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Publishing and Culture: The Alchemy of Ideas

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Abstract and Keywords

How has book publishing shaped and reshaped the modern world? Since the advent of moveable type, books have moved into position as the signal element that defines culture. While this chapter places an emphasis on English-language publishing, it also draws on original discussions with international publishers and editors, providing a brief overview of the history of book publishing in a variety of countries. Starting with the Venetian printers, the chapter moves through the Inquisition to the pre-modern age, briefly discussing the consistent entanglement of book publishing and authority, which perceives books and their publishers as potentially devastating threats or powerful allies.

Keywords: Gutenberg, book history, publishing history, publishing and culture, publishing and the Inquisition, propaganda

SINCE the days of Gutenberg and probably long before, publishers have depended on what was most popular, and therefore profitable, for their existence. From breathless, half-imagined travelogues to more salacious material, from puzzle books to sycophantic portraits of wealthy patrons, publishing has always displayed its commitment to commerce. The very concept of 'publishing and culture' may therefore seem an oxymoronic combination: but if culture in its broadest sense is taken to mean the delimitations of a particular society, then book publishing plays an essential role in defining those boundaries. It is at the heart of cultural change, exchange, and interpretation. That is why publishing is not simply just another business; that is why it embodies the conflict between the commercially successful and the culturally substantive. Publishing traffics in the written transfer of ideas, of crafted messages that represent a direct appeal from the mind of the creator/author to that of the consumer/reader. It is a principle that applies as much to the works of Dale Carnegie as it does to those of Samuel Beckett. That transfer of ideas, pushed a bit further, becomes the essential leap from 'writing' to 'publishing': the first requires a single physical act, the

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second demands a complex relationship involving a readership beyond a circle of one. Publishing yearns for an audience, a community of readers—to have a cultural impact.

The transition from idea to page represents a commitment on the part of the creator to the recipient that is missing in any other medium: a reader sees precisely the marks made for her, in precisely the sequence intended. Dance, theatre, music, art: all lose in the translation; the physical transference from concept to stage, canvas, or concert. Writing comes closest to being a focused, accurate conveyance of thought.¹ While it may (p. 100) be too much to claim that there is no culture without books—oral traditions abound in human history, past and present—it is safe to assert that books are a powerful tool in creating, preserving, and furthering a cultural message in an effective, easily transmissible way. (Here, by a ‘book’, I mean an object that conveys an extended, prefixed message based on the written word: that definition applies to print books, electronic books, and audio books.)

If we imagine how culture—the expression of a people’s identity—occurred in a pre-book era, we can see that its evolution and practice was dependent on personal relationships developed over a period of time. Dialogue and debate are integral to a living culture, and in the pre-book era, information travelled slowly, transmitted person to person, orally or by manuscript across vast distances, via small groups of people. Even relatively major debates took place gradually, over decades, sometimes involving a new generation. The result of these exchanges was to create commonality, and gradually re-shape society: as David Foster Wallace observed in *Consider the Lobster and Other Essays*, ‘The whole point of establishing norms is to help us evaluate our actions (including utterances) according to what we as a community have decided our real interests and purposes are.’ That is, to establish its culture.

What follows is of necessity an incomplete and personal overview of the relationship made manifest by the tenacity of publishers and their advocates over the centuries, and matched by the ferocity of their opponents: the Inquisition, the Crown, the Texas School Board, the Reichskulturkammer, the New York Society for the Suppression of Vice, and so on.

With the arrival of the printing press and in particular moveable type in mid-fifteenth-century Europe, the slow-motion pace of cultural development became headlong, and the ‘solitary scribe’ an anachronism. The press immensely multiplied the impact of manuscripts, making possible timely cultural debate across a continent. As the Babel of learned voices increased, so did the authorities’ concern: because of their role as fixed propaganda, books engendered intellectual unrest on a level not previously encountered.

It is this period that marks the beginning of modern publishing, because, apart from technological innovations that do not challenge the basic principles of the book business, the profession has remained essentially the same for 500 years. Reviewing the personalities and events surrounding the advent of the press and movable type, a twenty-first-century publisher cannot help but be struck by the distant parallels of her predecessors: the Mainzian Johannes Gutenberg, the man credited with giving us

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moveable type, himself lost his presses and his business to a creditor; the Venetian Aldus Manutius battled counterfeit copies of the books published by his Aldine Press; the (p. 101) life of the peripatetic Dutch humanist Desiderius Erasmus—priest and publisher—is bracketed by scholarship and a constant search for patrons who will enable him to continue his work. These are all issues—irregular cash flow, violation of copyright, and the constant need for underwriting pioneering but financially risky books—familiar to any publisher today.

