere in England. I have therefore not entirely ignored the provinces, although most of my archival research has been confined to the City of London itself. Some Londoners, pursuing their trades, crossed the sea to lands such as Flanders or Ireland; others traded from home with foreign (and often hostile) countries such as France or Scotland. But London is the only place named in my title, and I make no apology to anyone more interested in some other locale.

The first chapter surveys the history both of the Company and of printing in England up to 1500, but the particular story I have chosen to tell begins with 1501:<sup>A</sup> the first year of the sixteenth century, and the first year during which all books known to have been printed in England were printed in London. That story ends with the Company's incorporation by charter on 4 May 1557; I hope to complete a sequel that will end in 1616 with the death of the last surviving Stationer who had been freed before the charter. Others might have preferred different terminal dates for different reasons, but I do not consider that I have wronged them by writing my book instead of theirs.

This study covers a comparatively short period, and looks at a wide variety of topics. One possible approach would have been to give each topic one or more chapters of its own, charting its progress through the whole period before starting a new chapter with a different subject. Although that would have necessitated repeated journeys through 1501–57, had such matters as privileges and censorship been the essential core of this book I might well have organized it in that way. But although those are unquestionably important elements of the story I have chosen to tell, my main focus is on the book-trade professionals rather than their patrons or rulers. And those Stationers, printers, binders and others lived their lives from year to year rather than topic by topic.

Between the introductory [Chapter 1](#) and the concluding Chapter 12, each chapter covers a period ranging in length from four to eleven years. Chapters 2–5 and 7–8 are all structured in essentially the same way, in three parts. The first part consists of a series of sections that introduce the printers who began work in the metropolitan area during the period in question. Where relevant, these are followed by sections introducing new provincial printers, and then any new non-printing publishers. The middle of each chapter is more miscellaneous. It opens with noteworthy events in the lives or careers of one or more printers or publishers already

<sup>A</sup> An early version of parts of this book appeared in the essay I wrote for the Company's sexcentenary: *The Stationers' Company before the Charter, 1403–1557* (2003).

introduced – the number and nature of such sections being determined either by the accidents of archival preservation or by something unusual about a printer's books. Those sections are followed by one called 'Printers and Stationers in the records' and then by one about the import trade.

In 'Printers and Stationers' I record virtually every mention of any printer, Stationer, or other person active in the book trade that I have found in the relevant years but have not included in any other section. My motive is not to cram in every trivial scrap just to prove that I have done the research. But it has been a common complaint for decades that the Bibliographical Society's biographical dictionaries – which for 1501–57 means E. Gordon Duff's *Century of the English Book Trade* (1905) – are hopelessly obsolete. The more recent *Directory of London Stationers and Book Artisans* by C. Paul Christianson covers only 1300–1500, and while a database in progress (The London Book Trades, or LBT) does look back as far as the first printers in England, at present the early entries depend almost entirely on Duff. So for many obscure book-traders, and for numerous obscure facts about better-known ones, my 'Printers and Stationers' sections are as yet the only published source.

Last but far from least, the final sections of each chapter step back from the focus on individual book-traders and examine the ways in which the Crown and the ecclesiastical authorities both assisted them (by granting offices or privileges) and regulated them. These important sections owe their position not to being mere afterthoughts, but because the end of a chapter is a position of prominence second only to the beginning – and my priorities require me to introduce the characters before discussing the plot. Chapters 9 and 10 are special cases, each dealing with a reign whose first few weeks brought immediate and far-reaching changes to the book trade, so in each chapter the first two sections deal with those changes. Thereafter the order of topics is as before, except that Chapter 10 ends with a statistical comparison between the two reigns and an overview of the whole period.

When acknowledging the help of colleagues and correspondents, historians often thank one or more predecessors upon whose shoulders they profess to stand – conceding that, without that pioneering work, their own research could not have been undertaken. I readily acknowledge that much of the research for this book would have been difficult or impossible had it not been for the incomparable achievements of the revisers of the *Short-Title Catalogue*, especially the late and sadly missed Katharine F. Pantzer, whose death deprived this book of the most expertly critical reading it could have had. But if I focus instead on previous historians of either the Stationers' Company or the London book trade, I feel rather less gratitude.

Some readers may accuse me of being too ready to point out errors in the work of others. I have sometimes been admonished that because everyone makes mistakes it is somehow neither sporting nor mannerly to draw attention to them; that factual errors, wild speculations, and slipshod scholarship of all kinds will, if ignored, simply fade away and be forgotten. Experience, however, daily proves otherwise. Most unpublished dissertations, and most really obscure publications by the untutored or the eccentric, make so little impression that it is pointless to drag them out of the shadows only to show why they should have stayed there. But error is not the exclusive prerogative of the amateur. To take just three examples: in 1910 Henry R. Plomer claimed that a lawsuit of 1496 describes Richard Pynson both as a book-printer and as a pouchmaker; in 1957 Sir Walter Greg stated that the Stationers' 1557 monopoly of printing explicitly excepts the university presses of Oxford and Cambridge; in 1960 Cyprian Blagden asserted that of ninety-seven Stationers named in the charter, thirty-three were master printers.<sup>6</sup> Each of those familiar statements has been believed, cited, and repeated many times since it was first printed,<sup>A</sup> and the fact that each is false has done nothing to make it go away. The lawsuit against Pynson the printer is wholly unrelated to the one brought by a different plaintiff against Pynson the pouchmaker; Greg repeatedly credited the charter with a provision that originated in the Star Chamber decree of 1586; on the day the charter was sealed only fourteen of the named Stationers had ever been master printers and only thirteen of them still were. Unless it is openly and clearly explained that Plomer, Greg, and Blagden (among many others) were wrong about these matters (among many others), their mistakes will continue to mislead. I have therefore chosen to take arms against a sea of muddles, and by exposing, mend them.

The few scholars who have even attempted to explain how the Stationers' Company came to be granted its monopoly all seem to have assumed that, like Topsy, it just grow'd. Edward Arber guessed that the post-Caxton printers formed a company of their own that subsequently merged with the bookselling Stationers; Graham Pollard imagined that the territorial Stationers successfully strove to assimilate all alien printers and to shut down those in the provinces. In each case the hypothesis grew from no

<sup>A</sup> For a handful of examples: Pamela Neville, 'Richard Pynson', 11 (1990, citing Plomer), Lotte Hellinga, *William Caxton*, 114 (2010, no citation); McKenzie, 'Printing in England', 215 (1982); John N. King, 'The Book-Trade under Edward VI and Mary I', 175 (1999); Joseph Loewenstein, *The Author's Due*, 35 (2002, all three citing Greg), and John Barnard, 'Introduction', 10 (2002, no citation); Michael Treadwell, 'Printers on the Court', 30 (1992, citing Blagden).

more than a vague faith that once a few Stationers had begun to print, the Company's progress towards monopoly must have been both inexorable and inevitable.<sup>7</sup> Had anyone undertaken a systematic study of the first half of the sixteenth century it might have been noticed that as printing became more 'naturalized' the Company's market share *declined* – slowly at first, but more rapidly after the mid-1530s – until in 1548–9 fewer than 22 percent of the items printed in England were printed by Stationers. But no such study was ever attempted, so my attitude towards my predecessors sometimes falls short of reverence.

As long as new studies continue to cite, as if current and authoritative, the obsolete likes of Timperley's *Dictionary of Printers and Printing* (1839), the foundations of the supposedly innovative 'history of the book' will remain mired in the blunders of the past. We have long been told that 'the Act of 1484' (1 Ric. III, c. 9) 'gave absolute liberty to foreign printers and stationers to trade and reside in England';<sup>8</sup> what really happened was that a last-minute proviso ensured that the book trade remained completely unaffected by the act. The Stationers' charter of 1557 has all too frequently been described in Greg's words as 'a master-stroke of Elizabethan politics';<sup>9</sup> in fact the Company successfully exploited the fears of Mary I and her Spanish husband (whose politics were about as far from Elizabethan as one could get). As it stands today, the familiar edifice built from what have passed for the basic facts of the story is so riddled with misunderstandings, oversights, errors, and fictions of various kinds that mere repair is no longer enough. What is needed is demolition and replacement.

While the imagined history of the Company under the Tudors and Stuarts has often been summarized, only one book has offered a more extensive treatment: Cyprian Blagden's *The Stationers' Company: A History, 1403–1959*. Blagden, however, was more at home in the seventeenth century than the sixteenth, and the fifteenth was far beyond his range. His subtitle promises a history covering 1403–1959, but in his preface he confesses that he has 'been able to give the first 150 years a mere 20 pages because there is evidence for no more' (9). Even that is an exaggeration, because although the Company's first 150 years ended in July 1553, more than a third of the pages in question deal with 1554–7. In reality Blagden dismisses nearly two centuries (1357–1553) in just over twelve pages (21–33) in which there is scarcely a paragraph free of factual errors, unfounded assumptions, or both. To be fair, those paragraphs are largely derivative, and most of their faults were inherited by Blagden from untrustworthy sources – but he also created new distortions by stretching other people's bad guesses beyond

their original context. I have long considered the first half of Blagden's history to be seriously inadequate and misleading, and that belief is what prompted me to write a corrective. This book can therefore be considered a replacement for those 'mere 20 pages'.

*Toronto, 2001–12*

## *Acknowledgements*

The roots of this book lie in a project begun in 1984, although that study and its belated offspring bear little family resemblance. By measuring the prevalence of shared printing in 1591–1610, I wanted to determine how much that practice shaped the way in which the book trade actually worked. I hoped to explain how printers, publishers, and booksellers interacted with each other, and how those interactions were shaped by the laws of the land, the customs of the City, and the ordinances of the Stationers' Company. Seven years of that research were made possible by research grants from the National Endowment for the Humanities. While this book differs greatly from what I originally proposed, it is nevertheless a product of the research funded in 1984–91 by the Endowment – and neither the passage of time nor my changes of direction and emphasis have lessened my deep gratitude for that support.

By the summer of 1991 I had examined every page of every copy of every STC book of 1590–1611 in the Folger Shakespeare Library and several hundred volumes in other libraries. But my parallel study of the Stationers' records was suggesting that some of the accepted ideas about the Company's history and rules were mistaken. I became convinced that the significance of the charter of 1557 could only be properly evaluated in the context of the Stationers' past. For some time I was pulled in two directions. My work on 1591–1610 was incomplete, but understanding the Company itself seemed to require a systematic investigation of its history from the time when the English book trade first put down permanent roots in London. More than once during that period of uncertainty the Folger Library generously found ways of providing financial support, and I owe a special debt of gratitude to Werner Gundersheimer, Barbara Mowat, and Richard Kuhta for their parts in offering that assistance when it was most needed.

By 1995 I had decided to attempt both the present book and its intended sequel. During that 'final' phase of the research I was materially assisted by a Guggenheim Fellowship in 1997–8 and by both a Bibliographical Society

Fellowship and the Fredson Bowers Award for 2000, for which I should like to express my sincere gratitude, first to the John Simon Guggenheim Memorial Foundation and then to the Bibliographical Society and the Bibliographical Society of America. When I moved to Canada the English Department of the University of Toronto first allowed me library privileges, and in 2007 further assisted my research by appointing me to the status of professor – a benefit for which I am especially grateful to Professors Brian Corman and Alan Bewell.

Many of those who have helped in the preparation of this book have done so as representatives or employees of libraries and other institutions. Among them I must particularly thank Julie Ainsworth, Julia Blakely, Laura Cofield, Rachel Doggett, Kathleen Lynch, Frank Mowery, Heather Wolfe, and especially Elizabeth Walsh (the Folger Shakespeare Library), Vivienne Aldous (the Corporation of London Records Office), Anna Lou Ashby (the Morgan Library), Dr N. Aubertin-Potter (All Souls College, Oxford), David Beasley (Goldsmiths' Hall), Mrs Elizabeth Boardman (Brasenose College, Oxford), Ms G. C. Cannell (Corpus Christi College, Cambridge), Dr H. Carron (Emmanuel College, Cambridge), Juliet Chadwick (Exeter College, Oxford), Lawrence Craik (Southwell Minster), Timothy Cutts (the National Library of Wales), C. Y. Ferdinand (Magdalen College, Oxford), Mrs R. J. Freedman (York City Archives), Stephen Freeth and Ralph Hyde (the Guildhall Library), Penny Fussell (Drapers' Hall), Moira Goff and Arnold Hunt (the British Library), Thomas Gordon, Ed Potten, and Julianne Simpson (The John Rylands Library, University of Manchester), Jonathan Harrison and Malcolm Underwood (St John's College, Cambridge), Wendy Hawke and Penelope Hunting (Leathersellers' Hall), Helen J. Hills and Rosemary Mathew (Cambridge University Library), M. J. Hinman (Coventry Archives), R. W. V. Holland (Friends' Provident Office, Dorking), Dr Peter Jones (King's College, Cambridge), Richard Landon (the Thomas Fisher Rare Book Library, Toronto), Sally-Beth MacLean (REED), Giles Mandelbrote (the British Library and Lambeth Palace Library), Dr David Morrison (Worcester Cathedral Library), Dr Richard Mortimer and Dr Tony Trowles (Westminster Abbey), Julian Reid and Joanna Snelling (Corpus Christi College, Oxford), Jill Rosenshield (Memorial Library, University of Wisconsin-Madison), Jane Swinyard (Wells Cathedral), Charlene Taylor (Worcestershire Record Office), D. E. Wickham (Clothworkers' Hall), and Dr F. H. Willmoth (Jesus College, Cambridge).

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Like any student of the Stationers I am deeply indebted to Robin Myers. During her years as the Company's Honorary Archivist she did more to make the early records accessible to scholars than any of her predecessors, and I am privileged to number her among my friends. Special thanks are also due to John Lock, who not only introduced me to the plea rolls of King's Bench and Common Pleas, but also drew my attention to mentions of early printers and Stationers hidden in obscure corners of a variety of archives. David McKitterick has been a never-failing source of advice and encouragement throughout the growth of a project that proved far larger and took far longer than I ever anticipated. He also read the whole book in a late draft, and made valuable suggestions for its improvement.

I am particularly grateful to Professors John Barnard and John Guy, who read and reported on the typescript I submitted to Cambridge University Press. Their detailed comments and criticisms prompted a substantial revision from beginning to end, and the book is undeniably the better for it. The process of learning how many errors and inconsistencies still remained was made comparatively painless by the perception and tact of copy-editor Carol Fellingham Webb. Cartographer David Cox expertly redrew my graphs and maps (first drawn in the 1990s and gradually updated on the same computer until long after its 'best before' date) when my files proved unreadable by less obsolete software. Among those at the Press to whose patience and skill this book owes so much I must especially thank Sarah Stanton for her faith in the value of the project, and both editor Fleur Jones and production editor Tom O'Reilly for tolerating my questions, foibles, and often needless concerns.

But my greatest debt is to my wife, Leslie Thomson, who read early drafts of every chapter and suggested numerous changes for the better. From the optimistic beginning, through the seemingly interminable middle to the long-awaited end, she has given both the book and its author every possible kind of support. For once the cliché is only too literally true: without her, this book could never have been written.

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I should also like to express my gratitude for the kind permissions that have been granted for the reproduction of the illustrations here listed.

The British Library Board: Figures 7*b*, 9, 10, 11

The Syndics of Cambridge University Library: Figures 5, 14*b*

The Chapter of the College of Arms: Figure 18

The Master and Fellows of Emmanuel College, Cambridge: Figure 22*b*

The Folger Shakespeare Library: Figures 6, 12, 13, 14*a*, 15, 19

The City of London, London Metropolitan Archives: Figures 1, 2, 3

The National Archives of the UK: Figures 4, 7*a*, 8, 16, 21, 23

The Board of Trinity College Dublin: Figure 22*a*

The Worshipful Company of Barbers, London, and Bridgeman Art Library: Figure 17

The Worshipful Company of Stationers and Newspaper Makers, London: Figure 20.

## *Conventions*

### **Transcription**

In quotations from early modern sources, printed or manuscript, almost all abbreviations and contractions are expanded with supplied letters in italic. The only regular exceptions are the ampersand and abbreviations for pounds, shillings, and pence. Occasional exception is made for superior letters in special contexts, but ‘*master*’ is generally preferred over ‘*m<sup>r</sup>*’.

Forenames are usually, and common surnames often, given their usual modern spellings. Surnames of printers and publishers usually follow the spellings preferred by STC. Titles of early printed works, many of which went through multiple editions in varying spellings, are usually given in modern spelling in the main text and footnotes. But if cited by title in the notes or bibliography, specific editions are identified in original spelling.

### **Dating**

Unless *quoted* from a document using legal-year dating, all dates follow the calendar year. In other words the year number changes on New Year’s Day (a name that since Roman times has meant *only* 1 January) rather than on 25 March.<sup>A</sup> Because the liturgical year began with the calendar in January, it was always usual for almanacks (both secular and liturgical) to be identified by the number of whichever ‘Year of the Incarnation’ *began* during the twelve months covered. That may be why most printers in England normally used calendar-year dating.

<sup>A</sup> The difference has nothing to do with that between the ‘Old Style’ Julian system of allocating leap years and the ‘New Style’ system that Pope Gregory XIII would introduce twenty-five years after the close of this study – although Gregory’s reforms would *also* include abolishing legal-year dating in Catholic Europe.

### Signature reference

The prevalence of several fallacies, such as the belief that signature reference requires actual signatures to be *quoted*, suggests a need for some basics to be restated. The letter identifying a quire is always given in roman, irrespective of the font actually used. An italic letter indicates an inferred quire-signature. In the Tudor roman alphabet the capital following T is V – *not* U, even though a textura V is rounded. The number of the leaf in its quire is always expressed by an arabic numeral, even if the actual signatures use roman; that number is always *correct*, even if the original is misprinted. Every signature reference requires both letter(s) *and* a leaf-number: the verso of a leaf signed B is B1<sup>v</sup>, *not* B<sup>v</sup>. And signature references to unsigned leaves or pages are not given in square brackets.

In large books I have ignored the ill-advised convention of condensing multiple letters. Problems may seldom arise when referring to Elizabethan play-quartos, but if a large book has quires signed AAA, AAa, *and* Aaa, calling each of them ‘3A’ is hardly helpful.

### Annotation

There are both footnotes and endnotes. Notes that consist only of citations are serially numbered through each chapter and printed as endnotes. Any note that either includes or consists of some form of commentary is keyed by a capital letter and printed as a footnote.<sup>A</sup>

Manuscripts are cited only if I have either seen them (in the original or photographically) or in a few cases relied on a written answer to a question. Information derived only from a published source such as *Letters and Papers* is cited accordingly.

### Pages, folios, signatures, etc.

With two general exceptions I have usually considered ‘p(p).’, ‘f(f).’ or ‘fol(s).’, ‘sig(s).’, and ‘no(s).’ for numbered items (as in *Letters and Papers*) to be unnecessary. The exceptions are cross-references within this book and pages within lengthy numbered items. Arabic numbers followed by colons are volume numbers; lower-case roman numbers followed by colons are separately bound parts of volumes.

<sup>A</sup> Except that in Appendix K, List 1 includes its own special-purpose endnotes (beginning on p. 1057).

### Multiple citation

When the groundwork for this book was done, a number of archives were most conveniently accessible through published calendars and editions. Even when published microforms existed, they tended to be held by comparatively few libraries. Where appropriate I therefore made a habit of following a manuscript citation with a reference to a more accessible printed substitute. Parts of some of those archives have since been digitized and made available online – but since not everyone can read Tudor scripts as fluently as print, I have left the double citations unchanged. I have not added references to those online resources, because my information was not derived from them.

In a few special cases I have done the same with printed books. References to one (or more) of the early editions of Foxe's *Acts and Monuments* are followed by citations of the eight-volume Victorian conflation that has long served (whether or not deservedly) as the standard reference. Rather than the first edition of 1837–41 I have cited the textually inferior second edition of 1843–9 (anonymously revised, but naming only George Townsend on the title-page) because of the extensive annotation that was added. Other books treated in similar fashion include Burnet's *History of the Reformation*, Hall's *Chronicle*, Stow's *Survey of London*, and several works by John Strype.

The main exception to that practice concerns the Stationers' own records, virtually none of which date from the period covered by this book. The only chapter in which I cite any of the registers with any frequency is Chapter II, which refers repeatedly to Register A. Although Arber's transcript of this volume omits numerous short entries, his policy of following the original volumes page by page (and his provision of an index, however flawed) makes his edition of Registers A–D an extremely useful substitute when the microfilm is unavailable. Because Arber is so much more widely accessible I have therefore cited him almost exclusively, even though every quotation has been taken from microfilm and all problematic readings checked in the original. I have cited the Register itself only when discussing difficult readings.

A special case of multiple citation concerns the City records. The Letter Books consist of fair copies of records of special significance from the Repertories of the Court of Aldermen, the Journals of the Court of Common Council, and occasionally from other sources that have not survived. Some libraries have a published set of microfilms of the Repertories; others hold privately acquired copies of the Corporation's own films of either some of the Letter Books or some of the Journals (seldom both). Because

few readers will have equal access to all three series I have usually cited both the original and the Letter Book copy of any such record (which are not always quite identical). In the special case of orphanage records, the Repertory often records the appointment of sureties, the Journal has their formal recognizance, and the Letter Book has a fair copy – while subsequent records (as when an orphan's portion was paid) are sometimes added to the Journal entry and sometimes to the Letter Book but rarely both. Where appropriate I have therefore cited all three records.

Most of the STC books examined for this study were examined during the 1990s either in the original or in the University Microfilms International series, *English Books, 1475–1640*, before Early English Books Online (EEBO) digitized many of those films and put the result online. I have sometimes found it convenient to check a quotation or confirm a signature reference on EEBO, but I have found the digitizations too untrustworthy to use as a primary source, and have preferred the microfilms when I could not consult originals. Over the years there has been a great reduction in the number of books represented in EEBO by the wrong STC number, and many such problems as the title-page of one book being followed by the body of another have been corrected. But a number of films were digitized with the horizontal and vertical magnification set to different values, resulting in images 'stretched' one way or the other.<sup>A</sup> Moreover, while some openings in some books were accidentally skipped in microfilming, some openings present on film have been skipped in digitizing.<sup>B</sup> EEBO is therefore neither cited nor mentioned outside this paragraph.

### **Revised archival references**

Several of the archives I consulted while researching this book have changed either their names or their reference numbering since my notes were taken.

#### *London archives*

The documents once at the Corporation of London Records Office (CLRO), now at the London Metropolitan Archives (LMA), have had their identities (such as Repertory 19, Letter Book Q, and Husting Roll 250) concealed behind the fog of a hierarchical reference system (respectively

<sup>A</sup> Of the two sets of images currently offered for STC 9436, for example, one is distorted in each direction.

<sup>B</sup> The film of STC 2068 omits the four openings containing B7<sup>r</sup>, L3<sup>r</sup>, O3<sup>r</sup>, and MM3<sup>r</sup>; EEBO also omits the five containing a5<sup>r</sup>, Hh8<sup>r</sup>, Kk4<sup>r</sup>, Kk5<sup>r</sup>, and Kk6<sup>r</sup>.

COL/CA/OI/OI/O2I, COL/AD/OI/I5, and CLA/O23/DW/OI/249). This would matter less if a concordance of old names and new references had been made, but no such aid has been considered necessary. While I have updated all former CLRO references, I have also included the old names in my list of manuscripts cited (p. 1098).

Manuscripts moved from the Guildhall Library to LMA have also been renamed, but because the need for cross-reference had by then been recognized, each new reference incorporates a form of the original manuscript number. Those remaining in the Guildhall Library, while under the jurisdiction of (and similarly renamed by) the London Metropolitan Archives, are here cited as being at 'GL' to emphasize that they are not at Northampton Road.

### *The National Archives*

In the 2003 leaflet, *How to Cite Documents in The National Archives*, section 2 explains that 'The National Archives is the institution which . . . incorporates both the Public Record Office (PRO) and the Historical Manuscripts Commission (HMC).' Section 3 elaborates:

The Public Record Office (PRO) has legal designation as a place of custody under the Public Records Acts of 1958 and 1967 . . . In citation then, the name of the legal entity relevant to the documents to be cited should follow the institutional name. The names should be separated by a colon, for example: The National Archives (TNA): Public Record Office (PRO) . . . In subsequent citation, the abbreviated forms TNA: PRO and TNA: HMC may be used.

Given the purpose of abbreviation I have trimmed 'TNA: PRO' (eight keystrokes) to 'PRO' (three keystrokes) throughout. If any reader should mistake any such citation for a reference to some other Public Record Office, I apologize.

Section 4d of the same leaflet suggests that for internal reference to a document, 'the following abbreviations should be used, without punctuation', and gives a list including these two items.

- m or mm for membrane or membranes (used only for chancery-style rolls, ie. those sewn head to foot, and for parchment membranes of files)
- rot or rots for rotulus or rotuli (used only for exchequer-style rolls, ie. those sewn together at the head)

I do not take punctuation advice from those who omit the first period from ‘i.e.’. The plural ‘rots’ stands not for Latin ‘rotuli’ but for English ‘rotulets’. Since a rotulet in either language is a little roll rather than a single membrane, the term is properly restricted to exchequer rolls whose numbered units *include* little rolls – in which, in other words, a number sometimes denotes a *group* of membranes, as in such PRO classes as CP 40, E 37I, and KB 27. Exchequer rolls whose numbered units are always single membranes (such as class E 122) are here cited by membrane and not by rotulet. When referring to a rotulet with more than one membrane I have used ‘rot.’, followed by ‘m.’ or ‘mm.’ for its constituent membranes. Otherwise, while using ‘m(m).’ for chancery-style rolls, I have usually dispensed with ‘m(m).’ and ‘rot(s)’, and have referred to membranes and rotulets by their numbers alone.

We are later told that ‘After the number should be added the letters “r” (for the recto of a folio or the face of a membrane), “d” (for the dorse of a membrane) or “v” (for the verso of a folio).’ It is often unnecessary to use a letter at all when referring to chancery-style rolls, which are usually written on one side only. To signal ‘d’ for a Patent Roll or ‘f’ for a Close Roll is to draw attention to something atypical.<sup>A</sup> Elsewhere, if ‘r’ for recto can stand for ‘face’, then ‘v’ for verso can indicate ‘dorse’ with equal propriety. For exchequer rolls the terms *face* and *dorse* are anyway something of an affectation. Topologically an exchequer roll is a codex, even though the membranes are bound along a short side instead of a long. I have therefore used ‘r’ and ‘v’ for the two sides (pages) of each membrane (leaf) in either an exchequer roll or a rotulet, and ‘d’ only for text written on the outside of a Patent Roll.

<sup>A</sup> How one should cite Close Rolls that the PRO conservators have rolled inside out after repair is another matter.

## Abbreviations

Book-titles whose abbreviations also serve as elements of standard reference numbers (DMH, STC, TRP) are here abbreviated in roman rather than italic. Place of publication is London unless otherwise specified.

<i>AEB</i>	<i>Analytical &amp; Enumerative Bibliography</i>
<i>APC</i>	<i>Acts of the Privy Council of England. New Series. A.D. 1542–1558. Ed. John Roche Dasent. 6 vols. 1890–3.</i>
—	<i>Acts of the Privy Council of England, 1630 June–1631 June. 1964.</i>
Arber	Edward Arber, ed. <i>A Transcript of the Registers of the Company of Stationers of London; 1554–1640 A.D.</i> 5 vols. 1875–7, Birmingham, 1894.
<i>A&amp;M</i>	<i>Acts and Monuments</i>
<i>BIHR</i>	<i>Bulletin of the Institute of Historical Research</i>
BL	British Library
<i>BMC xi</i>	<i>Catalogue of Books Printed in the XVth Century Now in the British Library: BMC Part XI. Compiled by Lotte Hellinga. The Netherlands, 2007.</i>
<i>Catalogus</i>	John Bale. <i>Scriptorium illustrium Maioris Brytannie, quam nunc Angliam &amp; Scotiam vocant: catalogus . . . usque ad annum hunc Domini 1557.</i> Basle, 1557.
CCA	Canterbury Cathedral Archives
col.	column
<i>CPR</i>	<i>Calendar of the Patent Rolls Preserved in the Public Record Office</i>

CSPD	<i>Calendar of State Papers, Domestic Series</i>
CSP Foreign	<i>Calendar of State Papers, Foreign Series</i>
CSP Spanish	<i>Calendar of Letters, Despatches, and State Papers, Relating to the Negotiations between England and Spain, Preserved in the Archives at Simancas and Elsewhere</i>
CSP Venice	<i>Calendar of State Papers and Manuscripts Relating to English Affairs, Existing in the Archives and Collections of Venice, and in Other Libraries of Northern Italy</i>
CWAC	City of Westminster Archives Centre
DMH	<i>Historical Catalogue of Printed Editions of the English Bible, 1525–1961</i> . Revised and expanded from the edition of T. H. Darlow and H. F. Moule, 1903, by A. S. Herbert. 1968.
DNB	<i>Dictionary of National Biography</i> . Ed. Sir Leslie Stephen and Sir Sidney Lee. 63 vols. 1885–1900. Reprinted in 21 vols. 1908–9.
DNB: Missing Persons	<i>The Dictionary of National Biography: Missing Persons</i> . Ed. C. S. Nicholls. Oxford, 1993.
Duff	E. Gordon Duff. <i>Fifteenth Century English Books: A Bibliography of Books and Documents Printed in England and of Books for the English Market Printed Abroad</i> . 1917. Reprinted as <i>Printing in England in the Fifteenth Century: E. Gordon Duff's Bibliography with Supplementary Descriptions, Chronologies, and a Census of Copies by Lotte Hellinga</i> . 2009.
ed.	edition, edited by
EHR	<i>English Historical Review</i>
ESTC	English Short-Title Catalogue ( <a href="http://estc.bl.uk">http://estc.bl.uk</a> )
f(f).	folio(s)
GL	Guildhall Library
HLRO	House of Lords Record Office
ISTC	Incunabula Short-Title Catalogue ( <a href="http://www.bl.uk/catalogues/istc/">www.bl.uk/catalogues/istc/</a> )
JPHS	<i>Journal of the Printing Historical Society</i>
LJ	<i>Journals of the House of Lords, Beginning Anno Primo Henrici Octavi</i> . 1846.

