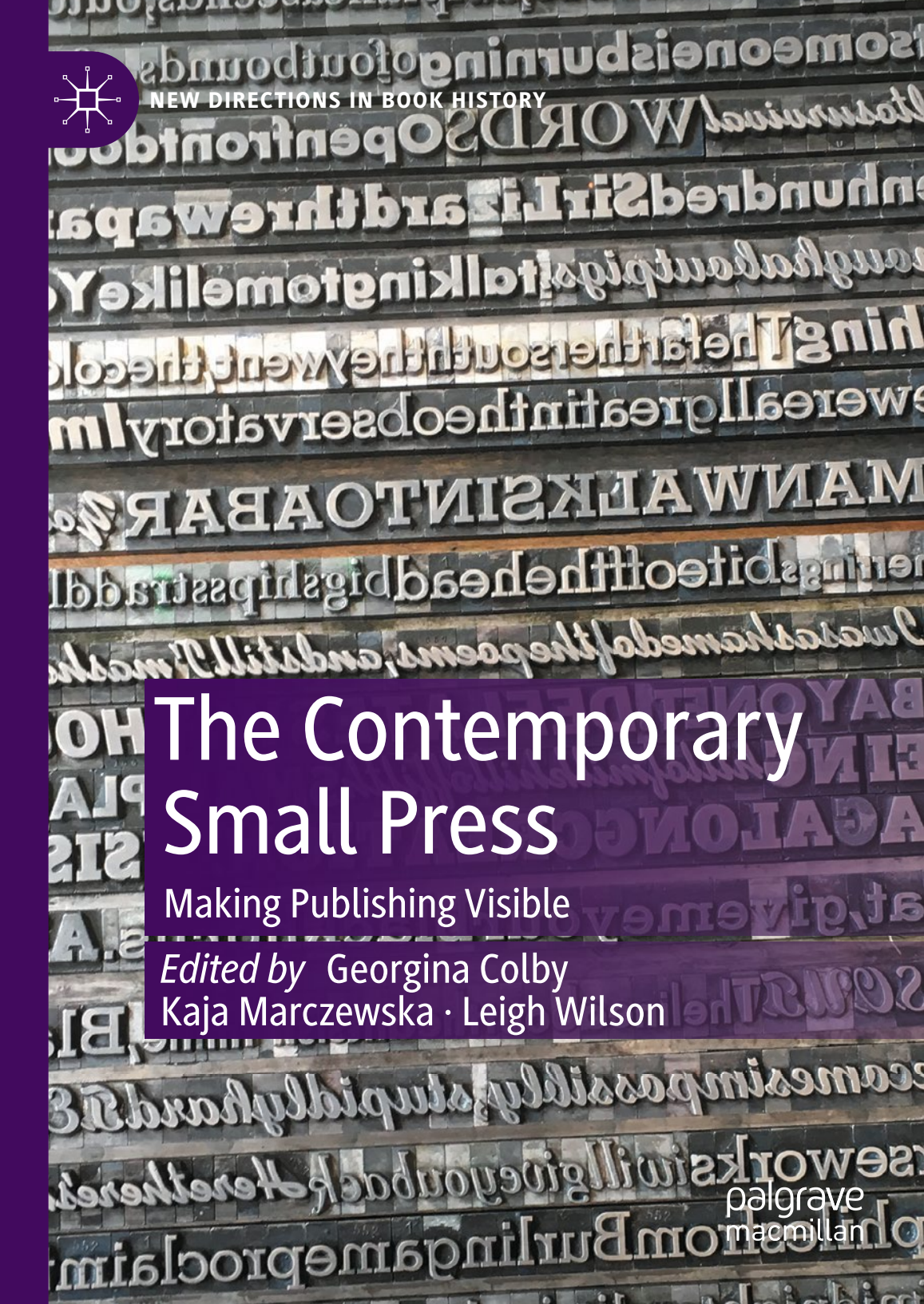
NEW DIRECTIONS IN BOOK HISTORY
The Contemporary Small Press
Making Publishing Visible
Edited by Georgina Colby
Kaja Marczewska · Leigh Wilson
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New Directions in Book History

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Praise for *The Contemporary Small Press*

"*The Contemporary Small Press*: Making Publishing Visible is essential reading for anyone interested in the Anglo-American publishing industry of the past fifty years. At a time when conglomerates are dominating the industry, small presses offer an alternative model of development. The book shows how these enterprising publishers have carved a niche for themselves in relation to the mainstream firms. This is a powerful story of survival, of creativity and ingenuity at a time of rapid change and digital disruptions."

