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News in Late-Seventeenth Century Britain

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News in Late-Seventeenth Century Britain

Thesis Summary

Though an occasional feature of society and politics prior to the late-seventeenth century, it is only after the Restoration that news became a more permanent aspect of British culture. Through the 1660s to the early 1700s, regular news emerged and developed, consumed enthusiastically by an increasingly-politicised public. Historians of the era and genre have looked to this period to explain how the news press developed its modern characteristics – its periodicity and claim to authenticity; its structure and style. In so doing, the focus of their attentions have overwhelmingly looked to the emergence and development of the print periodical, and its effect on society. The examination of periodical news across the later seventeenth century has taken on a Whiggish perception of print news development, largely neglecting the significance of more ‘traditional’ news forms.

Older forms of news dissemination, such as scribal, pamphletary, and oral news, in fact offer an earlier representation of the characteristics that have been attributed to print – and often to a greater extent than their contemporary printed counterpart. Whether it is in terms of accepted accuracy of content, extent of coverage, or contemporaneity, these older forms of news provide a level of stability and modernity that can only rarely be seen in the print papers of the day. As such, their contribution to the development of news is deserving of further consideration.

Using a case-study approach to examine specific time-frames and current events within the chosen period, this thesis considers the impact of news on politics and society, and how the ‘traditional’ forms of news, particularly manuscript, offer a comparatively more ‘modern’ approach to the provision of news information across the later-seventeenth century.

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News in Late-Seventeenth Century Britain

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News in Late-Seventeenth Century Britain

Introduction

There is not *anything*, which at *This Instant* more Imports his *Majestie's Service*, and the *Publick*, then to *Redeem* the *Vulgar* from their *Former Mistakes*, and *Delusions*, and to *preserve* them from the *like* for *the time to come*: to both which purposes, the prudent [management] of a *Gazett* may Contribute in a very high Degree: for beside that 'tis *everybodies Money* and (in truth) a good part of *most mens study*, and *Bus'ness*; 'tis none of the worst wayes of *Address* to the *Genius*, and *Humour* of the *Common People*; whose *Affections* are much more capable of being *tuned*, and *wrought upon*, by convenient *Hints*, and *Touches*, in the *Shape*, and *Ayre* of a *Pamphlet*, then by the *Strongest Reasons*, and *best Notions imaginable*, under any *other*, and more *sober Form whatsoever*.¹

So began the first issue of Sir Roger L'Estrange's *Intelligencer Published for the Satisfaction and Information of the People* on August 31st, 1663. Periodical news, it announced, was 'worth the *while* ... [if] only to detect, and disappoint the *Malice* of those *scandalous* and *false Reports* which are daily *Contrived*, and *Bruited* against the *Government*.'² With its allusions to the easy manipulation of the people, it was not, perhaps, the opening we might imagine to one of the first published periodical papers of the Restoration. The public, suggested its author in his 'introduction', were easily 'tuned', but it was for the government to decide whose news would do so. And if that was not clear enough, then the 'advertisements' that immediately followed – for the discovery and prosecution of illegal presses, seditious books and their 'hawkers' – surely were.

From the early 1660s, 'news' was to be a constant thorn in the side of the government – an unpleasant, intrusive presence in politics and society. L'Estrange's first periodical went some way towards explaining why: 'I think it makes the *Multitude* too *Familiar* with the *Actions* and *Counsels* of their *Superiours*; too *Pragmatical* and *Censorious*, and gives them,

¹ *Intelligencer Published for the Satisfaction and Information of the People*, no. 1, August 31st 1663.

² *Ibid.*

not only an *Itch*, but a kind of *Colourable Right*, and *License*, to be Meddling with the *Government*.³ From a modern perspective, L'Estrange's writings hardly seem to represent the ideals and impartiality that we value as readers today. Of course, in an age of increasingly digitised information resources, the traditional newspaper now exists merely as a commercial competitor to a steadily-widening variety of news medias, and one of the last to survive as a physical, printed text. News is a commodity to which British society has become accustomed – so much so, in fact, that the machinations of the media industry work with relatively little detection from the public it informs. In its current appearance, on an international, as-it-is-happening scale, news is perceived as an almost-exclusively 'modern' aspect of society. Its seemingly limitless coverage, coupled with its availability and variety of form, reflects modern views on the free (or at least, inexpensive) access to information. In comparison, L'Estrange's news seems rather different indeed.