The quick turnaround, the vastly lowered cost-per-unit of these technological innovations had results beyond the enrichment of the merchant printer/publishers: it solved the ‘shortage of reading matter,’ exulted Jacobo Cromberger, one of Seville’s most highly regarded printers of the sixteenth century.² Cromberger is a prime example of the cultural mix that resulted from the flurry of activity necessitated by the newfound demand for books, readily transportable and affordable sources of entertainment, knowledge, and propaganda. A Nuremberger working in Spain, Cromberger was most likely a *converso*, a converted Jew. At the request or perhaps direction of Juan de Zumârraga, the first bishop of Mexico, in 1539 Cromberger sent one of his surrogates, the Italian Giovanni Paoli (also known as Juan Pablos), to establish the first printing press in the New World in Mexico City (the original house where it was installed still stands at the corner of Moneda and Licenciado Primo Verdad streets).³ Six years later, the Casa de Cromberger produced the first printed book in the Americas, in both Spanish and Nahuatl (*Breve y más compendiosa doctrina Christiana en lengua Mexicana y Castellana*, by none other than Zumârraga). Zumârraga, head of the Inquisition in Mexico and reputedly the creator of the first public library, knew the value of publishing.⁴ He was renowned for his steady assault on native culture, and he did this most effectively through his relentless hunt for Aztec codices: in 1530, he made a bonfire of them in Texcoco. Thus was the book an essential complement to the sword in incinerating the old culture and imposing the new.

From the earliest days of the printing press, perhaps no group was more involved in the culture of books than the self-styled ‘People of the Book’, the Jews, members of a religion that has at its core the delivery of a two-page ‘book’ to Moses—the stone tablets of the Ten Commandments. In every Jewish temple, the focal point of the house of worship contains a written document, usually a scroll of the Torah, or Old Testament, safeguarded within a cabinet known as the Ark. Apart from the Torah itself, several books were considered essential to ongoing Jewish cultural vitality and stability, and therefore Jews provided a ready market for the nascent publishing industry. The deeply engrained rabbinical traditions of debate and analysis are exemplified by the Talmud—a collection of discussions about Jewish law and tradition, the earliest of which date back more than 2000 years. But it was particularly due to the standardization of prayer books that the printing press changed how Jews acted as a culture, and unified them across vast (p. 102) distances: for the first time, Jewish gatherings from Kochin to Warsaw to Amsterdam could read from books that shared the same texts and songs. In short order, all established congregations had printed books. Although in Venice, home to the world’s most vibrant Jewish community of the Renaissance, Jews were forbidden to publish

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books, the steady demand for prayer books became a profit base for the early printer/publishers, and allowed the print market to thrive there for 150 years.

Thanks to the collaboration demanded by publishing, different cultures came together as they never had before: for the first time, Christians, Jews, and *conversos* worked together in business. The act of publishing itself, not only the dissemination of its products, led (and leads) to cultural exchange. In short order, via the books that Martin Luther so detested, Humanism (of which Erasmus was the great proponent), Judaism, but also Arab thought (and hence the catalytic advances brought by Arab science and philosophy) made its way to the enlightened princes of the Renaissance, who were prodigious collectors of Jewish and Arab manuscripts.

As those in authority have argued since the concept of book-focused censorship first arose, if books could spread culture and ‘wrongful’ ideas, their absence would logically prevent ideological contamination. Even the books that were permitted to be published could be corrupting in the wrong hands. In 1546, responding both to the threat of Protestantism and the increasing number of independent observers who were making use of the new technologies, the Second Degree of Session IV of the Council of Trent condemned ‘printers, who now without restraint,—thinking, that is, that whatsoever they please is allowed them,—print, without the license of ecclesiastical superiors, the said books of sacred Scripture, and the notes and comments upon them of all persons indifferently’. It therefore decreed:

... It shall not be lawful for any one to print, or cause to be printed, any books whatever, on sacred matters, without the name of the author; nor to sell them in future, or even to keep them, unless they shall have been first examined, and approved of, by the Ordinary; under pain of the anathema and fine imposed in a canon of the last Council of Lateran. ... As to those who lend, or circulate them in manuscript, without their having been first examined, and approved of, they shall be subjected to the same penalties as printers: and they who shall have them in their possession or shall read them, shall, unless they discover the authors, be themselves regarded as the authors.

This gave impetus to the authoritarian cry, in the words of the Council, that ‘what ought to be condemned, may be condemned’—and in practice led to a frenzied destruction of books as agents of subversion. In 1559, following on a smattering of other such decrees, Pope Pius IV published the first edition of the *Index Librorum Prohibiturum* (*Index of Prohibited Books*). The Index had many local variants in France, Spain, the Holy Roman Empire, the New World, and this sometimes resulted in now-astonishing decrees: in 1565, the Mexican Second Provincial Council restricted the circulation of Bibles, including in the Vulgate (the Church-approved, fourth-century Latin translation) and expressly forbade non-Europeans from possessing them. The Index continued through various (p. 103) editions and was held as Church doctrine until 1966, by which time some 4,000 titles—by authors such as Martin Luther and John Calvin, but also ranging from Voltaire to René Descartes to Simone de Beauvoir—had been included.