—Lise Jaillant, *Lecturer of English, Loughborough University, UK*

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CHAPTER 1

Introduction: Making Publishing Visible

Georgina Colby, Kaja Marczewska, and Leigh Wilson

In the summer of 2016 an idea suggested on Twitter led to the inaugural 'Small Press Day' in the UK. From the small beginnings of 140 characters, the idea resulted in at least 25 events around the country celebrating the small in publishing and drawing attention to a range of current small press publishers and the work produced by them. The Small Press Day was repeated in 2017—on 8 July—and consisted of events across the British Isles from Plymouth to Dundee, from Dublin to Southend-on-Sea.[1] The significance of such a day for contemporary literary publishing is multiple, and it is this significance that *The Contemporary Small Press* will reveal and interrogate. This chapter will first discuss the context of contemporary small press publishing, before going on to set out the implications of this context and the work of small presses for those academic disciplines most concerned with literary culture. The final part of this chapter will go on to

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define the central terms which frame the chapters that make up the collection at the same time as describing the chapters themselves.

As John Thompson has argued, the rise of the small independent press over the last few decades has been the result of radical changes in the mainstream of the Anglo-American publishing industry. Mergers, buyouts and the dominance of large conglomerates have been features of the English-speaking publishing world since the 1960s, but have accelerated to such an extent over the last two decades that all mainstream literary publishing across the UK and the US is now carried out by just five companies—the 'big five' of the Anglophone world.[2] This has led to what Thompson calls 'the polarization of the field'. In both the UK and the US, he notes, 'the rise of large publishing corporations has gone hand in hand with the proliferation of small publishing operations' and a 'small and dwindling number of medium-sized players',[3] but he notes too the intensification of these dynamics since the economic crisis of 2008.[4] Indeed, many have seen the origin of the contemporary rise in small presses—of which the Small Press Day is a part—as rooted in the consequences of the economic crash.[5] While the effects of polarization are still crucial, what is specific to the contemporary small press is its existence in the world produced by the crash and the subsequent recession. Indeed, it is these events which this collection takes as the beginning of our 'contemporary'. As many from various disciplines have argued, the crisis and the subsequent recession continue to define our present.[6] Among many other things, this origin has produced a complex relation between small presses and the economic mainstream, as can be seen in the 'Small Press Day'. From chocolate to tourism, tequila to robotics, the acquisition of a day or week of its own is one of the identifying features of the commodity today. Technological change, commodification and marketization—all since the late nineteenth century equally the spur, rival and nemesis for the small press—are today folded back into the presses' operations and their success. At the same time, though, the Small Press Day is evidence of the current vibrancy of small presses, of a confidence among those involved in them, and of their sense that they are publishing work that is original and important that needs to be made visible to the wider public. This vibrancy can be seen too in the increasing recognition of small press publications by well-established literary prizes and the creation of new ones specifically for small presses. The phenomenon is also reflected in a growing attention from mainstream publishers to what is being published by small presses and in a growth in coverage of small presses in the mainstream media.[7]

Indeed, Simon Collinson of Tilted Axis Press—founded in 2015—claimed in the pages of *The Bookseller* in 2017, for example, that this is a 'golden age' for small press publishing.[8]