LMA	London Metropolitan Archives
LP	<i>Letters and Papers, Foreign and Domestic, of the Reign of Henry VIII</i> . Arranged and catalogued by J. S. Brewer, James Gairdner, R. H. Brodie, and others; vol. 1 revised by R. H. Brodie. 22 vols. in 35. 1864–1932.
m(m).	membrane(s) (but unpunctuated mm = millimetres)
McK	Ronald B. McKerrow. <i>Printers' &amp; Publishers' Devices in England &amp; Scotland, 1485–1640</i> . 1913.
McK&F	R. B. McKerrow and F. S. Ferguson. <i>Title-Page Borders Used in England &amp; Scotland, 1485–1640</i> . 1932.
McK&F Adds	F. S. Ferguson. 'Additions to <i>Title-Page Borders 1485–1640</i> '. <i>The Library</i> , 4th ser., 17 (1936–7): 264–311.
MS(S)	Manuscript(s)
n(n).	note(s)
ODNB	<i>Oxford Dictionary of National Biography . . . From the Earliest Times to 2000</i> . Ed. H. C. G. Matthew and Brian Harrison. 60 vols. Oxford, 2004.
OED	<i>The Oxford English Dictionary</i> . Second edition, prepared by J. A. Simpson and E. S. C. Weiner. 20 vols. Oxford, 1989.
p(p).	page(s)
PBSA	<i>Papers of the Bibliographical Society of America</i>
PPC	<i>Proceedings and Ordinances of the Privy Council of England</i> . Vol. 7, 32 Henry VIII. MDXL. to 33 Henry VIII. MDXLII. Ed. Sir Harris Nicolas. 1837.
PRO	The National Archives: Public Record Office
r	recto
REED	Records of Early English Drama
rot(s)	rotulet(s)
SB	<i>Studies in Bibliography</i>
SH	Stationers' Hall
Statutes	<i>Statutes of the Realm</i> . Vols. 2–4 (1377–1624). 1816–19.

xxxvi	<i>List of abbreviations</i>
STC	<i>A Short-Title Catalogue of Books Printed in England, Scotland, and Ireland, and of English Books Printed Abroad, 1475–1640.</i> Compiled by A. W. Pollard and G. R. Redgrave. Second edition, revised by W. A. Jackson, F. S. Ferguson, and Katharine F. Pantzer. 3 vols. 1976–91.
Steele	Robert Steele, ed. <i>A Bibliography of Royal Proclamations of the Tudor and Stuart Sovereigns and of Others Published under Authority, 1485–1714. Vol. I, England and Wales.</i> Oxford, 1910.
<i>Summarium</i>	John Bale. <i>Illustrium Maioris Britannia scriptorum, hoc est, Angliae, Cambriae ac Scotiae summarium[m] . . . ad annum Domini M.D.XLVIII.</i> Wesel, 1548. (STC 1295)
TBS	<i>Transactions of the Bibliographical Society</i>
TCBS	<i>Transactions of the Cambridge Bibliographical Society</i>
TLS	<i>The Times Literary Supplement</i>
TNA	The National Archives
tp.	title-page
TRP	<i>Tudor Royal Proclamations.</i> Ed. Paul L. Hughes and James F. Larkin. 3 vols. New Haven, 1964–9.
UMI	University Microfilms International
v	verso
WAM	Westminster Abbey Muniments
Wing	Donald Wing, ed. <i>Short-Title Catalogue of Books Printed in England, Scotland, Ireland, Wales, and British America and of English Books Printed in Other Countries, 1641–1700.</i> Second edition, revised and edited by Timothy J. Crist, John J. Morrison, Carolyn W. Nelson, and Matthew Seccombe. 4 vols. New York, 1982–98.

## CHAPTER ONE

1357–1500

### *Historical and lexical introduction*

#### **Prehistory, 1357**

By the middle of the fourteenth century, most members of the London book trades belonged to one or other of three recognized craft companies or misteries. Many today would call those misteries ‘guilds’ (or ‘gilds’), and in other cities they might have *been* guilds. But in late medieval London the words *mistry* and *guild* were not synonymous, and the three craft associations in question were misteries as distinct from guilds. How and when they first gained formal recognition is uncertain. None of them had been incorporated by royal charter, so each probably achieved official existence when the City permitted its members to assemble, to elect governing officers, and to make rules. But it is unclear whether that permission was individually conferred on each craft by a formal act of foundation, or whether the City’s relationship with the members of those and other unincorporated trades simply evolved.

Arguably the most important of those misteries was the one least closely related to the book trade as such. Its members sometimes wrote texts to be bound up in codex form, sometimes wrote in ready-bound codices, and sometimes wrote documents that were called ‘books’ even though they were not codices at all.<sup>1</sup> But what distinguished the Scriveners or Writers of Court Letter (*scriptores litterae curialis*) from London’s other writers was their focus on *legal* documents, including indentures, bonds, deeds, and contracts of all kinds. Some Scriveners specialized in conveyancing, others in composing petitions or drawing up wills. Some became sworn notaries; others preferred accountancy, and were hired by organizations that needed skilled clerks to keep the books. Although the word *scrivener* was sometimes used as an unspecialized synonym for *writer* and might thus be applied to any professional penman, by the fifteenth century its primary meaning was much the same as modern *solicitor*, and it denoted a writer of legal deeds as distinct from other kinds of manuscript.

The Textwriters (*scriptores litterae textualis* when being differentiated from the Scriveners, otherwise *scriptores texti*) wrote virtually everything that the Scriveners did not. At one extreme that included literary texts – vernacular works in prose or verse, Latin works both ancient and modern – and works of philosophy and theology, science and medicine, history, geography, and so on. Such books were often produced to order, and it is commonly observed that manuscripts were seldom written speculatively to anticipate a future demand. But there were kinds of text for which a demand was always predictable, and which may well have been produced for stock. Educational works were in that category, from the most elementary (hornbooks and ABCs) through more advanced schoolbooks (Latin grammars and vocabularies) to university texts (for which, however, the demand in London was probably limited).

In one sense the contents of any manuscript could be called a *text*, whether written by a Textwriter or a Scrivener. But as the first syllable of *textwriter* the word had a more limited connotation. Text hand, or text letter, was the formal handwriting used for the main body of an important or authoritative work, as distinct from any commentary or notes written below, beside, or around it. Works that were customarily surrounded by annotation were familiar enough to scholars, but outside the universities *text* commonly implied the most important and authoritative text of all, namely the Bible, and especially the gospels.<sup>2</sup> One of the main functions of the Textwriters was to provide the clergy and their congregations with religious texts of all kinds, from liturgical books (primers, psalters, hymnals, and breviaries) through saints' lives and popular devotional works (such as the 'Fifteen Oes of St Bridget') to paternosters, creeds, and single prayers – some for reading, some to be carried or worn as amulets or charms.<sup>3</sup>

The third book-trade mystery was that of the Limners (*illuminatores*), and when the products of scribes or textwriters needed to be decorated it was the Limners who illuminated or illustrated them as required. Commissions for the sumptuous decoration likely to be conjured up by the words 'illuminated manuscript' may not have been very common in London, where few local craftsmen could have matched the quality of imported books of hours. But not everyone who wanted a primer could afford a deluxe one, and a few images and decorated initials could be included even in quite cheaply produced liturgical books. Limners, like textwriters, would have done much of their work to order when manuscripts were first commissioned. But they too may have produced some of the most frequently requested images to be sold individually for insertion into existing books. And as textwriters sold prayers to be carried as protective spells, so too did

limners sell Images of Pity, the Five Wounds, and other talismanic pictures and emblems.<sup>4</sup>

The earliest City record to mention any of those companies as an established mystery mentions all three consecutively – together with a fourth company unconnected with the book trade. On 20 May 1357 the Court of Aldermen ordered that the Writers of Court Records and of Text, the Limners, and the Barbers were thereafter to be exempt from jury service in the Sheriffs' Court.<sup>A</sup> That record was first quoted in the context of the Stationers by Edward Arber in 1875, but he merely reprinted H. T. Riley's translation and offered no commentary.<sup>5</sup> More detailed discussion had to wait until 1937, when Graham Pollard published an influential article on the Company's early history. But in doing so he created a complication by arguing that the limners and both kinds of writer must have belonged to a single mystery.

The real problem is whether [the four trades] represent one, two, three, or four guilds. Surgeons and solicitors are still exempt from jury service, though the statute in force does not now extend the privilege to booksellers and hairdressers. The barbers were excused because they then practised surgery, and they had been an organized gild since 1308. The writers of court-hand were the conveyancers who wrote deeds; as the medieval equivalent of the modern solicitor they might naturally be excused jury service: but there seems no reason to have excused the writers and illuminators of books, unless they formed one organization with the writers of court-letter; and it seems unlikely that the writers of court- and text-letter . . . would have been so summarily described if they had really formed distinct guilds.<sup>6</sup>

But if the writers had belonged to a single mystery there would have been no need to distinguish between them. Furthermore, in 1373 the Writers of Court Letter petitioned the City for permission to introduce four new ordinances. To Pollard that request marked both the origin of the Scriveners as a separate mystery and the fragmentation of his supposed joint company.<sup>7</sup> But nothing in the Scriveners' petition suggests that they were asking to secede (or had already seceded) from an alliance to which they had belonged a mere sixteen years earlier. On the contrary, the request clearly comes from an established mystery concerned about the encroachment by outsiders 'less skilled than the scriveners who are free of the said City and who for a long

<sup>A</sup> LMA, COL/AD/01/007, 61<sup>r</sup>. Translated literally, the first two are described as 'the writers writing court and text' (*Scriptores scribentes Curiam & textum*), with 'Curiam' presumably meaning 'court matters'. In 1868 Riley translated the phrase as 'the writers of court-hand and text-letters' (*Memorials*, 295); in 1937 Pollard offered both 'court-hand and text' and 'court- and text-letter' ('The Company before 1557', 5, 6). The original, however, refers not to the handwriting (*litteram curialem et textualem*) but to the *substance* of what the writers wrote.

time have been versed in their craft'.<sup>8</sup> While it was not uncommon for small companies to combine to increase their size and power,<sup>9</sup> separation was rare, and the three-way split imagined by Pollard between 1357 and 1373 is without precedent, parallel, or supporting evidence.

Pollard's real reason for doubting that the Textwriters and Limners could have been separate companies is obvious in the passage quoted above: as members of respectable professions, surgeons and solicitors deserved to be exempt from jury service, but mere 'booksellers and hairdressers' did not. Scribes and illustrators could have obtained such an unmerited privilege only on the coat-tails of the Scriveners. But what Pollard failed to consider was that even if the trades really had belonged to a single company, if the mayor and aldermen shared his prejudice they could easily have restricted their favour to bona fide scriveners. They were not obliged to treat all freemen of a company as equals if only one in three practised an eligible trade.

The ordinance of 1357 did not create new privileges; it extended existing ones. Qualified medical practitioners were already exempt from jury service; the ordinance extended that privilege to Barbers because they practised dentistry and minor surgery. Members of the legal profession were likewise exempt, and their privilege was extended to Scriveners. But medicine and the law were not the only privileged professions, for a similar exemption was enjoyed by the clergy. And as the suppliers of the liturgical books on which church service depended, the Textwriters and the Limners could claim just as valid a kinship with an exempt profession as could the Barbers and the Scriveners.<sup>A</sup> What the record of 20 May tells us is that by 1357 each of the four companies named in it was recognized by the City as not simply a mystery, but as one deserving a special status.

### **The foundation of the Company, 1403**

In early July 1403, the mayor and aldermen of London received a petition from three groups of citizens with a common interest. Two of the groups were the mysteries of Textwriters and Limners; the third was a less formal alliance of 'other good people, citizens of London, who use to bind and sell books'. On 12 July a clerk reported (in Latin) that the Court of Aldermen had received the petition. He then transcribed its full text, in which the petitioners asked permission (in Law French) to combine into a single craft association to represent all their trades. Finally he recorded (in Latin

<sup>A</sup> Looking back from 1582, Christopher Barker described the Stationers of the early sixteenth century as 'men, that were writers, Lymners of bookes and dyverse thinges for the Church [my emphasis] and other vses' (BL, MS Lansdowne 48, 189<sup>f</sup> (Arber, 1: 114)).

again) that the court had perused, approved, and granted the petition. The record itself is reproduced as [Figure 1](#) and transcribed in Appendix A; in translation it reads as follows:

Let it be remembered that on the twelfth day of July in the fourth year of the reign of King Henry, the Fourth since the Conquest, the good men of the mystery of Writers of Text Letter, those commonly called Limners, and other good people, citizens of London, who use to bind and sell books, delivered here to Mayor John Walcote and the aldermen of London a certain petition in these words:

To the honourable and wise lords, the mayor and aldermen of the City of London. All the good people free of the said City of the misteries of Writers of Text Letter, Limners, and other good people of London who also use to bind and sell books, most humbly beg that it may please your wisdoms to grant that they may elect each year from among them two worthy men, the one a Limner and the other a Textwriter, to be wardens of the said crafts. And that the names of the wardens so elected may be yearly presented before the mayor for the time being, and they there sworn well and diligently to oversee that good rule and governance is kept and exercised in all practices pertaining to the said trades by all people of the same crafts, to the praise and good fame of the loyal good people of the said crafts and the shame and blame of the bad and disloyal people of the same crafts. And that the same wardens may assemble all the people of the said crafts honestly and peaceably when necessary, for the good rule and governance as well of the said City as of the crafts aforesaid. And that the same wardens, in performing their due office, may from time to time present all the defaults of the said bad and disloyal people to the chamberlain of the Guildhall for the time being, to be there corrected, punished, and duly redressed according to the wise and prudent discretion of the governors of the said City. And that all who rebel against the said wardens regarding the oversight and good rule of the same crafts may be punished according to the general ordinance made regarding rebels in the crafts of the said City, as appears in Letter Book G, folio 135. And that it may please you to command that this petition, granted by your wisdoms, may be entered of record for time to come, for God and as a work of charity.

Which petition having been read before the said mayor and aldermen and understood, especially because it concerned the common interest and benefit that transgressors against the aforesaid ordinances should be severely punished as aforesaid, it was unanimously decided by them that the aforesaid ordinance should thereafter be faithfully observed and transgressors punished in the manner abovesaid.<sup>A</sup>

<sup>A</sup> Translated from LMA, COL/AD/01/009, 25<sup>r</sup>. Christianson ('The Rise of London's Book-Trade', 128) has described this entry as a grant of 'civic ordinances of incorporation' – perhaps a nonce coinage. But the City had no power to create corporations, and the Stationers were not incorporated until 1557.



Two points are particularly worth noting about the ‘other good people’ – the binders and booksellers not belonging to either of the named misteries. The petition (though not the preamble) describes them as people who *also* bind and sell books (‘gentz . . . usantz auxi de lyer & vendre liures’). As Pollard observed, the wording implies that both binding and bookselling were trades commonly practised by textwriters and limners. That is unsurprising, because books were rarely bound before being written and illustrated, and the craftsmen responsible for the contents might well have taken an interest in the quality of the finished products. Not every textwriter or limner would have been a skilled or even a competent binder, but those who were employers might reasonably have wanted to hire at least one trained binder. Textwriters and limners with shops of their own would also have been *sellors* of books – and not only of the books they produced. It is sometimes forgotten that while a manuscript can be bespoke only once, it can be sold and resold many times, and most of the second-hand trade would naturally have been in the hands of textwriters and limners. And that brings us back to binding, because some used books would have needed to be repaired or rebound before resale.

The other noteworthy point is that in the preamble (though not the petition) the other good people are explicitly described as citizens of London (‘Ciues londonij’). That would necessarily have been true of those who *sold* books, because only freemen could sell goods by retail within the City limits.<sup>10</sup> There was evidently no recognized Mistery of Bookbinders, so non-freemen could have worked as binders if no other mistery claimed jurisdiction over the trade. But if there were any such binders in 1403 the new company would eventually have tried to assimilate or marginalize them, because binding is clearly identified as one of the trades it was to govern.<sup>A</sup> Meanwhile it seems safe to conclude that the ‘other good people’ were few in number. As citizens they must have been free of other London misteries: misteries, moreover, that were willing to allow them to become free of the new company. Translation from one mistery to another required the consent of both, and companies were often reluctant to lose freemen. And by City law a freeman could not be free of more than one mistery at a time.

<sup>A</sup> Gary Taylor claims that during the lifetime of Thomas Middleton (1580–1627), the Company of Leathersellers ‘fought to protect its control of bookbinding’ (‘The Order of Persons’, 41), but neither identifies an opponent nor cites a source. I know of no evidence that the Leathersellers ever imagined that they controlled a trade explicitly and repeatedly regulated by the Stationers (Arber, 1: 100, 114; 2: 791, 811; 3: 40–2; Greg and Boswell, *Records*, 3–6, 8, 18, 57; Jackson, *Records*, 15, 54, 121, 136; Greg, *Companion*, 132–3; SH, Liber A, 50<sup>F–V</sup>, etc.).

### Textwriters and Limners become Stationers

When they drew up their petition, the tradesmen omitted one detail they might usefully have included: their future name. The annual presentation of wardens by the misteries was only sporadically noted in the early Letter Books, but the wardens of the new company happened to be recorded nine times in the next thirty-eight years. Their mistry was identified in seven different ways, including Limners and Writers (1416, 1418), Limners and Textwriters (1423), Textwriters (1421, 1439), and Textwriters and Limners (1426).<sup>A</sup> Of particular interest are the presentments of 1417 (Textwriters, Limners, and Stationers: see [Figure 2a](#)) and 1433 (Limners and Stationers), which are the first two to use the word that would soon displace all the alternatives. And in 1441 – in the last presentment to be recorded before a gap of half a century – the newly elected officials were described for the first time as simply the wardens of the ‘Stacioners’ ([Figure 2b](#)).<sup>11</sup> That single word would thereafter define the company for nearly five centuries.<sup>B</sup>

But seeing the word emerge is one thing; working out what it meant is quite another. Latin *statio* meant a fixed place or station; a *stationarius* was one who occupied a *statio*, such as a sentry in a guard post (ancient) or a residentiary canon (c. 1192).<sup>12</sup> Early in the thirteenth century European universities began to apply the word to academic booksellers, and the usage later migrated to Oxford (1262) and Cambridge (1275). The word might have meant a stall-holder if the stall was restricted to a single position; alternatively it might have meant the occupant of a permanent building as distinct from a movable stall. Perhaps a particular university once required approved booksellers to set up their stalls in a prescribed location, or even provided premises for designated suppliers of books – and perhaps a local usage was adopted by other universities where those circumstances had never applied. Whatever the origin, it is difficult to explain why the word attached itself to booksellers as distinct from any other kind of tradesmen. Those who supplied a medieval university with books were not only retailers: they were also craftsmen who made and repaired books, and so had more need of permanent premises than did

<sup>A</sup> In the three earliest examples (1416–18) Reginald Sharpe mistranslates *scriptores* as ‘Scriveners’ and overlooks the word ‘text’ in 1417 (*Letter-Book I*, 150, 173, 174). Pollard (‘The Company before 1557’, 11) and Christianson (*Directory*, 16) both follow Sharpe; Cheryl Greenberg mistakenly concludes that the Stationers’ Company was ‘also called the Scriveners’ Company’ (‘John Shirley’, 377).

<sup>B</sup> After another merger in 1933, the name was officially changed to Stationers and Newspaper Makers by a charter of 25 January 1937 (Blagden, *Stationers’ Company*, 277–8).

(a) Robert Crulle predicta forma qua supra etc.  
 Robert Sulner magis mister officialium Jurat xij die Decembris anno quarto predicta forma  
 Robert Chappley qua supra etc.

Thomas Bowland magis mister textu Samp et illuminator et dicit Jurat xij die  
 John Assh Junij Anno regni Regis Henrici sexti post conuictum quinto  
 John Wynchill magister mistere de Westchester Jurat primo die Junij Anno quinto  
 John Chetlesford predicta forma qua supra etc.  
 John Sulner

(b) Robert Chirch Ward de Stationers xij die Sept  
 John Pye Ward de Stationers xij die Sept  
 Thomas Bowland Ward de Stationers xij die Sept  
 John Assh Ward de Stationers xij die Sept  
 John Wynchill Ward de Stationers xij die Sept  
 John Chetlesford Ward de Stationers xij die Sept  
 John Sulner Ward de Stationers xij die Sept

Figure 2 Wardens sworn in, 1417 and 1441.

(a) Thomas Bowland and John Assh, masters of the Textwriters, etc. (London Metropolitan Archives, COL/AD/01/09, 189<sup>f</sup>.)

(b) Robert Chirch and John Pye, wardens of the Stationers. (London Metropolitan Archives, COL/AD/01/010, 195<sup>f</sup>.)

many other retailers. But they were by no means the only tradesmen who needed workshops, so why were only they *stationarii*? And while the word was certainly used of people who sold books, did it apply to *all* booksellers? Or did it originally refer, as Pollard believed, only to *exemplatores*, who wrote and hired out standard texts that the students had to recopy for themselves?<sup>13</sup>

The word was used in London in the fourteenth century but remained uncommon until after 1350, when it began to be applied to various members of the book trade: textwriters, limners, binders, and occasionally even scribes. Here the question of the original meaning gives way to the more pertinent question of what *stationer* meant in London in 1350–1500, which may not be quite the same. Observing that the word does not directly describe a productive function (as do *textwriter*, *binder*, and the like), Pollard suggested that it meant a shopkeeper from whom manuscripts were commissioned, and who subcontracted the actual writing, illuminating, and binding to suitably skilled artisans. In other words, *stationer* ‘emphasizes . . . the individual’s importance as a dealer rather than a craftsman, as an intermediary between the producer and the public rather than an actual maker of the goods he sells’.<sup>14</sup> But this explanation does not really fit the evidence. It could have accounted for a usage by which stationers were *distinguished* from mere artisans such as textwriters and binders, but in fact the word seems to have been an all-purpose synonym applicable to any maker, binder, or seller of books.

An entrepreneur who coordinated the productive efforts of subordinate craftsmen would necessarily have been among the elite of the book trade. The masters of each craft were employers of journeymen and apprentices; Pollard’s stationer would have been an employer of masters. And yet when the word first appears in the mystery’s name in 1417 and 1433, it appears last – following the Textwriters and Limners as the ‘other good people . . . who also . . . bind and sell books’ had followed them in 1403. That Stationers finally *replaced* Textwriters and Limners in the records in 1441 might be taken to imply a greater importance. But if the company chose to identify itself by the name of a single craft, which would best represent it: the profession of the smallest elite group, or the trade most commonly practised by the greatest number? It seems likely that the primary meaning of *stationer* in London in the fifteenth century was exactly what it was in the dictionaries of the sixteenth, namely *bookseller*.<sup>15</sup>

While searching the London records for early appearances, Pollard found the word applied once in 1366 to John de Grafton, elsewhere called a

parchmener or parchment maker.<sup>A</sup> He therefore numbered parchmeners among the early producers of books, prompting Blagden to claim it as ‘a reasonable guess’ that they were included in the new mystery in 1403.<sup>16</sup> So when Christianson searched the archives for London book artisans before 1501 he included parchmeners in his trawl, and found records of fifteen active between 1269 and 1476. But other than de Grafton, only one was ever called a stationer (Richard Collop, once in 1472).<sup>B</sup> If *stationer* meant *bookseller*, a parchmener who included stitched quires or bound ledgers among the skins and rolls he offered for sale might sometimes have been thought of as a stationer. But he was not a producer of books: his product had other uses, books could be made without using it at all, and as a craftsman he had closer affinities with the Skinners and the Leathersellers than with the Stationers. The only observed links between the professions consist of one occasion in 1366 and a second in 1472 when a parchmener was *once* called a stationer. I therefore doubt that parchmeners were included among the ‘other good people . . . who use to bind and sell books’.

Some stationers, though, would sometimes have sold *books* of blank parchment. Early booksellers sold books of every kind: new, used, and ancient; local and imported; blank, written, and (eventually) printed; made of vellum, parchment, and paper. Those who offered in-house binding probably stocked blank parchment and paper ready to be bound as required, and some doubtless sold small quantities unbound. Some fifteenth-century booksellers also sold pens and ink,<sup>C</sup> although the practice of selling the tools of the textwriter’s trade probably diminished when printed books largely displaced manuscripts in the bookshops. The Tudor Stationer John Taverner and his former apprentice John Turner are now known mainly as sellers of vellum and parchment (though seldom paper).<sup>17</sup> But they were exceptions rather than the rule, and nothing in the Tudor records of either

<sup>A</sup> ‘The Company before 1557’, 3; Christianson, *Directory*, 112–13. There is no consensus on spelling. *OED* lists it as ‘Parchmener’, but dismisses both the word and the spellings *parchemener* and *parchemyner* as obsolete. Blagden follows Pollard’s *parchminer* (*Stationers’ Company*, 22–3); Ian Archer prefers *parchmyner* (*Haberdashers’ Company*, 25) and Christianson *parchmener* (*Directory*, *passim*).

<sup>B</sup> Collop’s will was proved in 1476; his namesake whose will Pynson witnessed in 1505 may have been related (PRO, PROB 11/6, 171<sup>r</sup>; PROB 11/14, 223<sup>r-v</sup>). Christianson also lists a man identified in 1416 as ‘William Parchemenmaker otherwise Fysshere’ and allegedly described in 1413 as a bookseller (*Directory*, 105). But ‘bookseller’ is only a misguided attempt by Christianson’s 1952 source to modernize Fisher’s obsolete trade, and has no authority.

<sup>C</sup> ‘George the booke sellar’, whose stock included ‘Ynke and perchemyn, Pennes of swannes, Pennes of ghees’ in Caxton’s 1480 *Doctrine* (STC 24865, c3<sup>v</sup>), was translated in the 1460s from a French-Flemish original of the fourteenth century (Painter, *William Caxton*, 103), and may not typify Caxton’s English contemporaries.

the City or the Company supports the notion that selling paper and other writing materials was what defined a Stationer. Not until the Stuart period did so many of the Company adopt that trade that the word *stationer* began to migrate from bookselling to paper-selling. The first sign of that migration is found in Robert Sherwood's English–French *Dictionnaire* of 1650, which translates 'A Stationer' as '*Papetier, aussi, marchand libraire*' (paper-seller, also bookseller). Six years later Thomas Blount's *Glossographia* offered a fuller definition:

**Stationer** (so called of his *station* or standing Shop to sell in) is often confounded with *Book-seller*, and sometimes with *Book-binder*; whereas they are three several Trades; The *Stationer* sells Paper, and Paper-Books, Ink, Wax, &c: The *Book-seller* deals onely in printed Books, ready bound, and trimmed up; and the *Book-binder* binds them, but sells not. Yet all three are of the Company of *Stationers*.

Before 1650, all printed dictionaries known to me that included *stationer* at all equated it firmly with *bookseller*,<sup>A</sup> while Latin *chartarius* and *papyropola*, French *papetier*, and Italian *cartoliere* were all translated as *paper-seller*.<sup>18</sup> Moreover, both Sherwood's 'aussi' and Blount's claim that stationers and booksellers were 'often confounded' show that even in the 1650s the earlier meaning was still current. Not until long after the close of this study did *stationer* come to mean a vendor of writing supplies.

Before the 1580s hardly any white paper was made in England,<sup>19</sup> and virtually all paper used for printing was imported, mostly from northeastern France. The speciality of those who imported and sold it was not the use of paper but the importation of miscellaneous dry goods. Before printing came to England comparatively little paper was imported at all, and it was not very widely distributed outside a few major cities and towns.<sup>B</sup> Throughout the sixteenth century most book-importers in London were aliens or denizens, some of whom sometimes imported small quantities of paper, but most paper was brought in by native English merchants.<sup>C</sup>

<sup>A</sup> The *Ortus vocabulorum* of 1500 (STC 13829) still associates booksellers with textwriters, giving *stationer* as the English for its second definition of *Librarius*: 'scriptor . . . qui . . . scribit librum vel libros vendens vel custodiens'.

<sup>B</sup> Coleman, *British Paper Industry*, 10–11; Lyall, 'Materials', 12–13. John Feather's claim that paper importing was 'a major commercial enterprise' by the early fifteenth century, and that the distributors established a network later exploited by the early importers of books (*History*, 13), is unfounded.

<sup>C</sup> It is untrue that 'During the first century of print, importing paper stationers and wholesalers, who also imported foreign book stock, were much more heavily capitalised and more strategically powerful than other members of the book trades' (James Raven, *The Business of Books*, 48). The importers of books and of paper were largely separate communities, and the latter were rarely members of the book trades at all.

Before Elizabeth's reign port records do not mention company affiliation, and are anyway far too incomplete to allow detailed analysis.<sup>20</sup> But the identifications I have been able to make suggest a pattern that agrees with the Elizabethan evidence. Brown wrapping paper (usually 'niger' in Latin and sometimes 'grey' in English) seems mostly to have been imported by Grocers, while the trade in white paper was dominated (though far from monopolized) by Haberdashers,<sup>A</sup> whose shipments sometimes included pens, inkhorns, and other writing supplies. Haberdashers are known to have imported and sold those commodities (including parchment) in and before the fifteenth century, so they, rather than Stationers, were probably the principal retailers of writing materials in London until quite late in the sixteenth century.<sup>21</sup>

The last year of the century for which a complete record survives of importation into London by native English merchants is 1587–8. By that date the former dominance of the Haberdashers had been broken, although a lone Haberdasher was still responsible for nearly 11 percent of the white paper imported. But four Drapers accounted for an eighth of the total, three Ironmongers for nearly a quarter, and three Girdlers for just over a third. Not a single ream of paper (nor a single book) was imported by a Stationer, only two of whom appear in that year's records at all: John Norton with sixteen weys of white salt and Peter Mansfield with three gross of 'past babies' (pasteboard dolls).<sup>22</sup>

Many who write thumbnail surveys of the English book trade persist in confusing early Stationers with vendors of stationery.<sup>B</sup> But the principal concern of the mistery founded in 1403 – the product that its members manufactured and sold – was neither parchment nor paper but *books*. Freemen of the company wrote and illustrated books, they bound and repaired books, they bought and sold books, and it was the trade in books that they had joined forces to promote, protect, and regulate.

<sup>A</sup> Of the white paper imported in 1567–8 by English natives, 36 percent was brought in by Haberdashers, 21 percent by Drapers, 14 percent by a Girdler, and 10 percent by Leathersellers, while less than 1 percent (144 reams) was imported by Stationers. Those figures are derived from Brian Dietz, *Port and Trade*.

<sup>B</sup> 'The real power in the [pre-1557 Stationers'] guild, however, was held by the wealthy merchants who were importers of paper' (Feather, *Dictionary*, 250); 'The membership also included suppliers of parchment, paper, and stationery' (Clegg, 'The Stationers' Company', 277); 'The Stationers had originally been a humble fraternity of paper makers' (Loades, *Tudor Government*, 148); 'The Stationers took their name from the fact that they were primarily sellers of "stationery" – that is to say, of paper' (Scott-Warren, *Early Modern English Literature*, 84).

### Mistery, brotherhood, craft, or company?

The Company of Stationers was incorporated by royal letters patent in 1557. When Arber surveyed the evidence for its earlier history he observed that

long previous to the existence of the Company – there was a voluntary and informal Association or Brotherhood of Printers, Bookbinders, Publishers, and the like, formed on the usual model of a City Company. (1: xix)

His distinction between ‘informal . . . Brotherhood’ before the charter and ‘Company’ afterwards was maintained throughout both the introduction and the asides he inserted into the transcript itself. Thus Alexander Lacy’s freedom is described as ‘the last entry of this nature relating to the mere Brotherhood’ (1: 35), and we are advised that ‘From the use of the word “Company” . . . it is probable that all these entries were transcribed . . . after the Incorporation’ (1: 38). Elsewhere he defined a craft as ‘a kind of incipient Company, without its compulsory powers, honour, or dignity’ (1: xx), and evidently believed that the Stationers were not really a company until the charter conferred that elevated status upon them. To judge from the frequency with which modern writers identify the unchartered Company as the Mistery, Craft, Brotherhood, or even Guild of Stationers, Arber’s fallacy is sometimes mistaken for historical precision.

What the Stationers first became in 1557 was not a company but a corporation: in the words of the charter, a *corpus incorporatum*. Thereafter the Company could buy or sell real property, and could bring or defend lawsuits, as a corporate body in its own right. Before incorporation Stationers could deal in real estate as individuals, or could sue or be sued in their own names on the Company’s behalf, but the Company itself could do none of those things. Yet it was no less ‘the companie of Stationers’ for that, and is so described in the sole surviving fragment of its pre-incorporation records, dated 13 March 1550/1 (see Figure 20).