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Across the English Channel, 1534 marked the passage both of the Acts of Supremacy, which asserted the role of Henry VIII as head of the Church of England, and the related founding of Cambridge University Press, a convenient way to control dissenting voices. Under Henry, but continuing under the reign of Edward VI, the government waged relentless war on books by 'papists' including Thomas Aquinas and Duns Scotus, destroying their work wherever found. In 1548, for example, Henry destroyed a 300-year-old centre of Celtic scholarship, Glasney College, together with its unique collection of books in the Cornish language. With the restoration of Catholicism under Mary I, oppression continued, but in a different ideological direction. In 1557 the Stationers' Company, founded 150 years previously, was chartered by the Crown, and the right to publish was restricted to two universities and twenty-one existing printers. As officially sanctioned censors, the Stationers had the right and obligation to pursue measures against offending books, their authors and printers, and so served as proxies of authority.

Publishing and books were integral to the extended confrontations between Puritans and Royalists in the mid-seventeenth century, and the disputes there were only slightly less bloody than the fights that occurred on the battlefields. One among many examples is that of the unyielding William Prynne, a Puritan critic and publisher notable for his own attacks on 'bawdy' actors as laid out in *Histriomastix: The Player's Scourge, or Actor's Tragedy*. All copies were publicly burned and Prynne's ears were cut off, and when this did not dissuade him from his publishing, subsequently the stumps of the ears were cut off as well, and he was branded and sentenced to life in prison. (Remarkably, Prynne later became an advocate for the return of the monarchy.)

The ruling class was not wrong in its fascination with, and fear of, the cultural powers of a well-argued book. More than three centuries after their expulsion from England, the 'humanization' of Jews brought about by Rabbi Leone da Modena's 1637 *Historia de' riti hebraici* ('History of Jewish Rites'), a book addressed to gentiles, opened up the way for their return under Cromwell.⁵ On the Continent, radical change was presaged by a literacy rate that surged to 50 per cent of the French population, simultaneous with a concerted and failed attempt by the monarchy to control the publishing business: the publisher Guillaume Desprez went to prison for printing Pascal's *Provinciales*, but he also became wealthy from its sales.⁶

As the Enlightenment took hold across Europe and the Americas, the focus of publishers' transformative cultural output became less religious and more political and social in nature. And controversy went hand-in-hand with good publishing: if Thomas Paine's books were bestsellers (the perpetually impoverished revolutionary contributed his considerable royalties from *Common Sense* to the Continental Army for the purchase (p. 104) of mittens), his works were the ones printers, publishers, and booksellers (usually one and the same) were 'most often prosecuted for disseminating, on the grounds of seditious libel and blasphemous libel respectively'.⁷ Unless it was the Bible, reading of any sort was suspect: eighteenth-century moral guardians were on the alert for 'the moral laxity that could stem from ungoverned fiction reading'.⁸

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'Blasphemous' publishing was more often than not synonymous with political radicalism; the books by revolutionaries such as Giacomo Casanova, Henry Fielding, and the Marquis de Sade were no less assaults on established society than books by similarly forbidden and equally scandalous writers such as Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Baruch Spinoza, and John Stuart Mill. The danger of books lay not only in their transmission of ideas, but in their ability to allow a recognition of the commonality of interests. 'Once Weymouth, on the Dorset coast, became fashionable in the 1780s, a bookseller named James Love ... marketed his bookshop as a house of public entertainment, named "The Pantheon of Taste." The venue, open from six o'clock in the morning to ten in the evening, housed, in addition to its books, a billiard room, musical circulating library, and public exhibition room ...'⁹ Books, then and now 'extended bodies', in the words of the philosopher Alva Noë, were both focal points for communities formed by their readers and a means to personal and cultural transformation. From Cervantes on, the most substantive excesses in literature are book-centred; it was books that drove Don Quixote mad, and it is the book itself that is celebrated as the most intoxicating of worldly possessions by experts on the matter as disparate as François Rabelais, William S. Burroughs, and H. P. Lovecraft.

With the advent of more complex economies, the days of writer/printer/publishers such as Benjamin Franklin were on the wane: the roles of printer (the tradesman), publisher (the amalgamator), and writer (the creative force) became increasingly specialized throughout the nineteenth century. At least in theory, professionalism on all sides of the equation increased in tandem with the distinctions.