The starting point for *The Contemporary Small Press* is the investigation of this claim that we are living in a 'golden age'. The chapters of the collection scrutinize the complex relations between the contemporary small press and mainstream economics as well as the implications of this relationship for the scholarly disciplines which have literary culture as their object. Throughout its history the small press has challenged and illuminated these dynamics and forces, of course, and much important work exists on the place of the small press in literary culture in the early twentieth century. In particular, work on the small presses and little magazines which published early twentieth-century experimental writing has been extensive over the last few decades. One of the earliest of these works, which in many ways set the parameters of the debate which followed, is Lawrence Rainey's *The Institutions of Modernism: Literary Elites and Public Culture* (1998). Rainey challenged the now familiar assumption that Anglo-American modernism constituted a resistance to mass commodity culture and showed how the publishing of its central works used and interacted with the practices and networks of the mainstream. For Rainey, the modernist work published by a small press or in a little magazine does not resist commodification so much as it 'becomes a commodity of a special sort'.[9] The literary culture of modernism is for him 'neither straightforward resistance nor an outright capitulation to commodification but a momentary equivocation that incorporates elements of both in a brief, necessarily unstable synthesis'.[10] Crucial to Rainey's methodological challenge to his discipline—literary studies—is his focus on institutions as structures which interpose themselves between individuals and society—publishing, the press, education and so on. In focusing on these institutions, however, Rainey argued that he must exclude the usual focus of literary studies—the content of the work—because to juxtapose critical readings with his discussion of institutional networks 'would encourage…vulgar materialism'.[11] This division between the intangible and the material aspects of a work has remained in place across the disciplines that investigate literary culture, but it is this division, among others, that the rise of the small press in the contemporary period has put under pressure.

The question of this relationship between the material conditions of literary work and its content has become particularly prominent since the emergence of digital technologies and the rise of digital forms of

publishing in ways that challenge Rainey's division. While the over-familiar debate about the death of the book that the rise of e-readers was to bring about has been greatly exaggerated and, by now, almost entirely rejected, the focus on the digital in publishing has nevertheless been significant in further reinforcing the split between the mode of literary production—its technologies and institutions—and attention to its content. On the one hand, the digital in popular imagination challenges our understanding of materiality, of material conditions of literature, and, as a result poses a major challenge to its established institutions.[12] At the same time, the enthusiastic embrace of Digital Humanities by universities as the bright future of humanities disciplines, including literary studies, and the popular incorporation of digital technologies into publishing, be it in the form of e-readers, online-only publications or digital add-ons to published works, has made the digital the central tenet of the transforming institutions of literature today. However, this commitment to the digital in the mainstream, instead of resolving the tension between content and form to which Rainey pointed, further reinforces it. The content, be it in yet another big data mining project or a new literary app, becomes only a tool of or an excuse for the project of a new form of 'vulgar (im) materialsim'.[13]

In this context—so different from that of the small presses which were the object of Rainey's scrutiny—the contemporary small press, with its ongoing commitment to the book as a material object, continues to grow. In spite of, or perhaps exactly due to a certain fetishization of the digital in the mainstream, the small press emerges today as a celebration of reading that marries a commitment to content and form at the same time. This is not to say that the small in publishing also implies a reluctance to adopt and adapt. Quite the contrary is in fact the case. The small press as it operates today situates itself consciously not only on the margins of mainstream publishing but also on the margins of the digital. This position allows the small press the freedom to use the digital to its advantage without giving in to a certain fetishistic techno-determinism so prominent in the mainstream. As such, the contemporary small press can perhaps be read as a response to both the contemporary digital condition and to the approaches to the study of literature that we can see in Rainey's work. This approach is exemplified in its continued commitment to the forms of publishing that consider the material conditions of publishing an essential part of any publication.

In other ways, too, the contemporary small press demands a consideration of the 'material' with the 'immaterial' in exactly the ways eschewed by Rainey. The materialism of contemporary literary culture has been particularly 'vulgar' since the economic crash of 2008, and scholars ignore this at their peril, both in terms of the modes of production and in terms of the works that are produced by them. As Rainey shows, the small presses and little magazines of the early twentieth century operated according to a circulation of money that relied on private wealth, even if the role of the wealthy was remoulded according to the operations of commodity capitalism from that of patron to that of investor.[14] The contemporary small press does not repeat this model, but rather its circulation of capital is more complex, more democratic, more reliant on the institutions of the state and on universities. Questions of content, of the kinds of work contemporary small presses are setting out to produce, cannot be divorced from this institutional context. It is this entwining of historical, institutional and literary critical methods that this collection sets out to show as necessary and to provide.