As a consequence, it is no small wonder that historians of the period have focussed primarily on the 'new' print news of the later-seventeenth century when considering the modern origins of the genre.⁴ News in its printed, periodical form emerged to a greater extent in this period, and would appear to have undergone the largest significant development in comparison to the other existing types of recurring news publications. Furthermore, even a cursory glance over the period would suggest that it was print news that persistently occupied the interest of contemporary critics, as evident from the numerous attempts at control through legal proceedings, well-circulated public and intellectual responses to increases in printed information, and a rapidly maturing news industry coordinating the frequency of print and its physical dissemination. Analysis in the academic field has focused on the origins of news in association to the city of London – the city has provided a scarcely interrupted chronological narrative for the evolution of printed periodicals; from the first 'corantos' of the 1620s to the increasingly sophisticated 'newspapers' of the 1700s.⁵ Seventeenth century print news in London has conventionally been seen as at the heart of the academic field.⁶

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ Recently-published works regarding the news of the seventeenth century have tended to look mainly towards print to discuss the development of news in general, with reference to other forms of news as an aside. See, for example: Raymond, J., *The Invention of the Newspaper: English Newsbooks 1641-1649* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996); Sommerville, J., *The News Revolution in England: Cultural Dynamics of Daily Information* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996). Jason Peacey's recent essay in *The Oxford Handbook of the English Revolution* further explains the focus on print, and the reasons behind it: Peacey, J., 'The Revolution in Print', *The Oxford Handbook of the English Revolution*, ed. Micheal J. Braddick (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), pp. 276-293.

⁵ Print news in non-periodical forms, however, certainly existed in Britain prior to this. Pamphletary news had long presented a method of inexpensively producing printed accounts of events, typically framed through a polemical lens. See, for example: Peacey, J., *Politicians and Pamphleteers: Propaganda during the English*

However, careful consideration of the impact of news outside of the capital is long overdue, despite acknowledgements that provincial regions were significantly affected by, and significantly affected, the continued development of both manuscript and print news publication. In particular, there has been a lack of research concerning scribal news dissemination and its role in keeping provincial customers informed of domestic and foreign occurrences during the later seventeenth century.⁷ The aim of this thesis is to address the omission in current criticism.

A second question – that of the perceived ‘modernity’ of the manuscript newsletters in comparison to contemporary print news forms – will also be addressed. There is evidence to suggest a paradoxical relationship between manuscript, oral, and pamphletary news and published periodical news. Despite the perception that, as the newest form of news dissemination, print periodicals were inherently more ‘modern’, this thesis will demonstrate that a close study of the older, more traditional forms of news reveals that many of the ‘modern’ techniques attributed to print were in fact already in use, often to a greater extent.

Using a focussed, case-study approach, periods from 1676-1690 will be examined in detail through a series of comparative analysis chapters. The period chosen has been selected as it corresponds to the emergence and development of regular print news through the later seventeenth-century, and to the major source of newsletters to be drawn upon at each stage of the thesis – the Mostyn Records. Part of these documents – which comprises of thousands of official papers relating to the Mostyn estate in North Wales, in addition to private correspondence – is a series of scribal newsletters, sent to Sir Thomas Mostyn (1651-1692) from London, between 1676-1692.⁸ As second baronet, Mostyn held lands in North Wales, and served as a Member of Parliament for Carnarvon. His collection, whilst not only

Civil Wars and Interregnum (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2004); Raymond, J., *Pamphlets and Pamphleteering in Early Modern Britain* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003); Voss, P. J., *Elizabethan News Pamphlets: Shakespeare, Spenser, Marlowe, and the Birth of Journalism* (Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 2001).

⁶ And no wonder – in the preface to their short-title catalogue of British newspapers and periodicals, Carolyn Nelson and Matthew Secombe indicate that approximately one quarter of all publications in Britain between 1641-1700 were issues of serials, or periodicals – a total of over 31,000 issues from 700 titles: Nelson, C., Secombe, M., *British Newspapers and Periodicals 1641-1700: A short catalogue of serials published in England, Scotland, Ireland, and British America* (New York: The Modern Language Association of America, 1987), p. vii.

⁷ Alex Barber, discussing ‘those writing in the older tradition of whig history’, states that a ‘concomitant and widely-held interpretation sees the printed press as the dominant communicative form within English society’ – Barber, A., “‘It is Not Easy What to Say of our Condition, Much Less to Write It’: The Continued Importance of Scribal News in the Early Eighteenth Century”, *Parliamentary History* 32 (2013), 293-294.