The dangers of increasing mass literacy demanded a matching response from regimes and ideologies struggling to maintain their grip on society. Industrialization was accompanied by an unending stream of official efforts around the globe to shape newly developing publishing programmes—or eliminate them entirely. Emblematic of this oppression was the notorious Anthony Comstock, the founder in 1873 of the New York Society for the Suppression of Vice (aptly called 'a modern inquisitor' by Fernando Báez), the man who still holds the record for destroying the most books in the USA.¹⁰ The Anglo-American establishment of the period was desperate to fend off incursions first from the likes of Oscar Wilde, and later from writers such as George Bernard Shaw and James Joyce: and one of the enduring tragedies of this reaction is that the reverberations of such savage counter-attacks were felt well into the twentieth century, when American publishers and booksellers still faced the prospect of being sent to jail for simply publishing and/or selling a book. Brave and obstinate publishers such as Maurice (p. 105) Girodias, John Calder, and Barney Rosset, invoking the spirits of their antecedents Prynne and Desprez, defied the authorities and faced fines and prison time in pursuit of their commitment to the work of their writerly counterparts, including Vladimir Nabokov, Henry Miller, and D. H. Lawrence. New York bookseller Sam Roth, a translator of French avant-gardist Alfred Jarry, was only one of many in the profession who were convicted and sent to prison multiple times. But despite the seeming vulnerability of its protagonists, as the publishing industry continued to chip away at the rules laid down by Church and State, there was no question that cultural mores were changing, and the 'eroticization of leisure was a force no warning voice could stop'.¹¹ The twentieth century adage not to

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pick a fight with a man who buys ink by the barrel seems to have truth at its core: although practically from the moment the profession was founded publishers have been sued, thrown in jail, and driven to bankruptcy—their products condemned, banned, and burned—they persevere, and so does the material they propagate. Once conceived of and transmuted to paper (or the electronic screen), ideas still have remarkable, authority-defying tenacity.

As far back as Benvenuto Cellini's memoir (1563)—a wonderful, extended classic of shameless self-promotion—artists have recognized the aesthetic fiefdom conferred by literary creation. Whether for commercial gain, to influence society at large, or 'simply' as an extended artistic exercise in a different medium, artists' and writers' movements have often undertaken the establishment of publishing houses. William Morris' Kelmscott Press (1891) was essential to the development of the Arts and Crafts Movement and to promoting socialist values in England. On the Continent, the symbolists had their *Mercure de France*, which published works by Guillaume Apollinaire, André Gide, and others. A few decades later, in 1917, Virginia and Leonard Woolf founded the Hogarth Press to further the interests of the Bloomsbury Group. Around the same time, the 'Literary Company of Futurists' was thriving in Russia, as was the *Edizioni Futuriste di Poesia*, founded in Milan by the artist Filippo Tommaso Marinetti, author of both the Futurist and Fascist Manifestoes (1909 and 1919, respectively). The tradition continues: in 2010, artist Paul Chan founded his Badlands Unlimited, a raucous New York-based enterprise that has published erotica, an interview with Marcel Duchamp, and ex-Iraqi dictator Saddam Hussein's speeches on democracy, among other titles. To effect aesthetic change it helps to be the ruler of a literary demesne.

The threat posed by freethinking publishers to a particular definition of 'civilization' came on two fronts, social and political. Thus it was that Emma Goldman, the great anarchist of the early twentieth century, was an early advocate of 'free love'. And publishers who fought censorship were well aware that writing that celebrated pleasures of the flesh, even as it occasionally sold well, was writing that challenged social stability. Barney Rosset, for example, was taken to court repeatedly by the US government for publishing Henry Miller's *Tropic of Cancer*; he was also the American publisher of Che Guevara's diaries, Frantz Fanon's *The Wretched of the Earth*, and so many other radical works. The legal battles raged for decades, culminating in the Anglophone world with (p. 106) the million-copy selling satirical novel *Candy*, written on a lark by Terry Southern and Mason Hoffenburg for Girodias' Olympia Press.¹² Its odyssey from underground success (1958) to number one commercial blockbuster (1965) 'can be attributed to America suddenly growing up after the relaxation of the "decency laws" that had kept such works as *Lady Chatterley's Lover*, *Howl*, and *Last Exit to Brooklyn* from sullyng America's Doris Day-hallucination of cheerful, neutered perfection'.¹³ After *Candy*, American and English governments skirmished with publishers, but they knew they had lost the war.

No discussion of authority's hatred and fear of the power of publishing would be complete without mention of Germany in the 1930s. As Gary Stark has documented in *Entrepreneurs of Ideology* (1981), a string of German publishers had over a period of