It is not just in Rainey's work in literary studies that we see a resistance to providing this entwining, however. The place of the small press in contemporary literary culture presents a similar challenge to all those disciplines—publishing studies, histories of the book, literary critical studies and the sociology of literature—whose object of study is that culture. The lacunae in literary studies which Rainey's work sets out to challenge was of course noted by Jerome McGann as long ago as 1983, at the beginning of the discipline of the history of the book which emerged, at least in part, to speak to certain disciplinary shortcomings in literary studies.[15] However, it would seem that these lacunae remain over 30 years later in relation to the contemporary. In 2008, the year of the crash and of the beginnings of the new rise of literary small presses, Rachel Malik argued that the effects of publishing as an activity are 'almost universally denied' as determinants in the shaping of literary fiction.[16] More recently, if literary critics now notice it at all, they seem paralysed by the implications of their noticing. In 2013, for example, in his 'Contemporary Fiction in the Academy: Towards a Manifesto', Robert Eaglestone cited, among numerous other problems thrown up by studying the literary works of one's own time, the need for what he called a 'contemporary history of the book' about which he noted there appears to be 'a dearth of research'.[17] Work on contemporary literary culture since 2013—perhaps in part in response to Eaglestone's challenge—has begun to acknowledge the existence of institutions beyond the

text. Martin Paul Eve, in his *Literature Against Criticism* (2016), considers the interaction between the forms of contemporary fiction and the discipline of English literature in the context of the latter's loss of its gatekeeping role to mainstream publishing. Sarah Brouillette, in her *Literature and the Creative Economy* (2014), considers contemporary literary work in relation to the politics and economics of the concept of the 'creative industries'. However, in the case of each, their selection of novels and their readings of them are still delimited by a mainstream which works, as Malik has shown, precisely to close down and smooth over the tensions between literary value and the market produced by its own operations. Neither Eve nor Brouillette acknowledges this and their studies rely on a traditional version of close reading which, despite their attempt to focus on the institutional, threatens a return to the situation noted by McGann.[18]

It is the case too, however, that those disciplines created to challenge the lacks in literary critical studies are themselves lacking in regard to some of the most significant implications of publishing. Malik's challenge was directed not just at literary studies but at the history of the book, suggesting that the nature of Eaglestone's 'noticing'—its recourse to book history—to make good a literary critical blind spot is part of the reason for the subsequent paralyzed reaction. Malik argued that both literary criticism and the history of the book are blind to what she calls 'the horizons of the publishable', horizons which stretch much further than either the 'text' of literary criticism or the specific objects, individuals, publishers and practices which are on the whole the focus of book history. Malik's 'horizons' seek to capture the 'multiplicity of processes and also the variable relations between them' that constitute literary culture.[19] Her 'publishable' includes 'all that can be written at a given historical moment and all that can be read'.[20] Indeed, for Malik, '[n]othing lies outside the publishable'.[21] Her concept of the publishable forces to the surface the interactions, determinations and relations that make possible and shape smaller instances of the literary and of publishing. Focus on these smaller instances alone, Malik implies, blinds both literary criticism and book history to the very forces which most determine them. Malik's 'publishable' is a productive conceptual spur; but the small press has the potential of working in much the same way for both literary criticism and the history of the book. As we have seen with the Small Press Day, the small press makes visible both the multiple processes and the tensions which construct and shape the literary in the contemporary. Malik's 'horizons of the publishable'

describe exactly the entwining of causes and effects, form and content, that this collection sets out to make visible.