⁸ These newsletters (MS Mostyn 9089-9097) are currently held in the archives of Bangor University (BU) in North Wales, and comprise of approximately two-thousand manuscripts beginning from March 27th 1676, and ending January 29th 1692. The Mostyn collection as a whole spans from the 13th to the 21st century, and includes records of early printed books, wills, estate rentals, surveys, plans and maps, and illustrated pedigree rolls, in addition to the private correspondence sent to the family.

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representing the first private non-Welsh medieval manuscripts to have been compiled in North Wales, probably offers the fullest and most-complete collection of scribal news existing in Britain today.

Other manuscript sources to be considered alongside the Mostyn newsletters include those sent to Sir Richard Newdigate (1644-1709) from 1674 until the early eighteenth century.⁹ Like Mostyn, Newdigate was a second baronet, and served as a Member of Parliament. The Carte collection, gathered by Thomas Carte (1686-1754) and consisting mostly of papers relating to James Butler, the 1st Duke of Ormond (1610-1688) amongst others, will be examined through a similar time period.¹⁰

In terms of print, the Burney news collection will provide the majority of print periodical analysis. Gathered by Reverend Charles Burney (1757-1817), the collection represents one of the largest compilations of seventeenth and eighteenth century news publications available. Though mostly initially dominated by issues of the *London Gazette* (the first and most consistently published of the periodicals represented), the collection has comprehensive runs of the other newspapers and news sheets that appeared from time to time during the period under consideration. Additionally, print news in the form of pamphlets will be extensively examined. Pamphletary news, in particular, offers a unique news perspective of events – that is, the framing of news-content through polemical reporting. It also represents a form of news that long precedes the Restoration. During the thesis, both print periodical news in addition to pamphletary forms of news will form the basis of comparison throughout

Chapter Organisation

The thesis will consist of six comparative chapters, with each considering a particular time-period within the sixteen year range. The first, ‘News of the 1670s’, will establish a comparison between the manuscript and print news publications available at the beginning of the period (during the summer months of 1676, where the Mostyn newsletters begin) in order to assess the typical characteristics of the Restoration news report for each form.

The second chapter, ‘The News of the Popish Plot: the *Gazette* and Manuscript Newsletters’, will examine the effect of the controversy surrounding the alleged attempt to usurp the king on the news forms of 1678, at the emergence of the supposed conspiracy.

⁹ Held at the Bodleian Library (BL) at Oxford University. Dating to 1715, the Newdigate newsletter collection comprises of around 4,000 letters sent over four decades. The letters corresponding to the later-seventeenth century have been identified as ‘official’ newsletters, coming from the offices of Joseph Williamson and Henry Muddiman: Barber, “‘It is Not Easy What to Say of our Condition, Much Less to Write It’”, 298.

¹⁰ Also at the Bodleian Library. The collection comprises of 276 volumes of original papers, most of which relate to the seventeenth century.

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Manuscript newsletters selected from the collections noted above will be compared to the major print periodical of the time, the *London Gazette*. The chapter will cover the news story's first appearance in both forms, and follow its development over the ensuing months.

The Popish Plot, which will provide a major focal point throughout the thesis, probably represents one of the most formative news stories of the later seventeenth century. Its appearance shortly before the lapse of licensing laws in 1679 stimulated the rapid growth of periodical production and pamphlet publication, which will form the basis for the third chapter, 'The New Media of the Popish Plot'. This chapter will consider in detail how these new print news forms sought to report on the event, in addition to how the structure and style of each was affected by the progression of the news story. Analysis will consider the Plot's development in the new media from 1679 to the beginnings of its involvement in the subsequent Exclusion Crisis of the early 1680s.

Chapter four, 'News Cultures in the Popish Plot', will examine the role of the news-reader (their part in establishing the authenticity of reports, etc.), in addition to providing a survey of the 'news cultures' likely to have been created by the growth of regularly disseminated influential media. The writings of readers such as Narcissus Luttrell and Roger Morrice will be considered, particularly with regard to the manner in which they digest and organise news information.

'News in the Tory Reaction' will follow the progression of the succession debate in the news of the early 1680s, before moving onto a comparison between the various news forms of 1684 to those existing in 1676, in order to examine overall development over time. 1684 has been selected as it represents a relatively politically-calm period between times of instability: a series of plots and crises on one side, and the succession on the other.