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decades set the ideological stage for the rise of the radical right in that country, and may even have been instrumental—by providing a ‘solid’ base philosophy—in the rise of National Socialism. Publishers such as Eugen Diederichs, Julius Lehmann, and others in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries took advantage of what was then perhaps the largest literate market in the world, playing to fears of immigrants and Marxists, and stoking nationalism. The books sold well, by all accounts. After Hitler was named chancellor of the Weimar Republic in 1933, laws were passed to restrict ‘dangerous’ material, and the infamous, brilliant Joseph Goebbels, a novelist and propagandist possessed of a doctorate in philology, began his book burnings. Texts were destroyed, libraries ransacked, and publishers’ warehouses ‘sanitized’. ‘In Frankfurt, books were brought in on trucks, and the students made human chains to get them to the bonfire.’¹⁴ Germany’s allies in the war, the Japanese Empire, undertook a similarly systematic destruction of libraries throughout China, part of the strategy of conquest. As the persecution of books and their producers and defenders intensified, it became clear the process was only a prelude to more intensive and human-focused oppression: the care of books, and a vibrant publishing environment, closely parallels a society’s assessment of the worth of its human components. ‘Where they burn books, they will also ultimately burn people.’¹⁵ Burning a book or repository of books sacred to a particular people is the penultimate insult, or so biblioclasts like to think. In the years following the destruction (p. 107) of the World Trade Center, American Pastor Terry Jones made a name for himself burning copies of the Koran, and following the Chinese invasion of Tibet in 1950, ethnocide (and the death of approximately 200,000 people) was complemented by a highly focused campaign to destroy the extensive network of monasteries, which doubled as publishers for Tibetan Buddhism: ‘the Great Monastery of Derge had a collection of more than half a million woodblocks that was systematically deposited in more than ten halls ... the use of such blocks made possible printing on demand’.¹⁶ Not content with destroying thousands of monasteries, their libraries, manuscripts, and woodblocks, the Chinese ‘forced Tibetans to burn or shred sacred scriptures, mix them with manure, or lay them on the ground and walk on them’.¹⁷ Destruction was so thorough that by the 1990s, most Tibetans had no concept of what a library was.¹⁸

Russians famously venerate the status of publishers, writers, and their output, so much so that their governments have a long tradition of attempting to control the process: both by tightly regulating the business and by incarcerating writers and publishers on the pretext of their threat to the state. In 1553, it was the first tsar, Ivan the Terrible, notable for his wars against the Mongols and his enthusiasm for torture on a mass scale (and the Massacre of Novgorod), who founded Russia’s first publishing company, the Moscow Print Yard. Throughout the centuries, Russian rulers recognized the connection between publishing and mass influence: one of the world’s all-time bestsellers, and a book with particularly pernicious consequences, *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion*, is widely believed to have been fabricated in 1903 under the direction of Pyotr Rachkovsky, chief of the foreign branch of the Romanov secret police. Thirty years later, the Soviets imposed rigid layers of control over the publishing process: ‘first by the Writers’ Union, then by the appropriate state-appointed commissar, finally by the Central Committee of the

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Communist Party'.¹⁹ Stalin himself was a famously insatiable reader who held authors and their books in high regard—and consequently had no hesitation about imprisoning and executing them and their publishers. For Stalin, the ultimate editor/publisher, 'the power to edit was power itself'.²⁰ In the post-war period, the State Committee for Publishing in the Soviet Union, or Goskomizdat, held sway; private (non-governmental) publishers were enjoined from doing business until the 1980s. Even when the restrictions eased, the lack of infrastructure and the tightly-controlled paper supply meant that almost no books could be printed privately, giving rise to samizdat publishing, underground publishing where a 'print run' often consisted of a few copies of a manuscript passed illicitly from hand to hand. After 1989, there was a surge in literary and radical publishing in the former Soviet states, but to no one's surprise (except, perhaps, ever-optimistic publishers'), the publishing scene quickly came to be dominated by the same commercial works (romance, how-to, potboilers) long seen in the West. And publishers were once again in the sights of those who resented (p. 108) their products: in 2006, for example, the Moscow offices of Alex Kervey, publisher of T-ough Press, were firebombed (as Barney Rosset's Grove Press offices had been in 1968, as was the London home of Gibson Square publisher Martin Rynja in 2008).

'People die, but books never die', said FDR in 1942.²¹ Recognizing that the Nazi campaigns against books and 'decadent' art could be used as counterpropaganda, Roosevelt authorized the establishment of the Council on Books in Wartime (CBW), a publisher's committee headed by the publisher W. W. Norton. 'Books are weapons in the war of ideas', became the CBW's slogan. The culmination of the Roosevelt Administration's remarkable series of book-centred cultural programmes in the USA both during the Depression and World War 2, the CBW instituted its own publishing programme during the war, eventually engineering the manufacture and distribution of close to 123 million paperbacks to soldiers overseas. Authors included in the programme ranged from Zane Grey to F. Scott Fitzgerald. Books were also printed and distributed to newly 'liberated' populations, sometimes in wanton violation of copyright (including unauthorized editions of *The Abruzzo Trilogy* by the socialist writer Ignazio Silone).²² More than any speech or overt indoctrination, the publishing programme became a palpable expression of what the Allies saw themselves as fighting for.