Malik's 'horizons of the publishable' have only been slowly recognized too in the discipline which might be thought to be most alive to them, that of publishing studies. However, its beginnings in teaching rather than research have delayed its considerations of such conceptual challenges. As Michael Bhaskar has recently argued, while studies in the history of the book have too often ignored the question of publishing in all its complexity, publishing studies continue to lack a rigorous theoretical framework. Quoting John Sutherland from 1988 and Simone Murray from 2006, Bhaskar in 2013 recognized that '[t]heoretical forays' in publishing studies 'are still relatively rare'.[22] Murray's argument was that work in publishing studies remained descriptive rather than critical because it failed to engage with the most recent trends in 'qualitative humanities research'.[23] However, a focus on the small press puts pressure on this reluctance, not least because the small presses themselves are so keen to make visible issues around class, challenges to racism and the aims of feminist politics.

What the continuing anxiety around investigation of the 'publishable' in a number of disciplines suggests is that the recent rise in prominence of the small press presents an opportunity to make visible too debates within literary academic disciplines that circle around questions of method. If Murray argued in 2006 that publishing studies needed to engage with the 'qualitative' techniques of the humanities, Alan Liu has recently argued that the new textual editing, the new bibliography and new media studies are challenging what he calls the 'lite' core of literary studies—lite 'because literature's who, where, when, why, and how had been standardized'—by 'restoring to view other vital nodes in the circuit: editors, publishers, translators, booksellers, shippers, balladmongers or peddlers, annotators, censors and so on'.[24] This challenge has been articulated most strongly in a methodological shift; in a keenness to assert the end of 'critique' and a claim for the inevitability of its replacement by the empirical. James English, while noting literary studies' 'antagonism toward counting' as part of its resistance to the increasingly 'cynical quantitative paradigm' that dominates the management of universities, takes for granted that a sociology of literature, whose approaches he describes as 'more rigorously "descriptive" or "pragmatic"', must inevitably reject 'the long-dominant paradigm of critique'.[25] Mark McGurl too, in his article in the same special issue, while acknowledging that an association between sociology and literary studies puts at risk the latter's claims to political and aesthetic

critique, suggests that such a cost might be worth paying given the 'exhaustion of critique'.[26] More recently, in an introduction to another special issue co-authored with Ted Underwood, while acknowledging some of the limits of computational methods for literary criticism, English cites the models of book history and the sociology of literature, whose methods are based on what he calls 'simpler forms of counting', as likely the most useful for literary studies more generally.[27] However, Malik's challenge to the methods of book history and Murray's to the methods of publishing studies make explicit the problem of the empirical. As Malik argues, if its methods are reduced to 'the accumulated record of individual decisions', publishing is then 'at once banalized and mystified'.[28] Indeed, often the 'rigorously "descriptive" or "pragmatic"' misses precisely those aspects of a topic which are the richest for scholarly analysis and for properly new thought and the challenges of the small press bring this to light. The processes and practices of the contemporary literary small press challenge the descriptive limits of empirical methods and their tendency to reproduce the way things are. Many recently established small presses assert a return of political and aesthetic values which challenge both the 'lite' core of literary studies and the recourse to 'counting' in the sociology of literature, publishing studies and the history of the book. In the US, for example, OR Books and Commune Editions were set up in 2009 in response to the political implications of the crash which were explicitly linked by both to the publishing of new aesthetic forms and to new models of publishing. In the UK, Galley Beggar Press has set up a school which brings together the methods and objects of literary studies, creative writing and publishing as the only way to appreciate novels as 'marvellous creations'—a move which implicitly challenges all existing literary disciplines.[29] What the recent rise in the number and visibility of literary small presses makes visible is the complex dynamics of resistance which cannot be captured by one method alone. By bringing together work from across these disciplines, *The Contemporary Small Press* shows a fuller picture of how publishing may be thought about and investigated. The echoes, resonances and tensions across the chapters provoke questions about method and disciplinary boundaries which we hope will be probed in future research.