The final chapter, 'News in the time of the Glorious Revolution', will continue this multi-media analysis through the next period of crisis. The manner in which news was utilised to a greater extent than ever previously to attract popular support for the opposing parties will be closely examined, in addition to the manuscript, print, and pamphletary coverage of the development and aftermath of the Dutch invasion, from later 1688 to early 1689. The conclusion will then survey the state of the news forms by the 1690s and early eighteenth century, before coming to the final summations.

Major Themes

There are a number of related themes that we will consider in detail at various stages of the study in order to consider the news of the later-seventeenth century. These themes will

often form the focus of our discussion, though their emphasis may vary depending on the specific time-frame examined each chapter. Due to frequent interruptions in the development of news during these years (particularly the lengthy periods of print censorship), the following themes emerge periodically to lesser or greater extents, but contribute significantly to our understanding of ‘news modernity’ – the overarching subject of this examination.

‘Modernity’ and its application represents a complex and ongoing multi-disciplinary discussion, considering a wide variety of connected understandings. Across various fields of study, it has been used as an inclusive descriptor with which to consider many different philosophical aspects of the social, cultural, and political development that has contributed to the formation and defining characteristics of the ‘modern’ era. ‘When we speak of modernity and of modern society,’ Björn Wittrock writes, ‘we seem to mean one of two things.’¹¹ The first, he explains, is ‘an encompassing name to a whole epoch in world history, the modern age, as distinct from, say, the medieval age or classic antiquity.’¹² The second concerns these ‘modern’ characteristics: ‘we may speak as if we were actually characterising distinct phenomena and processes in a given society at a given time.’¹³

Modernity in the field of sociology has, amongst other things, considered the concept in relation to the historical move from the ‘traditional’ to the ‘modern’; to the emergence of the modern ‘self’; to the development, and experience of, urbanisation and industrialisation over time; to the ‘modes of behaviour’ established first in post-feudal Europe.¹⁴ Accurately identifying their origins, and the origins of related ‘modern’ social and cultural features, has been the subject of much debate: ‘It has been immensely difficult to exactly define the characteristics of modern societies and to show when they actually broke with traditional social formations. ... Some of them can be traced to regions and times quite distant from the so-called modern world and era.’¹⁵

Indeed, as a concept with which to consider the early-modern period, such discussions have broadly considered the development of centralised and bureaucratic nation-states in the

¹¹ Wittrock, B., ‘Modernity: One, None, or Many? European Origins and Modernity as a Global Condition’, *Daedalus* 129:1 (2000), 31.

¹² *Ibid.*

¹³ *Ibid.*

¹⁴ Berman, M., *All That Is Solid Melts Into Air: The Experience Of Modernity*, 9th ed. (London: Verso, 2009); Wagner, P., *A Sociology of Modernity: Liberty and Discipline* (London: Routledge, 1994), p. 3; Giddens, A., *Modernity and Self-Identity: Self and Society in the Late Modern Age* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1991), pp. 14-15.

¹⁵ Wagner, *A Sociology of Modernity*, 3. Wagner observes that by starting with the political changes of the seventeenth century, ‘some demarcation is achieved.’ Marc Raeff also identifies ‘the roots of modernity’ as having their origins ‘in the second half of the seventeenth century’ – Raeff, M., ‘The Well-Ordered Police State and the Development of Modernity in Seventeenth and Eighteenth-Century Europe: An Attempt at a Comparative Approach’, *The American Historical Review* 80:5 (1975), 1222.

post-medieval period, and the resulting sociological and cultural change that followed.¹⁶ The emergence of regular commercial news, and its effect on society, has been an important part of this discussion. Marshall Berman, considering its origins, states that ‘the maelstrom of modern life has been fed from many sources’, and marks ‘systems of mass communication, dynamic in their development’ as one of the major contributions to the modern experience.¹⁷