At the end of World War 2, as part of its effort to stymie the forces that were 'destined to shake civilization to its roots', in the words of FBI chief J. Edgar Hoover, the USA doubled down on its efforts to influence the world of publishing. Publishers were manipulators who themselves could be manipulated, potential if not actual 'masters of deceit', to borrow Hoover's (1958) marvellously crystallizing phrase, the title of his bestselling tome assessing the communist threat. As they had with the Axis powers, the American propagandists found they could use their opponents' intransigence to their own advantage: in 1957, after being denied publication by Goslitizdat, the Soviet state publishing house, Boris Pasternak handed the manuscript of *Doctor Zhivago* to an agent for the left-wing Italian publisher Giangiacomo Feltrinelli. Despite explicit pressure from Soviet emissaries (which included a personal visit to his offices), Feltrinelli proceeded to publication. The entire Italian print run sold out in one day, and the novel, disseminated

throughout Europe with the help of the CIA, became a runaway success. Wrote one American agent regarding *Doctor Zhivago*: 'It is requested that Headquarters keep us informed of its plans concerning the book so that we may continue to discuss its exploitation with the [British] as closely as possible.'²³ In the UK, Secker & Warburg was used to channel CIA money to friendly publications, and the Free Europe Press was an out-and-out CIA-run publisher, managed by the CIA's 'Office of Policy Coordination'.²⁴ Years after the fact, publishers themselves saw no need to disavow their CIA connections, which stretched from Beacon Press (through the editor and publisher Sol Stein, a prominent member of the CIA-funded American Committee for Cultural Freedom) to (p. 109) Farrar, Straus & Giroux (whose publisher Roger Straus acknowledged his CIA-funded and -hired literary scouts to a writer for *The New Yorker*).²⁵

In the modern era, no political movement has taken shape without a published presence, and no would-be leader seems to achieve legitimacy without a book to his or her credit (even if it is ghost-written). There is no enduring ideology without at least one book providing its cultural foundation. From the fascists to the Zapatistas, from Lenin to Trump, the popular conception of a leader is underpinned by two things: a prevailing visual image (Hillary Clinton in her pantsuit; Donald Trump in his red tie and combover) and a book (*It Takes a Village* and *The Art of the Deal*, respectively). Titles in this category include Lenin's *What Is to Be Done?*, Hitler's *Mein Kampf*, Mao's *Little Red Book*, Merkel's *So wahr mir Gott helfe*, Gaddafi's *Little Green Book*, Kennedy's *Profiles in Courage*, Obama's *Dreams of My Father*, Thatcher's *Statecraft*, and many more. Each was written to further its purported author's ambitions; each succeeded to various degrees.

As countries moved out from under the weight of overbearing outside forces, publishing industries—in Egypt, in China, in India—sprang up as part of an effort 'to understand ourselves, our past, our future', says V. Geetha, publisher and co-director of Tara Books in Chennai, India. In French North Africa, Algerian-born writers knew that for a book to be considered professional, it had first to be published in the language of the colonizers. A sense of self-worth, anti-colonialism, and a thriving literary culture are part of the same package, and occupying forces have always been alert to the challenge. In Algeria during the war for independence, the library and campus of the University of Algiers were targeted and set on fire in 1962 by the Organisation de l'armée secrète (OAS), a catastrophe commemorated throughout the Arabic-speaking world.²⁶ In India, various iterations of the hated Sedition Laws were imposed beginning in the nineteenth century, with punishment for infractions ranging from banishment to life imprisonment. As always in trials of sedition, books provided clinching evidence for the prosecution (bringing to mind contemporary American cases, where mere possession of a book such as William Powell's *Anarchist Cookbook* or Abbie Hoffman's *Steal This Book* has been cited as evidence of a commitment to violent revolution). Towards the end of the 1800s, the Hindu Free Thought Union founded a publishing house which brought out books with a distinctly atheistic, rationalistic bent. In the 1920s, populist reading rooms sprang up, along with books for people 'who didn't read, but liked to listen', says Geetha. 'The connections between popular oral and written worlds were close: and what would often happen is that older women and younger women developed a bond there. For the first

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time, people were exposed to Indian content in a formalized setting, giving them a chance to fraternize with strangers and bring in 'new worlds'. Publishing democratized knowledge in a big way,' as it sidestepped the traditions of the caste system, (p. 110) which imposed cultural taboos against sharing knowledge. Suddenly, culture and history were acknowledged as a part of public memory, rather than the 'property' of privileged familial or communal circles. Publishers began asserting the vitality of their regional culture by the not-so-simple act of rejecting English and publishing in one of the many languages spoken and written by the pre-colonial population—Hindi, Tamil, Mayalam, Urdu, Bengali, Kannada, and many more.

In modern Turkey, despite the ascension to power of an intensely nationalist regime at the turn of the twenty-first century, literary publishers by and large have been spared harassment, with one notable exception: Ragıp Zaraklou, publisher of Belge Publishing House, brought to trial at least seven times. What makes Zaraklou distinct? His determined commitment to publish the work of Greek, Kurdish, and Armenian authors, thus perpetuating minority cultures in a nation ruled by a government that has no patience for non-Turkish voices. In China, while the enforcement of laws is widely acknowledged by editors to be inconsistent, the threat of jailtime is a very real one for publishers: the State Administration of Press, Publications, Radio, Film, and Television has complete power over the industry, both print and electronic. Typically, books dealing with the Cultural Revolution, Tibet, and border provinces from anything other than a tourist's point of view, or containing even a mention of the Tienanmen Square protests, will be refused publication. In the 1990s, among the books banned outright by what was then known as the General Administration of Press and Publication was Dr Seuss' *Green Eggs and Ham*: more recently, under President Xi Jinping, censorship has become more focused and the consequences of running afoul of the government more dramatic. In 2015, five Hong Kong publisher/booksellers, all connected to Mighty Current Media, known for books exposing government officials, disappeared. One of them, Gui Minhai, a Swedish citizen who reportedly had been working on a book about President Xi Jinping's love life, remains in government detention as of this writing.