In his consideration of the relations between literary studies and sociology, Mark McGurl does call for a further 'sociologization of literary studies' which would 'toggle between empirically acquired contextual knowledge and the invigorating experience of a close reading of literary

texts themselves, which may condense more knowledge about their environment, in their own way, than any one contextual framework is likely to reveal'.[30] In so doing, he details areas which 'would benefit from a more extended sociological treatment', and the work of small presses 'at the margins of the market' is one of the possible areas that he lists.[31] However, it is the premise of this collection that contemporary small press publishing is not one among a number of places where this new 'toggling' can take place, but rather is *the* place. The contemporary small press challenges the methods and disciplinary assumptions of all those disciplines concerned with the literary. What small press publishing so often does—as we have seen in the tensions inherent in the 'Small Press Day' and as can be seen in the raison d'être of so many small press fiction publishers as the publishing of literary writers excluded by the mainstream for commercial reasons—is to challenge bifurcations between the aesthetic and the material, and subsequent methodological bifurcations between the evaluative and the empirical.

What the current situation suggests is that our methods as literary critics, as book historians, as researchers in publishing studies or as sociologists of literature are not on their own fit for purpose, and one of the aims of this collection is to begin to think through the implications of this for our studies of literary writing and publishing. The chapters that follow draw on a variety of methods—ethnography, close reading, the quantitative, the historical, the theoretical and the archival. Through this variety of methods the challenges that the contemporary small press makes to literary culture and to the disciplines which study it are made visible.

Assertions that the number of small presses are growing, that their impact on literary culture is increasing, and that paying attention to them is important for a number of academic disciplines of course raise the question not just of what is meant by the contemporary but also what is meant by 'small'. Thompson acknowledges that the 'world of small presses' encompasses a wide range of practices and models, from those publishing from their own homes in their spare time—operations so small that they often fall 'under the radar' of empirical observation and record—to those who have office space and employ staff, from private businesses to not-for-profit organizations.[32] Thompson does suggest a taxonomy, but it is one which raises more questions than it answers. He suggests that '[w]hereas the large publishers benefit from an economy of scale, the small publishers benefit from what we could call an *economy of favours*' fuelled by 'passion, commitment and belief'.[33] However, as Clayton Childress has suggested,

personal relationships between, for example, literary agents and editors are still key at all scales of publishing, and passion and belief de rigueur.[34] He describes the process of production in the medium-sized literary publisher he is investigating as 'sowing a web of collective belief', and Thompson too acknowledges the tastes, judgments and sometimes 'whims' of editors are still key irrespective of size.[35] What can act as a distinction between large and small, however, is a conscious defining of the small against the 'big', and against the 'big five' in particular. 'Small' in this collection denotes not just a particular profit range, turnover or staff size, then, but the assertion of a particular identity in relation to the mainstream of publishing. The chapters in this collection take this claim to be an alternative model, a resistance of some kind, as the key element in the contemporary literary small press. It is this attitude which shapes the practices and claims of these presses, which throws up questions about the nature of this resistance, and which poses the most interesting challenges for those who study them. Methodological differences will lead to different assessments of the nature and success of this resistance. The chapters which follow do not always produce the same conclusions about this, but rather they make visible the way that variations in methodology can produce different results, and the need therefore for such a range of methods.

Without forgetting the range and variety of accounts produced by different methodologies, the relation of the small literary press to the mainstream can be seen in three broad areas. As this collection will show, the work of the small press makes visible the forces and tensions inherent in these areas and makes clear in particular the complex interactions between resistance and complicity. First, implicit in the distinction between Thompson's 'economy of scale' in mainstream publishing and his 'economy of favours' in small presses is the relation of each to the economic. While the polarization of publishing noted by Thompson has concentrated the vast majority of sales among a tiny number of companies, these dynamics of contemporary publishing have led also to a reduction in the kinds of work published. The large publishers—squeezed by their owners' focus on the bottom line—are increasingly interested only in new writers, who may make it big, and those whose sales are already huge. Those in the middle—the place historically occupied by literary writers—have been jettisoned. The damaging of writers' careers as a result is one of the key dangers of the current 'logic of the field', and Thompson again links this to the increasing importance of small presses:

> The small indie presses have many writers who are refugees from the large corporate houses, happy to have found a publisher who, they feel, takes their writing seriously and is willing to stand by them and publish their work even if the sales are modest.[36]