When applied to news, the discussion of modernity considers the widespread commercialisation of information and its effect on readers, the move from ‘traditional’ commercial news (such as scribal) to the more technologically-advanced and serialised print periodical, and the continued development of ‘modern’ news expectations, as detailed below. Historians have often considered the news of the later seventeenth century in relation to the origins of distinctive modern news characteristics. By the 1690s, Sutherland writes, ‘many of the essential features of the English periodical press (waiting, to be sure, for development) were already there in embryo or plainly visible.’¹⁸ John Sommerville agrees: periodical news developed ‘some of its inherent tendencies during the Restoration.’¹⁹ News, he suggests, altered ‘certain static conventions of truth,’ creating ‘dynamic conventions that form the rules of modern thinking.’²⁰ Steve Pincus, writing of the Glorious Revolution of 1688, indicates the press specifically as having played a significant role in the modernisation of England – the press, he suggests, found a firm place in the ‘modern arsenal of political tools.’²¹

Jurgen Habermas, examining the development of the ‘public sphere’ during the period notes that ‘the elimination of the institution of censorship marked a new stage in [its] development’:

It made the influx of rational-critical arguments into the press possible and allowed the latter to evolve into an

¹⁶ See, for example: Peter Van Der Veer, ‘The Global History of Modernity’, *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 41:3 (1998), 285-294; Habermas, J., *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity*, trans. Frederick Lawrence (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 1987). Steve Pincus has considered modernity in relation to the period in his examination of the Glorious Revolution of 1688, to be considered later in this thesis: Pincus, S., *1688: The First Modern Revolution* (London: Yale University Press, 2009).

¹⁷ Berman, *All That is Solid Melts Into Air*, 16, 15-17.

¹⁸ Sutherland, J., *The Restoration Newspaper and its Development* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), p. 232.

¹⁹ Sommerville, *The News Revolution*, 74.

²⁰ *Ibid*, 165.

²¹ Pincus, *1688: The First Modern Revolution*, 7.

instrument with whose aid political decisions could be brought before the new forum of the public.²²

News, Habermas suggests, had a significant role in the formation of the ‘modern’ public – in addressing its readership, and through the state authorities’ use of the press to promulgate instructions and ordinances, its audience ‘genuinely became “the public” in the proper sense.’²³ Benedict Anderson, considering the modern origins of nationality, has examined the role of the newspaper in the birth of the ‘imagined community of the nation.’²⁴ Mass-consumption of the news, his argument suggests, played a part in creating a community of the mind, in which readers became increasingly aware of, and connected to, one another. When we consider this in relation to the reception of news in the later-seventeenth century however, we might observe that Anderson’s ‘community’ need not only exist in the mind, as we shall see.

Thus, the news of the later-seventeenth century might be examined in terms of ‘modernity.’ We might consider the characteristics that defined the traditional and emerging news forms to examine their respective features in a time ideologically linked to the origins of ‘modernity.’ As Pincus states: ‘England in the later seventeenth century was rapidly becoming a modern society.’²⁵

The first method by which we intend to consider the modernity of the print and traditional news of the later-seventeenth century is through an examination of its structure and style. Changes in stylistic and paratextual elements characteristic to modern news offer an immediately apparent way to perceive the development of the various forms. An examination of the textual frameworks of news (i.e. the structure attributed to the print periodical, etc.), and their development from or into other forms, can indicate the origins of what we might consider ‘modern’ news arrangements. By examining the changes in particular styles, and the contrasts between the presentation of news in different news forms,

²² Habermas, J., *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*, trans. Thomas Burger (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2011), p. 58. Even prior to 1695, however, news had a significant part in bringing partisan arguments before the people – see chapters 3, 5, and 6.

²³ Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*, 21. Habermas states: ‘one can only speak of public opinion in a precise sense only with regard to late-seventeenth-century Great Britain and eighteenth-century France’ (xvii-xviii). See chapter 4 for more detail.

²⁴ Anderson, B., *Imagined Communities* (London: Verso, 1991), pp. 24-25. Anderson states that it ‘first flowered’ in Europe during this period. Richard Cust argues that seventeenth century news had a role in furthering the sense of integration between ‘local’ and ‘national’: ‘This was, of course, a complex process, related to a wide variety of cultural, social, and institutional influences; but it was one in which news appears to have played a significant part’ – Cust, R., ‘News and Politics in Early Seventeenth Century England’, *Past and Present* 112 (1986), 69-70.

²⁵ Pincus, *1688: The First Modern Revolution*, 6.

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we might assess whether there is a perceptible move towards the editorial techniques of modern news-reporting.