Certified pedants should use ‘Mistery’ *after* 1557, because the charter twice explicitly declares the official name of the new corporation to be ‘The Master and Keepers or Wardens and Commonalty of the Mistery or Art of Stationers of the City of London’ (*Magister et Custodes sive Gardiani et Communitas Mistere sive Artis Stationarii Civitatis Londini*).<sup>A</sup> The

<sup>A</sup> Translated literally, the genitive singular ‘Stationarii’ should be Arber’s ‘of Stationery’ (1: xxviii–xxix) as distinct from ‘of a Stationer’ in *The Charter and Grants* and elsewhere. But the Company’s own English rendition was always plural ‘of Stationers’.

charter was drafted by the Stationers and their legal advisers, so we can assume that the name was their own choice. And while they had no master before 1557,<sup>A</sup> we can be confident that they had long considered their name to be ‘The Mistery or Art of Stationers of the City of London’ (preceded on formal occasions by ‘The Keepers or Wardens and Commonalty of’), although we cannot know precisely when ‘Stationers’ had replaced ‘Textwriters and Limners’. But despite having chosen ‘Mistery’ for their official style, after incorporation the Stationers continued in practice to use the word they had doubtless been using for decades before 1557, namely *company*.

While announcing that the *mistery* is now a *corpus incorporatum*, the charter uses the common noun *communitas* twenty-two times. Arber uniformly translates it as ‘community’ (I: xxviii–xxxii), but it is used in two quite distinct senses. On fifteen occasions it means all free Stationers *except* the master and wardens, and the 1741 translation in *The Charter and Grants* correctly uses the technical term ‘Commonalty’. On the other seven occasions it means all free Stationers *including* the master and wardens; in 1741 this was translated as ‘Society’,<sup>B</sup> but any word meaning *fellowship* or *association* would be equally apt – and the usual choice in the Stationers’ earliest extant records is *company*. Rather than being a title restricted to incorporated misteries, *company* was merely one of several common nouns that Londoners used for their craft associations. Throughout the fifteenth century the usual choice was *mistery*, although *craft* and *fellowship* were common. In the early sixteenth century *craft* and the increasingly popular *company* largely displaced *mistery*. No one word ever completely ousted the others,<sup>C</sup> but by the 1550s *company* was (and still is) the preferred term in London records. I can see no reason for pretending that the informal ‘Company of Stationers’ – commonly used by both the City and the Stationers before 1557 – was inappropriate before the charter.

<sup>A</sup> To be precise, they had never had a master *and* wardens. Although the petition of 1403 repeatedly speaks of electing ‘gardeins’, in the first eight recorded presentments they are *masters* (‘Magistri’). The record of 1441 that first calls them ‘Stacioners’ (Figure 2b) is also the first to call the officers *wardens* (‘Gardiani’).

<sup>B</sup> *The Charter and Grants* in fact has ‘Society’ eight times instead of seven, having been translated from the patent roll (PRO, C 66/915, 10–11). In the warrant (C 82/1027/[30]), the word’s second appearance is in ‘et *Communitate*’ (and Commonalty), but the patent roll copyist erroneously changed it to ‘in *Communitate*’ (in the Company).

<sup>C</sup> In 1509, one page of Journal II yields both ‘The residewe of the foresaid Felisships with all other Companies of lyuery’ and ‘euery company . . . as they vse to goo a procession the lowest Craft to begynne’. A few pages later we find ‘the Companies of every mistere of this Citie’ (LMA, CO1/CC/01/01/011, 68<sup>r</sup>, 82<sup>v</sup>).

### The G-word

Among the interchangeable nouns by which the City records refer to London's craft companies, *guild* is conspicuously absent. That word is now used more inclusively than it was in London in 1400–1700, and is considered applicable to any London livery company. To claim that the Stationers' Company was never a guild would therefore ignore present-day lexicography. But I have seen no extant record of the fifteenth, sixteenth, or seventeenth century – in any Company, City, or national archive – in which the Stationers' Company is ever called a guild. Nor have I noticed any City record of that period in which *guild* is used as a common noun synonymous with *mistry*, *craft*, or *company*.<sup>A</sup> It seems evident that by 1400 the City recognized an important difference between guilds and companies.

To a Tudor Londoner a *guild* was a fraternity formed for essentially pious reasons, and typically named for and dedicated to a saint, an aspect of the Deity, or some other sacred symbol. Sometimes its purpose was to foster the mutual benefit of its members, for example by helping members overtaken by sickness or other misfortune – although H. F. Westlake notes that fewer than a third of the guilds listed in the returns of 1389 had ordinances making such provision.<sup>23</sup> Sometimes the original purpose was to raise funds for rebuilding or repairing a church, or for a seemingly more secular good work such as building a bridge or maintaining a road. But guild ordinances most commonly show a preoccupation with the souls of the dead, and the saying of requiems and masses for departed members – which is why another distinguishing characteristic is that any guild with adequate funds usually retained the services of a chaplain or chantry priest.<sup>24</sup>

Some of London's oldest misteries were first incorporated as guilds. What led them to take that step evidently varied widely from company to company; as Elspeth Veale has observed, 'different groups set up and used different forms for different reasons at different times'.<sup>25</sup> In some cases an existing parish guild seems to have been taken over by men of a particular trade;<sup>26</sup> more often, perhaps, an existing association of tradesmen formed a guild to promote their common interests. As each new association added another precedent, more groups of tradesmen were inspired to form their own societies, both formal and informal, to serve the interests of their own trades. And it is by no means certain that all those associations (especially

<sup>A</sup> Some companies' formal names reflected their early incorporation as guilds, and some had ancient ordinances that used the word, so it is sometimes *quoted* in City records (London's oldest company still called itself a guild in the 1590s: see Consitt, *Weavers' Company*, 1: 318–21). My claim refers only to records in which the City authorities or their clerks appear to be using their own words.

those that remained unincorporated) can realistically be equated with guilds even before 1400.<sup>27</sup>

Some nineteenth-century historians considered the most important features of misteries to be what they had in common with guilds, and ‘conventionally but unhistorically described [them] by the hybrid term “craft guilds”’ to emphasize the point.<sup>28</sup> For George Unwin, every craft guild necessarily combined ‘The craft or mystery element and the fraternity or gild element’, so he could generalize confidently about the ‘large place occupied by religious observances in the life of the trade guilds’ without needing any quantitative evidence about the majority.<sup>29</sup> Most freemen of most companies undoubtedly spent what would now be considered an unusually large part of their lives in active religious observance. But unless they did so only as a condition of membership, that tells us more about the individual freemen than about the mystery. Most crafts made donations to their least fortunate members and to good causes outside the company, collectively attended divine service or public sermons on special occasions, and engaged in other activities also practised by guilds and fraternities. But charity and piety were hardly exclusive to guildsmen, and having pious and charitable members is not enough to qualify an essentially secular mystery as a guild.

Caroline Barron has observed that ‘by the fifteenth century there was no longer any confusion between what was, and what was not, a craft guild’.<sup>30</sup> But nor was there much confusion in London between what was a craft and what was a guild. As early as 1388 the Crown sent separate writs on the same day to the mayor and sheriffs, one ordering all ‘misteras’ to produce their charters or patents in Chancery and the other requiring all ‘gildas et fraternites’ to do the same.<sup>31</sup> In 1504 Parliament thought it necessary to differentiate: an act of that year specified that unauthorized ordinances should be made by neither ‘Maisters Wardens & felishippes of Craftes or mysters, nor eny of them, nor eny rulers of guyldes or fraternities’.<sup>32</sup> When a later statute abolished ‘all fraternities brotherheddes and guyldes being within the Realme of Englande’ in 1548,<sup>33</sup> the only London ‘company’ whose existence was at all threatened was that of the Parish Clerks – whose fifteenth-century charters unmistakably identify it as a guild rather than a craft.

Of particular interest is the Drapers’ Company, whose charter of 1364 identifies it simply as the Mystery of Drapers (*‘le mestier de draperie’*) and concerns only its internal government and the regulation of the trade.<sup>34</sup> Not until 1438 was it incorporated by a charter that allowed ‘the Mystery of Drapers’ to establish (or become) ‘the Gild or Fraternity of the Blessed Mary of Drapers of London’. But while the memberships of the guild and

the mystery were evidently identical, the new charter twice implies that the two associations remained conceptually distinct: the Drapers were to elect a master and wardens, and to procure a common seal, for conducting the business ‘as well . . . of the Mystery aforesaid as of the Gild and Fraternity aforesaid’ (*tam mistere predictae quam Gilde & Fraternalitatis predictarum*).<sup>35</sup> So when the guild was abolished in 1548, the mystery remained in existence.

By 1400 the defining difference in London between a guild and a mystery was the freedom of the City. The franchise was almost completely in the hands of the companies, and the guilds had no say in it whatever. While a freeman of a company could bind and free apprentices, a mere guildsman could not. Any apprentice who had been legally bound to a freeman, and who had served his term satisfactorily, was entitled to be made free of his master’s company. If he had been presented to the chamberlain of the City for registration within a year and a day of the start of his term, freedom of the company automatically entitled him to freedom of the City. If he had not been properly registered the City may in theory have reserved the right to refuse him – but in practice the only difference was that he had to pay a higher fee.<sup>36</sup>

There were two other ways of becoming free of the City, and both patrimony and redemption were also in the hands of the companies. Any youth whose father was free at the time of his birth was entitled to become free ‘by patrimony’ of his father’s company (and therefore of the City) when he came of age at twenty-one – *provided* that he had never been registered as an apprentice by the chamberlain.<sup>A</sup> It was also possible for an adult to buy the freedom and thus become free ‘by redemption’. Over this practice the companies’ control was less direct, because no matter who sponsored an applicant, only the Common Council could actually confer the freedom in this way. The councilmen were all freemen, and even if they agreed that an applicant could be freed, for the transaction to be completed a company had to accept him. No mere guild, however, had the power to free anyone.

The reason why the Parish Clerks faced abolition in 1548 was not only that their association was defined by its charter as a ‘fraternity or gild’, dedicated to St Nicholas, and entitled to retain chaplains.<sup>37</sup> It was that when the City authorities had finally agreed to free all the newly chartered parish clerks by redemption in 1443, they had made the fraternity’s status unequivocal by expressly forbidding its members to take apprentices.<sup>B</sup> In

<sup>A</sup> That proviso was, however, frequently ignored and only occasionally enforced.

<sup>B</sup> Except that any member whose wife had a trade of her own could bind apprentices on her behalf.

1548 the threat to their guild's existence was sufficiently serious to spur the clerks into civil disobedience. According to a complaint laid before the Court of Augmentations, 'pretendyng interest . . . by collor of theyre Corporacion' they not only occupied both Clerks' Hall 'and all other the possessyons of the seid Guylde and intruded the kinges possessyon therein but also wyll in nowise suffer the kinges offycers to take the possession of the premysses'.<sup>38</sup> What finally saved them from abolition was that in 1553 the City allowed them to revise their ordinances to include apprenticeship, thus making the guild resemble a bona fide company.<sup>39</sup>

In their 1403 petition, the Textwriters, Limners, and others asked permission to elect wardens whose only specified duty was to oversee the professional activities of the mistery. There is no clearer example in the City records of a fifteenth-century company being formed for the express secular purpose of trade regulation. The wills of individual Stationers often display the common concern to provide for prayers and masses to be said for their souls. But no will I have seen even *hints* that the Company itself played any role in arranging requiems for its members. As will be discussed in [Chapter 4](#), in 1528 one wealthy Stationer left a small bequest to 'the bretherhoode of saint Iohn the Euangelist kept by the Stacioners'.<sup>A</sup> Whatever that fraternity was, if it still existed twenty years later it was abolished in 1548. That there is no other known reference to it makes it hard to believe that it played a major role in the Company's life – and since the lone testator made other provision for trentals to be said for him, that bequest had no obvious funerary purpose. Rather than suggesting that the Stationers' Company really was a guild after all, the elusive brotherhood of St John the Evangelist seems to point firmly the other way – because there is an obvious difference between *keeping* a fraternity and *being* one.

I have found no evidence that the Stationers' Company before 1700 was ever what its London contemporaries would have called a guild. It was never called a guild in either its own records or those of the City authorities who created it, and it is hardly possible that any of its early members (especially those with apprentices) could have mistaken it for one. Whether we call it a mistery, a craft, or a company today makes little real difference – but our understanding of it will not be enhanced by calling it a guild.

<sup>A</sup> In 'The Arms of the Scriveners and Stationers', Moran argues that the presence of the eagle of St John the Evangelist in both companies' arms is 'evidence' that Pollard's supposed joint mistery of 1357 was a guild devoted to that saint. As the patron of writers and books John would have been an obvious choice for either company – but neither he nor his eagle appeared in the Stationers' arms before 1557 (see [Figure 9](#)).

### The hierarchy of companies

By 1500 there were at least eighty-two recognized companies in London and probably more. Certainty is difficult, because there are no definitive lists among the extant City records. What lists survive – for example when the companies are assessed for their contributions to City loans – usually range in length between forty and sixty-four companies, and the selection of smaller crafts often seems arbitrary.<sup>A</sup> The longest sixteenth-century list I have found is shown in [Figure 3](#). It was copied in 1501 from an original at least four years older, and after at least two stages of alteration was left recording seventy-four of the companies recognized in late 1502.<sup>B</sup> At least eight others could have been added, because there is no doubt about the official standing of the Basketmakers, Brownbakers, Cooks, Gardeners, Horners, Musicians, Plasterers, and Stringers. But the status of some of the smaller communities and less skilled trades (soapmakers, porters, waterbearers, watermen,<sup>C</sup> and labourers) remains far less certain.

Some companies were more prestigious than others, usually by virtue of either wealth or age (though not always both). If we take the eighty-two that were certainly recognized in late 1502 we can divide them into four groups in descending order of prestige – although those groupings do not exactly match the official order of precedence in processions, which was newly laid down for the top forty-eight companies in January 1516.<sup>40</sup>

Most prestigious of all were the ‘greater’ companies, which in 1502 numbered eleven. Until the late fourteenth century there had been only seven (the Mercers, Grocers, Drapers, Fishmongers, Goldsmiths, Skinners, and Vintners), but between 1382 and 1460 they were joined by the Ironmongers,

<sup>A</sup> I have assumed that no list shorter than forty is even attempting to be ‘complete’. A list of 111 ‘*diuersarum artium*’ of 1422–3 (Unwin, *Gilds and Companies*, 167, 370–1) is sometimes mistaken for a roll of companies. But despite significant omissions (Bricklayers, Coopers, Masons, Tylers), several obscure trades unlikely to have formed companies are included (Chariotmakers, Galochmakers, Heymongers, Stuffers), while Bokebynders, Lymnours, Scriptoros Texti, and Stacioners are listed separately nineteen years after amalgamation.

<sup>B</sup> LMA, COL/CC/01/01/010, 374<sup>r</sup>. The original antedated the mergers of the Glovers and Pursers (1498) and the Pinners and Wiremongers (1497). The 1501 copyist correctly used the new names of the former Glovers and Wiremongers, and included the new Hurer-Hattermerchants (1501) in the first column – but left the Pursers, Pinners, Hurers, and Hattermerchants separately listed. Those names were later deleted and the Stockfishmongers inserted, probably when the list was updated in 1502 to record three new changes: the mergers of the Painters and Stainers, the Glovers-Pursers and Leathersellers, and the Hurer-Hattermerchants and Haberdashers. The marks that indicate which companies had livery were added later still.

<sup>C</sup> Unwin erred in making the watermen (who carried passengers or goods by water) and the waterbearers (who carried water) share a single index entry under ‘Watermen’ (*Gilds and Companies*, 397).



Tailors (later Merchant Tailors), Haberdashers, and Salters. Not until 1538 did the last of what are now called the Great Twelve achieve that status: the Clothworkers, who until their merger of 1528 had been the Shearmen and the Fullers. What distinguished those companies from their inferiors was their monopoly of the aldermanry. By long-established custom (and London was *ruled* by its customs), only freemen of the greater companies could serve as aldermen – and because only an alderman could be elected mayor, those same companies also monopolized the mayoralty. In the 1550s the rule was finally relaxed as regards aldermen, but apart from a Commonwealth aberration in 1649–51, the Great Twelve held on to the mayoralty until 1742.<sup>41</sup>

Among the ‘inferior’ companies, those of highest status were the ones with royal charters, of which there were still only eighteen in 1502.<sup>A</sup> Most, as might be expected, were among the companies later numbered from 12 to 29 in the precedence list; three notable exceptions were London’s oldest company, the Weavers (forty-fourth in precedence), and the Cooks and Plasterers (neither listed in 1516 at all). Below the chartered companies were the fifty-three (or more) that owed their existence only to recognition by the City. These can be further subdivided into twenty recorded as having a livery and thirty-three lacking that distinction. The Stationers were in that last category.

A company livery (or ‘clothing’) was a long gown and a hood of some distinctive colour or combination of colours: a dress uniform for ceremonial occasions. By the sixteenth century the right to wear it was a privilege conferred only on those that a company chose to ‘call’ to that status – usually men who met some property qualification and were considered likely candidates for elective office, for which a prior call to the livery

<sup>A</sup> I exclude the Musicians, although a company of that name is said to have been chartered in 1472 by Edward IV (Unwin, *Gilds and Companies*, 163). The present company celebrated its tercentenary in 1904 (Ditchfield, *Companies*, 278) and its archive and memory date only from its Jacobean charter of 1604; no musicians are mentioned in [Figure 3](#), the 1502 livery list discussed below, or the 1516 precedence list.

Steve Rappaport’s claim that ‘approximately one hundred gilds were incorporated by the crown as livery companies’ in 1319–1518 (*Worlds within Worlds*, 31) is erroneous, both numerically and in implying that only incorporation could create a ‘company’ or confer a livery. The cited passage from which he took the number (Unwin, *Gilds and Companies*, 87–92) concerns the granting of ordinances by the City, not incorporation by the Crown, and in a second cited passage Unwin observes that ‘Of the sixty crafts . . . at the Guildhall in 1531 not more than half were incorporated’ (169). This explicitly contradicts Rappaport’s assertion that ‘During the late fourteenth and fifteenth centuries *most* of London’s gilds were incorporated as companies by the crown’ (184, my emphasis), which derives from the earlier claim. Not counting the Musicians, in 1502–1603 the number of companies with charters rose from twenty-nine to forty. By 1616 there were still only fifty-one.

was usually a requirement. Those who had been called (or ‘clothed’) were collectively known as the livery of that company.

There is considerable evidence that some kind of livery was worn by far more freemen in the fourteenth century than in the sixteenth.<sup>A</sup> As it became more exclusive, livery took on a greater civic importance. In 1467 the Common Council decreed that in future, the election of the mayor and the sheriffs should be restricted to the council itself, ‘the Masters and Wardens of each Mistry of the City, coming in their livery, and . . . other good men specially summoned for the purpose’. And in 1475 the council decided to forgo the privilege of specially summoning the additional good men (*probi homines*). Instead,

it was agreed that the Masters and Wardens of the Mistryes, together with good men of the same . . . , shall proceed together to the Guildhall, clothed in their last [*ultima*] livery for the election of a Mayor, and clothed in their previous [*penultima*] livery for the election of Sheriffs. Also that no others except good men of the Common Council shall be present at such elections.<sup>42</sup>

The plural pronoun in ‘their . . . livery’ may refer only to the masters and wardens, and need not suggest that the other ‘good men’ were similarly dressed. But it is more likely that the order should be taken at face value as restricting the elections to the Common Council and the masters, wardens, and *liveries* of the companies.

Sometime during the mayoralty of Sir John Shaa, probably in early 1502, a second and shorter list of companies was written into Journal 10 on the page facing that reproduced in Figure 3. The new list was headed in Latin, ‘The names of the arts of the City that have liveries’, and it recorded how many liverymen were in each of fifty companies. The earlier, longer list was then annotated, with a backslash added after each company that had liverymen and a ‘2’ before each company that had none.<sup>B</sup> The only other list of unliveried companies known to me was added by John Stow to the 1603 edition of his *Survey of London*, ostensibly recording sixty companies that attended the mayor’s feast in 1531, ten of which are noted as having ‘No Clothing’.<sup>43</sup> All ten are marked with a ‘2’ in the earlier list, but five marked as unliveried in 1502 are listed by Stow without annotation – one of them

<sup>A</sup> Unwin, *Gilds and Companies*, 166; Reddaway and Walker, *Goldsmiths*, 32–3; Steer, *Scriveners’ Common Paper*, 6. In some companies, however, many of the freemen may have worn a lesser ‘clothing’ distinct from the more exclusive livery (Reddaway and Walker, *Goldsmiths*, 236 n.2, 239 n.1).

<sup>B</sup> A ‘2’ was wrongly added before the Plumbers at the top of the second column, although it was already correctly checked. The leaf is now mounted, and the ‘2’ markings in the first column are lost – but the absence of check-marks is evidence enough.

being the Stationers. The problems raised by that list will be addressed in [Chapter 4](#); what matters here is the Company's apparent status in 1502. For while the Textwriters and Limners had evidently both been considered somewhat 'special' in 1357, what the Stationers belonged to at the beginning of the sixteenth century was one of the lowliest of all the City companies: unchartered, unliveried, and thoroughly undistinguished.

### Trade mobility

As already noted, if the 'other good people . . . who use to bind and sell books' of 1403 really were 'citizens of London' they must have been free of other companies. By the same token there were doubtless freemen of both the Textwriters and Limners who neither wrote text nor limned. But even if each mystery had somehow purged itself of all such freemen by 12 July 1403 it could not have maintained its unnatural purity for long, because it was quite common for Londoners to practise trades completely unconnected with the companies of which they were free. I therefore follow the convention of capitalizing company affiliations but not occupations – which makes it possible to distinguish between the very different circumstances of Richard Grafton (who was a stationer but a Grocer) and Henry Conway (who was a Stationer but a grocer). In City records, when someone is described as 'citizen and stationer of London' (with or without capitals) it is almost always safe to conclude that what is indicated is company affiliation. But if someone is merely described as 'stationer' the reference may only be to his or her actual trade. That difference is not always appreciated by those studying early modern London, who sometimes assume that anyone described inconsistently must have had more than one trade.<sup>A</sup>

Whenever practicable, by City custom any freeman could follow any trade and could change occupations at will. To protect against monetary abuses and forgery the Goldsmiths were allowed a monopoly (although their own freemen could practise other crafts), and in the interests of public health the City regulated the victualling trades more strictly than most – but the reasons for such exceptions were usually both obvious and sensible. In Pollard's influential paper on the Stationers' early history he claimed that 'a grocer or a draper could only sell books wholesale, because retail trade was confined to members of the appropriate guild', but that

<sup>A</sup> Roger Crane, for example, was a parchmener by profession but a freeman of the Haberdashers' Company (which he served as warden in at least 1385–6). It is not easy to tell whether the entry in Christianson's *Directory* (95–6) claims him as a Haberdasher or a haberdasher (or both).

is incorrect.<sup>A</sup> In the absence of a compelling reason to the contrary, any freeman of early modern London could practise any craft, and could buy or sell any commodity by either wholesale or retail.

Some of the causes and consequences of trade mobility can be illustrated from the career of Andrew Palmer, Goldsmith and scrivener. He knew his company's business well enough to serve as Comptroller of the Mint in the Tower from 1582 until his death in 1599.<sup>44</sup> But he spent much of his career as a scrivener and was often so described – especially when he or his employees wrote and witnessed wills.<sup>45</sup> He could bind apprentices only in his own company, so although he trained at least some of them as scribes they were freed as Goldsmiths. One of them, Richard Collins, was acquainted with some influential Stationers (he wrote and witnessed the wills of Arthur Pepwell and Joan Wolfe),<sup>46</sup> and when the Stationers' clerk died in 1574 he was chosen to succeed him. Sworn in as clerk in May 1575, after negotiating with the Goldsmiths he was translated to the Stationers in October.<sup>47</sup> But although he was now a Stationer instead of a Goldsmith, Collins remained a scrivener by trade.<sup>B</sup> Before translating he had bound an apprentice named Richard Wright, who was duly freed as a Goldsmith even though Collins had been a Stationer for years – and like Palmer and Collins before him, trained his own apprentices as scribes and freed them as Goldsmiths. So Andrew Palmer was directly responsible for the later presence among both the Goldsmiths and the Stationers of dynasties of scribes who never became Scribes. In much the same way, after the Grocer Richard Grafton became a printer he trained several apprentices in the book trades. They in turned trained their own apprentices, some of whom remained Grocers while others eventually translated to the Stationers. And an even more impressive family tree of book-trade Drapers was founded by the printer Thomas Petyt.

One could also join the 'wrong' company by patrimony. A boy entitled to become free of his father's company could nevertheless learn any trade he chose – although if he served as an apprentice he was supposed to be freed in his master's company instead. It might seem illogical for an apprentice to prefer his father's company after learning a different craft, but there could be advantages. An apprentice had to serve for at least seven years (some companies required eight or more), and terms of ten years and above

<sup>A</sup> 'The Company before 1557', 23 n.3. Pollard eventually learned otherwise, but the 1937 article still retains its power to mislead. Christianson follows the error (*Directory*, 41) but cites a passage Pollard wrote after he had abandoned it ('The English Market', 11).

<sup>B</sup> And so described himself, for example, in the 1577 will of Richard Juge (Plomer, *Abstracts*, 24).

were not uncommon. In 1556 the City ruled that no apprentice should be freed before his twenty-fourth birthday.<sup>48</sup> The regulation appears to be new rather than simply reaffirmed – but it is likely that *most* apprentices served until that age even before 1556. But patrimony could be claimed at the age of twenty-one, so any youth who particularly wanted early freedom (for example because apprentices could not marry) might choose patrimony even in an inappropriate company.

An equally compelling motive was status. No matter what his trade, anyone eligible to become free of one of the wealthier companies might seize the opportunity. Francis Shardman served his full apprenticeship with an unidentified Stationer, but then made himself free of the Dyers (thirteenth in precedence) ‘contrary to the custome of thys Cytie’. In March 1560 the Court of Aldermen ruled that the chamberlain should translate him to the Stationers where he belonged.<sup>49</sup> There is no trace of Shardman in the Stationers’ records, so he apparently never accepted translation – but we do not know whether he died, persuaded the aldermen to relent, or chose to remain unfreed. Translation, too, could be motivated by status. On 24 October 1525, in the presence of the wardens of both companies Richard Nele asked to be translated from the Stationers to the Ironmongers, ‘for by cause he is fully Instructid & occupieth the Craft of Iremongers/ and can but litell skyll or nothyng yn the Craft of Stacyoners’.<sup>50</sup> Nele had been freed in 1510, and had prospered enough to have been elected to the Common Council.<sup>51</sup> The Ironmongers were eager to acquire him as a freeman:<sup>A</sup> they paid 3s. to an officer ‘to warne Rychard nele to com . . . before *the* corte of alldermen’ for the hearing, gave the mayor 20s. ‘to attayne is favore that Rychard nele myght be Free of *our* company’, and instead of charging him for admission they gave him 20s. ‘tower is welcom’ (towards his welcome) and elected him warden the following June.<sup>52</sup> His claim to be a fully instructed ironmonger may be doubted, because records in and after 1530 show that he was really a soapmaker.<sup>53</sup> His real motive for translating was probably ambition, because only by joining one of the greater companies could he rise beyond the Common Council – although in the event he was never even nominated for alderman, let alone elected.

William Andrew also left the Stationers for one of the Great Twelve. In September 1554 the Court of Aldermen authorized his translation to the Vintners on condition that he pay the Stationers five marks (£3 6s. 8d.) for assenting to his departure.<sup>54</sup> Unlike Nele, he also had to pay his new company for admission – but only 20d., and he was elected to the Court

<sup>A</sup> The Stationers, on the other hand, could merely ‘nothyng obiecte & say agaynst the said *translacion*’.

of Assistants within a year.<sup>55</sup> But Andrew was a less prominent citizen than Nele, so he may have translated because he really *was* a vintner rather than to gain a foothold in the Twelve. By December 1555 he had been appointed for the first time as one of his new company's searchers for the eastern half of the City, so he presumably knew something about the trade.<sup>56</sup>

If Andrew had been working as a vintner before translating, the City could have *required* him to translate – though in that event he would probably not have had to pay the Stationers for assenting to his enforced removal. But Andrew belonged to a special group of freemen who did *not* have the right to change their trade. Freed by redemption in 1535, he had to sign a recognizance with a penalty of 100 marks (£66 13s. 4d.) to follow the craft of the company that accepted him.<sup>57</sup> In Andrew's case that custom may perhaps have been tacitly ignored from the beginning. Very unusually, the record of his freedom notes that the mayor refunded two marks of his redemption fee 'bycause the sayd Androwes can wryte very well & shall brynge vp youthe *vertuously*'.<sup>58</sup> There were still textwriters in the Company in 1535, so Andrew's penmanship may have been professionally relevant – but bringing up youth *virtuously* does not seem much closer to the craft of the Stationers than to that of the Vintners.

But even if Andrew was not held strictly to his recognizance, others sometimes were. The authorities generally tried to limit the number of redemptions, and would periodically impose a moratorium for a few years. But in special circumstances they occasionally permitted a company whose membership had seriously declined (or which was facing financial collapse) to nominate a specified number of redemptioners to be freed as a group.<sup>A</sup> There were always many people wanting redemption, and some would pay handsomely to be nominated, so a 'batch redemption' not only increased the company's membership but also helped fill its coffers. The practice was therefore open to abuse by those more willing to bribe their way into an impoverished company than to abide by their recognizances.

The largest group redemption of the century was authorized in October 1546, when the Stringers were allowed to admit no fewer than twenty 'foreyn Bowestryngmakers beyng of honest name & fame & howsholders'.<sup>59</sup> That favour was probably abused even more flagrantly than usual, because four years later half a dozen Stringers were translated to other companies within the space of four months – and during the same period the Joiners' request 'for the admyssion of certein foreyns into their felowship by redempcion

<sup>A</sup> For example, LMA, COL/CA/01/01/008, 163<sup>v</sup> (fourteen Weavers in 1531); COL/CA/01/01/011, 284<sup>v</sup> (twelve Weavers in 1546); COL/CA/01/01/013, 349<sup>f</sup> (fourteen Blacksmiths in 1551).

was . . . vtterly denied'.<sup>60</sup> Of the six translated Stringers, four are explicitly recorded as having been first freed by redemption. One of them had obviously never intended to make bowstrings, but had set up as a printer as soon as he was freed. John Day himself was probably happy to become a Stationer in February 1550, but removing him from the Stringers was intended by the City as a punishment.<sup>A</sup>

To cite examples involving Stationers I have had to rely on the better-documented sixteenth century. But the rules and customs of the City, and the common infractions and abuses of them, changed comparatively slowly. It is just possible that the new company of 1403 was the whole book trade and nothing but the book trade, and that all Textwriters and Limners who had previously pursued other occupations were translated to more appropriate misteries before the merger. But even in that unlikely event, within a few years the new company would have acquired its first mismatched patrimony, and one or more freemen of other companies would have taken up the writing, selling, or binding of books. So by the beginning of the sixteenth century there were at least a few Stationers who were not stationers and vice versa.