This is not to say that small presses can ever occupy a utopian space beyond the reach of capitalist economics, of course. Rather, while small press publishing depends upon many elements of contemporary free market capitalism,[37] at the same time the aims and practices of small presses so often result in a 'failure' of the aims of the free market. Not only are profits usually negligible, but, to use Loren Glass's formulation, 'if you take a piece of paper and write a poem on it, that piece of paper is worth less than it was when it was blank'.[38] In a nice summation of this tension, Caroline Hamilton, writing about the rise of small presses in Melbourne since 2009, has noted that 'many such publishers act against capitalist *logic* while engaging in capitalist *activity*'.[39] Both the history of this dynamic and its implication for the contemporary small press are investigated in Chaps. 2 to 5 of this collection. While Rainey's work and most of the work that was inspired by it has focused on small press publishing in the context of modernism, these chapters explore the periods before and after in ways that offer pertinent questions for contemporary small presses. In particular, they all, pace Rainey, think about the relation between publishing as an institution and the work, or content, published. What these chapters show is that the specifics of different historical periods produce very different models for small presses and in particular different models for the relations between them and the mainstream. These chapters provide a necessary context for those whose focus is the contemporary.

In Chap. 2 Craig Saper studies two small presses, Way & Williams and the Auvergne Press, from the late nineteenth century in order to argue that mainstream corporate networks, technologies and aesthetics provided the possibilities for small press publishing. In Chap. 3 Kinohi Nishikawa looks at the modes of publishing engaged with by the African American writer Gwendolyn Brooks through her career and the relation between these modes and the work she published. In Chap. 4 Nick Thoburn thinks about the 'small' in small press publishing through a return to a pamphlet publishing in the 1970s. This return throws up questions too about the materiality of published forms, and about the political possibilities of the strategic use of their ephemerality. In Chap. 5, Kaplan Harris looks at the work of the Council of Literary Magazines and Presses in the US over the

last few decades to think about the ways that various kinds of capital—economic, symbolic and intellectual and human—circulate in the small press publishing of poetry.

The tensions created by rejecting 'capitalist logic while engaging in capitalist activity' have implications not just for aesthetic practices or the processes of production in the contemporary, but also for the people involved in making and reading. Based on his experience as one of the founding editors of Ugly Duckling Presse and on data gathered from other small press publishers, Matvei Yankelevich in Chap. 6 investigates the specific impact of market pressures on contemporary small-press culture and its rhetoric. Like Kaplan Harris in Chap. 5, this chapter scrutinizes the work of organizations such as the Council of Literary Magazines and Presses (CLMP) but shifts perspective to that of the presses themselves to show in detail how small presses are navigating the hostile terrain of a prevailing neoliberal economic culture while at the same time struggling to retain what Yankelevich calls a 'legacy of authenticity'. In Chap. 7, Nick Thurston investigates the activities involved in the work of publishing—particularly in terms of their implications for an understanding of the 'self'—and argues that it is only by investigating this work that the significance of the contemporary small press can be gauged. Rosamund Davies in Chap. 8 argues that the relation between the small press and the reader goes beyond the transactional relation between buyer and seller. Through a number of case studies she sets out the alternative models used by contemporary small presses in creating and describing this relationship. The effects of the economic dynamics experienced by small presses are investigated by Claire Squires in Chap. 10 through a focus on editorial decision-making. As she shows, whether small presses see themselves as resisting, as excluded by or as struggling to be successful within the main forces of contemporary capitalism, it is the presses' existence askance of these forces that brings them to visibility.