Publishing provides a means to document a culture. A foundationless, undocumented culture is vulnerable, a fact recognized, for example, by Palestinians living in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, a displaced, impoverished population of five million that enthusiastically supports close to thirty publishing houses. The industry thrives, in spite of restrictions on paper deliveries and arrests of writers and editors on charges of sedition. While the assault on culture via the emphatic repression of books and publishing is not limited to wartime or occupied territories, war of course provides conditions that accelerate the process. Remarking on the looting of the National Library of Baghdad in 2003, 'in the land where the book was born, where libraries were born, where the first legal codes were created',²⁷ the journalist Robert Fisk famously wrote, 'All over the filthy yard they blew, letters of recommendation to the courts of Arabia, demands for ammunition for troops, reports on the theft of camels and attacks on pilgrims, all in delicate hand-written Arabic script. I was holding in my hands the last Baghdad vestiges of Iraq's written history. But for Iraq, this is Year Zero; with the destruction of the

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antiquities in the Museum of Archaeology on Saturday and the burning of the National Archives and (p. 111) then the Koranic library, the cultural identity of Iraq is being erased. For almost a thousand years, Baghdad was the cultural capital of the Arab world, the most literate population in the Middle East. Genghis Khan's grandson burnt the city in the 13th century and, so it was said, the Tigris river ran black with the ink of books. Yesterday, the black ashes of thousands of ancient documents filled the skies of Iraq.²⁸

Despite the obstacles, across eras and languages, publishers often see themselves as, at least in part, cultural knights errant. In fact some, such as Barbara Epler, editorial director of the venerable publisher New Directions, see such pioneering work as crucial to their job: 'I want to live up to the legacy of [James Laughlin, founder of the house in 1936], to be the kind of publisher he wanted to be, to allow writers to make their experiments in public, doing things that somehow move the walls around inside your brain. You're not going to do that if your first objective is to make money.' Beacon Press, once a conduit for CIA-funded propaganda, is now one of the leading outlets for defenders of civil liberties. In a company blog, Tom Hallock, its associate publisher, proudly observed: 'To meet the needs of our times, we don't have to publish bestsellers. On the day that SCOTUS [the Supreme Court of the United States] handed down their decision on marriage equality, Hillary Goodridge (a lead plaintiff in the Massachusetts case that rocked the nation) publicly thanked Beacon Press for publishing *What Is Marriage For?* by E. J. Graff. She said that it had provided her with the intellectual framework to take a stand. The book sold modestly, but has so far helped make it possible for almost a million gay and lesbian people in the US to marry.'²⁹

For many publishers, the spectre of profitless seasons without end, and accelerating cash-drain—the pressures of the market—were and are a danger more immediate than the threat of lawsuits, jail, or officially-sanctioned violence. Publishers have always attempted to defy the laws of supply and demand—that there are many more books than readers does not keep them from attempting to maintain the steady value of their product. But as commercial forces put more pressure on publishing firms, more writers are taking matters into their own hands founding companies such as Fiction Collective and AK Press, echoing the anti-commercial, cooperative tradition of the Woolfs and their Hogarth Press. The latest incarnation of individual writers-as-publishers, online and off-, the techno inheritors of the samizdat tradition (albeit in a corporatized version), is represented via the offerings of companies such as Wattpad, Smashwords, and Lightning Source, all of which can lay legitimate claim in different ways to helping blast open the doors to the Palace of Culture. Wattpad, for example, allows writers to publish directly on the site, without editorial 'interference'—and a number of commercial books and at least one movie have been the result.

If war, the heavy hand of authority, and the equally oppressive demands of profit are united in their assault on culture, the undying obstreperousness of publishers makes for a formidable foe.

(p. 112) As the act of publishing has become more accessible to each generation through successive technological advances, we see the profession in a kind of historical loop, where authors can once again act as their own publishers, as they did in the pre-modern era. The result has been a tsunami of published books, an overwhelming if joyful chaos. The distinction between publisher and author, between author and reader continues to diminish, and the tools of culture are no longer in the hands of a few.