### The coming of the printers and publishers

William Caxton – Mercer, Merchant Adventurer, and former Governor of the English Nation at Bruges – apparently learned the craft of printing in his middle age in Cologne in 1471–2.<sup>B</sup> The following year he set up a press of his own in either Bruges or (more likely) Ghent,<sup>61</sup> where he printed four books in French and the first two ever printed in English: his own translations of Raoul Le Fèvre's *Recueil of the Histories of Troy* (1473–4) and Jacobus de Cessolis's *Game and Play of the Chess* (1474).<sup>62</sup> In or shortly before 1476 he set up England's first printing house in the precinct of Westminster Abbey, in the almonry,<sup>C</sup> and by late 1476 he was also renting

<sup>A</sup> The redemptioners of 1546 are not named, but when translated Day was described as 'heretofore . . . admytted into the liberties of this Citie by redempcion in the felowshyp of the Stryngers' (LMA, COL/CA/01/01/012, 200'). The only possible opportunity for that was in 1546.

<sup>B</sup> For the chronology of Caxton's publications see Paul Needham, *The Printer & the Pardoner*, Appendix D (83–91). The best lives are probably George D. Painter, *William Caxton: A Quincentenary Biography*, and N. F. Blake, *Caxton: England's First Publisher* (both 1976).

<sup>C</sup> Caxton's celebrated advertisement announcing that his books were for sale 'in . . . the almonesye at the reed pale' was printed in 1477 (STC 4890; Needham Cx24 (*The Printer & the Pardoner*, 85)), but that sign identified a shop and no book claims to have been *printed* there. The earliest record of rent paid by him for any almonry property is for 1482–3 (Tanner, 'William Caxton's Houses', 161–3), but Howard Nixon points out that there are no surviving records of 1475–82 for the tenements in question ('Caxton, his Contemporaries and Successors', 309).

a shop adjoining the chapter house, fronting on the path leading from what is now the Poets' Corner entrance of the abbey to the Palace of Westminster.<sup>63</sup>

Caxton's choice of Westminster rather than London has been variously explained. His most important books were commissioned by, dedicated to, or merely calculated to appeal to the nobility and gentry. As the principal royal residence and the seat of both Parliament and the major law courts, Westminster was the natural habitat of Caxton's patrons and preferred customers.<sup>64</sup> London was the home of the largest community of retail booksellers in England and the hub of the nation's most dominant network of commercial routes. But Westminster was close enough to allow Caxton to exploit those advantages without becoming subject to the City's more restrictive trading practices. It has been suggested that 'some of his friends may have lived there',<sup>65</sup> although he probably had at least as many friends in the City itself, and we can hardly know which ones he would most have wanted as neighbours. But there were also other Caxtons in Westminster,<sup>66</sup> and if they were his kin their presence may have played a part in what must nevertheless have been primarily a business decision.

In seeking additional reasons, some scholars have placed too much emphasis on London's xenophobia, suggesting that an attack on Richard Pynson and his workmen in 1500 was typical of what Caxton's alien employees could have expected in the City.<sup>67</sup> But the Pynson case was exceptional rather than typical, happened outside the City in the Westminster suburbs, and may have persuaded Pynson to move *into* London.<sup>A</sup> Another unlikely hypothesis is that Caxton, a distinguished freeman of London's highest-ranking livery company, feared opposition from the unchartered and unliveried Stationers. But there is no obvious reason to suppose that most Stationers objected to the idea of printers mass-producing books for them to illuminate, bind, and sell – although as the years passed and the volume and variety of printed material increased, some textwriters may have felt increasingly threatened as they read the printing on the wall.<sup>B</sup> Other suggestions are even less plausible:

As a shrewd businessman Caxton had to assess his competitors with presses in England; and they were soon there, if they did not actually beat him to

<sup>A</sup> One attack on Pynson's workmen admittedly happened in Fleet Street, but (as will be discussed below) Pynson and the attackers were residents of St Clement Danes, outside the City in Middlesex.

<sup>B</sup> Christianson quotes a Chancery bill in which a stationer laments that 'the occupation ys almost destroyed by prynters of bokes'. Conjecturing a date of *c.* 1487 (which may be several years too early), he observes that the complaint 'was premature . . . , but it was also prophetic' ('The Rise of London's Book-Trade', 131, 139).

it. Did he choose Westminster because there were printers already in the City of London? Lettou was there certainly by 1480, and by June 1483 he had been joined by several others.<sup>68</sup>

The ‘several others’ will be discussed below – but without better evidence than Lettou’s presence in 1480, the possibility that unrecorded printers were working in London before 1476 can safely be ignored.

The details of Caxton’s Westminster career are beyond the scope of this study, but one key factor that differentiated him from his later rivals (and, indeed, from many of his European contemporaries) demands attention. As Norman Blake has long emphasized, Caxton was not only England’s first printer but also its first publisher.

In common parlance, *printer* and *publisher* are virtually interchangeable, and modern authors often speak of having their work ‘printed’ by companies that own no printing equipment. But confusion between printing and publishing is nothing new, and the sixteenth century teems with books claiming to have been printed ‘by’ publishers who went from cradle to grave without ever owning or using a press. The phrase *printed by* was often used only in the sense of ‘caused to be printed by’ or ‘printing paid for by’ – and prefatory epistles written by publishers were usually headed ‘The Printer to the Reader’. Printers produce books by paying their employees to manufacture them; publishers usually pay printers to produce books for them – and when looked at like that, the essential difference may seem fairly trivial. It is therefore understandable that many historians and literary scholars assume that anyone named in an early imprint was a printer.

In the sixteenth century *publisher* had no specific book-trade connotation, and merely meant a person who made something public: the preacher of a sermon or the spreader of a rumour. Publishers in the modern sense certainly existed, but the book trade seems to have found it unnecessary to coin a word for them.<sup>A</sup> When considered as people who paid for books to be printed they were usually called *printers* even if they owned no presses; when their role as wholesalers was at issue they were thought of as *booksellers*. Not until late in the seventeenth century did a word other than the equally imprecise *stationer* emerge at all, and when it did, *undertaker* was first used only in its general sense of ‘one who undertakes a task or

<sup>A</sup> Although the author of *Scribal Publication in Seventeenth-Century England*, Harold Love criticized David Bergeron for making ‘anachronistic use of “publisher” since the period knew nothing of publishing in its modern trade sense. Most books were financed and distributed by booksellers’ (‘To my favourite . . .’, col. 2). But financing and distribution (the basics of what even a modern publisher does) are not the same as retail bookselling, and it is impossible to explain the early trade in printed books without either inventing a word or borrowing an anachronism.

enterprise', or *entrepreneur*.<sup>A</sup> In *The Nature of the Book*, Adrian Johns chose to avoid *publisher* and use *undertaker*, 'which is less ambiguous and more historically appropriate' (xix). But while its use can be defended when discussing the period Johns knows best, in this study *undertaker* would be no less anachronistic than *publisher*. It is admittedly found in the Stationers' records some years before the *OED* first records it in print in 1697,<sup>69</sup> but not during the period I have studied. I shall therefore use *publisher* throughout – because without a clear distinction between printing and publishing the early evolution of the book trade cannot be properly understood.

The process that began with a manuscript and ended with the purchase of a printed book could involve any number of people. At its simplest it can be divided into four principal parts, each considered the responsibility of a different agent – although in reality at least one agent would usually perform more than one of the tasks. The four principal agents were a publisher, a printer, a distributor, and a bookseller.

The *publisher* decided that making a particular text public was a worthwhile venture, and paid to have a large number of copies printed. Non-commercial motives could certainly exist – political or religious zeal, for example, or authorial vanity – but the usual hope was that enough copies could be sold to return an acceptable profit. Unlike printers, booksellers, and (most) distributors, publishers were not always book-trade professionals. Publishing was a form of speculative investment rather than a craft, and could in theory be undertaken by anyone with access to a suitable text and enough capital to finance its printing.

The *printer* ran a book-factory called a *printing house* or *printing office*.<sup>B</sup> He (or occasionally she) owned a press, some type, and various other necessary tools, and could either provide or be supplied with ink, paper, and other materials needed for the job in hand. He or she may sometimes have joined in the work, but usually employed journeymen (wage-earners) and apprentices (paid in kind with bed, board, and training) to do the actual printing. He or she paid compositors to set the text, pressmen to print it on

<sup>A</sup> Another possible candidate is *setter forth*, used in a proclamation of 1538 by Henry VIII (STC 7790, sheet 1, line 41; TRP 186, p. 272, line 17) and implicitly in 1609 in the dedication to Shakespeare's *Sonnets* by 'the well-wishing adventurer in setting forth', Thomas Thorpe (22353, A2<sup>f</sup>). But while there is ample precedent for using *set forth* as a verb or participle, English does not need the noun *forthsetter*.

<sup>B</sup> In early records of the book trade the word *shop* invariably appears to mean a retail shop rather than what a printer might hypothetically have called his workshop. *Printing house* and *shop* therefore refer to the sites of significantly different activities. The modern American *print shop* blurs an important distinction, so it is a term best avoided in historical studies.

the required number of sheets of paper, and sometimes a corrector to edit the copy before setting. If a corrector was on the payroll he would usually also read proof; otherwise proofreading was done by either the master or a literate journeyman. When the job was finished the printer returned the printed sheets to the publisher and (at some point) received appropriate payment. He or she was responsible for the accuracy of the text and the appearance of the printed pages, but *not* for the decision to publish that particular text in the first place.

The *distributor* then tried to get rid of as many copies as possible as quickly as possible. The most efficient way was to sell them at wholesale prices (in batches rather than singly) to as many retail booksellers as possible. The publisher and the distributor were usually the same person, but publishers with limited storage space (or few contacts in the retail trade) sometimes delegated the job to another (usually a bookseller) for either a flat fee or a percentage. Like *publisher*, *distributor* is a modern word not found in Tudor records. Wholesale distribution was considered merely a species of bookselling for which no separate word was needed.

The *bookseller* was a shopkeeper who marked up the wholesale price and sold copies directly to members of the public. Some copies (especially of larger books) would have been bound by or for the bookseller before sale, but others would have been sold either completely unbound ('in sheets') or stitched so that they could be handled and read before binding. Some customers commissioned a binding of a preferred style from the bookseller (who either employed an in-house binder or sent books out to self-employed subcontractors); others took their purchases to binders of their own choosing. Binding, in other words, was something often not done to a book until it was sold, and the purchaser often controlled not only how it was done but also *whether* it was done. I have therefore not counted binders among the intermediaries between publishers and booksellers.

In the earliest days of printing all four principal roles were usually played by the same entrepreneur, who not only chose texts, printed them, and distributed most copies to other booksellers, but also sold some copies to the public and sometimes bound them too. A century later that had largely changed, and most books printed in England were printed *for* their publishers by someone else. A scholar investigating the reliability of a text usually needs to study its printer rather than its publisher; one interested in how or why the manuscript was procured should focus on the publisher rather than the printer. But even when discussing the activities of a printer-publisher such as Caxton it is important to be precise about which of his roles is being considered. When the abbot of Abingdon paid him to

print an indulgence, Caxton was not its publisher; when he had two books manufactured for him in Paris he was not their printer.<sup>70</sup>

Caxton was arguably a publisher first and a printer only second, because he is known to have translated texts into English before he learned how to print them. To judge from his references to the mechanical process of printing, it certainly interested him.<sup>71</sup> But his activities as editor, translator, seeker of patronage, manager, and marketer would have left him little time to work at case or at press himself – and to have done so would have been beneath the dignity of his years and standing. As a merchant and publisher, if he wished to market books in search of a profit he needed to have them printed, and in the absence of available printers he needed to become one himself. But he owed his commercial success less to the quality of his printing than to his strategy as a publisher, and to his instinct for identifying what his chosen customers would most readily buy. Neither of his first two rivals in England had comparable instincts, and both established themselves at some distance from London. In a trade whose success depended on efficient and widespread distribution, and in a country whose major trade routes all radiated from an unusually dominant capital city, that may have been a serious geographical mistake.

England's second printer produced an edition of Rufinus in Oxford in 1478 (famously misdated 1468) and two other Latin texts using the same Cologne type in 1479. As Blake observed, the pattern is a familiar one in Europe:

A printer of German origins, who was trained in one of the major printing centres there, was encouraged to move to a city with a university in another country under the prompting of an eminent churchman and man of learning. The result was a book in Latin belonging to the standard Western intellectual tradition, but the edition itself was in competition with many others that were produced in Italy, Germany and Switzerland.<sup>A</sup>

Latin books continued to be printed in Oxford in 1481–6, but in different type. Blake notes that those books differ from the first three in having 'a strong English association as well as noticeable educational links', and A. C. De la Mare has pointed out that when they identify Oxford as their source, they do so in a different way.<sup>72</sup> The first three were printed anonymously while several of the later group identify their printer as Theodoric Rood – so it seems likely that Rood was really the *second* Oxford printer, and that he

<sup>A</sup> Blake, 'The Spread of Printing', 27. Another result, equally common in Europe, seems to have been that the business lasted only a few years before closing down (Rogers, 'Printing in 1478', *passim*).

took over the press of an unidentified predecessor. One book dated 1485 has a colophon attributing it to both Rood and Thomas Hunt, a known Oxford stationer. The revisers of STC followed the tradition of attributing all the unsigned Oxford books of 1485–6 and a selection of those of 1483 to both Rood and Hunt. But there is no real evidence of a printing partnership, and it is quite likely that Hunt's involvement was limited to publishing the single book that bears his name.<sup>A</sup> Their equal billing certainly implies that Rood shared the investment, but not that Hunt helped with the printing. What may have been Rood's last book, printed in 1486, was his only one in English – although Blake's suggestion that it shows 'a desperate attempt to change direction to prevent bankruptcy by imitating [Caxton's] policy' may be overstated.<sup>B</sup> No more books are known to have been printed in Oxford until 1517.

The trajectory of England's third press resembled that of the second. Six Latin books were printed in St Albans, probably in or near the abbey and under the patronage of the abbot. Five are dated in 1479–81, and one (a work by Antonius Andreae) is undated. The next known St Albans book was probably printed in 1485, so STC assigns the Andreae to 1483 to help fill the gap. But that book is of a piece with the other small Latin books of 1479–81, while the two large English books that close the career of the St Albans press in 1485–6 are distinctly different. Wynkyn de Worde would later describe the printer of the first of them as 'one somtyme scole mayster of saynt Albons',<sup>73</sup> which implies that he was English. But as Nicolas Barker has pointed out, the St Albans output may well be the work of two different printers as at Oxford,<sup>74</sup> and if he is right we know even less about the first than about the schoolmaster. Once again we see a press failing to establish itself with the kind of Latin texts printed by European competitors, then turning briefly to English books but closing down before the end of 1486.

England's fourth printing house differed in many ways. But, curiously, here too the first owner of the press produced only a few items in Latin before being replaced (after a period of partnership) by a successor whose output included English books but who probably ceased to print in 1486.<sup>C</sup>

<sup>A</sup> The same conclusion has been drawn by Hellinga (*BMC xi*, 14–15).

<sup>B</sup> Blake, 'The Spread of Printing', 28; STC 17958. The attribution to Rood, however, is now doubted (*BMC xi*, 15).

<sup>C</sup> The entries for STC 15849 and 15853 attribute them to '[W. de Machlinia, c. 1488]', and the chronological index lists them accordingly. But in the index of printers neither book is credited to Machlinia at all, whose career is dated '1481?–1486?'. That omission may be accidental, but ISTC has rejected the 1488 dates in favour of 'about 1486' and 'about 1486–87' respectively.

The first owner was John Lettou, whose surname indicates that either he or his forebears came from Lithuania. His press was in Thames Street, London, next to one of the neighbouring churches of Allhallows the Great and Allhallows the Less.<sup>A</sup> There he printed at least five known items: three unsigned and undated indulgences, and two signed and dated books for the wealthy Draper, William Wilcock.<sup>B</sup> No other book produced at the Thames Street press is dated, and only a handful are signed. Five of what are believed to be the next six, printed mostly in Law French between late 1481 and early 1484, are lawbooks: a volume of abridged statutes partly in Latin, three yearbooks, and the first printed edition of Littleton's *Tenures*. The Littleton identifies its printers as Lettou and William de Machlinia (William of Mechelen, or Malines, Belgium), so all five lawbooks and one other Latin tract are traditionally attributed to the same partnership.<sup>C</sup> None of the other books printed in the Lettou–Machlinia types is dated; only four are signed, and by Machlinia alone. Two of the earliest give his address as near ('iuxta') Fleet Bridge, which is usually taken to imply Fleet Street. But the bridge separated Fleet Street (west) from Ludgate Hill (east), so there is an equal chance that the printing house was in the latter. Sometime after 1484 Machlinia moved again, and the last book mentioning an address locates him somewhere in Holborn. His last datable publication was the English translation of a papal bull, presumably printed soon after 13 June 1486 when the King's Council noted that it should be translated and copied.<sup>75</sup>

It has been suggested that William Wilcock may have been responsible for bringing Lettou to England – which is possible, although his interest in publishing seems not to have outlasted 1480–1.<sup>76</sup> According to Anne Sutton, Wilcock

may have acted for [Lettou] as one of the London citizens required to stand surety for an alien being admitted to the freedom of the City . . . This status would have been essential to Lettou's position in the City.<sup>77</sup>

<sup>A</sup> In 'The Company before 1557', Pollard argued that the address in the colophon of STC 15719 was *between* those churches (21–2). When he retracted that interpretation he concluded that the press might have been next to any one of seven London churches of Allhallows ('Lettou's Address', 335). But in 1483–4 Lettou was documented as a resident of Dowgate ward (see below), in which the only two churches were the twin Allhallowses of Thames Street. His failure to specify *which* Allhallows he was 'iuxta' probably points to Allhallows the Great.

<sup>B</sup> A brief biography is included in Sutton and Hammond, *Coronation of Richard III*, 414. Most documents call him 'Wilcocks' (variously spelt), but Lettou – who must have known him – printed the name as 'Wilcock' (STC 581) and 'Wilcok' (19627).

<sup>C</sup> STC tentatively attributes the puzzling *Siege of Rhodes* (STC 4594) to '[London? J. Lettou? a. W. de Machlinia? c. 1482?]', but that attribution is now rejected (*BMC xi*, 263, 356–7).

To support that last assertion Sutton cites Graham Pollard, who suggested in 1937 that

Books could only be retailed in the City by freemen: alien stationers could only become freemen with the approval of the Stationers' Company. Therefore printers and stationers must have joined the Company before they could display a City address in the imprints of their books.<sup>78</sup>

But only the first of those two sentences is true.

Like most bibliographers of his day, Pollard believed that imprints were addressed to potential purchasers, and that a printed address identified the book's exclusive *retail* outlet. Had that been true, the London book trade might have been short-lived, because few publishers could have recovered their costs (let alone made a profit) if they restricted retail sales to a single shop. But then as now, the real purpose of an imprint was to tell *retailers* where a book could be bought *wholesale*. To break even during his lifetime a publisher needs to sell to as many booksellers as possible, whether or not he himself retails a single book. Retail customers do not usually buy books from printing houses. It was no more necessary in 1483 to go to Thames Street to buy the Lettou and Machlinia *Tenures* than it is today to go to Cambridge to buy a book from the Cambridge University Press. Furthermore, while only freemen could ply their trade through the windows of retail shops,<sup>A</sup> neither manufacturing nor wholesaling was similarly restricted. Alien printers and publishers were perfectly entitled both to identify their premises with pictorial signs and to mention their addresses in their imprints.<sup>B</sup>

A second fallacy also lurks in both passages quoted above, namely that the Stationers' Company had jurisdiction over printers. Even though some Stationers had begun decorating, binding, and selling printed books as well as manuscripts, they were still a company of textwriters, limners, binders, and booksellers, and no native Stationer is known to have printed before 1512. If an alien had threatened the livelihood of any competing freeman by setting up as a printer in London, he would certainly have been brought to the attention of the authorities. But inside the City limits in the 1480s

<sup>A</sup> A typical retail shop-front consisted of a large window, a *stall-board* or *stall* below it (an outdoor counter, hinged to close up against the window like a horizontal shutter), and a sloping *penthouse* or *pentice* above (often fixed, sometimes hinged like the stall-board) to protect against weather.

<sup>B</sup> In *BMC xi* (15 n.3) Hellinga claims that I have 'contested G. Pollard's hypothesis . . . that books could only be retailed in the City by freemen'. I have not questioned the fact that only free citizens could *retail* goods inside London. But Pollard's assertion that 'retail trade was confined to members of the appropriate gild' is mistaken (Pollard, 'The Company before 1557', 23; Blayney, 'The Sign of the Sun', 7, 19 n.29).

there were no competing freemen: the only freeman in the trade at all was a Mercer working outside the City in Westminster. The freedom would certainly have brought Lettou advantages if he could have acquired it – but the only significant handicaps he faced without it were being unable either to take apprentices or to sell his own books by retail, and it was perfectly possible to thrive as a printer without doing either. That was lucky for Lettou – because comparatively few redemptions were granted at all, most redemptioners were English-born,<sup>A</sup> and although Sylvia Thrupp has noted that aliens were *sometimes* freed without prior denization,<sup>79</sup> it was far from common. There is no evidence that either Lettou or Machlinia ever became a denizen, and no reason to suppose that either ever sought the freedom of the City.

It was Thrupp who first pointed out that the London assessments for the 1483 alien subsidy record ‘all the printers who are known to have been at work then except Machlinia’ – in other words, they record Lettou.<sup>80</sup> He is listed as a householder in Dowgate ward, where he and one William Ravenswalde are recorded as the joint employers of four alien servants. As Sutton later noted, Ravenswalde and Machlinia are indubitably one and the same.<sup>81</sup> Three other names listed in Langbourn ward were subsequently annotated with the word ‘bokepnynter’: John Hawkes, Henry Frankenberg (with five servants), and a ‘Bernardus’ listed immediately after Frankenberg. As Thrupp suggested, Bernardus is presumably the Bernardo van Stondo who jointly leased a property in Langbourn ward with Frankenberg in 1482.<sup>82</sup> In that lease they are correctly described not as printers but as ‘merchauntes of Prynted booke’s; van Stondo is probably the Bernard of ‘Utareth’ (Utrecht) who imported a shipment of seventeen books in January 1481.<sup>B</sup>

Stressing that Hawkes, Frankenberg, and Bernard were ‘all *carefully* recorded as book printers’, Sutton observes that they ‘have no identifiable surviving books attached to their names and have therefore received no attention as printers from historians of the book trade’.<sup>83</sup> But printing

<sup>A</sup> In approximately twenty-two months of 1551–3 covered by the surviving fragment of a City freedom roll, only 40 of the 1,148 freedoms were by redemption (Rappaport, *Worlds within Worlds*, 292 n.8) – an average of fewer than two a month. Of eighty-two redemptioners recorded between May 1461 and April 1497 only one (Michael de Saros) is explicitly identified as alien-born, while two others (John de Salarío and Hans Riot) have names suggesting alien *ancestry*, though not necessarily birth (LMA, CO1/RG/01/024–5, esp. 25, 4<sup>r</sup>, 8<sup>r</sup>, 8<sup>v</sup>).

<sup>B</sup> Cobb, *Overseas Trade*, 21 (no. 58). Sutton describes that shipment as ‘large quantities of books in 1480–81’ (‘Caxton was a Mercer’, 137). Neither Thrupp nor Sutton seems to have noticed that in another alien subsidy list Bernardo is generically identified as ‘Bernardo Boke prynter’ (PRO, E 179/144/75A, 1).

had arrived in England only eight years earlier, and even many decades later it was common for record-keepers to assume that anyone who traded in printed books was a ‘printer’. There is no obvious reason to believe that whoever annotated the Langbourn return was using the word with precision to distinguish those men from book-traders of other kinds: what he was doing was distinguishing members of the printed book trade from other professions.<sup>A</sup>

About Hawkes nothing is known, but he is not recorded as having servants. If self-employed he was probably either a bookseller or bookbinder; if not, he was presumably an employee rather than an employer. Bernardus too is listed without servants, but if he is indeed Bernardo van Stondo he was probably either Frankenberg’s partner or his employee. The question of whether there was an unrecorded printing house in Langbourn ward during Caxton’s lifetime therefore depends on whether or not Frankenberg was a printer. He is listed as having five servants, and if we add Bernardus, Frankenberg’s staff outnumbered Lettou’s by one. In seven years, Lettou and Machlinia produced at least thirty-three items of which copies have survived; Frankenberg’s recorded activity in the book trade lasted two years longer, but not a single extant book or sheet has been attributed to him. While printers make occasional appearances in the surviving London port records, the principal trade of the major importers of incunabula was not printing but importing. During Frankenberg’s career as an importer (1478–85) he was second only to Peter Actors in the number and total value of his recorded shipments.<sup>B</sup> The only known book to bear his name was printed *for* him by Machlinia in 1486. It is true that some actual printers (including Caxton, Pynson, and de Worde) occasionally hired another printer for one or more books – but in the case of Hawkes, van Stondo, and Frankenberg there is no persuasive evidence that they ever *were* printers.

### The act of 1484

On 20 February 1484, when Richard III gave his assent to the acts passed by his first and only parliament, neither he nor the assembled members

<sup>A</sup> It is unlikely that the annotator was any more interested in the three book-traders (as Sutton suggests in ‘Caxton was a Mercer’, 137 n.73) than in the widow, tailor, cordwainer, two goldsmiths, and three curriers whose status and trades he likewise noted (PRO, E 179/242/25, 9<sup>v</sup>–10<sup>r</sup>).

<sup>B</sup> For port records before 1501 I have made grateful use of information privately communicated by Paul Needham, who together with C. Paul Christianson has independently re-examined the extant London port rolls from 1478 through 1557. For records after 1500 I have relied on my own examination.

could have imagined how egregiously future historians of the book trade would misunderstand one of those acts. The famous proviso appended to 'An Act touchinge the Merchauntes of Italy' (1 Ric. III, c. 9) can only be properly understood in the context of the act itself, which seems usually to have been read either inattentively or not at all. And the traditional misinterpretations of the proviso itself are often repeated without regard to its actual words or their meaning.

The act was introduced, debated, and passed by both houses in the form of a 'common petition'. It begins by reciting a list of grievances against the unfair trading practices of alien merchants, especially Italians, and then asks for restrictions to be imposed upon them. The main complaints are that they have been combining to monopolize all trading in the goods they import, profiteering as middlemen in the internal wool trade, and exporting English currency rather than goods. The petition therefore requests that all Italian merchants who are not denizens must sell all imported wares presently in their possession, by wholesale and not retail, and to native Englishmen only, before 1 May 1485.<sup>A</sup> After deducting reasonable expenses they must then spend their profits on English goods instead of either exchanging or exporting the money. All future imports are to be sold under the same conditions, in the port of entry and within eight months, or exported again before the end of two more months. No alien merchant may share his residence with any other alien merchant not of his own nationality.<sup>B</sup> No undenized Italian merchant may sell or barter in England any wool, woollen goods, or other merchandise bought in England, or have any such wool made into cloth in England, but must export everything via the Straits of Morocco.<sup>C</sup> No alien of any nationality may make cloth in England.

The remaining three sections of the act also apply to aliens of all nationalities, and all have implications for book-traders. No alien artificer arriving after Easter 1484 may dwell and work with any other alien, or practise his trade at all except as the servant of one of the king's subjects. No alien may sell any merchandise in England by retail, but only by wholesale and only in the town where he dwells. No alien may take any apprentices or

<sup>A</sup> A *denizen* was an alien who had been granted permanent residence and other rights by letters of denization. Full naturalization (which gave the recipient all the rights of the native-born) required an act of Parliament, and was usually granted only to children born abroad to English parents.

<sup>B</sup> This and all the foregoing sections would be repealed by 1 Hen. VII, c. 10, in March 1486.

<sup>C</sup> That is, via Gibraltar: neither to nor through the North Sea and Channel ports favoured by English exporters. While most of this section remained in force, the Gibraltar condition was also repealed in 1486.

servants except his own children or English natives. Of those sections, the one that would have damaged the book trade most was the second, which responded to a particular grievance specified in the preamble:

Artifycers and other Straungiers . . . brynge and convey from the parties of beyonde the See greate substaunce of wares and Merchaundises vnto faires and Merkettis and all other places of youre Realme at their pleasure and there they selle aswell by retaillle as otherwise as frely as any of youre said subgiettes vseth for to do to the greate hurte and empoueryssyng of youre said subgiettes.<sup>84</sup>

By restricting them to wholesaling in their home towns, the act prevented aliens from retailing even in their local markets and from selling at country fairs at all. But apart from Caxton, Thomas Hunt, William Wilcock, and probably the schoolmaster of St Albans, every known printer, importer, or wholesaler of books in England was an alien – so if implemented as originally conceived the act would have crippled the book trade.

Too little attention has been paid to the act itself. In *The Cambridge History of the Book in Britain*, for example, it is inexplicably described as ‘regulating the number of aliens who might be denizenized in Britain’ (3: 13) – but no such goal is mentioned, it should if anything have *encouraged* Italians to become denizens, and no English parliament of the fifteenth century could legislate for ‘Britain’. Even more puzzling is a later suggestion that ‘the ultimate purpose of the 1484 Statute was – as with other craft-related legislation . . . – to encourage a native production by making it possible for foreigners to come in to teach the necessary skills’.<sup>A</sup>

Richard III, however, clearly understood what Parliament intended, and recognized the danger to the book trade. So instead of simply responding with the formulaic *Soit fait comme il est desire* (let it be done as desired),<sup>B</sup> he made his royal assent conditional:

Soit fait come il est desire Prouided alwey that this acte or any part therof or any other acte made or to be made in this present parliament in nowise extende or be preiudiciall any lette hurte or impediment to any Artificer or merchaunt straungier of what nacion or Contrey he be or shalbe of for bryngyng in to this Realme or sellyng by retaill or otherwise of any maner bokes written or imprynted or for the inhabitynge within the said Realme

<sup>A</sup> Alexander, ‘Foreign Illuminators’, 63. In *The Oxford Companion to the Book* Andrew Murphy seems to agree that the legislation was intended ‘to promote the growth and development of the industry’ (‘History of the Book in Britain’, 172). But he finds that motive not in the act itself but in the exemption of alien book-traders *from* it, and declines to explain how that would have encouraged their native competitors.

<sup>B</sup> That was the form of assent used on petitionary acts; the more familiar *Le roi le veult* was reserved for those introduced as bills (Elton, *Parliament*, 52–5).

for the same intent or to any writer lymprer bynder or imprynter of suche bokes as he hath or shall haue to sell by wey of merchaundise or for their abode in the same Reame for the excercysing of the said occupacions this acte or any parte therof notwithstanding.<sup>A</sup>

The initiative behind this amendment may not have been Richard's own, and those who have credited Parliament with the proviso have suggested a number of plausible candidates who might have proposed it.<sup>B</sup> But wherever the idea originated, the credit for actually amending the act belongs not to Parliament but to Richard III himself.

