des documents précieux à cause d’une panne de serveur ou d’un virus informatique ?

Ne se limitant pas au présent, l’auteur jette un regard curieux et inquiet vers l’avenir rapproché... De plus, le livre est riche, d’une chronologie sélective, d’une riche bibliographie et de l’index. Si vous cherchez une encyclopédie des bibliothèques détruites, ce livre est pour vous. Cette encyclopédie n’est cependant complète, d’abord parce que ces bibliothèques sont trop nombreuses, ensuite parce que chaque année leur liste augmente.

EUGÈNE LAKINSKY
Bibliothécaire


“No one who was there will forget his inspiring inaugural lecture, in which he held a room spellbound as he explicated, with wit and energy, the intricate dances of the skeleton formes used to print Francis Bacon’s *Novum Organum*.” The explication remembered by David Colclough in the *Times Higher Education* obituary of Graham Rees now forms a part of this splendid monographic study of the Jacobean King’s Printers, the joint achievement of Rees, who died shortly before its publication, and Maria Wakely.

The King’s Printing House had a monopoly on the printing of the Bible and the Book of Common Prayer in England, and was also responsible for many other publications, from proclamations to the 1606 English translation of the atlas of Ortelius and the 1620 *Instauratio magna* – the latter work making a bridge between this book and Rees and Wakely’s contributions (including the editing of the *Instauratio magna*) to the Oxford Francis Bacon, of which Rees was the director. Some of its publications were inevitable loss-makers: indeed, one of the King’s Printers was most unwilling to take on the *editio princeps* of Thomas Bradwardine’s *De causa Dei*, which eventually appeared as a folio of 910 pages in 1618, at the expense of one of his colleagues. However, a monopoly on printed Bibles and Common Prayers, if not a license to print money, made the position of King’s Printer a valuable one.
So it was that four men, namely Robert Barker, John Bill, John Norton, and Bonham Norton, acted as King’s Printers in the reign of James VI and I, in a complex pattern of partnership and rivalry. From 1618 to 1630 the rival parties engaged in litigation, and thanks to this, much of the business of the King’s Printing House can be reconstructed from Chancery records. These and associated documents in the Public Record Office and elsewhere constitute, in Rees and Wakely’s words, “a primary-source archive which is almost certainly the most extensive and detailed relating to any one Jacobean printing business” – or, a few pages later, “to a single set of London book-trade businesses,” for the offices of King’s Printer (in English) and King’s Printer in Latin, Greek, and Hebrew were distinct, and the King’s Printers had other interests and partnerships than these two offices.

The archive reconstituted by Rees and Wakely’s researches is the foundation for the first two chapters, which present the history of the business from 1603 (Barker is King’s Printer by inheritance from his father Christopher; John Norton is granted the office of King’s Printer in the learned languages and is also in a business partnership with Bill and Bonham Norton) through 1617 (John Norton has died; Barker assigns the office of King’s Printer to Bill and Bonham Norton) to about 1630 (Barker has regained the office of King’s Printer, in partnership with Bill; Bonham Norton is in prison). A chronological table would have been welcome, though it could not have been definitive: as Rees and Wakely say in a later chapter on the events of the year 1620, “during no other year was it less certain as to who was King’s Printer from one week to the next,” the point being that there were other years in which the office was changing hands fast. A third chapter, on “resources human and material,” gives an account of the King’s Printing House personnel who appear in the lawsuit documents, and admits, a little anticlimactically, that these give practically no information about paper, ink, and equipment, the Plantin-Moretus archives mined in Leon Voet’s *The Golden Compasses* being in this respect incomparably richer.