The second method we shall consider concerns the extent of coverage (particularly the balance between international and domestic news), and will provide much of the focus of our discussion. One of our principle understandings of the modernity of a news form relates to the breadth of its content; the inclusive or exclusive nature of its reporting. Modern news, as we perceive it, is inclusive by nature – selective in terms of apparent significance, but generally unrestricted in terms of variety of news information. Much of the distinction we make between scribal and print news will take into account their differences in content (particularly during the crisis years examined in chapters two-three and six). Throughout this discussion, coverage will remain at the forefront of our analysis.

Thirdly, we shall consider the accuracy of the news. The perceived truthfulness and reliability of a news form is of paramount importance to its influence, appeal, and longevity. In terms of news ‘modernity’, accuracy, and the language of establishing the ‘truth’ (and particularly, ‘fact’), is significant to the news development of the era, as we shall see.²⁶ The specific problems facing traditional and new print news types, and their attempts at finding solutions, are diverse, particularly in times of rapid news expansion (such as the time-frames considered during the third and sixth chapters). Methods for addressing the accuracy of news information became a lasting part of news-writing, and the effectiveness of each of the traditional and emerging news forms in creating and preserving a sense of accuracy, and in establishing the expectation of quantifiable evidence and ‘fact’, will be examined throughout.

Our fourth area of focus will examine reader-reception. It is our contention that the advent of regular news affected, as well as reflected, contemporary society. At various stages of the discussion (though particularly during chapter four), we will consider how periodical news led to the creation of real, modern communities, with reference to the ideas of Benedict Anderson and Jürgen Habermas.²⁷ The discussion will examine the growth of a modern ‘public’ through the communal interpretation of news information, as evidenced by the continued oral transmission of news and the popularity of coffee-houses, amongst other

²⁶ Barbara Shapiro has underscored the importance of seventeenth century news in the wider development of ‘discourses of fact’ – particularly in ‘fostering the shift of “fact” from the older legal and historical meaning of human deed to a newer, more encompassing meaning’: Shapiro, B. J., *A Culture of Fact: England, 1550-1720* (London: Cornell University Press, 2000), p. 104. News histories tend to focus on the perceived importance of accuracy in news reports as one of the defining characteristics of the genre in the era: Sutherland, *The Restoration Newspaper*; Pettegree, *The Invention of News*.

²⁷ Particularly: Anderson, *Imagined Communities*; Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*.

factors. The subsequent politicisation of the public through the news media that helped create it will then form a significant part of our analysis, particularly during the later chapters.

The fifth and final theme is a particular aspect of the wider reader-response, and will consider the idea that the growth in periodical and widely-disseminated news affected the reader's notion of the 'present', as advanced by Daniel Woolf: that is, how rapidly updating and developing narratives led to a more fluid and modern perception of time – a 'present' discernibly distinct from the 'past' and 'future', in which 'current events' might develop.²⁸

In what follows, the idea of 'modernity' is not used to suggest that seventeenth-century news was 'modern news' – not least because, as we have suggested, modernity can mean a range of not necessarily compatible things: from an abstract ideal of a state of society, to simple similarity with the present. Rather, 'modernity' is used as an analytical tool, in ways to be clarified at each point. In particular, it is used to point to a possible paradox that can elucidate key features of early modern news media and their development. In ways that will be explored, concepts pertaining to modernity are more closely applicable to older and 'traditional' forms of news dissemination (particularly, oral and manuscript), than to newer and emerging print forms.

To begin the work, we will start by examining the development of the metropolitan printed periodical throughout the seventeenth century as a method for setting out a context for the news of the period, in addition to bringing into consideration the existing historiographical tradition.

News through the Seventeenth Century: Corantos and Newsbooks, 1620-1642

Prior to the seventeenth century, news in England existed primarily in spoken form. Political songs and ballads were common, and had their origins in oral culture: 'one of the first widespread and widely affordable forms of the printed word was the song.'²⁹ With literary beginnings in the chivalric romances of the medieval period, the ballad of the later sixteenth century 'borrowed tunes and stories from court, city and country without discrimination, and distributed them to an equally varied audience.'³⁰ Reliably recounted to a mostly illiterate audience, the form steadily increased in popularity through the sixteenth

²⁸ Woolf, D., 'News, history and the construction of the present in early modern England', *The Politics of Information in Early Modern Europe*, ed. Brendan Dooley and Sabrina Baron (London: Routledge, 2001).

²⁹ Watt, T., *Cheap Print and Popular Piety, 1550-1640* (Avon: Bath Press, 1991), p. 11. 'In the Europe of the sixteenth century,' Pettegree writes, 'singing played an important role in mediating news events to a largely illiterate public' – Pettegree, A., *The Invention of News: How the World Came to Know About Itself* (London: Yale University Press, 2014), p. 121.