The only book-trade commentator to treat the proviso as the king's own addendum appears to be William Kuskin – but he does so for mistaken reasons. Geoffrey Elton once drew attention to two unusual provisos in the Parliament Rolls of Edward IV, each written several years after the act it amends and then stitched on to the appropriate roll (for 1465 and 1472 respectively). Wrongly assuming that *all* early provisos resemble those two, Kuskin suggests that

We see a similar papering-over of contradiction in the actual printing of the statute: literally sewn onto the parliamentary roll, a proviso represents the king's independent will sutured to the greater parliamentary consensus in a material fashion; yet, as Elton points out, this seam was masked in the printed edition so the act and proviso appear to be one continuous statement within the statute as a whole.<sup>C</sup>

But as [Figure 4](#) clearly shows, no such seam exists. The conditional assent may perhaps have been written on a separate piece of parchment, or at the foot of the original petition, or on its verso. But on the Parliament Roll

- <sup>A</sup> PRO, C 65/114, m. 20 (*Statutes*, 2: 493). A heavy stroke of different ink between 'of' and 'for' seems intended to clarify that the two words are separate, not to punctuate them (see the third line in [Figure 4](#)). The *Statutes* transcript (which wants the assent, is occasionally inexact, and has pointing added) is reprinted in *The Cambridge History of the Book in Britain* (3: 608) – with five erroneous spellings (*Country* for *Contrey*, *such* for *suche*, *Realme* for *Reame*, *exercysing* for *excercysing*, *notwithstandyng* for *notwithstondyng*) and two words omitted (*to be made* for *made* or *to be made*). Four of the misspellings recur in a quotation on 3: 51 in which *maner* is also misprinted as *manners*.
- <sup>B</sup> A useful list of suspects is given by Sutton and Visser-Fuchs in *Richard III's Books*, 258–63. But if the initiative came from anyone in Parliament, either his amendment was rejected in debate or he failed to think of it until later. Blagden imagined that the Stationers were consulted: 'I cannot believe that one group of craftsmen and shop-keepers would have been so pointedly excluded from the main provisions of the Act . . . unless the organization to which the native craftsmen and shop-keepers belonged . . . had approved the exclusion' (*Stationers' Company*, 24). For my part I cannot believe that Richard III would have either sought or valued the approval of an unincorporated company as lowly as the Stationers of 1484.
- <sup>C</sup> Kuskin, "Onely Imagined", 217, citing Elton, "The Rolls of Parliament", 12. Rhetoric aside, incorporating the proviso into the petition before the act was made public was as routine a necessity as replacing the petitioning formulae with enacting formulae and translating the whole into Law French. Nobody either expected or wanted a printed facsimile of the Parliament Roll.

next comynge shall use exercise or occupie the fete of merchandises of any maner of wares within this yourre said realme either  
or buye the same wares and merchandises in gross and not by retails within the porte towne or place where the same artificers  
hand or shall be inhabited or dwelling and in noon other place upon paine of forfeiture of the value of all the wares and merchandises  
solde contrary to this acte Also that no pson nor baron videly yourre obedience nor be inhabited dwelling or having house or Chamber within  
this yourre said realme and occupie any handicrafte or buye an artificer or handicrafte man after the ffest of the Anniversarie of ourre  
lady next comynge take any apprentice schawnt or any other pson to dwelle withyn or to his use but if he be his sone or his daughter other  
than atte the said fest shalbe dyppnt or schawnt with hym but if the same dyppnt or schawnt so to be taken ben yourre subgett than  
upon paine to forfeite and lose for any apprentice or schawnt taken to the contrary xx s that on half of all the said fines forfeitures  
and penalties and use of them to be unto yourre said highnesse and that other half to be unto hym or them the whiche shall lose  
the same or one for the same by action of dette by wyte atte Comen lawe by bill or playnte after the custome of the Citee or  
towne whiche it shall hapne hereafter any such fine forfeitures or penalties to fall and be And that the defendunt in any  
such action be not admitted to wage or do his lawe nor that any pteacion or esson be since he for any such defendunt be  
afforded in the same

¶ All sort fact come it eft shalbe Doubted alwey that this acte or any part thereof or any other acte made or to be made in this pnt no  
phaiment nor use extend or be pndiaall any latte hure or impediment to any artificer or merchant shawnt of what nacion or  
contray he be or shalbe offer bynyng in to this realme or selling by retails or otherwise of any man wares wrytten or unwrytten or  
for the inhabiting within the said realme for the same intent or to any wryte licence bynde or unwrytten of such wares as he  
shall or shall have to sell by way of merchandise or for thow abode in the same realme for the exercising of the said occupacions  
this acte or any parte thereof not withstanding

Figure 4 The proviso appended to the act of 1484. (The National Archives of the UK: PRO, C 65/114, m. 20.)

the text of the amendment is separated from the body of the petition only by a space, a marginal 'R' (for *Responsio*), a paragraph mark, and the assent formula.

Before briefly sampling the ubiquitous misinterpretations of Richard's proviso it is necessary to determine, as carefully and precisely as possible, what it actually says. The first two-thirds can be condensed as follows:

Prouided... that this... or any other acte made... in this present parliament in nowise... be... any... impediment to any Artificer or merchaunt straungier... for bryngyng in... or sellyng... any maner bokes written or imprynted... or for... inhabitynge within the said Realme for the same intent.

It is important to note that the focus is on those who import or sell books printed overseas (*not* on those who manufacture them either in England or abroad) and that the restrictions from which they are exempted *are only those imposed by acts of this present parliament*.<sup>A</sup> Not a word is said about exempting alien book-traders from any other restraints, whether imposed by past or future parliaments or by the towns or cities in which they dwell. The next section extends the same strictly limited exemption

to any writer lymprner bynder or imprynter of suche bokes as he hath... to sell... or for their abode in the same Reame for the excercisyng of the said occupacions.

This means that the plural alien manufacturers of the books that 'he' (the singular alien merchant) distributes – the artisans who write, illustrate, bind, or print them – are likewise exempt from the restrictions imposed by the present parliament.<sup>B</sup> Of particular note here is that while listed among the four kinds of craftsmen who make books for such merchants, printers are not singled out for special notice.<sup>C</sup> And as before, nothing in the text

<sup>A</sup> The only part of any other act of the session that might have affected a few book-traders was the inclusion of 'paynted Papers' among the goods whose importation was forbidden by 1 Ric. III, c. 12 (*Statutes*, 2: 495–6).

<sup>B</sup> Observing that 'Parchmeners as well as stationers were omitted', Sutton and Visser-Fuchs suggest that the words were not chosen by a 'professional' (*Richard III's Books*, 251). But unlike writers, limners, binders, and printers, neither parchment makers nor retail booksellers manufacture books.

<sup>C</sup> A mere eight years after Caxton returned to England, the primary meaning of 'imprynter' would still have been one who stamps an impression into a yielding surface. Whoever translated the proviso into Law French therefore glossed Richard's word rather than simply replacing it: 'Empressour autrement dit Imprintour' (STC 9347, b5'). Kuskin claims that this rendering 'is beset by hesitation and... appears to search actively for an adequate term' ("Onely Imagined", 209). But after switching his allegiance from the Parliament Roll to the printed text he instead praises the translator for showing 'his awareness of print's significance to textual production by naming the printer twice, once as "Empressour" and once again as "Imprintour de tilex Livres"' (217). (Kuskin's 'tilex', misread from the correct 'tielx' he reproduces on p. 207, also appears on pp. 208, 209, and 218.)

supports the widespread fantasy that the proviso resembled a general Bill of Rights, emancipating alien book-merchants from every imaginable kind of regulation and tax and giving them privileges not even possessed by their native rivals.

The purpose of the *act* was to impose specific new commercial restrictions on alien merchants and artisans. The clear and explicit goal of the king's proviso, on the other hand, was to ensure that none of those restrictions applied to aliens who traded in books. Richard manifestly intended the new legislation to have *no effect at all* on the book trade – and as he planned, no effect on the book trade was exactly what it succeeded in having.

For alien book-merchants, the most important consequence was that they could continue selling, by both wholesale and retail, at country fairs and in the markets of towns that had no local restrictions of their own. Alien booksellers, textwriters, limners, binders, and printers who had previously been allowed to take alien employees or apprentices could still do so under whatever conditions were imposed by local ordinances. But the proviso did not have 'the power to override City trade barriers' as has been suggested,<sup>85</sup> and could change the book trade no more in London than elsewhere. It granted not a single new right to anyone, and its exemptions could allow privileges to continue only where they already existed. In London (and in other cities whose charters likewise decreed) only freemen had the right to sell by retail or to bind and free apprentices, and the proviso could do nothing to change that.<sup>A</sup>

Neither before nor after amendment was the Act Touchinge the Merchantes of Italy a 'liberal Act allowing free entry of printed books', nor were 'foreign dealers in books . . . explicitly exempted from the tariffs . . . enacted in the statute';<sup>86</sup> no act of that parliament imposed any new tariff from which to exempt anyone, and nothing in the proviso granted immunity from any duty or tax. It is untrue that Parliament 'encouraged more printers to immigrate and share the market', and preposterous to suggest that 'the early domination of [printing] by aliens . . . was expressly permitted by a statute which gave aliens full freedom to practise the craft'.<sup>87</sup> The proviso

<sup>A</sup> Citing Blagden (*Stationers' Company*, no page given), Loades claims that the act 'explicitly exempted printers and booksellers from the ban which prohibited other alien craftsmen from working in the city' ('Books and the English Reformation', 268 n.15). No such ban was included in the statute, so no such exemption was either explicit or implicit – nor does Blagden anywhere suggest as much. Loades continues: 'The Stationers' Company, to which most of the English printers belonged, campaigned assiduously thereafter for the removal of that exemption' (my emphasis). But no English-born Stationer is known to have printed a book until twenty-eight years after 1484, and the supposedly assiduous campaign has left no trace antedating 1534.

is more concerned with importers and distributors of books than with printers, and expresses not a word that either encourages immigration or permits domination. And to imagine either the act or its proviso ‘favor[ing] alien tradesmen at the expense of London merchants and laborers’ or ‘freeing foreign members of the book trade [because] they had earlier been penalized’ is to leave reality far behind.<sup>88</sup>

When compared with their countrymen of other professions, aliens in the book trade in England were in an enviable position after 1484. But by comparison with their own position before that date nothing whatever had changed – and beside native English stationers and printers they remained at precisely the same disadvantages (especially in London and other cities) as they had been before the statute was enacted.

### The earliest printed statutes

One last feature of the act of 1484 merits discussion here, namely that as one of the acts of Richard III’s only parliament it was part of the first statute ever printed in England. Although Parliament conducted its business and wrote all its legislation in English, before 1486 the public acts were always translated into Law French before being promulgated. Richard’s statute was no exception, and William de Machlinia printed it in Law French sometime after the end of the session (STC 9347).<sup>A</sup>

Both Katharine F. Pantzer and Pamela Neville suggest that the publication was instigated by the authorities, whose motive was propaganda.<sup>89</sup> Pantzer explicitly reasons that because the printing of statutes would eventually become one of the functions and duties of the King’s Printer, it was probably always the king who wanted them printed. There being as yet no such thing as a King’s Printer, Machlinia was chosen because he had already printed several books in Law French.<sup>90</sup> But that last fact points rather more forcefully in the opposite direction. Lettou and Machlinia had previously demonstrated an interest in printing books for lawyers, and may have already started work on their collection of all the statutes from previous

<sup>A</sup> The printer may once have been misidentified. In 1978 Elton opined that ‘The elegance of the 1484 production suggests to me that the longer-standing ascription to Caxton is correct’ (‘Sessional Printing’, 68 n.1). But even if that ascription existed, elegance is hardly Caxton’s trademark, and Ames knew as early as 1749 that the book ‘is assuredly printed by Machlinia’ (*Typographical Antiquities*, 77). Elton was no typographer, and his note has been ignored by Pantzer (‘Printing the English Statutes’, 71; STC entry 9347), Needham (*The Printer & the Pardoner*, 83–91), Hellinga (*BMC xi*, 260), and other competent authorities. When Sutton and Visser-Fuchs declare that ‘There is still not sufficient evidence to prove beyond doubt who printed these statutes’ (*Richard III’s Books*, 254 n.62, citing Elton) they are wrong: the type is unquestionably Machlinia’s and not Caxton’s.

reigns back to Edward III (STC 9264).<sup>A</sup> Invaluable as that volume would be to many lawyers, the *new* statute would be even more immediately useful, and would demonstrate the value of the far more expensive collection. Furthermore, as an alien book-trader Machlinia had a vested interest in the ninth act and its proviso, while those who helped him distribute his products through fairs and markets outside London had an obvious motive for ensuring that the proviso was widely known.

The printing of that statute is therefore fully consistent with Machlinia's observed marketing strategy and professional interests, while only the most inept of state propagandists would have limited his audience to the comparative few fluent in the language of the law. As Neville herself points out, 'Machlinia's edition would only have appealed to the legal profession'.<sup>91</sup> No effort appears to have been made to print the statutes of the first, third, or fourth years of Henry VII's reign until 1491,<sup>92</sup> when Caxton printed all three together in English.<sup>B</sup> Not until 1504 would a statute again be printed as soon after passage as that of 1484 – and in 1504 it would be printed for the first time by a King's Printer. Before that date there is little evidence that either the king or Parliament had yet realized the potential value of print as a means of disseminating new legislation.

Neville-Sington, however, argues that the very *texts* of the printed statutes confirm their authorized status: 'From the beginning, their publication was of an official nature; their manuscript source was the Statute Roll until 1489, and thereafter the original Acts.'<sup>93</sup> It is true that new statutes were officially promulgated, and that the manuscripts prepared for the major courts of law soon after passage were copied from the most authoritative sources. But with the possible exception of 1504 no statute of Henry VII was printed soon enough after passage for the printed version to have served as the courts' first introduction to the new laws – and it was not until several years into the next reign that they were routinely printed promptly

<sup>A</sup> Pantzer suggests that the collection was probably finished at least a month or two before May 1485 ('Printing the English Statutes', 74), and *BMC xi* claims that Richard's statute was printed closer to August 1485 than to February 1484 (260). But if the 1484 statute was printed either alongside or after the *Nova statuta* (with which many copies were destined to be bound) it is curious that the two were not printed in the same type.

<sup>B</sup> Pantzer ('Printing the English Statutes', 74, 99–102) accepts Elton's suggestion ('Sessional Printing', 74–5) that 1 Hen. VII and 3 Hen. VII were circulated in Law French but translated back into English for Caxton's edition. Neville more convincingly argues that although at least one extant manuscript has a defective Law French text of those two, Henry VII's statutes were officially disseminated in English from the beginning of his reign ('Richard Pynson', 47–9).

enough to meet the needs of the courts in Westminster and London. Until then, each statute was necessarily communicated to the principal courts in manuscript; each manuscript necessarily derived either from an official translation (which would itself have later been enrolled on the Statute Roll if one was ever compiled after 1468) or from the original acts after the custom of first translating them into Law French had finally been abandoned.

The publication of the *Nova statuta* created a demand among lawyers for printed texts of subsequent statutes. Neville considers it ‘unlikely that printers would have had the knowledge or the inclination to select the most accurate and authentic version of the statutes from among the many manuscripts circulating among lawyers’,<sup>94</sup> but I am unpersuaded. What lawyers required were texts as accurate and trustworthy as those that Parliament sent to the courts – and a printer interested in exploiting that demand would probably have been able to obtain access to such a manuscript (or a copy of one). The fact that the early printed statutes necessarily derive from authoritative sources cannot prove that they were printed directly from them.

Before 1504, no printed statute claimed the status of an official publication, and there was evidently a commercial demand for them. For the first decade or two after 1484 that demand was probably what prompted the sporadic printing of recent statutes. Once printed versions existed their usefulness must have become increasingly obvious to both king and Parliament – but it was not until the reign of Henry VIII that the regular sessional printing of statutes was made the duty (as well as the privilege) of an officially appointed printer.

### The second generation: Richard Pynson

In 1486 there were four printers working in England: Caxton, Machlinia, Rood, and the schoolmaster of St Albans. In 1487–90 there was apparently only Caxton, whose own output in 1486–8 seems to have been severely curtailed.<sup>A</sup> And the chance survival of the subsidy port roll for 1487–8 reveals the curious fact that Caxton was the only importer of any

<sup>A</sup> After Cx83 (81 sheets assigned to ‘[1485–86]’) Needham lists only five books before 1489 (*The Printer & the Pardoner*, 89). One book dated 1487, two of ‘[1487]’, and one of ‘[ca. 1487]’ total only sixty-one sheets in all, and nothing is assigned to 1488.

nationality bringing books into London during that year,<sup>A</sup> although in every other surviving customs roll of the late fifteenth century (including 1485 and 1490–1) about half a dozen alien book-importers are recorded. Moreover, 1487 and 1488 are the only years in Caxton's Westminster career during which he is known to have had books printed *for* him: two liturgical works printed in Paris by Guillaume Maynyal.<sup>95</sup> But no plausible explanation for this seeming disruption of the English book trade has yet been suggested, so perhaps the only thing connecting the observed phenomena is coincidence.<sup>B</sup>

The first generation of printers in England were of heterogeneous origin. Caxton was English by birth, though as a printer he had trained in Cologne and then practised in either Bruges or Ghent. Rood described himself as 'de Colonia',<sup>96</sup> and Cologne was also the source of the type used by whoever printed the first three Oxford books. The schoolmaster of St Albans was probably English, as was the type used by whoever printed the first group of St Albans books. Lettou or his ancestors apparently came from Lithuania, Machlinia from Flanders, and Caxton's successor Wynkyn de Worde from the Netherlands. Apart from the English natives, all those men immigrated during the reign of Edward IV. When the next generation arrived, however, the throne was occupied by Henry VII, who before Bosworth had spent the first half of his life in Wales and the second in Brittany and France. It may therefore be no coincidence that five of the seven printers who began work during Henry's reign were French.<sup>C</sup> The first to set up shop, about a year before Caxton died, was Richard Pynson.

Pynson was born in Normandy, and began to print in the Middlesex parish of St Clement Danes in or shortly before 1491 in a printing house

<sup>A</sup> Needham, 'Customs Rolls', 155. Not even the King's Stationer appears to have imported anything during the year ending Michaelmas 1488. The terms of his appointment made it unnecessary for his shipments of books to be mentioned in the port rolls after December 1485 (although a single consignment worth £5 was anomalously recorded in March 1491 (PRO, E 122/78/9, 4<sup>r</sup>)). But after that date the annual value of his customs-exempt shipments was recorded in the Enrolled Customs Accounts (PRO, E 356). The tunnage and poundage account covering 7 July to Michaelmas 1487 values Actors's imports at £16 8s. 4d., but the account for the following year does not mention him (Jenks, *Enrolled Customs Accounts*, II, E356/23 nos. 189–90 (pp. 2716–17)). A single petty custom account covering both periods claims Actors's total as £16 10s. (*ibid.*, E356/23 no. 210 (pp. 2727–8)). The 1s. 8d. difference is probably an accounting error: no consignment of books recorded in any extant London port roll was valued at less than a mark (13s. 4d.).

<sup>B</sup> Inevitably, the proviso of 1484 has been invoked, as when Nicolas Barker suggests that Caxton's rivals were forced out of business 'when the competition from foreign presses released by the Act of 1484 seems to have become too strong' ('The St Albans Press', 268). He does not explain *how* the proviso had that effect, or how strong the competition was in a year when Caxton was the only recorded printer or importer.

<sup>C</sup> Pynson, Notary, Barbier, and William and Richard Faques.

on the south side of the Strand that later became nos. 229–30.<sup>A</sup> All other deductions about his early career are complicated by seeming contradictions in the surviving clues. According to Duff, ‘It is probable that he was educated at the University of Paris, for we find in a list of students in 1464 the name “Ricardus Pynson Normannus,” and this may very well be the printer’.<sup>97</sup> But Duff never recorded the source of the list, and since all subsequent attempts to locate it have failed its significance is hard to assess. How many students were listed, where and why, and how certain is the date? There were probably two Richard Pynsons in St Clement Danes in the 1490s; how common was the name in Normandy in earlier decades? Had Duff never mentioned that list we would have assumed that the printer spent 1464 as an infant rather than a student. But as Stanley H. Johnston first realized, birth before 1451 would help explain why Pynson sometimes seems to have been treated more like a native than an alien.<sup>98</sup> The difference between an *indigena* (native) and an *alienigena* was that the latter was born outside the *regis obediencia*, and until 1450 Normandy was under the obeisance of Henry VI. At least until the end of the century, then, anyone born in Normandy before 1451 could have claimed the same rights as any other *indigena* – although by 1501 the ageing survivors might have found it increasingly difficult to persuade young tax-collectors that one could be both Norman-born and native.<sup>99</sup>

It is sometimes claimed that Pynson was naturalized in 1493, but that the patent kept in the Rolls Chapel in the eighteenth century is now missing.<sup>100</sup> That is a myth. In his *Typographical Antiquities* of 1749, Joseph Ames began his entry on Pynson by observing that the printer ‘Is said to be born in Normandy in France’. He then inserted a footnote: ‘As appears by king Henry’s patent of naturalization, wherein he is stiled *Richardus Pynson, in partibus Normand. oriund.* See Chappel of the Rolls.’<sup>101</sup> Ames neither specified a Henry nor mentioned a date, but there is no reason to doubt that he was quoting from the letters of denization granted by Henry VIII in July 1513.<sup>102</sup> Revising Ames in 1785, William Herbert included most of the footnote in his main text, leaving only the reference to the Rolls Chapel as a note.<sup>103</sup> Thomas Froggall Dibdin rejected both versions and wrote his own opening sentence.

<sup>A</sup> Raven suggests that ‘Pynson was first licensed as a retailer and binder of books at his shop in St Clement Danes, situated, like Notary, in King Street, just beyond the City walls’ (*The Business of Books*, 21). Neither retailing nor binding was an activity for which anyone outside London had to be ‘licensed’, and Pynson has never been connected with King Street (where Notary worked *before* moving to St Clement Danes) – which was over three-quarters of a mile outside the City limits in the parish of St Margaret Westminster. The real site is discussed in Appendix G.

Contemporaneous with Wynkyn de Worde, if not a more ancient printer, lived Richard Pynson; who appears to have been a Norman by birth, and who certainly exercised the art of printing in this country as early as the year 1493.

At *that* point he inserted the asterisk for a slightly revised version of Ames's footnote, 'As appears by King Henry's patent of naturalization . . .'.<sup>104</sup> The note therefore seems to claim that what appears by the patent is that Pynson was in England by 1493 – which is not at all what either Dibdin or his sources meant. But once created, the mythical naturalization of 1493 spawned the assumption, now prevalent, that the Pynson who became a denizen in 1513 must have been the printer's son, Richard junior.<sup>A</sup>

In 1482, a Richard Pynson of the parish of St Clement Danes, described as a glover, stood bail for a yeoman of Hampshire.<sup>105</sup> When Plomer discovered the record he rightly acknowledged that 'there was no impossibility in there having been two Richard Pynsons in the parish',<sup>106</sup> but he never really doubted that the glover and the printer were the same.<sup>B</sup> Plomer believed Pynson the printer to be an alien – so when he failed to find him listed in the Middlesex alien subsidy roll for 1483 as either a glover or a printer, he wrongly concluded that the roll 'referred only to aliens of a certain standing in the parish'. But he seems also to have held the contradictory assumption that his alien Middlesex glover-printer must have been a freeman of the Glovers' Company of London. When he asked, 'William Caxton was a "mercier" before he became a printer, so why should not Richard Pynson have been a "glover"?', his question inextricably confused affiliation with trade, native with alien, and London with Middlesex.<sup>107</sup>

Plomer's conviction that there was only one Richard Pynson arose from an error he had made a dozen years earlier. Listing the Pynson lawsuits he had found in the Court of Common Pleas under Henry VII, he had written that in Michaelmas term 1496,

The third suit, in which he was again defendant, was brought against him by one John Isbury, and was for a debt of sixty-six shillings. In this he was described both as 'bokeprynter' of St Clement Danes, and as 'pouchemaker' [De Banco Roll 938, m. 472, 473].<sup>C</sup>

<sup>A</sup> Duff, *Century*, 127; Worman, *Alien Members*, 52; Johnston, 'Richard Pynson', 1. That assumption will be examined more closely in [Chapter 3](#).

<sup>B</sup> In 1897, long before finding that record, Plomer had gently ridiculed the notion that there could have been two Richard Pynsons in the same parish in 1500 ('New Documents', 154).

<sup>C</sup> 'Some Notices from the Plea Rolls', 298. Note that Plomer's belief that the Common Pleas rolls he examined were those of King's Bench was mistaken, while his suggestion that under Henry VIII 'the King's Bench *became* the Court of Common Pleas' (290, my emphasis) is nonsense.

Had that been true, there could have been no doubt that Pynson the printer and Pynson the pouchmaker were identical. But in the action for John Isbury's 66s. (the second entry on rotulet 472) Pynson is described only once, as a 'Bokeprynter' of St Clement Danes. Then follow eleven completely unrelated cases. The first case on rotulet 473 is equally unrelated, being an action by Dame Margery Astry and her fellow executors to recover four debts owed to the estate of her late husband Sir Ralph Astry, a former mayor. Three of the defendants are Yorkshiremen (a tanner and two *listers* or dyers); the fourth, whose debt of £5 is the smallest, is Richard Pynson of St Clement Danes, 'Pouchemaker'. This suit has absolutely no connection with John Isbury's action against the printer, and the proximity of the two records on successive membranes owes nothing to the identities or addresses of the defendants. While it remains possible to argue that the two descriptions *might* refer to a single Richard Pynson,<sup>A</sup> Plomer's claim that they are both part of the same record is false.

It is quite likely that the glover of 1482 and the pouchmaker of 1496 were the same man, because the two trades are closely related. In London, the Leathersellers' Company absorbed the Glovers in 1502 and the Pouchmakers in 1517 – not that there is any reason to suppose that Pynson the Middlesex leatherworker was free of either company.<sup>B</sup> Although both crafts use leather and have some tools in common, bookbinding is very different from glove-making, and it is hardly realistic to imagine Pynson 'gradually shifting from leatherworking to bookbinding and bookselling and then to printing'.<sup>108</sup> Making gloves and printing books are separated by more than any gradual shift. By 1490–1 Pynson the printer had learned enough about printing to set up an extremely successful printing house of his own. Neither an education at the University of Paris nor practical training in a printing house commonly appeared on the resumé of Middlesex leatherworkers.

We do not know where Pynson learned to print, although Graham Pollard plausibly suggested that he might have been apprenticed to Jean Du Pré in Paris.<sup>109</sup> One of his first major books was a reprint of Caxton's 1483 *Canterbury Tales*, and in his proem he commends the text as having been

<sup>A</sup> The surname Pynson was not uncommon in England, and that form can also be found as a variant of the names more usually written as Penson and Pynchon. Yet another Richard Pynson – a yeoman of Tottenham – is recorded in 1514–15 (PRO, C 1/348/37).

<sup>B</sup> LMA, CO1/CC/01/01/010, 258<sup>r</sup>; CO1/CC/01/01/011, 314<sup>r</sup>. Johnston mistakenly claims that the Glovers merged with the Pouchmakers in 1498 ('Richard Pynson', 42 n.26, followed by Neville, 'Richard Pynson', 11 n.6), but his cited source correctly identifies the second company in that merger as the Pursers, not the Pouchmakers.

‘diligently ouirsen & duely examined by the politike reason and ouirsight of my worshipful master william Caxton’.<sup>110</sup> Duff long ago pointed out that this courteous gesture need not be taken at face value, and few have gone so far as to suggest that Pynson was ever *apprenticed* to Caxton.<sup>A</sup> Although a resident of Westminster, Caxton lived near enough to London to be subject to his company’s ordinances. If he had taken any apprentices they would have had to be bound and freed as Mercers, and Pynson was never a Mercer. On the other hand, Pynson could easily have expressed his respect without using the phrase ‘my worshipful master’, so perhaps he was once employed by Caxton in some capacity. Their books, however, differ too greatly in style to suggest that Pynson was either trained or substantially influenced by Caxton’s workmen.

At the beginning of his career Pynson apparently acquired some printed waste and a few types that had once belonged to William de Machlinia,<sup>B</sup> and nearly thirty years later he made occasional use of two woodcut borders that Machlinia had once owned.<sup>111</sup> Duff therefore saw Pynson as Machlinia’s direct successor and the four-year gap between their careers as probably illusory. Plomer went farther: convinced that the glover of 1482 was the printer he deduced that Pynson was in England early enough to have been Machlinia’s apprentice.<sup>C</sup> He even accepted Duff’s argument for seeing the succession as immediate – ‘had any long time elapsed between the cessation of Machlinia’s press and the commencement of Pynson’s, England would have been left without a printer who could set up law French. Caxton and Wynkyn de Worde were presumably unable to do it’.<sup>112</sup> But Pynson’s native language was a far cry from the pidgin evolved by English lawyers, Caxton was demonstrably capable of *translating* from French (and could anyway have hired Francophone compositors to set it), and Latin was not the mother tongue of any of the printers who nevertheless contrived to print it. Law French had been printed during only five of the 420 years since the Norman Conquest, so the legal system could have survived a four-year hiatus. It is not impossible that Pynson arrived in England early enough to have worked for Machlinia, but there is no evidence that he did.

<sup>A</sup> Duff, *Printers of Westminster and London*, 58. Only Blake explicitly uses the word ‘apprentice’ (*Caxton: England’s First Publisher*, 144), although Painter suggests that Pynson ‘had trained and worked under . . . Caxton’ (*William Caxton*, 190).

<sup>B</sup> Oldham, *Blind Panels*, 14, 16. In Pynson’s two earliest yearbooks (STC 9771, 9825), Pantzer found ‘a few Machlinia sorts used for legal abbreviations’ (private letter, 7 October 1991). Johnston (‘Richard Pynson’, 8–9), citing Hobson (*Blind-Stamped Panels*, 22–9), claims that Pynson also acquired some panels from Machlinia. But Hobson, relying on Plomer’s assertion that Pynson succeeded Machlinia, suggests only that he *may* have acquired Machlinia’s blocking press (14, 23).

<sup>C</sup> Why Machlinia would have trained his apprentice as a glover is unexplained.

Pynson probably began to print a few months later than is presently believed. In 1492 he printed his first two dated books (STC 316, 9332) and perhaps also the now-fragmentary *Ghost of Guy* (12477), and finished his undated *Canterbury Tales* (5084). To the year 1491 (when work probably began on *The Canterbury Tales*) the revised STC assigns only a single half-sheet indulgence (14077c.51), but '1490?' is suggested for two undated yearbooks which total only thirty-one edition-sheets (9771, 9825). It may therefore reasonably be doubted that Pynson printed anything before 1491.

The date '[1490]' is generally given to two lawbooks printed for Pynson in Rouen by Guillaume Le Talleur,<sup>A</sup> but appears to rest only on the assumption that Pynson would have had no need to hire Le Talleur once he had a press of his own. As dating evidence that is flimsy: Caxton commissioned two books from Paris in 1487–8 and de Worde at least eight between 1497 and 1527. The British Library copy of one of the lawbooks (Littleton's *Tenores novelli*, STC 15731) lacks the first leaf.<sup>13</sup> Pasted on the blank now bound in its place is Pynson's first device framed by a border of woodcut strips that he only used thus in 1494–6. The scrap, cut from the last leaf of a copy of 18385 (1494), has three wormholes exactly matched in the first leaves of the Littleton, so the two books must once have been bound together. Harvard and the Morgan Library also have copies of the same books bound together, the Morgan volume also including Pynson's 23877.7 (1494), whose colophon links it to 18385. The type used in Le Talleur's books for Pynson is found nowhere else – and since Le Talleur apparently died in 1494 the cumulative evidence (albeit circumstantial) makes that year a better guess than 1490.