If small press publishing makes visible the complexities of contemporary modes of production and its own ambiguous relation to them, it makes visible too the radically uneven effects of these modes on the human beings who both use and are subject to them depending on their class, gender, sexuality and ethnic identity. As already suggested, the contemporary literary small press defines itself in great part through its relation askance to the mainstream, and part of this has been effected through editorial choices which seek out the 'new' rather than reproducing existing networks, stories and perspectives. Childress has noted, however, that

small presses remain, like publishing more generally, overwhelmingly uniform in their personnel.[40] The white and middle-class identities of the majority of US literary agents and editors, he shows, coupled with the still strong role of personal taste in acquisitions, militate against the publication of work which comes out of and focuses on the lives, experiences and perspectives of 'others'. In the UK, what Claire Squires has previously called 'publishing's diversity deficit' extends, as she has shown, beyond commissioning choices to long- and shortlisting for prizes, to the choice of titles for promotions such as the 2016 World Book Night, and to the workforce and readership.[41] A report carried out by Spread the Word in 2015, *Writing the Future: Black and Asian Writers and Publishers in the UK Marketplace*, shows too that the industry lacks ethnic diversity in its staff, the writers it publishes, and the kinds of work published. As the report makes clear, the diversity deficit in UK publishing worsened following the economic crash of 2008 as 'traditional publishers have retrenched and become more conservative in their editorial and employment choices'.[42] It is these effects of the crash, as already suggested, that have been seen as behind the explosion in the numbers of literary small presses, but narrowness in terms of gender, sexuality, class and ethnic background is as yet unevenly challenged by them.[43] Part of the problem too, as the report acknowledges, is that the history of the contributions of ethnic minority publishers and the independent presses founded by them in the past seems to be so often erased. A remembering of them can begin to make visible the imbrication of the practices of the small press and injustices around non-mainstream backgrounds and identities. As Jazzmine Breary argues in her response to the report:

> the importance of Black and Asian publishing pioneers is not limited to the great books they published, the careers they launched or the financial contribution they made to British publishing. Being outside mainstream publishing, they were forced to find new channels of distribution, production and sales, at a time when there was no Google search, no mobile phones and no Amazon.[44]

It is such an act of remembering, and its relevance for contemporary publishing, that is the focus, as we have seen, of Kinohi Nishikawa in Chap. 3. Gwendolyn Brooks' move from mainstream to small press and then to setting up her own publishing operation acted as a model for black women writers in the US who, beginning in the late 1990s, took to

desktop and digital publishing to reach readers in their own communities. The possibilities in the small press for disrupting conventional understandings of identity are also central to Chap. 9, in which Melanie Ramdarshan Bold investigates the way that small presses publishing for children and young adults have challenged the lack of diversity in publishing in terms of personnel, the work published and the readers catered for.

It is the case, though, that the complex links between the relation to the market and questions of diversity are foregrounded by the contemporary small presses in very particular ways. They can be seen, for example, in the way that the branding and design of many new small presses quite consciously eschew the style of the marketing models of the mainstream but in so doing use the self-conscious assertion of 'quality', and all that implies, as a marketing device. Jacques Testard, the founder of Fitzcarraldo Editions in London, for example, has spoken of wanting the covers of the books he publishes to be 'simple and austere to differentiate the books from the image-driven cover designs you see in bookshops everywhere in the UK. The idea…is that you let the writing speak for itself'.[45] Such an approach to design also foregrounds the press, rather than the author or the content of the books, and small presses often garner attention and esteem through a focus on editors and publishers in a way rare in the mainstream. Testard himself has enjoyed as much attention as the work he has published. In a similar way, in the US Dave Eggers has acted as a guarantor of seriousness and quality for the projects he has championed through McSweeney's and beyond. He too has asserted that the quality of the work should be paramount, and has underscored that by, for example, stressing books not as commodities but as 'little heavy papery beautiful things'.[46] Caroline Hamilton has noted that at the centre of Eggers' publishing operations is the desire to operate within a 'gift economy' rather than of the corporatized market.[47] However, a focus on writing 'speaking for itself' and on the material form of the book as ways of resisting the market could be seen, not only as a form of masking the small press's own complicity in the market, but as only possible for those with 'invisible' identities—those of middle-class white men. Indeed, Amy Hungerford has written of the extent to which McSweeney's has been accused of 'insiderish operations and exclusivity'.[48] Nevertheless, much work published by small presses does work to reveal, rather than shore up, the dangers of exclusivity. This is the focus of Georgina Colby in Chap. 12, which examines the small press as the site of a recent blooming of work that links literary experiment with queer and trans identities.