³⁰ Watt, *Cheap Print and Popular Piety*, 13.

century: it has been estimated that a minimum of 600,000 had been produced and were circulating by the second half of the 1500s.³¹

Though Ian Atherton has observed that evidence of the oral transmission of news is ‘largely lost to us’, forcing historians to instead pursue printed news, the substantial popularity of ballad material as indicated by its circulation at least points to the wider popularity of news information by the beginning of the seventeenth century.³² Indeed, in *The Invention of the Newspaper* (1996), Joad Raymond begins with the suggestion that ‘what news?’ was probably one of the most frequently asked questions in early-modern Britain.³³

The first of the printed English news sheets in the early 1620s emerged as a response to the desire for a greater availability of information, but did little to transform the traditional orality of news. ‘For the first few decades of the century,’ Harold Love writes, ‘news was still primarily an oral commodity.’³⁴ Influenced by earlier continental news publications, such as the German periodical *Mercurius gallobelgicus*, Nathaniel Butter’s ‘corantos’ (meaning ‘running’, from the French word ‘*courante*’) were literal translations of news reports from abroad.³⁵ Their appearance at this point reflected a ‘Europe-wide concern with the international crises’ of the Thirty Years War, which has been seen as ‘the major stimulus to the growth of the newspaper in western Europe.’³⁶ Conflict fuelled an interest in foreign developments, and provided a ready readership for English language publications, though established customs and pressures against reporting domestic news ensured that content was restricted to foreign news only, with a main focus on military endeavour.³⁷

³¹ Ibid, 11. Watt’s estimation is based on a 200-copy run – ‘the smallest run for which a printer would set up type’. If each of the runs were nearer 1,000 or 1,250 (‘the normal runs for a book in this period’), the total number would be closer to between 3 and 4 million.

³² Atherton, I., ‘The Itch Grown a Disease: Manuscript Transmission of News in the Seventeenth Century’, *News, Newspapers, and Society in Early Modern Britain*, ed. Joad Raymond (London: Frank Cass, 1999), p 40.

³³ Raymond, J., *The Invention of the Newspaper: English Newsbooks 1641-1649* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996), p. 1.

³⁴ Love, H., *The Culture and Commerce of Texts: Scribal Publication in Seventeenth-Century England* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1998), p. 193.

³⁵ Raymond, J., *Making the News: An Anthology of the Newsbooks of Revolutionary England, 1641-1660* (Gloucestershire: The Windrush Press, 1993), p. 3.

³⁶ Corns, T., *A History of Seventeenth-Century English Literature* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2007), p. 164; Frank, J., *The Beginnings of the English Newspaper: 1620-1660* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1961), p. 3.

³⁷ An outright ‘ban’ on domestic reporting is debated. Joad Raymond has suggested that there was no actual legislative prohibition placed on domestic reporting, but that news content was regulated through ‘indirect forms of legal constraint’, in addition to a prevailing pressure on journalists and publishers to conform to custom, expectation, and propriety. See: Joad Raymond, ‘News’, in Susan Doran and Norman Jones, eds., *The Elizabethan World* (London: Routledge, 2010), pp. 495-510 (specifically, 507). This was to characterise the majority of print news throughout the seventeenth century. With domestic news perilous to publish, periodical content primarily focussed on the wide range of typically military-based reports coming over from the continent.

Licensed corantos typically consisted of a varying number of pages which grouped the news by region. Though serialised, the time between issues similarly varied.³⁸ Despite lacking a clear sense of accuracy – corantos were held to be ‘notoriously unreliable’, and reports rarely expressed anything other than the location of their source, provoking criticism from contemporaries (as seen in the parody play *The Staple of News* (1626), by Ben Jonson) – they proved to be a popular enterprise, proliferating in number and frequency of publication throughout the 1620s.³⁹ With increased frequency, publications such as Butter’s *Continuation of our Weekly Newes* (first published in 1624) began to develop more common structures and techniques, such as providing a title page and ‘elegant layout’, in order to ‘tickle the curiosity of a prospective reader by enumerating with many “fair” words on the title-page the most sensational and most welcome news contained in the “book”.’⁴⁰