One of Pynson's two dated books of 1492 is a quarto of twenty leaves: a set of ordinances agreed by King, Council and Parliament in late 1491 for regulating the conduct of soldiers in the planned campaign against the French. It twice mistakes the date of enactment as 17 October '1492', but correctly identifies the year as 7 Henry VII (which ended on 21 August 1492). Either Henry or one of his advisers was apparently beginning to appreciate the potential uses of print, because just before the *explicit* the reason for publication is explained:

to thentent [that the King's subjects shall] haue no cause to excuse them of their offences by pretense of ignorance of the saide ordenances/ his highnesse hath ouir and aboue the open proclamacion of the saide statutes commaunded and ordeyned by wey of empyrnte diuerse and many seueral

<sup>A</sup> STC 15731 and 23238. If Pollard's guess was right, and Pynson was trained by Jean Du Pré in Paris, he and Le Talleur may have met as fellow apprentices.

bokes conteignyng the same statutes to be made. and deliuered to the capitaignes of his ost charginge them as they wyl auoyde his greate displeasure to cause the same twyes or ones at the lest in euery weke hooly to be redde in the presence of theire retynue.<sup>114</sup>

The colophon explicitly indicates Henry's personal involvement in the publication of the ordinances:

Emprented by his hygh Commaunde[ment] & by his owne propre handys delyuered to me Richard Pynson prynter of this boke.<sup>A</sup>

Pynson's main qualifications for this particular example of royal favour were probably only that he was both a printer and alive. The book was almost certainly printed in early 1492 – when Caxton had ceased to be alive but Wynkyn de Worde had not yet become a printer. If the ordinances were to be printed at all, Henry had to hire the only printer active in England.<sup>115</sup> Before Caxton died he had printed the statutes from Henry's first three parliaments (1491). Not only had he dedicated his translation of the *Aeneid* to Prince Arthur (1490), but in 1489 Henry chose him to translate and print an earlier work on military discipline that he had commissioned for strikingly similar reasons:

whiche boke beyng in frenshe was delyuered to me willm Caxton by the most crysten kyng & redoubted prynce my naturel & souerayn lord kyng henry the /vij/ kyng of englond & of fraunce in his palais of westmestre the /xxiiij/ day of Ianyuere the /iiij/ yere of his regne & desired & wyllde me to translate this said boke & reduce it in to our english & natural tonge/ & to put it in enprynte to thende that euery gentylman born to armes & all manere men of werre captayns/ souldiours/ vytayllers & all other shold haue knowlege how they ought to behaue theym in the fayttes of warre & of bataylles.<sup>116</sup>

Had Caxton still been alive in the spring of 1492 it is unlikely that Pynson would have been chosen to print the *Statutes and Ordinances of War*.

It is misleading to think of Pynson as Machlinia's 'successor', but from the beginning of his career it is clear that he shared Machlinia's professional interest in lawbooks. Like Machlinia, he recognized that the uniqueness

<sup>A</sup> STC 9332, c6<sup>r</sup> (PRO, E 163/22/3/23). To use in this royal edict, Pynson had a woodcut of the royal arms made. Curiously, it seems to have been that woodcut (rather than the informative colophon) that prompted Dennis E. Rhodes to surmise 'that early in his career . . . Pynson was already enjoying royal favour, although he did not officially become King's Printer until 1508. How otherwise would he have had access to the new royal arms woodcut and the official text of the *Statutes of War*? (*Statutes and Ordinances*, 341). The implication that the cut could only have been obtained from an authorized supplier is unconvincing.

of the English common law made European lawbooks essentially useless in England. To a publisher that meant a potential market in which there could seldom be any effective competition from abroad. In 1481–5 Lettou and Machlinia printed ten lawbooks: Pynson started more slowly, but in addition to the *Statutes and Ordinances of War*, by 1496 he had printed four books of common law and had two more printed for him in Rouen. Lettou and Machlinia had printed five yearbooks (33–37 Henry VI); what appear to be Pynson's first two products are also yearbooks (1 and 9 Edward IV).<sup>A</sup> The partners had also printed two editions of Littleton's *Tenures*; Pynson commissioned the third edition from Le Talleur. By 1500 he had produced even more lawbooks, including nine new yearbooks (9 and 20 Henry VI; 3–8 and 11 Edward IV), reprints of three of his books of 1494, and an enlarged edition of the Lettou and Machlinia abridgement of the statutes.

As an early modern businessman Pynson was also acquainted with the common law in other ways, and the labyrinthine ways of Tudor finance sometimes left him on one side or the other of an action for debt. The first certain appearance in court of Pynson the printer, though, was in a case which has largely escaped notice,<sup>B</sup> and concerned something a little more interesting than an unpaid debt. In the Easter term of 1492 one James Borbyke brought an action in King's Bench against 'Richardus Pynson Bokebynder' and 'Conrodus Meller laborer'.<sup>C</sup> According to Borbyke, on 20 March Pynson and Meller attacked and seized him, and then imprisoned him for six days, for which offence he was seeking damages of ten marks (£6 13s. 4d.). The defendants were allowed to postpone their defence until Trinity term; after that the case was adjourned until Michaelmas and then again until Hilary 1493, at which point its disappearance from the records probably means that it was settled out of court.<sup>17</sup> Pynson and Meller appear not to have denied the facts, but the record fails to explain exactly what they did, why they did it, or how they defended their actions.

<sup>A</sup> STC's explanation of the relationship between 9770 and 9771 is confusing, and misled J. H. Baker into claiming that 'Pynson printed two issues of 1 Edw. IV' ('Books of the Common Law', 424 n.102). The two are merely variants, not separate printings or issues. One extant copy (9771) has an early state of forme A2<sup>F</sup>:3<sup>Y</sup> with headlines reimposed unchanged from a forme of 9825; the other copies (9770) have both headlines reset.

<sup>B</sup> In 1999 Baker made a passing reference to the second of the entries relating to this case ('Books of the Common Law', 424 n.101); in 2010 Hellinga summarized Borbyke's plea but cited no source (*William Caxton*, 124).

<sup>C</sup> If Meller was an adult in 1492, he would have been at least eighty-one in 1552 when John Gybkin bequeathed some binding tools to his servant, Conrad Myller (PRO, PROB 11/35, 128<sup>r-v</sup>; see also Arber, 1: 45, 48). Meller can hardly have been Myller (who was still active in the 1560s), but may have been his father.

In Easter term 1494, Pynson was simultaneously involved in two actions in Common Pleas, being sued by John Boket of the Isle of Wight for £3 and suing Henry Hunt of Essex and Hubert Hubert of London for £10.<sup>118</sup> Two years later, as already noted, he was again a defendant when John Isbury sought repayment of 66s. Two later lawsuits concern work that Pynson did during the 1490s, but since neither action was brought before 1501 they are more appropriately considered in the next chapter.<sup>A</sup>

Pynson's best-known lawsuit is his Star Chamber action against Harry Squire and others. There are four surviving documents.<sup>B</sup> One is the initial complaint by the plaintiffs, Pynson and his neighbours Cornelius Johnson and Harry Wilson. Another is their 'replication' to the defendants' answer, adding nothing except an assertion that the three named defendants were the instigators of all the crimes and misdemeanours mentioned in the complaint. On the opposing side the complaint is answered by the defendants: Harry Squire (cordwainer and parish constable), John Walker (saddler and bailiff of the Savoy – a precinct that included part of St Clement's parish), and John Vicar (butcher). Predictably, the two partisan accounts seem too different to reconcile. But the remaining document is a deposition on Pynson's behalf by his friend Thomas Sutton of Chingford, who contradicts both the other versions often enough to qualify as a comparatively objective witness.

The events happened while Pynson still lived in St Clement Danes, and before July 1500.<sup>C</sup> Pynson tells us that they began on 21 April, while Sutton places them in Easter week. During Pynson's known residence in the parish, 21 April fell in Easter week only thrice: in 1495 (too early for a case first heard in 1500), 1498, and 1500 itself. A sequel to the main event happened 'on the Wensdaye then next ensuyng'. That seems more consistent with 1500 when the 21st was a Tuesday (and tempers might still have been hot on the 22nd) than with 1498 when it was a Saturday (and passions would

<sup>A</sup> Kuskin calls Pynson 'famously litigious, a figure in no fewer than four lawsuits before 1500' ("Onely Imagined", 204). An endnote identifies them as two defensive Chancery suits brought after 1501 against people who were suing Pynson, the Star Chamber action of 1500 discussed below, and the appearance as a bailman (which Kuskin mistakes for a 'witness') of Pynson the glover in 1482. In the printer's four actual lawsuits of the 1490s he was more sued against than suing – and if that counts as 'famously litigious' we need a new adjective for John Rastell and John Wayland. Perhaps influenced by Kuskin, Hellinga too refers to 'the many occasions when he became involved with the legal system – far more often than any of his contemporaries' (*William Caxton*, 124).

<sup>B</sup> The first three constitute PRO, STAC 1/2/94, and are printed both by Plomer ('Pynson v. Squyr', 138–41) and Leadam (*Select Cases*, 114–18: a better transcript, though not meticulous). Thomas Sutton's deposition is STAC 2/20/267, printed in Plomer, 'New Documents', 165–6.

<sup>C</sup> The original complaint is endorsed "Termino Trinitatis anno xv": late June and early July 1500.

have had time to subside by the 25th). Since the quarrel may have played a part in Pynson's decision to leave St Clement's, it is reasonably certain that the trouble erupted on 21 April 1500.

On that Tuesday evening Pynson and some friends were making merry at a nearby tavern. Those present included Pynson and his wife, Johnson, Wilson, Sutton, one William Berell, and some of their servants. At about ten o'clock Pynson was warned to be careful going home because some people were lying in wait to attack him – news that apparently reduced Mrs Pynson to tears. The party paid for their drinks and set off homeward, but were ambushed. As Pynson describes it, the attackers 'wyth force and armes Cruelluy and Riouttusley assautyd [them,] and theym by force droue yn to their housez or elles they had ben slayn'. Sutton is more specific: what happened first was that some boys began throwing stones at them. He 'rebuked thaim and callid thaim knaves' – whereupon an ostler with a sword stepped forward and 'asked this deponent whom he callid knaves'. Sutton 'tooke him . . . fast by the bosom' and told him to put up his sword and keep the peace.

Pynson identifies Squire, Walker, and Vicar as the ringleaders, and explicitly alleges that all three participated in the fray. Squire, on the other hand, claims that he spent the evening at home with his neighbour William Hales, and knew nothing of the trouble until someone came and reported a fight in progress – upon which he and Hales went outside and saw Pynson, Sutton, Berell, and others in the street. On this point Sutton seems to corroborate Squire, and he denies having seen Walker or Vicar at all. While he was still holding on to the ostler, Squire appeared with his constable's bill and told him to let go. Sutton tried to explain what had happened, but Squire insisted on making him release the ostler.

Pynson himself reports no dialogue. Squire says that he charged Pynson's party to keep the king's peace, to which Pynson responded by charging him to do likewise. According to Sutton, Squire told Pynson, 'Wele knave we shall ordaign for *the* wele inough. *This* is *thi* worke' – and there is little reason to doubt that all that and more was said by both sides.

At this point the stories diverge sharply. Squire implausibly claims that he went home peaceably and stayed there all night – which if true was a dereliction of his constabulary duty, because the trouble was not yet over. Sutton reports that 'many folkes *wit*h weapons' came to join Squire, 'and som of thaim Ranne in at oon Halis hous' (presumably that of Squire's neighbour, William Hales) and fetched out a bench to use as a battering

ram.<sup>A</sup> Whether or not either Squire or Hales was still present, the crowd evidently intended to break down Pynson's door – but before they could do so some 'gentlemen of court' came by and did a rather better job of dispersing the rioters than the constable had done.

For the subsequent events we have only Pynson's word. Next day some fifteen or sixteen of the rioters allegedly lay in wait in Fleet Street for Pynson's servants, beat and wounded them, and stole a cloak and a short dagger from one of them (the cloak, we are told, was later sold to an upholsterer). Pynson also claims that his servants have at other times been so menaced and threatened that they fear to leave their houses even to go to church, and that so many have consequently left him that his business may not survive. Moreover, the defendants 'haue made great othys and *promisys* that their shall nother frenshman nor flemmyng dewell nor abide wythyn the seid *parish* of seynt Clementes'.

This incident has been described as 'one of the usual attacks by natives on foreign workmen then so common', and as part of what Painter called 'the chauvinism of unruly London' that Caxton sensibly avoided by setting up shop in Westminster.<sup>B</sup> But if events of this kind were commonplace in 1500 it is curious no others have yet been cited in support of 'usual',<sup>C</sup> and when Pynson moved *into* London later in the year his motives may have included a desire to escape unruly Middlesex. Despite the underlying xenophobia implied by Squire's reported objection to having Frenchmen or Flemings in his parish, Johnston rightly observes that the attacks themselves were aimed not at the alien community in general but at Pynson in particular.<sup>119</sup> It was Pynson for whom the rioters were lying in wait, Pynson's door they intended to break down, Pynson whom Squire held responsible for the affray ('*This is thi worke*'), and Pynson's workmen who were ambushed in

<sup>A</sup> The deposition describes what they fetched as 'a *fourme with* which *thei Ranne* at *mennys dores* to breke thaim vp' (PRO, STAC 2/20/267, verso, lines 8–9). There is, however, no evidence that the crowd was interested in any door but Pynson's or that any doors were actually rammed. Perhaps whoever penned the deposition should have written '*with* which to *Runne* at *mennys dores*'.

<sup>B</sup> Duff, *Century*, 126; Painter, *William Caxton*, 83. Mirjam Foot assigns specific blame for the alleged crime wave. 'The Stationers' Company . . . bestirred itself and there were endless riots and disorders arising out of troubles between the established stationers, concentrated in London, and foreign competitors. Actions brought in Star Chamber bear witness to the frequent attacks by native workmen on foreigners, such as an action brought by Pynson and others against Henry Squire and his companions' ('Influences from the Netherlands', 149). No evidence of 'frequent' attacks or other Star Chamber actions is offered, and neither Squire nor his co-defendants were Stationers.

<sup>C</sup> Striving to illustrate what he calls 'the routine harassment aliens were subjected to', Kuskin can muster only six examples in 137 years ("Onely Imagined", 200, 233 n.6) – including the Peasants' Revolt (1381), the Cade rebellion (1450), and Evil May Day (1517), which were neither routine nor remotely comparable.

Fleet Street. For his part, Pynson included two of Squire's friends in his Star Chamber action without offering any specific accusation or evidence against them, although his own witness explicitly denied seeing either of them. Even if the rioters' actions drew fuel from a more general resentment against aliens, the immediate cause of the riot appears to have been a personal quarrel between Pynson and Squire.

Exactly when Pynson moved into London is uncertain. His first printing house was outside Temple Bar, but because both the Middle (or New) Temple and its bar were in London he often gave his address in a form such as 'extra Berram noui templi/ Londoñ'.<sup>A</sup> So even before he moved Pynson would sometimes carelessly imply (or deliberately suggest) that he was located in London itself.<sup>B</sup>

Only two Pynson books are actually dated 1501.<sup>C</sup> One I have been unable to examine has a colophon dated 13 November, and is presumably the later of the two (STC 16232.6). The other is quite explicit that it was printed *inside* Temple Bar: 'intra barram noui templi londiniarum' (17727, aa<sup>r</sup>). Pynson must therefore have moved before either book was printed. The five books dated 1500, however, are less helpful. Two give no address at all (9265 and 11611).<sup>D</sup> Two others claim to have been printed in 'Londoñ', but one of them is dated 28 April, only a week after the ambush in St Clement Danes (12471). The other is the magnificent folio missal printed for Archbishop Thomas Morton (16273), dated more than three months earlier on 10 January. The remaining dated book of 1500 must presumably be later than the missal – but it was explicitly 'Emprynted without temple barre by Rycharde Pynson in the yere of our lorde. M.D.' (3297, k6<sup>v</sup>). If we could date that book before April and assume that the missal was dated by the legal year (January 1501 rather than 1500) there would be few problems, and we could assume that Pynson was already on the point of moving when he was attacked. But there is general agreement that the Morton Missal *must* be dated by the calendar year (January 1500), because Morton died on 15 September 1500 and the book betrays no awareness of his death. So while we can be certain that Pynson had moved into London by the time

<sup>A</sup> STC 11601, L4<sup>r</sup> (1496). The south end of Pynson's printing house adjoined the garden of the Middle Temple, whose grounds extended well to the west of Temple Bar.

<sup>B</sup> For example, 'Finitum Londoñ. Per Richardum Pynson. Anno dñi. M.CCCC.lxxxxix.' (STC 17966.5, F8<sup>v</sup>).

<sup>C</sup> Five undated books are *believed* to have been printed in 1501, and fifteen more in or around 1500.

<sup>D</sup> In the colophon of STC 11611, the words 'in regia quoque Ciuitate Londoñ' (found also in earlier editions by both Pynson and de Worde) refer to the compilation of the book, not to its printing.

he printed STC 17727 in 1501, it is only *almost* certain that he did so before the end of 1500.<sup>A</sup>

### The second generation: Wynkyn de Worde

By November 1479 Wynkyn de Worde was not only living in Westminster but also married to an Englishwoman, so it is a reasonable guess that he came over with Caxton in or just before 1476. Where he had learned his craft, whether he had worked for Caxton abroad, and if so, for how long, are all unknown.

Caxton died early in 1492.<sup>120</sup> It is certain that he left a will of some kind, though it may only have been a nuncupative one (spoken on his deathbed and reported by one or more witnesses). Whatever kind of document it was, probate was contested almost immediately: the executor refused to pay a legacy of £80 that the printer's son-in-law, Gerard Crop, claimed had been promised to him by the dying Caxton. From the Archdeaconry Court of Westminster the consequent litigation escalated into at least two Chancery actions, and eventually led to a legal separation between Crop and Caxton's daughter Elizabeth in May 1496.<sup>121</sup> It is generally (and plausibly) assumed that these difficulties disrupted what could otherwise have been a relatively seamless transfer of the business to Caxton's successor, causing a delay of several months before the printing house resumed work under de Worde. Alternatively, it may simply have taken de Worde some time to raise whatever money he needed to secure the succession – for while Plomer imagined Caxton rewarding the long service of his loyal foreman by bequeathing him the whole business,<sup>B</sup> such munificence is not very likely.

Wynkyn de Worde was granted letters of denization in April 1496, and they describe him as hailing from the Duchy of Lotharingia (*ducatu Lothoringie*) or Lorraine.<sup>122</sup> It seems to have been Duff who first interpreted the usual printed form of de Worde's surname as referring to Wörth in Alsace – and having settled the matter to their satisfaction, he and Plomer were thereafter repeatedly insistent that the printer was of German rather than Dutch descent.

<sup>A</sup> Hellinga suggests that he remained outside Temple Bar until 1502 (*William Caxton*, 114), but offers no evidence.

<sup>B</sup> 'Nor can there be much doubt that the business at the Red Pale was left by Caxton to Wynkyn de Worde' (Plomer, *Wynkyn de Worde*, 46).

His name, De Worde, which some have fallen into the mistake of deriving from the town of Woerden in Holland, is clearly taken from the town of Wörth in Alsace: indeed, the printer sometimes uses the form Worth in place of Worde.<sup>123</sup>

The form 'de Worth', however, has not been recorded, although 'the Worth' (1494 and twice in 1496) and 'the Worde' (ten times in 1495–1501) are found on a few books in the English language.<sup>124</sup> Neither Duff nor Plomer seems to have entertained the possibility that they might be intentional puns.

But as Eric Vickers pointed out in 1977, Wörth in Alsace (now Woerth sur Sauer) ceased to belong to the Duchy of Lorraine in 1206.<sup>125</sup> If we assume that both the patent and the printer's surname indicate his birthplace, Woerth sur Sauer seems to be firmly ruled out (as does the nearby Wörth am Rhein). More recently, Lotte Hellinga has ingeniously argued that de Worde might after all have been born in Woerden.<sup>126</sup> Although that town was never part of Lorraine, during the mid-1470s it was under the authority of Charles the Bold, duke of Burgundy, whose titles included that of count of Holland. If de Worde did indeed accompany Caxton to Westminster in 1475 or 1476, his passport might well have been issued in Charles's name – and if so it would have included the duke's full title, which began by describing him as duke of Burgundy, Lotharingia, and Brabant. As Hellinga notes, in that title 'Lotharingia . . . had no realistic territorial significance' – but it does suggest a possible explanation of how a native of the Netherlands and '*ducatu Lothoringie*' might coexist in the same official document.<sup>A</sup>

In support of a Dutch origin, Hellinga points to de Worde's seemingly close connections in 1492–3 and 1496–7 with the Dutch printers Gotfridus de Os and Govert van Ghemen (who may be one and the same), from whom he borrowed a set of woodcut initials and acquired a cut depicting a schoolmaster and three pupils. She also notes that some of the other woodcut illustrations used by de Worde before 1500 were copied from books printed in the Netherlands in the Dutch language.<sup>127</sup> But interesting as those connections are, as evidence for de Worde's own origin they are of uncertain value; one could equally observe that every book de Worde had printed for him overseas, or agreed to distribute for a foreign publisher, was printed in Paris.<sup>128</sup> More telling is the evidence of the first two English documents known to mention de Worde: a lease of 1479 to Wynkyn and his

<sup>A</sup> 'Wynkyn de Worde's Native Land', 345. Compare the claim of the Tudors and Stuarts to be monarchs of 'England, France, and Ireland', in which formula 'France' was hardly realistic even before the loss of Calais.

wife Elizabeth, and a lease of 1480 to the next tenant, of a property in which Elizabeth had apparently lived before their marriage. It has often been noted that both the name Wynand and its diminutive Wynkyn are more characteristically Dutch than German. To that can be added the fact that both leases identify the printer with an unequivocally Dutch preposition as Winandus *van* Wordon (my emphasis).<sup>A</sup> While far from conclusive, the evidence pointing to Woerden as Wynkyn's birthplace seems stronger than that for any of the Wörths.<sup>B</sup>

It is nevertheless true that de Worde's name can present problems. In print it is always one spelling or another of Wynkyn de Worde, but the accounts of Westminster Abbey before 1500 usually record his rent as paid by either Johannes or Jan Wynkyn (fifteen examples, plus an aberrant 'Willelmo' Wynkyn).<sup>129</sup> It could be suggested that this was simply a quirk of the abbey accountants, who thought of him simply as 'Wynkyn', assumed it was a surname, and added 'Johannes' in their records as a generic Christian name. But as we shall see in due course, 'Johannes Wynkyn Stacioner' also made an appearance in the City records in 1521, and a printer who must have been de Worde was identified as 'Mr Wylkyns' eight times in the accounts for 1520–2 of the Hospital of St Mary Rounceval.<sup>130</sup> Furthermore, in and after the 1530s we find records of a Stationer named Richard Wynkyn (once called 'Rycharde de worde') who may have been the printer's son. It is therefore possible that John Wynkyn was an Anglicized alias devised by de Worde himself for occasional use – though why, and for what occasions, remains obscure.

For the first nine years of his independent career de Worde printed 'at Westmynster, In Caxtons house'.<sup>131</sup> That building was presumably one of the tenements rented by Caxton in the almonry, but in the absence of rental accounts for 1492–1501 it is uncertain whether de Worde took over *all* his master's almonry properties. If potential customers could recognize the building as 'Caxtons house' it probably displayed a sign incorporating Caxton's initials and merchant's mark. It may, indeed, have resembled the printer's device used first by Caxton and sporadically afterwards by de Worde (McK 1). That conclusion is supported by de Worde's inclusion of the initials and mark in each of the fifteen devices he commissioned and used in later years.<sup>132</sup> He also took over Caxton's little shop beside the

<sup>A</sup> Hellinga, 'Wynkyn de Worde's Native Land', 344; Nixon, 'Caxton, his Contemporaries and Successors', 320–1. Both give the surname as 'Worden', but the manuscripts clearly read 'Wordon' in all three places: Westminster Abbey, WAM 17849, line 1 and endorsement; WAM 17850, line 3.

<sup>B</sup> In addition to the two already mentioned, farther east there is a Wörth in Austria and two more in Germany (Wörth an der Donau and Wörth an der Isar).

chapter house, but gave it up in 1499, a year before leaving Westminster.<sup>133</sup> In December 1498 he buried Elizabeth, his wife of at least nineteen years, and the 'Iuliane de Worde' he buried ceremoniously in July 1500 was probably his next wife.<sup>134</sup> If so, by the time he completed his plans to leave Westminster he was once again a widower.

De Worde finally moved to London sometime between September 1500 and May 1501. He was certainly still in Westminster in March 1500, when two of his dated books announced that they were printed there. His only other book dated 1500 declines to specify a month, but was also printed in Westminster and is probably later than the March books, while two other items conjecturally dated 1500 (one book and some reset sheets for another) also identify themselves as printed in Westminster.<sup>A</sup> We do not know exactly when de Worde left 'Caxtons house', but at Michaelmas he made his last recorded payments for a tenement and a room he had rented elsewhere in Westminster.<sup>B</sup> No de Worde book bears both the date 1500 and his new London address, but two conjecturally dated '1500?' by STC were printed 'in fletestrete in the sygne of the sonne'.<sup>135</sup> Either or both could conceivably have been printed early the next year,<sup>C</sup> and the first dated book with the Fleet Street address was not completed until 27 May 1501.<sup>136</sup> But since de Worde is not known to have paid rent for any Westminster property after Michaelmas 1500, he probably moved into London no later than October.

### The second generation: Julian Notary and partners

In 1496 a book of *Questiones* attributed to Albertus Magnus was printed in London by a new press near the church of St Thomas the Apostle, and in April 1497 the same press printed a Sarum *Horae* for de Worde.<sup>137</sup> No printer's name appeared on either book, but each colophon used the device of a mercantile mark containing three sets of initials. As [Figure 5](#) shows, the lower part of the mark is a circle divided horizontally, with the top half divided again vertically. In each of the upper quadrants appears a

<sup>A</sup> STC 13829; 14546, 24766.3 (reset sheets only). Hellinga ('Tradition and Renewal', 30) accepts the STC date for 14546 but does not mention 24766.3.

<sup>B</sup> Nixon, 'Caxton, his Contemporaries and Successors', 323; Westminster Abbey, WAM 23127. There is no extant account for 1500–1, so de Worde might have continued to rent those properties after Michaelmas 1500.

<sup>C</sup> Hellinga mentions neither in her chronology of 'books printed by Wynkyn de Worde before 1501' ('Tradition and Renewal', 27–30), implicitly rejecting the STC conjecture, and has privately suggested 1502 as the earliest likely date for one of them (STC 21070).

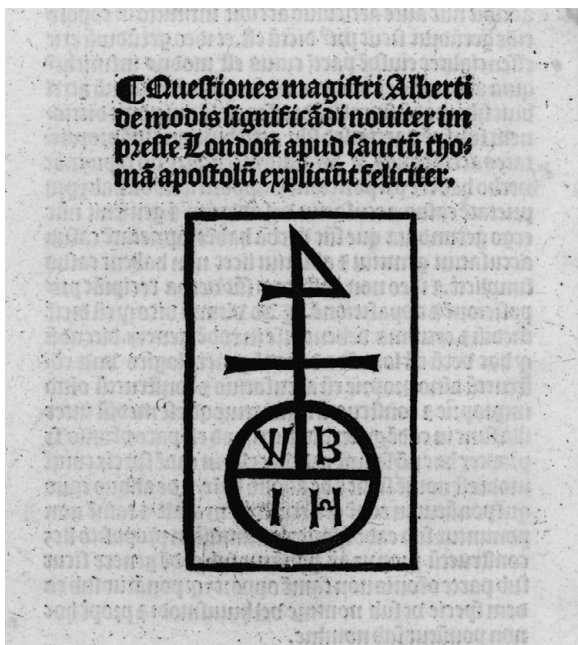


Figure 5 The device of Julian Notary, Jean Barbier, and I. H. STC 270, h5<sup>v</sup>. (Cambridge University Library, Inc.5.J.3.7 (3629).)

monogram representing two initials: I and N on the left; I and B on the right. The lower half-circle contains the separate initials I and H.

A later colophon implicitly identifies the monograms as belonging to Julian Notary (or Notaire) and Jean (or John) Barbier, but I. H. remains enigmatic. In 1889 Duff observed that only two known stationers were plausible candidates: Inghelbert Haghe and Jean Huvin, both of Rouen. In his opinion there were ‘hardly any grounds’ for suspecting the little-known Haghe, but ‘many probabilities in . . . favour, and very little to be said against’, Huvin.<sup>138</sup> Duff, however, believed that while Haghe was only a bookseller, both Huvin and I. H. were printers. But Huvin was not a printer either. As bookseller-publishers both he and Haghe supplied the English market with imported liturgical books in the early 1500s, and having a 1497 *Horae* printed for de Worde is as likely a venture for the one as for the other. As Duff admitted, Haghe and de Worde had an important patron in common: Haghe’s only known publication is a 1505 Hereford breviary commissioned by Margaret Beaufort, countess of Richmond and

Derby.<sup>A</sup> But the qualification that makes Haghe a distinctly more credible candidate than Huvin is his documented presence in London in at least 1505–7 and Hereford in at least 1510.<sup>139</sup> If Huvin ever set foot in England the evidence is yet to be found.

But was I. H. either a printer *or* an alien? Each of the three devices later used by Notary alone incorporated the same merchant's mark, but with the upper quadrants empty and Notary's initials in the compartment below.<sup>140</sup> The mark must therefore have been Notary's own – so why were the initials of I. H. originally given pride of place? The third extant book from that press was a missal printed for de Worde in 1498, with a colophon identifying Notary and Barbier by name and with the initials I. H. excised from the bottom compartment of the device. That book, moreover, was printed not in London but in Westminster. And because the only two books that bear the London address are the only two associated with I. H., the house near St Thomas the Apostle seems likely to have been his.

Looking again at [Figure 5](#) on the assumption that the mercantile mark is Notary's but the address belongs to the more prominent initials below, I cannot resist interpreting the colophon and device as the graphic equivalent of 'Printed by I. N. and I. B. *for* I. H. near St Thomas the Apostle'. I suspect, in other words, that while Notary and Barbier provided the technical expertise, in 1496 the role of I. H. was that of publisher and major shareholder in the venture. He was still the financial principal in 1497 even though the *Horae* itself was paid for by de Worde, but by 1498 the partnership had broken up and Notary and Barbier had moved to Westminster. If that scenario is more than mere fancy, then I. H. may have been neither a printer nor an alien. He may have been an English patron who had encouraged Notary to come to England.

But if the identity of I. H. is problematic, so is that of Barbier. His initials and name are associated with only the first three extant Notary books of 1496–8. The following year Notary cut both monograms from their device, typeset his name in the bottom compartment, and thereafter printed in his own name alone. In and after 1502 a Jean Barbier ran a printing house in Paris, and if that were the whole of the evidence one would naturally conclude that after a few years in England as Notary's partner, Barbier returned home to set up on his own. But at Easter 1495 one Hans Warnekes brought an action for a debt of £7 against 'Iohannem

<sup>A</sup> STC 15793. The countess sued Haghe in Common Pleas in Easter 1505 for a debt of £5 (PRO, CP 40/972, 50<sup>v</sup>): see Plomer, 'Some Notices from the Plea Rolls', 296–7.

