David Adams and Adrian Armstrong, eds. ***Print and Power in France and England: 1500-1800.*** Burlington: Ashgate, 2006. 157p.

LIBERTY STANAVAGE
UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, SANTA BARBARA

With *Print and Power in France and England, 1500-1800*, David Adams and Adrian Armstrong have brought together essays that qualify interestingly the current critical interest in the role of print with regard to early publics. The introduction to the text (reasonably enough) positions the collection with regard to the development about discussions of the public sphere, invoking and summarizing the relevant theories of Foucault, Habermas, and Darnton. The editors claim that the text explores territory that these critics have neglected, noting critical research that privileges the "dissident potential of printing" (7) ignores the specific and diverse methods by which those who have and those who seek power attempt to exercise social control. Adams and Armstrong position the current collection as furthering the goal of establishing a "more disabused and fuller appreciation of the 'democratization' widely (and often inaccurately) ascribed to print culture and the struggles to assert or oppose repression, which this process has always entailed" (7-8). *Print and Power* thus sets out to do some detail work that undermines claims of print as a liberating media that enables the subversion of power, and instead works to restore or reaffirm print as largely a tool of elites, in what might seem an almost reactionary move.

The focus of the essays in the collection is predominantly on the exercise or attempted exercise of authority through and around printed materials in early modern France and England. Where the essays do invoke existing public sphere theory, it is often a direct rejection, as with Ann C. Dean's essay "Insinuation and Instruction: Public Opinion in Eighteenth-Century 'Letters to the Printer,'" which argues that the 1765 exchange of letters in the *London Chronicle* did not figure a public sphere unless it was one defined by agonistic, instead of rational, discourse (85) or Simon Burrows essay "Police and Political Pamphleteering in Pre-Revolutionary France: The Testimony of J.P. Lenoir, Lieutenant-Général of Police of Paris," which rejects Habermas-influenced readings of revolutionary origins in France as arising within the public sphere of print.

Many of the essays do not engage directly with public sphere theory, but instead examine the role of elite authority in textual production at specific historical moments. Several of the pieces provide thoughtful examinations of textual responses to the perceived tastes or desires of a reading public, such as Adrian Armstrong's intriguing analysis of changes made to Burgundian texts by French publishers in the early 16th century to reflect the sensibilities of a French public, or Sarah Knight's discussion of

changes in academic publishing in early modern England. In a slightly different vein, Kenneth Austin's essay argues the pronounced role of Tremellius' bible in the rise of Calvinism, focusing on the actual reception and implementation of a text. These close historical readings work nicely to illustrate the counter-claims of the editors to create a "more disabused and fuller appreciation of the 'democratization'" of print culture, but sometimes—as with Alison Saunders' "Spreading the Word: Illustrated Books as Political Propaganda in Seventeenth-Century France"—fail to draw explicit conclusions about the relevance of these examples for the bigger picture.

Particularly strong is Lee Morrissey's essay "'Charity', Social Control and the History of English Literary Criticism." Morrissey examines the evolution of the concept of charity as a way of tracking the development of English literary criticism and uses this to draw a number of intriguing conclusions about the perceived relationship of texts and social control. The attitudes the essay traces not only articulate a connection between early textual criticism and the exercise of a conservative social authority, but also highlight an intriguing shift between the mid-seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, which Morrissey relates to the current exploration of text and other currently being explored by the "new ethical criticism." Beginning with a well structured and argued historical examination of changes in the use of "charity" with relation to the act of reading, Morrissey moves to a considered discussion of the theoretical implication of these shifts. Framing the essay's claims with several critical positions in this debate about the ethics of criticism (Attridge, Derrida, Levinas, and Marion), Morrissey discusses the ways in which the evolution of notions of literary "charity" anticipate or qualify these discussions. While well argued, this section is fairly brief, and feels somewhat rushed in comparison to the historical trajectory traced in the first part of the essay (which is, admittedly the primary focus of the piece). Nevertheless, Morrissey's piece works well to link the evolution of the term to ideas about the text and the reader as "other."

As a whole, the collection feels strong, but slightly unfocused. Despite the clear positioning of the introduction, it was not immediately apparent to this reader that all of the essays in the volume worked clearly within the framework set out by Adams and Armstrong, and I had trouble discerning a clear sense of purpose to the volume that matched the introduction However, despite the slightly disjointed overall feel to the collection, the essays are well-written and structured and do a thorough job of arguing their particular claims, claims with some historical and theoretical significance. The collection does succeed in problematizing the existing discourse of early modern print as a subversive agent. While not an essential purchase, *Print and Power* is a valuable addition to an early modern bookshelf, particularly for a reader interested in print, power, and publics. ❈