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Notes:

⁽¹⁾ But not so fast: in Plato's *Phaedrus*, Socrates quotes a legend concerning an Egyptian pharaoh who is approached by the god Thoth, the scribe of the gods and the god of scribes, with various gifts that Thoth explains should be shared with the people. After going through a lengthy catalogue of wonders, finally he presents the king with his greatest gift: something that will be an 'elixir of memory and wisdom'. The gift, of course, is writing. The king demurs: whether out of error or malice, Thoth has ascribed to letters 'a power the opposite of what they really possess' (274c, H. N. Fowler translator; Harvard University Press). Words can never precisely describe a thought or an occurrence: they convey only an approximation thereof. Until Zeno of Elea (*fl.* fifth century BCE), Greek philosophers conveyed their arguments via poetry; all things considered, this may be a more effective means of transmitting complex ideas.

⁽²⁾ As paraphrased by Lisa Jardine 1998: 141.

⁽³⁾ In *The Library at Night* (2008), Alberto Manguel writes that Zumàrraga, a zealous book burner of heretical texts, may not have 'understood the paradox of on the one hand creating books, and on the other destroying them'; I would argue that it was precisely because the bishop recognized books' numinous power that he focused on them. To create a new world it was necessary to destroy the old.

⁽⁴⁾ Fernando Báez 2008: 131.

⁽⁵⁾ Alessandro Marzo Magno, 'Bound in Venice: The First Talmud'. http://primolevicenter.org/printed-matter/bound-in-venice-the-first-talmud/#_edn11

⁽⁶⁾ Vincent Giroud 2013: 336.

⁽⁷⁾ Elisabeth Ladenson 2013: 174.

⁽⁸⁾ Abigail Williams 2017: 3.

(⁹) Williams 2017: 111.

(¹⁰) Báez 2008: 224.

(¹¹) Jay Gertzman 2002: 106.

(¹²) Girodias' career ended in bankruptcy after repeated legal clashes. Although Girodias, the first publisher of Vladimir Nabokov's *Lolita* and J. P. Donleavy's *The Ginger Man*, was as notorious for his commitment to 'erotica' as he was for fleecing his authors, it was his political engagement that most enraged the authorities: in 1947 he was sued by the French minister of culture (the writer André Malraux) for publishing *Le pain de la corruption* (*The Bread of Corruption*), a book attacking the state of the economy, and in 1959 he was condemned again by Malraux for publishing books legal in France but banned in their home countries. In 1963, he wrote his fellow publishing maverick, Barney Rosset: 'The situation here is really most awful and disgusting. I am being sentenced once a week, or nearly, and for the most ludicrous reasons. It seems difficult to continue publishing books in France, and I am now trying to start a branch abroad—perhaps several branches' (Barney Rosset 2016: 249.) He moved to New York when the Olympia Press went bankrupt in 1970, and a mere four years later his pornographic fantasy *President Kissinger* caused US State Department officials to tell him to leave the country, a situation perhaps facilitated by his expired visa. (Nile Southern 2004: 284).

(¹³) Southern 2004: 13.

(¹⁴) Báez 2008: 210.

(¹⁵) 'Das war ein Vorspiel nur, Dort wo man Bücher verbrennt, verbrennt man auch am Ende Menschen.'—Heinrich Heine, 'Almansor'.

(¹⁶) Rebecca Knuth 2003: 205.

(¹⁷) Knuth 2003: 213.

(¹⁸) Knuth 2003: 225.

(¹⁹) Isaiah Berlin, *The New York Review of Books*, 19 October 2000: accessed at <http://www.nybooks.com/articles/2000/10/19/the-arts-in-russia-under-stalin/>

(²⁰) Holly Case, *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, 7 October 2013: accessed at <https://www.chronicle.com/article/Stalins-Blue-Pencil/142109>

(²¹) [Author uncredited], 'Book Trade hears appeal by M'Leish: He Urges a Return to Old-Time Standards of Responsibility for Works Dealers Sell Message from President "Books Never Die," He Writes in Referring to Anniversary of the Nazi Bonfire', *The New York Times*, 7 May 1942, p. 17.

(²²) Alexander Stille, foreword to Ignazio Silone 2000: vii-viii.

(²³) Joel Whitney 2016: 62-5.

(²⁴) Whitney 2016: 38.

(²⁵) 'Appealing to Straus's patriotism, the man asked if Farrar, Straus could provide cover for two men in Europe. They would do real work for Straus as literary scouts, but they would also be reporting to this government agency, which would pay their salaries. ... Straus (who has always been a fan of spy fiction) agreed to the plan. A dedicated telephone line was put into his office for calls to and from his contact.' Ian Parker, 'Showboat: Roger Straus and his flair for selling literature', *The New Yorker*, 8 April 2002.

(²⁶) <http://www.libraryhistorybuff.com/bibliophilately-algiers-library.htm>

(²⁷) Báez 2008: 278.

(²⁸) Robert Fisk, 'Library books, letters and priceless documents are set ablaze in final chapter of the sacking of Baghdad', *The Independent*, 15 April 2003.

(²⁹) Tom Hallock, 'The work of publishers in an authoritarian age', Beacon Broadside, 19 January 2017. <http://www.beaconbroadside.com/broadside/2017/01/the-work-of-publishers-in-an-authoritarian-age.html>

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