Barbour nuper de Couentre Berebrewer alias dictum Iohannem Barbier nuper de Couentre Prenter'.<sup>A</sup>

The defendant failed to appear, and the absence of any later record probably means that the case was settled out of court. As for Barbour/Barbier himself, Pantzer concludes that 'This is surely not the Paris printer, who was a native of France',<sup>141</sup> but that does not necessarily follow. 'Late of Coventry' (*nuper de Couentre*) proves nothing about his origins or nationality – only that he was living there either when the debt was incurred or when the plea was entered. The 'nuper' merely protected the case from a technical challenge if the defendant had since moved. All the description tells us is that sometime before Easter the defendant had lived in Coventry, that his name was variously rendered in both English and French forms, and that he could be described as either a brewer or a printer. In the England of the 1490s there was probably more demand for beer than for printed books. It therefore seems less likely that a struggling brewer would turn to printing than that a printer – laid off during the slump of the late 1480s? – might cope with a lean period by turning to brewing. There is no need to imagine an unrecorded press in Coventry; Barbier could have learned to print in London, Oxford, St Albans, or Westminster. The evidence is admittedly just as consistent with a Coventry-born brewer who became a Francophile printer and then emigrated, or with two quite distinct Jean Barbiers.<sup>B</sup> But the 1495 record cannot eliminate the possibility that Barbier of Paris was Notary's former partner.

With Julian Notary we are on safer ground. In early 1511 he identified himself in a deposition as a forty-year-old native of Vannes in Brittany who had lived there until he arrived in the parish of St Clement Danes sixteen years earlier.<sup>142</sup> He seems, indeed, to have given a little more information than intended, for when first asked how long he had lived in his present parish he apparently mistook the question to mean at his present address, and answered 'eight or nine years'. But having written 'vij vel' the clerk deleted the unfinished phrase and substituted 'xvj<sup>to</sup> annos'. Eight years before the deposition, in 1503 Notary had resumed his interrupted printing career at a new address 'in saynt clementys parysshe'.<sup>143</sup> If he really had lived continuously in that parish for sixteen years before January 1511 he must have arrived in or just before 1495, a year or more before printing his

<sup>A</sup> PRO, CP 40/932, 277<sup>r</sup>, first noted by Plomer, 'Some Notices from the Plea Rolls', 295. Plomer gives the regnal year as '16' Henry VII (really 10) and the plaintiff's first name as 'Ham:' (clearly 'Hans' in the original).

<sup>B</sup> The Middlesex alien subsidy assessments of 1483 list a householder named John Barbour in the parish of St Clement Danes (PRO, E 179/141/94, 4<sup>r</sup>; E 179/141/95, 2).

first known book. Whether or not the house near St Thomas the Apostle belonged to I. H. it was evidently not Notary's dwelling, and nor was his second printing address in King Street, Westminster (conceivably Barbier's house).

The three books Notary is known to have printed in partnership have already been mentioned: two red-and-black liturgical books printed for Wynkyn de Worde and the 1496 *Questiones* probably for I. H. Of the books he subsequently printed alone, only three can be dated before 1501. The first and largest was a quarto edition of John Mirk's *Festial* and *Quatuor sermones* dated 1499. The next year saw a much smaller quarto: Chaucer's *Love and Complaints between Mars and Venus*, containing only fourteen leaves. Last (and in 64°, distinctly least), in April 1500 he printed another two-colour *Horae*, this time for himself: a miniature with text-pages measuring less than an inch and a half by one inch. Those last two items could not have kept his press busy for the whole of 1500 – but either the accidents of survival have treated his work unfairly or he then ceased to print for two to three years, because nothing else of his can be dated before 1503. By the end of 1500, then, the number of active printers in the London area had apparently declined again, and for a while there were only two. And both of them had recently moved inside the City limits.

## CHAPTER TWO

### 1501–1509 *In the beginning...*

#### De Worde and Pynson in London

The sixteenth century began with the first year in which all books known to have been printed in England were apparently printed in London itself. The men who printed them were not only master printers: they were also importers, publishers, distributors, booksellers, and binders.<sup>A</sup> De Worde had been a denizen for nearly five years. Although Pynson's Norman origins may strictly have qualified him as an *indigena* he would have found it increasingly difficult to convince people of that technicality, and in 1513 he would acknowledge himself an alien by purchasing letters of denization. But nationality aside, before moving into Fleet Street neither man was a citizen of London. That fact would not have stopped them importing, publishing, or distributing, all of which non-citizens could legally do. And because they had no native rivals, as printers de Worde and Pynson posed no competitive threat to any citizen. But as non-citizens, inside the City limits they could bind books only with the consent of the Stationers' Company and could not legally retail them at all.

In his will of 1534 de Worde described himself as 'citizen and stacioner of london',<sup>1</sup> using the formula reserved for freemen of companies. A City record of December 1521 describes him as one of four 'Ciues' and individually as a 'Stacioner', so he was presumably already free by then.<sup>2</sup> Pynson, similarly described in a record of October 1520, declined to use the proper formula in his will of 1529, but all three drafts of a contract of 1523–4 call him 'Cyttezeyn and stacioner' in one spelling or another.<sup>3</sup> Furthermore, in February 1510 the Court of Aldermen agreed that no denizen should

<sup>A</sup> The extant London port records from Pynson's career (1491–1529) cover almost eight years, although some of the rolls are damaged. De Worde is named frequently; Pynson not at all. But Pynson imported the books printed for him by Le Talleur and the Rouen almanack whose first sheet he replaced (STC 504). Hellinga suggests that 'Pynson's absence from the Customs Rolls may be explained if he had argued that as an Englishman he was exempt from aliens' duties' (*William Caxton*, 150), but he is not among the native importers recorded in 1494–5 and 1519–20.

thereafter be made free 'withoute assent of the maire and aldermen and the Comen Councell',<sup>4</sup> so it is unlikely that either de Worde or Pynson could have been freed after that date without a record surviving. And in Pynson's case, as early as 28 June 1502 a legal document described him as 'Ricardum pynson Ciuem & Stacionarium' of London.<sup>5</sup>

Two translators who set up businesses of their own (Henry Watson in 1512 and Robert Copland in 1514) had each described de Worde in print by 1510 as 'my worshypfull mayster'.<sup>6</sup> Both had probably served him as apprentices, and Copland is documented as a Stationer in March 1518.<sup>7</sup> Only freemen could bind and free apprentices, who had to serve at least seven years. Copland must therefore have been bound before the end of 1507 and Watson at least two years earlier – so de Worde must have been a freeman by 1505. Chancery bills submitted by the Stationers Henry Tab and Thomas Kele show that each had served eight years as Pynson's apprentice.<sup>8</sup> Tab applied for a marriage licence on 20 January 1521,<sup>9</sup> and must therefore have been bound before 20 January 1513 – so even without the deed of 1502 we could deduce that Pynson was a freeman by the end of 1512. No freedom registers or recognizance rolls survive from the first half of the century, and in the very early 1500s redemptions were not usually recorded elsewhere. But if Pynson was free by 1502 and de Worde by 1505, the obvious conclusion is that they were freed by redemption when they first moved into the City in late 1500.<sup>A</sup> So 1501 seems also to have been the first year during which all books known to have been printed in London were printed by freemen of the Stationers' Company. After 1503 there would not be another such year until 1606.

De Worde's new home and printing house was the second house west of Shoe Lane, on the north side of Fleet Street in St Bride's parish.<sup>10</sup> Shoe Lane was then only nine feet wide, and the corner house had a Fleet Street frontage of a little over thirteen feet; de Worde's own frontage was a respectable 31 feet 3 inches (the present no. 131 and part of no. 130) and was probably between forty and fifty-seven feet deep.<sup>B</sup> Looking south it

<sup>A</sup> In 1997 Loades suggested that 'when the more exalted Scriveners refused to receive practitioners of the new art of printing in the late fifteenth century, the Stationers gave them hospitality' (*Tudor Government*, 148). In 1998 he contradicted that: 'The foreign printers, such as Pynson and de Worde . . . , were heavily dependent on royal and ecclesiastical favour to protect them from the jealous hostility of the London Stationers' ('Books and the English Reformation', 268). The exalted refusal, official favour, and jealous hostility are all imaginary.

<sup>B</sup> Raven claims that 'Most printing houses offered room barely sufficient for the printing press, the cases of type, the drying of pages and the storage of paper and completed copies', and that 'single-press rooms of some ten by twelve feet seem to have been common' (*The Business of Books*, 24). There is no evidence for the size of 'Most' examples, so this notion may derive from early woodcuts

faced the cistern house of the Fleet Street conduit – the public water supply for the neighbourhood – which formed an island dividing the street into two lanes of unequal width.<sup>A</sup> The house had once been an inn called the Falcon, but when de Worde moved in he used a sign of his own, namely the Sun.<sup>B</sup> He never owned the building; he leased it from the priory of Ankerwyke in Buckinghamshire, and his annual rent of five marks (£3 6s. 8d.) was collected on the prioress's behalf by the dean and chapter of St Paul's. Like most substantial houses on major thoroughfares such as Fleet Street it would have had at least three full storeys (quite possibly four) with garrets above. For a short period in 1508–9 de Worde also had a separate retail outlet at the sign of 'diue marie pietatis' (Our Lady of Pity) in Paul's Churchyard, but it was evidently not a success. The only two books to mention that shop are dated 22 December 1508 and 4 February 1509.<sup>11</sup>

Pynson's printing house was also on the north side of Fleet Street, 100 yards or so inside Temple Bar in the parish of St Dunstan in the West. It had a frontage of approximately thirty-four feet and extended north some ninety feet to the wall of Clifford's Inn.<sup>C</sup> To the west of St Dunstan's, it was separated from the church only by the narrow Clifford's Inn Passage, and the frontage lay a little to the south of the eastern half of the present no. 190. It belonged to the dean and chapter of St Stephen's College, Westminster, and when Pynson first moved in he was only the subtenant. Not until 12 October 1507 did he secure a lease of his own, for 60 years from the Michaelmas just past at an annual rent of eight marks (£5 6s. 8d.).<sup>12</sup> In his imprints from 1502 (and his 1507 lease) the house is identified as the George, so it must have displayed the sign of St George and presumably the dragon. We can only guess whether Pynson chose his own sign or simply took over what was already there – but he never depicted St George in his printed devices.

of printing, which cram as many activities as possible into the few square inches available. Neither of his cited sources – William Leybourn's 1674 surveys of the Stationers' tenements (none of which was a printing house) and my study of the bookshops in Paul's Churchyard (hardly any of which ever housed a press) – supports the claim.

<sup>A</sup> The conduit was apparently closer to the south side of the street than to the north.

<sup>B</sup> The devices he designed and used after his move suggest that the sign included Caxton's mark and initials, and that the sun may have been surrounded by smaller stars. See McK 12, 19–21, 23–5 and 27.

<sup>C</sup> Northern abuttal from LMA, CLA/023/DW/01/255/48 and CLA/023/DW/01/257/32; measurements from P69/DUN2/B/041/MS03771. The site comprised the properties that were numbered 187–8 in the eighteenth century. The belief that the George was on the corner of Chancery Lane (Baker, *Year Books*, xviii n.10; Hellinga, *William Caxton*, 115) is mistaken.

### Notary, Faques, and Faques

In 1503 Julian Notary reappeared at a new address in St Clement Danes with the sign of the Three Kings, probably on the south side of the Strand, at or near what eventually became no. 194.<sup>A</sup> There he was happy to exploit the ambiguity in the name of his parish: 'St Clement Danes outside the Bar of the New Temple, London'. Although the parish itself was outside the City, Notary usually described his address as in 'London'.

Like Pynson, the next two printers to set up in London were of Norman origin. The first was William Faques, who described himself in one colophon as 'Guilliermum faques normanum'.<sup>B</sup> Only eight books of his are known, four printed in 1504 and four probably in 1505. In two of the former he gives his address as 'within Seynt Helens' and in two of the latter as 'In abchirche lane'.<sup>13</sup> Graham Pollard once suggested that alien printers in London would usually have chosen to work in one of the so-called 'liberties' – areas inside the City's geographical boundaries but outside its jurisdiction.<sup>14</sup> If 'within Seynt Helens' means in the priory grounds of St Helen, Bishopsgate (as seems likely), and if those grounds were recognized as a liberty (which is uncertain), then for a single year William Faques may have been the only known example of the suggested norm. But as I have shown elsewhere, no other early printer's address has been confirmed as having been inside a liberty, while most of them (including Faques's second in Abchurch Lane) were certainly not.<sup>15</sup>

The brevity of Faques's career is to be regretted, because some of his extant work rivals Pynson at his best. Some of his woodcut ornaments are of high quality, most notably his unusual device (two interlaced and contrasting triangles) and a capital H that Plomer has rightly compared to the best initials associated with V  rard in Paris.<sup>16</sup> Perhaps his arrival in England was somehow connected with Henry's librarian, Quentin Poulet, and with what Gordon Kipling has called 'The King's patronage, through Poulet, of the great French printer Antoine V  rard' – who visited Henry's court a year before Faques made his first appearance in the records.<sup>C</sup> He can hardly have acquired all his skills by instinct alone, and there were few

<sup>A</sup> It would, however, have been closer to the church than the present no. 194: the Strand has been considerably widened to the south since 1503. The evidence for the site is discussed in Appendix G.

<sup>B</sup> Feather usually spells him 'Facques' (*History*, 17, *Publishing, Piracy and Politics*, 11), and Murphy imagines that he 'changed his name to William Fawkes' ('History of the Book in Britain', 172). I have found no sixteenth-century authority for either version.

<sup>C</sup> Kipling, 'Henry VII and the Origins of Tudor Patronage', 121–3, 125–6. In March 1503 Faques imported a shipment of forty reams of paper and two cases of books (PRO, E 122/80/2, 6<sup>t</sup>).

places in which he and his workmen could have been trained as well as they manifestly were.

Sometime between 1505 and 1509 William was succeeded by his kinsman Richard Faques (perhaps, but not certainly, his son), who moved the business to the sign of the Maiden's Head in St Paul's Churchyard. If that was the building at which Thomas Petyt used the same sign for two decades from 1536 (which is likely but not certain), it was in the northeast quarter of the cathedral precinct, immediately west of the charnel chapel (no. 9 in [Map 3](#)).<sup>A</sup> Between William's last book of 1505 and the first one with Richard's name and new address in 1509, the Faques types were used once in 1507 for a small, single-sided letter of confraternity for a priory in Leicestershire.<sup>17</sup> There is no imprint, and no sure way to determine whether it was William's last job or Richard's first. But as I shall suggest later in this chapter, William may have been otherwise occupied by 1507, so the probabilities favour Richard.

I have already mentioned Julian Notary's deposition of 1511. When C. E. Welch first drew attention to it he suggested that it 'contains nothing else of interest'.<sup>18</sup> But immediately after the words Welch quoted, Notary explains that he is testifying on behalf of the plaintiff, Richard Faques, against one Alice White. He describes Faques as a Frenchman born in Normandy ('*gallus natus in partibus normandie*') and claims to have known him for sixteen years – which probably means that Faques too had been in England since at least 1495.<sup>19</sup> Several pages later Notary's wife Anna (aged twenty-eight, nine years in St Clement's), who has known Faques for twelve years, adds the detail that he binds books for her husband.<sup>20</sup>

In early August 1510, while Alice White was 'in the cuntre' she lost some money – or as she later claimed in Notary's presence, the money 'was takyn Fro me and conveyde owte of my bowchett'. To find out what had become of it she went to a soothsayer, and next time she saw Anna Notary she called her into her workshop.

Mastres Iulian, Richard Faques hathe my mony that I lake, For I haue beyn *with* a sothe saier, and he hathe shewde me so by tokyns in his Face, where fore I *pray* yow shew Richerd Faques thus and desire hym that I may haue it agayn and that he let it be caste *in* some corner in my howse or in my gardyn prevely for els I will trobill hym therefore.

<sup>A</sup> In *Booksops* (48–51) I wrongly located the Maiden's Head and the neighbouring Bell at the east end of the churchyard. The Bell was really at no. 8 and the Brazen Serpent at nos. 6–7. Raven conflates William and Richard, describing the King's Printer as 'William Faques (or Fawkes) of the Maiden's Head in St Paul's Churchyard' (*The Business of Books*, 30).

Anna agreed that Faques had the indicated ‘tokyns’, but declined to believe that he had stolen Alice’s money. But on 13 August, in Notary’s house and in the presence of John Wendover, Skinner, Alice confronted Faques and asked for it back. As Wendover tells it, she said that her soothsayer ‘hathe shewde me by *certeyn* tokyns that ye haue it, where fore I *pray* yow let my [*sic*] haue it agayne for els I will trobil yow for it’.<sup>21</sup> Notary’s version of her words is more detailed and explicit.

I *pray* yow gode man Fakques latt me haue my money . . . for ye haue it as it is shewede me by a soothe sayer, For he shewys me that ther was a man in our compeny that hathe a blemysse in his Face whyche he saithe has itt, and ther was none bot yow that hath eny suche token, and ther For I pray yow let me haue it, for ye be he that has it.

Furious at being accused of theft in front of influential friends, Faques retorted, ‘Mastres I haue none of *your* money, goo and seke of *your* soothsayer as ye woll for I haue none of *your* money, and that ye shall know shortly.’ Neither Alice nor her soothsayer foresaw the action for slander.

Had Faques’s facial ‘blemysse’ been a scar it would probably have been called either that or a ‘cicatrice’, while pocks, moles, wens, and the like were too common to serve as distinctive tokens. So I have added a prominent birthmark to my mental image of Richard Faques.

### Early printing in York

Although the focus of this study is London, it is hardly possible to ignore significant events elsewhere in England. One such was the establishment of the first known press in York by Hugh Goes, about whose origins nothing is known (although the vacuum is often filled by guessing that he was related to Mathias van der Goes, printer of Antwerp). The 95 textura he used as his text fount has been identified as type last used several years earlier by Wynkyn de Worde, but with a different lower-case w with a hooked serif at the left.<sup>A</sup> In later years de Worde sometimes helped former apprentices launch their own careers by sharing publications with them (Robert Copland, John Skot, John Byddell) and by selling, giving, or lending them type or woodcut initials (as before, plus Henry Pepwell). When Goes relocated to Charing Cross in 1512 he did so in partnership

<sup>A</sup> De Worde’s fount is Duff 4 (plate XIV in Duff’s *Fifteenth Century English Books*), also illustrated by Isaac (1501–35, figure 2). Goes’s w (a variant of Isaac’s small w<sup>2</sup>) is mentioned in the note to the STC entry for 13689.3.

with Henry Watson, who is known to have been de Worde's apprentice. While neither the type nor the association with Watson can be claimed as *evidence* that Goes had worked for de Worde before setting up in York, they are at least suggestive.

STC lists only four items known to have been printed by Goes in the north: an indulgence dated 1506, a service book dated 1509 that names Goes and locates him in 'Steen gate' (now Stonegate),<sup>A</sup> and fragments of two other books that STC tentatively places between those dates. But Joseph J. Gwara has identified two other Goes items hitherto misattributed to de Worde: another indulgence whose text includes the date 1505, and a fragment of *Bevis of Hampton* that must now be recognized as the second known edition (STC 1987, c. 1506?) instead of the first.<sup>22</sup> Three lost items are also known. Two small grammar books printed by Goes without date (but bound with a de Worde book of 1506) are credibly described in a manuscript of 1667,<sup>23</sup> and a broadside claiming to have been printed by him at Beverley (perhaps between his York period and his move to Charing Cross) is listed by Ames.<sup>24</sup>

The newly attributed indulgence (STC 14077c.81) is a letter of confraternity issued by the Hospital of the Holy Trinity at Walsoken, Norfolk, and a similar letter was printed a decade later by Richard Pynson in London. Goes's other known indulgence is a letter of confraternity issued by the Chapel of St Mary in the Sea at Newton in the Isle of Ely, and a year earlier a similar letter had likewise been commissioned from Pynson. The hospital and chapel were less than 5 miles apart, and each was substantially closer to London (about 100 miles) than to York (150 miles). Neither indulgence mentions where it was printed, so geography might suggest that the earliest Goes items are more likely to have been printed in London than in York. But both Walsoken and Newton are near Wisbech in the heart of the Fens, each only a mile or so from the River Nene – and before the Fens were drained in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, road travel was not always the best method of transportation there. A package of printed indulgences from York could be taken down the Ouse to the Humber by riverboat and thence to Hull, transferred to a coaster heading down the Lincolnshire coast, and handed over at either Boston or King's Lynn to a riverboat bound for Wisbech by way of the Nene. Depending on the time of year, 150 miles by water might have been preferable to 100 miles

<sup>A</sup> STC 14077c.63 is formally dated 1506; the colophon of 16232.4 is dated 18 February 1509, which William K. Sessions reads as a legal-year date meaning 1510 (*Printing in York*, 10). But the liturgical year began on 1 January and liturgies were usually dated accordingly.

by road – so I see no reason to doubt that Goes printed both his extant indulgences in York.

It is sometimes suggested that Goes was preceded as York's first printer by Frederick Wanseford or Frees,<sup>A</sup> who arrived in York during the 1490s (perhaps from London) and was made free of the city in 1496–7.<sup>25</sup> That theory depends on a legal document of December 1511 that calls him 'Fredericum Frese . . . buke prynter'.<sup>26</sup> His freedom record described him as a 'Bookbynder & Stacioner', and Sessions suggests 'that the term "stacioner" was at that time often used to incorporate also the craft of printer'.<sup>27</sup> But 'that time' was the 1490s, and before de Worde and Pynson moved to London no printer in England had ever been a Stationer. When sued in 1505 by Pynson (who knew the difference), Frees was described as a 'Bokeseller'.<sup>28</sup> When sued in 1511 by the executors of Frederick Egmont (who also knew the difference) he was a stationer and a seller of printed books.<sup>B</sup> It would be easy for a scrivener unfamiliar with the book trade to confuse a seller of printed books (*librorum impressorum venditorem*) with a printer of books (*librorum impressorem*), so the isolated 'buke prynter' is hardly compelling evidence that Frees owned a press even in December 1511. And as evidence that he was a printer before 1505 it is worthless.

### Publishers, distributors, and booksellers

In the first decade of the sixteenth century the English book trade was largely divided between native retailers and alien wholesalers. The division was not *quite* complete – there were certainly a few aliens retailing in towns that had no charters forbidding them, and also a few Englishmen commissioning and distributing books – but they were merely exceptions proving the rule.<sup>C</sup>

<sup>A</sup> The spelling 'Wanseford' is from the will of Frederick's brother Gerard (Sessions, *Printing in York*, 6), using what was probably the family surname. Frederick's preferred alias is now usually spelled with a *z* as in his freedom record (*ibid.*, 2), but virtually every other early mention of him or his family uses an *s*. I have done likewise.

<sup>B</sup> To be precise, he was 'Fredericum Wansworth nuper de london Stacyoner alias dictum Fredericum Frees in partibus Fricie oriundum modo commorantem in Ciuitate Eboracensis librorum impressorum venditorem' (PRO, CP 40/997, 384<sup>f</sup>). So he was born in Friesland (as has been suggested), and appears to have been a bookseller in London before moving to York.

<sup>C</sup> Some aliens retailed illicitly, even in London. In 1497 Jois Pelgrim supplied lawbooks to a pair of customers, each of whom then told him to seek payment from the other. Pelgrim complained to Chancery, explaining that he was 'a Straunger and not of habilite ner power to sue for his remedie otherwise in this behalf' (PRO, C 1/218/2; Duff, 'Early Chancery Proceedings', 417–19). He was right: a London court would have ruled that his being a 'Straunger' made the attempted sale illegal.

Most books printed speculatively in England (as distinct from items commissioned by people outside the trade) were apparently printed wholly or mainly at the printers' own charges. That, at least, seems implicit when the only name, address, or trademark printed in a book is the printer's own. The purpose of an imprint was to tell booksellers where they could buy stock for their shops. Most printers would gladly sell single books to customers who sought them, but they were more interested in selling in quantity to retailers. John Rushe is admittedly not named on any of the books Pynson printed for him in the 1490s, but he apparently planned to sell them at fairs rather than expecting retailers to approach him in London. Likewise, none of the lawyers who invested in Pynson's *Abbreuiamentun statutorum* was mentioned in the imprint, because no matter how they planned to sell their copies, they were not setting up shop as book distributors. Evidently, then, imprints do not always identify everyone who shared the costs of publication. But it is usually reasonable to assume that anyone intending to act as wholesale distributor – whether as sole publisher, major partner, or the agent of a publisher with limited warehouse space – would be identified on a book for the convenience of interested booksellers.

Only seven of the books printed in England in 1501–9 bear the name of any distributor other than their printers.<sup>A</sup> Two of them are large books of 1507 whose costs were shared by de Worde and Pynson.<sup>29</sup> Each was printed by de Worde alone, and many copies display his name, address, and device. But other copies have the colophon altered and the device replaced, and misleadingly claim to have been printed by Pynson at *his* address. In 1503 Pynson printed a book 'at the instaunce' of the alien-born Oxford stationer George Chastelain and one John Bars; in 1508 he printed another for Chastelain alone.<sup>30</sup> Bars is not recorded elsewhere in that form, but he was probably the John de Bars who imported a shipment of books into London in July 1503.<sup>31</sup>

One of Julian Notary's books of 1508 announces that it is to be sold by the booksellers in St Paul's Churchyard ('apud bibliopolas in cimiterio sancti pauli').<sup>32</sup> The book could be sold retail by any bookseller anywhere, and we have no idea how many booksellers there were in the cathedral precinct at this date. But if Notary believed he was giving enough information, perhaps there was only one notable *wholesale* bookshop in the churchyard. Twelve other books of 1502–10 use the phrase *apud bibliopolas in Cimiterio Sancti Pauli*, and the two earliest give no additional information. All the

<sup>A</sup> I exclude books that boast of having been printed for, or at the instigation of, non-commercial patrons such as the king (STC 16179), his mother (15806a, 23954.7), and others (12512, 18846).

others (of 1506–10) are associated with the name of Henry Jacobi,<sup>A</sup> and half of them also mention his sign of the Trinity.<sup>33</sup> All those of 1506–8 are also associated with the name of Jois Pelgrim; the three that name the Trinity also mention Pelgrim's sign of St Anne.<sup>34</sup> So while it is clear that Jacobi and Pelgrim were financial partners in those years, it is no less clear that their shops were separate. After the partnership dissolved, the *bibliopolas* formula was used with Jacobi's name in three books of 1509–10, two of which also mention his sign.<sup>35</sup> It is therefore reasonable to conclude that Notary's book of August 1508 was sold wholesale by Jacobi at the Trinity. But whether it was the last venture of the partnership with Pelgrim or the first of Jacobi's post-partnership career is uncertain.

Wynkyn de Worde and Richard Pynson each printed a book that was to be sold by Jacobi. The de Worde item is conjecturally dated '1506?' by STC, but since Pelgrim is not mentioned a date in or after 1508 seems more likely.<sup>36</sup> In some copies of the Pynson book the imprint identifies the vendor as Pynson himself at the George, but others are to be sold 'apud bibliopolas In cimiterio sancti Pauli: sub intersignio sanctissime Trinitatis: ab Henrico Jacobi'. In all copies the credit for revising and correcting the contents (or perhaps only for having *commissioned* the revision) is given to 'virum autem laudabilem ac ciuem prouidum Henricum Iacobi'.<sup>37</sup> Jacobi could perfectly well have been praised as a laudable and prudent man without the insertion of 'ciuem', so there seems no obvious reason to reject the claim that he was a citizen. Furthermore, if he had been freed by redemption, the company most likely to have accepted him would have been the Stationers. He may perhaps have spent part of 1510–11 in Paris, so Duff guessed that 'he was a Frenchman, or came from France'.<sup>38</sup> But Jacobi's name is no more characteristically French than English, and he could anyway have been the son or grandson of an immigrant.<sup>B</sup> It is therefore *possible* that he was the first English-born Stationer to be named in an imprint.

### Pynson in the courts

Richard Pynson's name is found in various public records in 1501–9, mostly in connection with earlier events. In both March and October 1501 he failed

<sup>A</sup> Jacobi was an established bookseller by at least 14 June 1505, when he was paid the large sum of £46 10s. from the Privy Purse 'for certen bokes deliuerd to the Freres at Richemount': BL, MS Add. 21480, 16<sup>v</sup> (Plomer, 'Bibliographical Notes', 301, 305).

<sup>B</sup> A Florentine merchant named John Jacobi, in England by 1477 at the latest, took out letters of denization on 17 August 1484 (*CPR Edward IV etc.*, 64, 486, 517).

to appear in Common Pleas when a cleric brought an action about a missal worth ten marks (£6 13s. 4d.) that Pynson owed him.<sup>39</sup> The details of another lawsuit are obscure, but in March 1502 two citizens testified in the Mayor's Court that Nicholas Boke had signed a bond to pay Pynson £7, and had paid all but £2 by 20 January 1501. On that date a Mercer arranged to use the bond to settle a debt of £2 that Pynson owed to one Georget Le Levour (in other words, Boke's outstanding debt should now be paid to Le Levour). That is all we know, and the record does not mention Boke's trade. He was probably the Nicholas de Boke, alien, who imported thirty-two gross packs of playing cards into London on 15 December 1502 and (as Nicholas Delboke) seventy-five gross more into Sandwich in July 1503.<sup>40</sup> If so, his debt to Pynson may have been book-related, because the principal importers of playing cards often also imported paper and primers.<sup>A</sup> In 1505 it was Pynson's turn to be frustrated by the non-appearance of a debtor, when he began a suit in Common Pleas against Frederick Frees of York for a debt of £5 3s. 6d.<sup>B</sup>

When a debt was paid off, the bonds or other documents were supposed to be cancelled, returned, or destroyed, but that final step was often overlooked. So the executors of a tradesman or merchant sometimes found uncanceled bonds recording former debts, and mistakenly (or knowingly) took action to recover them a second time. Both the courts of common law and the mercantile courts (such as the Mayor's Court) required documentary proof that a debt had been paid – evidence that under the circumstances the defendants could not produce. Their only recourse was to have the case moved to a court of equity, and a large part of the work of Chancery concerned cases of that kind. One example was a protracted series of actions between Pynson and the widow of John Rushe of London, gentleman.<sup>C</sup>

In the early 1490s Pynson had such extensive dealings with Rushe that the latter's widow later described Pynson as 'his factour & *seruante* to *printe* for hym bookes beyonde the see and to doe oder feates of merchandyse for hym'.<sup>41</sup> Rushe died in 1498, and several years later his widow Isabel, her new husband Thomas Gray, and her fellow executor John Welles sued Pynson in the Mayor's Court for alleged outstanding debts amounting to

<sup>A</sup> Examples in 1502–3 are Remy François and Guillaume Violette: PRO, E 122/80/2, 2<sup>f</sup>, 3<sup>v</sup>, 6<sup>v</sup>, 14<sup>v</sup>.

<sup>B</sup> PRO, CP 40/974, 250<sup>r</sup>, 297<sup>r</sup>, 476<sup>r</sup>. Plomer ('Some Notices from the Plea Rolls', 298) mistakes the amount, but the records clearly specify 'Centum & tres solidos & sex denarios'.