The next two chapters, on the Bible and Common Prayer monopoly and the series of remarkable folios which include the 1618 Bradwardine and the 1620 *Instauratio magna*, turn to the evidence of the printed books themselves. This is supported by most interesting archival material such as the document of 1619 which claims that Barker paid four thousand pounds for the right to print the 1611 Bible, a sum which may be set against a series of calculations suggesting
that the total value of the Jacobean trade in new Bibles may have been around one hundred thousand pounds, slightly over half of that being profit. The special folios were, by contrast, “woorks of great Charge & losse” to the King’s Printers. They were, as well as the two volumes already mentioned, editions of works by James himself (in English and Latin), Marc’Antonio de Dominis (in Latin), and Paolo Sarpi (in Italian, Latin, and English). This list should perhaps have been extended to include another learned folio, Isaac Casaubon’s *Exercitationes* of 1614 against Cardinal Baronius, which, like the works of de Dominis and Sarpi, demonstrates to the satisfaction of any good Jacobean that on the subject of church government, the counter-Reformation Papacy was wrong and James VI and I was right.

The chapter on the year 1620 follows, and suggests how enormous the output of the King’s Printing House could be, even at a time when the ownership of the business was very unstable, arguing that it must in that year have had “as many as seven or eight presses, and a further one for pulling proofs, and enough compositors, say fourteen to sixteen, to feed them.” It is at this point in the argument that the skeletons come dancing in: a chapter on the King’s Printers’ methods analyses the use of skeleton formes in a number of major works to show how the printing house must have handled urgent major jobs such as the rapid printing of the *Instauratio magna*, and how its rhythms of work must have fluctuated.

The last three chapters turn to the stockholding and selling of books, with particular attention in chapter 8 to the printed “Note of the seuerall sorts of Bookes in the Ware-houses” of the King’s Printers, a document here dated to 1624 or early 1625, from which much can be inferred about the value (perhaps some six thousand pounds) and nature of the stock held by the business at the end of the reign. Chapter 9 reads the relevant parts of the printed catalogues of the Frankfurt book fairs, and of the catalogues inspired by these which were subsequently produced by John Bill and by the Stationers’ Company, and chapter 10 discusses John Norton and John Bill’s place in the international book trade. What stands out here is the degree to which Bill’s dealings in particular were integrated with the Continental circulation of books: he was not simply a link between, for instance, Sir Thomas Bodley in England and the businesses which he visited in “Venice, Ferrara, Padua, Verona, Brescia, Mantua, Pauia, Milan, Florence, Pisa, Rome &c.” (Bill’s energy is a recurring theme in this book) but also between one Continental business and another,
for instance in his regular sale of books published by Lazarus Zetzner of Frankfurt to the house of Plantin.

This is a learned and original book, in which every chapter is packed with new information and new insights. There are, it must be said, some blemishes which should have been caught in the copy-editing process: a number of awkwardly constructed sentences, for instance, and several inadvertent small repetitions. But they hardly matter: Rees and Wakely tell their intricate story with wit and energy, and it is hard to imagine anyone seriously interested in the book trade in early modern England who will not be stimulated by it. The authors claim modestly to have “sought to lay foundations for future work.” To put that another way, *Publishing, Politics, & Culture* really is an inspiring book.

JOHN CONSIDINE

*University of Alberta*


This volume completes the catalogue of books given to the British Library by Henry Davis in 1968. A manufacturer of telephone cables, Davis (1897–1977) collected books for about 25 years. The British Library received the part of his collection which had been acquired mainly as examples of fine bookbinding. The Library published the first two volumes recording Davis’s gift in 1978 and 1983. Volume 1 contains 25 essays by Mirjam Foot on particular bookbindings and bookbinders; in volume 2, she catalogued the Northern European (mainly British, Dutch, and German) bookbindings. The present volume covers bookbindings from France (222 entries), Switzerland (14, mainly from Geneva), Italy (157, mainly from northern Italy and Rome), Spain and Portugal (15), and a miscellany of other countries, including Persia (5). All research libraries should already possess volumes 1 and 2 of *The Henry Davis Gift*, and acquire this third volume. Its price also makes it affordable to anyone interested in the history of the book, and to bookbinders.

The *Catalogue of South European Bindings* follows the format of volume 2. Each book or multivolume work is given an identifying