<sup>C</sup> In the earliest of the Chancery records Rushe has only a single *s*, so I decline to follow the tradition of spelling him 'Rushe'. The records are PRO, C 1/269/66–8; C 1/349/40; C 1/1510/43–7.

£300.<sup>A</sup> In March or April 1503 Pynson complained to Chancery that all had been paid during Rushe's lifetime.<sup>B</sup> In the three earliest bills he says nothing of the nature of the transactions between them. He does, however, note that he is a printer who works 'to the erudicȝon and comfort of many wele disposed Clerkys and lernyd men', and that unless the lord chancellor helps him he may be put out of business.

Later records show that the case was indeed transferred to Chancery, where it remained unresolved for several years. Rushe's executors would claim in 1509 that the delays were all caused by Pynson's 'sotelte' (subtlety), although he never succeeded in proving anything against them.<sup>42</sup> A new bill he submitted in or before June 1507 tends to support that view, by introducing much that has nothing to do with the alleged debt of £300.<sup>43</sup> Pynson now claims that he, rather than Rushe, was the one who lost by their dealings. Rushe arranged for him to print editions of six books at a cost of more than 1,000 marks (a later document puts the actual sum at £750). Rushe was to pay half the cost and to take half the books, though in the event he seems to have received slightly fewer. But when asked for the money he apparently declined to pay it in full, and Pynson was eventually left more than £100 out of pocket. Pynson also claims to have delivered large quantities of money and merchandise to Rushe without recompense; these seem likely to be the goods that the executors say he received from others on Rushe's behalf but never passed on, and which Pynson denies that he ever actually possessed. He mentions two accompanying schedules that supposedly support his version of events: one of the books and one of the other merchandise. Neither survives, but the schedule of books accompanying a later bill is almost certainly a copy of the first – and is completely irrelevant to the substance of the litigation.

As a married woman, Isabel Rushe Gray could not be an independent party to a lawsuit, so the defendants in Chancery were Thomas Gray esquire (Sir Thomas, by 1507), Dame Isabel his wife, and John Welles. Not long after Pynson's new bill was submitted Sir Thomas died, and in the words of Rushe's executors, 'the seyd suete was abated'. But Pynson was not yet in the clear, because after Dame Isabel had acquired the surname Persall by remarrying, she and Welles prepared to bring a new action at the common law. Pynson learned of their plans, and in April 1509 submitted a

<sup>A</sup> Plomer ('Two Lawsuits', 117) claims that the action was in Common Pleas, but all five of Pynson's bills and his replication agree that it was a City suit heard before the mayor and aldermen.

<sup>B</sup> The bill was addressed to the keeper of the great seal: William Warham, bishop of London (PRO, C 1/269/66; MacAlister and Pollard, 'Pynson's Dealings', 152) – not, as Kuskin would have it, 'William Busshop, Keeper of the King's Seal' ('"Onely Imagined"', 226).

copy of his previous bill to revive the Chancery suit. This time the schedule of books also survives, as do the defendants' answer, Pynson's replication, and their rejoinder.<sup>44</sup>

The first section of the schedule gives the size of each edition and the unit costs of the books themselves. The second section lists the number and value of the copies that were delivered to Rushe; the third is a priced list of various other books (not all printed by Pynson) of which he also procured and supplied smaller quantities.<sup>A</sup> What matters here is not the books themselves (all of which were printed long before 1501),<sup>B</sup> but what Pynson does and does not say about the transaction. He gives the total value of the listed books allegedly delivered to Rushe as £349 19s. 10d., but when he claims that Rushe failed to 'fulfyll vp hys bargayne', declines to say whether Rushe paid him anything at all or whether he was able to retrieve the books. (If neither, he would surely have claimed that the whole sum was owing.) So even if we accept his assertions that he would never have printed the books but for Rushe and that the unspecified copies remaining unsold are worth £100, as a counterclaim against the executors his tale is irrelevant. If he still had books worth £100 the law would hardly have agreed that their value had been lost to him – and unless the copies delivered to Rushe had been returned, Pynson's unsold remainders were anyway copies he had printed for himself. Furthermore (and crucially), the book deal had nothing to do with the goods worth £300 whose value was being sought by the executors. It is regrettable that the outcome of this case is unknown.

Pynson's other appearance in Chancery during this period concerned another book printed before 1501, namely the 1499 *Abbreuiamentum statutorum*, or abridgement of statutes.<sup>45</sup> Before printing began, a bond with a penalty of £40 was drawn up between Pynson on the one hand and three Middle Temple lawyers on the other: Robert Bowring, Robert Fermour, and Christopher St German. One of the conditions was that Pynson should deliver 409 bound and clasped copies to the lawyers for a total of £20.<sup>46</sup> Another was that the lawyers 'shulde gyue attendaunce in Correctyng examenyng euery lefe after the prynting of the seid bokes when they were thereto required'. What that entailed depends on the precise meaning of

<sup>A</sup> The schedule (PRO, C 1/1510/46), in which there are numerical errors, is transcribed in Plomer, 'Two Lawsuits', 126–8. The first line of section 2 is miscalculated and should total £60; the quantities for lines 2 and 4 should read 500 and 300 copies respectively; each of the first two totals in section 3 is 10s. too high.

<sup>B</sup> They are discussed briefly by Plomer ('Two Lawsuits', 120–3) and at greater length by Johnston ('Richard Pynson', 12–22).

‘after the prynting’. When a newly set forme of type had been fixed on the press, the first legible impression needed to be proofed at least once before the press-run began. The manuscript copy was presumed to be correct, and any difference was an error. The proof-reader’s job was therefore to seek and correct divergences from the copy. It is hardly likely that Pynson planned to send a boy across the street to the Middle Temple to fetch a gentleman lawyer whenever this routine job needed to be done. It would be slightly less implausible to imagine that he was to send for a lawyer after that first stage of correction, to apply his legal expertise to the *substance* of a second proof. But that would essentially have been copy-editing that should have been done before any type was set – and it would still have required a legal professional to be available at short notice whenever Pynson’s schedule demanded. So while ‘after the prynting’ could perhaps mean ‘after the printing of a proofsheets but before the press-run’, it more probably means exactly what it says: that the lawyers were to read each sheet or quire after completion and compile a list of errata. That no such list is found in any extant copy is unsurprising, because Pynson’s 1506 Chancery bill complains that the lawyers ‘ne obserued & kepte’ that condition.

Pynson contends that he delivered the required copies, all bound and all but 144 of them with clasps. The lawyers, however, paid him only £10 of the agreed £20 – and in Easter term 1502 began an action against him in Common Pleas to recover the £40 penalty for failing to fulfil his obligations.<sup>47</sup> Four and a half years then elapsed before Bowring and St German tried to restart the case in Common Pleas in Michaelmas 1506 (Fermour had probably died in the interim).<sup>48</sup> Once again Pynson declined to appear – but he responded by submitting his bill to Chancery. No extant record spells out which conditions he had allegedly failed to satisfy. John Guy assumes that the problem was his failure to fit clasps to all 409 copies, although Pynson claimed that he could produce an ‘acquitaunce’ to justify that.<sup>A</sup> But there is another possibility. A few years after the first edition Pynson produced a close reprint of the *Abbreuiamentum* – close enough to reproduce the colophon date of 9 October 1499 without alteration. If that edition was printed before Easter 1502 (STC conjectures ‘c. 1503?’) Pynson might have broken an agreement not to reprint without the lawyers’ consent. Whatever differences prompted the lawyers to sue in 1502 were apparently still unresolved in late 1506.

<sup>A</sup> Guy speaks of ‘118 copies’ lacking clasps, but the record reads ‘Cxluiij’ (*Christopher St German*, 13; PRO, C 1/345/4). He also misprints the reference to the Common Pleas record of 1506 (really CP 40/978, 617<sup>v</sup>) and seems unaware of that of 1502.

Despite his legal misfortunes, Pynson evidently prospered enough to consider investing in real estate. On 15 July 1508, he and his wife Joan leased a tenement called the St Andrew Cross on the west side of Chancery Lane.<sup>49</sup> It is unlikely that the Pynsons ever planned to live there; with an annual rent of only 30s. a year it was probably acquired to be sublet. How large a fine the Pynsons had to pay to secure their 60-year lease is unrecorded – as is whatever additional sum they had to find the following year to renegotiate it. But on 13 October 1509 they obtained a new 60-year lease that included (for only an additional 30s. of rent) the four smaller tenements adjoining the St Andrew Cross on the south.<sup>50</sup> In addition to dealing in real estate for himself, at least twice Pynson was asked to lend a hand with someone else's transaction. Some kinds of conveyance required the possession of a property to be formally delivered from vendor to purchaser, each of whom had to be either present in person or represented by an agent, usually described as an *attornatus* or attorney. On 28 June 1502, the six owners of a 'tenement or great message' conveyed it to one of the justices of the King's Bench. It was evidently inconvenient for some of the six to attend, so they appointed Pynson and the keeper of Ludgate prison to act as their attorneys for the occasion.<sup>51</sup> Five years later, in May 1507, Pynson was an attorney once again when the earl of Kent conveyed some property in East Anglia to a group of three purchasers.<sup>52</sup> Johnston interpreted these records as evidence for 'some heretofore unsuspected legal training',<sup>53</sup> but while Pynson certainly knew how to print the law he was not qualified to practise it.

Not all the records of Pynson concern legal proceedings. Three years before he was appointed King's Printer – indeed, even before the first holder of that office was appointed – on 11 November 1503 'Richard Pynson the printer' was paid £1 by Henry VII 'in reward' for services unknown. On 12 July following a larger payment of £10 was made to him 'upon a prest for Massebokes to be printed',<sup>54</sup> which probably refers to the Sarum missal that he printed at the king's command and expense and finished on 23 December 1504.<sup>A</sup> Sometime in the year following May 1504, 'Nowell Turges. William Thursby & Richard Pynson' were bound in a recognizance to pay ten marks to the Crown at Whitsun (11 May) 1505, and the money was eventually repaid a little late on 6 June.<sup>55</sup> Pynson, however, was probably only a surety for a debt owed by Turges alone.

<sup>A</sup> STC 16179. Plomer suggests that a *prest* was a loan ('Bibliographical Notes', 301). But see *OED*, *Prest sb.*<sup>1</sup> 3: 'A payment or wages in advance; money paid on account to a person to enable him to proceed with an undertaking.'

### Printers and Stationers in the records

In [Chapter 1](#), two early lists of misteries showed the Stationers to be very low in the hierarchy of City companies. Four more lists are found in the City records for 1503–9, and they reinforce that conclusion. In February 1503 forty-one companies were appointed to take part in the funeral procession for Queen Elizabeth.<sup>56</sup> In April 1509 forty-eight companies were to take part in the funeral procession of Henry VII: thirty-eight to stand along the route and ten to ride with the mayor and aldermen. After the funeral a second list was compiled, of fifty-nine companies (including thirteen without livery but accidentally omitting the Goldsmiths) that had contributed towards the provision of white cloaks and hoods for 300 torchbearers. And in June of the same year, forty-six companies were appointed to stand in the streets for the coronation procession of Henry VIII.<sup>57</sup> None of those lists includes the Stationers.

With two uncertain exceptions,<sup>A</sup> the only Stationers known to have been involved in the publication, printing, or distribution of any printed book before 1512 are the recently freed redemptioners, de Worde and Pynson. A substantial number of Stationers – perhaps even a majority – were active as binders and sellers of printed books, but their involvement has left little attributable evidence on the books themselves and few traces in the public records. Moreover, the comparatively few records that do preserve the names of early Stationers seldom tell us anything specific about their trade.

On 17 August 1501, for example, the will of William Kendall, citizen and Stationer, was proved in the Prerogative Court of Canterbury.<sup>58</sup> What little is known of Kendall during the previous forty years consists mainly of rent payments for shops in Paternoster Row.<sup>59</sup> To supervise his will he appointed another obscure Stationer, John Children (whose own will was drawn up in 1505 but not proved until 1518),<sup>60</sup> and one of his witnesses was the better-known John Taverner who had recently become his near neighbour in Paternoster Row.<sup>61</sup> Apart from the existence of those presumed friendships, however, the will tells us nothing about Kendall as a Stationer. Among the wills proved in the same court in the early 1500s were those of the Stationers' former warden John Hebson (25 April 1502) and his widow Joan (14 June 1503), but neither reveals anything about John's

<sup>A</sup> Henry Jacobi (the distributor already mentioned who was perhaps not a Stationer) and John Bray (a Stationer to be discussed below).

career.<sup>A</sup> That of William Haresfield (proved on 8 October 1502) fails even to identify the testator's trade, and not until an action of debt was brought against his administrators was it recorded that William 'Harffelde' had been a citizen and Stationer.<sup>62</sup>

When a freeman of London died, the disposal of his movable property was partly determined by City custom. First, all his outstanding debts had to be paid; second, if he left a widow her 'chamber' was separated from the estate; third, acceptable funeral expenses were paid.<sup>B</sup> The remaining estate was divided into a maximum of three parts: one for his orphans (unmarried children under twenty-one),<sup>C</sup> one for his widow, and one for him to leave in miscellaneous bequests as he chose. If only two of those parts were required (in the absence of orphans, or a widow, or a will) the estate was halved instead; if only one, it remained undivided.

Any money thus belonging to a freeman's orphans was administered by the City, and each orphan's equal portion was paid when he or she became eligible – either by reaching the age of twenty-one or (in the case of a daughter) by marrying.<sup>D</sup> If the amounts were small the money appears simply to have been held in the City Chamber until required. But sums exceeding £10 (and sometimes less) were lent by the chamberlain to groups of three or more citizens (usually at least four) who acted as sureties for the eventual orphanage payments. Such a loan was recorded as a recognizance in which the sureties were collectively bound to pay each orphan's portion at the appropriate time.<sup>E</sup> Exactly how they managed the money is never specified, can rarely be deduced, and probably varied

<sup>A</sup> PRO, PROB 11/13, 76<sup>v</sup> and 237<sup>r</sup>. Christianson (*Directory*, 115) is right that John was buried in the Greyfriars' Church, but was misled by his source about the date: the John Hebson who died in 1520 was probably the ex-warden's son. See Kingsford, *The Grey Friars*, 116 (John junior) and 119 (John senior).

<sup>B</sup> Unless needed to help pay her husband's debts, the widow's chamber belonged to her and not to his estate. It consisted of 'all her vsuall apparell . . . her vsuall bedd that she & her husband did comenlie vse . . . the hanginges of her own bed chambred, the] chestes wherein she vsuallie kept her said lynnyng & other apparell And her vsuall cheynes Rynges of gold & other Iuells . . . which she was wount to weare vpon highe & festiuall daies' (LMA, COL/CA/01/01/018, 115<sup>r</sup>). To prevent funeral extravagance, the City prescribed maximum expenses according to wealth and social standing (LMA, COL/CC/01/01/015, 33<sup>r-v</sup>). A citizen who wanted something more expensive could fund the difference from the 'dead man's third' of his estate.

<sup>C</sup> An orphan was the child of a deceased father, whether or not that child's mother was still alive.

<sup>D</sup> Charles Carlton (*The Court of Orphans*, 14) wrongly suggests that an orphan daughter who married before eighteen did not officially reach her majority until that age. At eighteen an orphan girl could ask (but not necessarily receive) permission to marry at her own discretion without further consent from the court – but orphanage portions were sometimes paid to the husbands of orphan brides as young as thirteen.

<sup>E</sup> In the early 1500s the sureties were simply bound for the amount of the principal. Later recognizances often included a penalty for defaulting (occasionally as high as 50 percent of the principal).

widely. Often, perhaps, the first surety held the whole sum while the others merely guaranteed his or her good faith; sometimes the principal may have been divided (equally or otherwise) among two or more of the group. The loans were not interest-free: 'finding money' of 4d., 8d., or a shilling in the pound (depending on the size of the principal) had to be paid each year towards the orphans' maintenance. But there was no lack of demand for low-interest capital (which might never need to be repaid if all the orphans died young), and it is quite common to find financially qualified citizens standing surety for two or more families of orphans at the same time.<sup>A</sup>

At the beginning of the sixteenth century few Stationers were wealthy enough to leave large sums to their small orphans. Several, however, were of sufficient standing to act as sureties for the orphans of other citizens. Four years after sureties were first appointed for the children of a wealthy Draper, his estate acquired additional funds. So on 15 March 1502 four new sureties were bound to pay an additional 100 marks (£66 13s. 4d.) to the eldest orphan when he came of age.<sup>63</sup> One was Edmund Gilbert, Stationer; the other three were all Drapers, and it is likely that one of them, Thomas Gilbert, was related to Edmund.<sup>64</sup> Also in 1502, on 27 October two Stationers were among the sureties who guaranteed the eventual division of £25 16s. 8d. among the eight orphans of a Haberdasher.<sup>B</sup> Those Stationers, William Lawnd and John Long, were evidently frequent associates, for in January 1506 they were among the five sureties who stood bail to guarantee the appearance in court of a Barber named Thomas Appulton.<sup>65</sup> Lawnd, who by 1504 was renting a Paternoster Row tenement not far from Appulton's, is known from other records;<sup>C</sup> Long (described as a 'Notarye' in 1506) has proved harder to trace, and difficult to distinguish from three or more namesakes who were also active in the City.<sup>66</sup> A week after Lawnd and Long signed their recognizance, on 3 November 1502 two more Stationers became orphan sureties when William Walwyn and John Bell were among those bound to divide 200 marks (£133 6s. 8d.) among the three children of a prosperous Mercer.<sup>67</sup>

<sup>A</sup> For a more detailed account, see Carlton, *The Court of Orphans*, especially 42–55. On p. 42, however, note that one could *not* become free of London merely by marrying a freeman's widow, and that London apprentices served a *minimum* (not a maximum) of seven years.

<sup>B</sup> LMA, COL/CC/01/01/010, 271<sup>v</sup>; COL/AD/01/012, 65<sup>v</sup>–6<sup>t</sup>. The first surety listed was another Haberdasher, John Clampard, who may have been a stationer by trade.

<sup>C</sup> For Lawnd, see Christianson, 'Paternoster Row', 356. Lawnd was in a pair of tenements that had been occupied by William Kendall in 1495–6 and by Robert Lawnd (perhaps an error for William) in 1501–2 (LMA, CLA/007/FN/02/004, 166<sup>v</sup>, 219<sup>v</sup>, 252<sup>v</sup>; CLA/007/FN/02/005, 154<sup>v</sup>: nos. P18–19 in Map 3). Nine doors to the west, Appulton rented a tenement from at least 1501 until 1521 (CLA/007/FN/02/004, 219<sup>v</sup>; CLA/007/FN/02/005, 215<sup>t</sup>: no. P28 in Map 3).

In addition to their administrative functions as the Court of Aldermen and the Court of Orphans, the mayor and his brethren also played a judicial role as the Mayor's Court. No primary records of the cases that came before that court in the early sixteenth century have survived, but more than a few recognizances and depositions relating to its business are entered in the Journals. In January 1507 the Stationer Thomas Layton, who occupied a shop in Paternoster Row in 1504–11 (no. P12 in [Map 3](#)), deposed what he knew about the history of a bond for a debt of 45s. 3d.<sup>68</sup> And in March 1509 the otherwise unknown Stationer John Blackmore was one of two deponents who testified that a debt of £9 owed by a Merchant Taylor to a Grocer had in fact been paid by a third party.<sup>69</sup> Sometimes, too, a Stationer was the subject of a deposition by somebody else. On 28 August 1501 two citizens testified that the previous September one William Redy, who owed £6 15s. to William Bokar, Stationer, had arranged for a third party to pay Bokar the money by Easter (11 April 1501). And on 30 July 1506 two Grocers deposed that widow Margery Rose had acknowledged that she owed 4s. 6d. to the Stationer Thomas Dallison and had promised to pay him.<sup>70</sup>

But as with wills and orphanage recognizances, while such records give us the names of early Stationers they often tell us little else. Did either Bokar or Dallison ever receive what was owing to him? Was Bokar suing Redy for defaulting, or was Redy suing Bokar for trying to collect the debt a second time? Such questions remain unanswerable – and although we may guess that the debts of Bokar and Dallison were probably business debts, we cannot be certain that either man was a stationer by profession. In 1510–35 Thomas Snappe rented a building in St Nicholas Shambles for the substantial rent of £6 6s. 8d., and was therefore cited by Christianson as an example of a successful native-born stationer, 'much of [whose] trade presumably [came] from the sale of printed books, both new and used'.<sup>71</sup> But while Snappe was certainly a free Stationer he was not a stationer by trade. The accounts of the Brewers' Company for 1501–2 record the admission of 'Thomas Snappe Stacioner dwellyng at horn in Shamblez' as a brother.<sup>72</sup> Brotherhood in the Brewers was a kind of associate membership for 'Fremen off other craftes' whose actual trade was brewing, so the sign of the Horn in the Shambles was presumably a brewery and alehouse rather than a bookshop. In the Bridge House accounts for 1518–19, Snappe's landlords explicitly described him as 'thomas Snap bruer'.<sup>73</sup>

The records of the Westminster courts can sometimes be more informative, although even there it is quite common to learn only that one otherwise unknown person was trying to recover a debt from another. During each of the four terms, dozens of actions initiated by plaintiffs in

King's Bench and Common Pleas were held over until the following term because the defendants failed to show up within four days. Many of those cases were reopened in later terms: if the defendants finally appeared the suits were heard; if they persistently refused to appear they could eventually be outlawed. But the very fact that legal action had been started seems often to have persuaded a defendant to settle out of court, so a substantial number of such cases never resurface after the initial record. In Common Pleas, for example, in 1504 one Philip Ducarrogis started an action against 'Wylkyn' de Worde for a debt of £3, and four years later a Stationer named Thomas Dunton was one of two men sued by John Scarlet for a debt of £30, but in neither case is any further action recorded.<sup>74</sup> Not all such cases were about debt: in 1502 Gilbert Macraf and his wife Elizabeth began an action against William and Joan Herman for having assaulted, beaten, and injured the said Elizabeth ('insultum fecerunt . . . *verberauerunt* [et] *vulnerauerunt*').<sup>75</sup> Herman (who may have been an immigrant) was apparently not a Stationer, but as a 'Bokebynder' of St Clement Danes he qualifies as a person of interest. Regrettably, the King's Bench plea rolls rarely give any details about uncompleted actions beyond distinguishing between *debitus* and *transgressus*. So although we know that in 1506 one John Myles brought a suit against the Stationer Thomas 'Simon' (more commonly Symond), the nature of the alleged transgression is unknown.<sup>A</sup>

The records of the equity court of Chancery often preserve details of kinds seldom met in the courts of common law – and although the final outcome of Chancery cases in the early 1500s can rarely be determined, the extant bills and answers present their partisan arguments in English. So although the complaint of the Stationer Stephen Pynne is damaged, and can be dated no more precisely than between May 1501 and January 1504, it does explain that when Pynne defaulted on a debt of £30 to one William Smith, the goods seized by Smith in return were quite excessive (including a furred velvet gown, a grey horse, and a casket containing £50 in cash).<sup>76</sup> From Common Pleas we also learn that Pynne died sometime before Michaelmas term 1507, when his executors began an action against five men (none of whom appeared) who owed his estate a total of £8 10s.<sup>77</sup> Other Chancery bills reveal that Walter Smith, a Stationer who became Clerk of the Bridge House Works in 1502,<sup>78</sup> was later involved in various

<sup>A</sup> PRO, KB 27/980, 9<sup>r</sup>. Symond, who rented a shop in Paternoster Row from at least 1501 (no. P27 in Map 3), seems to have been primarily a binder (Christianson, 'Paternoster Row', 352–4). A document of 1540 identifies him as the son and heir of Alice and John Symond, Alice being a daughter and heir of John and Katherine Long (PRO, C 54/418, 16). That John Long *may* have been the Stationer mentioned in 1502.

disputes with John Pole, Goldsmith. Sometime before February 1508 it was ruled that Pole should pay Smith £12 15s. and receive back the pertinent bonds and obligations. He duly paid the first £4 15s. on 2 February, but when Smith refused to deliver the required documents Pole immediately complained to Chancery.<sup>79</sup>

Another Stationer found in the records of more than one court is William Fox, whose suit in Common Pleas against Benedict Bone (details unknown) was settled in Michaelmas 1502.<sup>A</sup> Three years later an action was brought against him in King's Bench by one Roger Harrys for an unspecified transgression,<sup>80</sup> but since Fox never appeared we know only that it was not a matter of debt. The following year he was again a defendant in King's Bench, and this time actually made an appearance. On 9 January 1506 he had bought 'too hoggshedes of Gascoyn wyn' from Thomas Nutbrown, Dyer,<sup>B</sup> and had signed a bond to pay 46s. 8d. on 29 June that year; on 4 February he then signed a second bond to pay the like sum on 'festo beate Marie' next. When Fox defaulted on the later bond, Nutbrown's attorney Richard Cotton began legal action for both sums on his client's behalf. Fox responded by complaining to Chancery, pointing out that he had already paid one of the two debts, but that Nutbrown, who was at present overseas, had given him no acquittance. At the common law, therefore, he was 'lyke to be condempned in the seid hole somme' of £4 13s. 4d. Attorney Cotton replied that he was just doing his job.<sup>C</sup> The chancellor presumably declined to take the case out of King's Bench, where it was heard on 16 October 1506. Fox's fears proved justified: under the common law Nutbrown was awarded the total debt plus damages: £6 10s. in all.<sup>81</sup>

On 9 May 1503 one John Broughton assaulted James Slaughter, Stationer, in St Clement Danes. When Slaughter sued him in King's Bench a few weeks later the attack was formally described as having been carried out with force and arms, namely swords and staves ('vi & armis videlicet gladiis [&] baculis').<sup>82</sup> It seems likely that Broughton was wearing a sword and carrying some kind of stick, because the absence of either a *gladius* or a *baculus* could have invalidated Slaughter's plea. But it need not follow that

<sup>A</sup> PRO, CP 40/962, 47<sup>v</sup>, 49<sup>f</sup>. Christianson (*Directory*, 106), apparently following an unpublished conjecture of Duff's, tentatively equates Fox with the printer William Faques, but in court records the former is usually described as a 'Stacyoner' of London and always spelled 'Fox'. That spelling is not found in any known reference to either William or Richard Faques, neither of whom was a Stationer.

<sup>B</sup> In Chancery, Fox spells the name 'Notbroun'; in King's Bench it is repeatedly 'Nowtbron... alias... Nutbroune' (with one variant 'Nutbrowne'). Normalization seems desirable.

<sup>C</sup> PRO, C 1/135/16–17. Duff conjecturally dated Fox's bill to the early 1490s (Christianson, *Directory*, 106), but the King's Bench evidence places it unequivocally in 1506.

the sword was ever drawn, or that Broughton actually used the stick when he beat and injured (*verberauit* [et] *vulnerauit*) his victim. The most we can infer is that something happened that Slaughter could define as the striking of at least one blow, and that it left at least a temporary trace that he could claim as an injury. Whether the incident really made him despair of his life as alleged, only Slaughter could say.

In Michaelmas 1505 Slaughter was back in King's Bench being sued for debt by a Draper.<sup>83</sup> Earlier that year, on 28 June, he had signed a bond to pay 43s. 4d. before November to a Mercer, and when he defaulted, the action in King's Bench took more than two years to resolve.<sup>84</sup> Meanwhile the City records show that Slaughter was bound by a recognizance of 30 March 1506 to repay (in four quarterly instalments) a debt of £5 to a worsted-weaver of Norwich.<sup>85</sup> And in Michaelmas 1506 two Italian merchants began an action in Common Pleas against Slaughter and a Skinner (neither of whom showed up) for a debt of £8 15s. 2d.<sup>A</sup> Once again, however, we face the usual uncertainty. Can we assume that Slaughter incurred his debts by working as a stationer, or should we rather note that most of his known creditors were connected in one way or another with the cloth trade?

The last Stationer to be considered in this section was involved in more lawsuits than any of his fellows, although not about the book trade. His single possible claim to fame as a book-merchant may be illusory, but in an age when few native-born Stationers achieved any real civic prominence, as the keeper of first Ludgate prison and then the Bread Street Counter, John Bray must have been one of the best-known freemen in the Company. Plomer claims to have found twenty-one entries in Common Pleas relating to him in and after Easter 1495, but mentions only two.<sup>86</sup> If any had directly concerned books he would presumably have drawn attention to them, so while I have seen only seven I have not attempted to locate all the others. And while several of the records I have examined in the City archives, Chancery, and King's Bench are interesting in their own right, they too are unconnected with the book trade. I shall therefore cite only the two that show that he was still alive in Easter term 1506 but died before 25 March 1508.<sup>87</sup>

The possible significance of John Bray in book-trade history depends on a doubtful identification offered unobtrusively by the revisers of STC. In 1504 an edition of Terence was printed in Paris by Badius Ascensius for distribution in London by three booksellers: Wynkyn de Worde, the

<sup>A</sup> PRO, CP 40/978, 567<sup>r</sup>. Plomer ('Some Notices from the Plea Rolls', 301) wrongly locates this entry in roll 968 (Easter 1504).

Frenchman Michael Morin, and an otherwise unrecorded Joannes Brachius.<sup>88</sup> Under ‘Brachius’ in the index of printers and publishers in STC (3: 28), a cross-reference leads to the main entry under ‘Bray (Brachius), John’. The absence of a question mark in either entry suggests a degree of confidence that may be misplaced.<sup>A</sup> That no archival record has yet confirmed that Bray dealt in books is not in itself a disqualification.<sup>B</sup> But the most obvious Latin form of Bray would be ‘Braius’ – and if the evidence connecting Bray and Brachius is limited to the first three letters of their surnames, the alien John Brase (who imported a consignment of books into London on 18 March 1506) is just as likely a candidate.<sup>89</sup> *If* Joannes Brachius really was John Bray, he was the first native-born freeman of the Stationers whose name ever appeared in an imprint. But while I cannot dismiss the STC identification out of hand, I consider that a very big ‘if’.

### The import trade: names

During the nine years under consideration there were five known printing houses at work in England, and nearly 87 percent of their 273 known products were the work of just two printers.<sup>C</sup> It is therefore only to be expected that there was still a substantial demand for books from overseas. One of the most obvious needs was for liturgical books, and that meant two-colour printing. De Worde was never particularly good at printing in red and black, and although Pynson, Faques, and Notary were capable of creditable results, they could hardly compete in speed or price with some of the specialist printers in France. So although local production was slowly increasing, the English book trade still relied heavily on importation.

Many commercial imports were simply copies of books that would have been printed even if no English market had existed. Latin was the living international language of both the Church and secular learning, so much that was printed in any European country was just as vendible abroad as at home. But liturgical books were less universal than the Church professed to be, because forms of divine service, and the order of events during

<sup>A</sup> When writing *The Stationers’ Company before the Charter* in 2002 I declined to question the identification (24), but reviewing the evidence for Bray’s career has left me sceptical.

<sup>B</sup> A bookbinder named John Bray is recorded in Oxford in 1475 and 1482, and Plomer (‘Some Notices from the Plea Rolls’, 296), cautiously followed by Christianson (*Directory*, 73), implies that he and the Stationer of London were the same – but Bray of Oxford died in 1493 (Gibson, *Abstracts*, 1).

<sup>C</sup> Counting by titles, de Worde produced 47.3 percent and Pynson 39.6 percent; counting by the number of printed sheets, de Worde produced 42 percent and Pynson 38.9 percent.