These first news publications suffered from a variety of problems. Unlike their continental counterparts, for the majority of their news English editors had to contend with the weather conditions across the Channel: ‘If the wind was adverse, or the sea shrouded in fog, the news reports could not get through, and the English news-books had nothing to report.’⁴¹ With domestic news not yet tolerated in print, corantos occasionally failed to regularly provide enough information to satisfactorily fill a publication. From time to time, it was necessary for an editor to comment on the lack of updates, or of significant incident abroad: ‘Very little Newes are stirring now, being a dead time of yeare ... Winter comming on apace.’⁴²

Nevertheless, corantos remained popular, and by 1632 quarto newsbooks had emerged and were being published on a regular basis, but were increasingly restricted by a series of stringent laws throughout the following decade.⁴³ A Star Chamber decree against the publication of corantos in late-1632 (lasting until 1638) stated:

It was thought fitt and hereby ordered that all printing and publishing of the [newsbooks] be accordingly suppress and inhibited. And that as well Nathaniell Butter & Nicholas

³⁸ Dahl, F., *A Bibliography of English Corantos and Periodical Newsbooks, 1620-1642* (London: The Bibliographical Society, 1952), p. 19.

³⁹ Atherton, ‘The Itch Grown a Disease’, 47; Dahl, *A Bibliography of English Corantos*, 55.

⁴⁰ Dahl, *A Bibliography of English Corantos*, 21.

⁴¹ Pettegree, *The Invention of News*, 196; Dahl, *A Bibliography of English Corantos*, 21.

⁴² Butter, N., *The Continuation of Our Weekly Newes, from Italy, Germany, Spaine, France, the Low-Countries and Divers Other Places*, no. 42, 22nd November 1624, p. 10.

⁴³ Fox, A., *Oral and Literate Culture in England, 1500-1700* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), p. 394.

Bourne Booke Sellers, under whose names the said Gazetts have been usually published, as well as all other Stationers, Printers and Booke Sellers, p[re]sume not from henceforth to print publish or sell any of the said Pamphletts &c, as they will answer the Contrary at their perills.⁴⁴

Punishments for publishing news material during this time were severe. However, following a petition in 1638, King Charles granted a patent to Butter and Bourne allowing them the right ‘for the imprinting and publishing of all matter of History or News of any forraine place or kingdome.’⁴⁵ Their subsequent weekly publications were overseen by a secretary of state, whom the periodical was submitted to prior to printing. By 1641, however, coranto publications had been discontinued, overtaken by the emerging newsbook.

Despite superficial similarities, the newsbook of the 1640s represents not the literary development of the coranto, but a different news form altogether. ‘Corantos,’ Raymond states, ‘played little part in the invention of the newsbook in 1641.’⁴⁶ How the news was gathered and edited differed considerably between the forms – corantos had represented an amalgamation of multiple sources gathered across Europe, and were published promising “‘faithful” translations of Dutch, German, Italian, and French periodicals.’⁴⁷ ‘The publishers, Pettegree writes, ‘were not permitted to publish any domestic news or comment on English affairs. What was intended was a dry and fairly literal translation of the reports inherited from the continental newspapers.’⁴⁸

Such publications were ill-suited to the later 1630s. In the years leading to the English Civil War, as political anxieties grew ever more pressing, literal translations of foreign news publications did little to address the intensifying domestic fears. Despatches from the continent ‘no longer met the public’s expectations’ – readers had more urgent concerns.⁴⁹

Urgent constitutional debate led to the production of a new news form – the first of the newsbooks. Offering a weekly summary of events in Parliament, these new publications ‘struck an immediate chord with the reading public.’⁵⁰ Whilst corantos had represented a

⁴⁴ Dahl, F., ‘Amsterdam: Cradle of English Newspapers’, *Library* 4 (1949), 173-174.

⁴⁵ *Calendar of State Papers, Domestic Series, of the Reign of Charles I: 1638-1639*, ed. John Bruce and William Hamilton (London: Longman & Co., 1871), p. 182.

⁴⁶ Raymond, *The Invention of the Newspaper*, 92.

⁴⁷ Slaughter, W., ‘The Paragraph as Information Technology. How News Traveled in the Eighteenth-Century Atlantic World’, *Annales: Histoire, Sciences Sociales*, 67 (2012), 258.

⁴⁸ Pettegree, *The Invention of News*, 195.

⁴⁹ *Ibid*, 220.

⁵⁰ *Ibid*.

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combination of sources from many different locations, newsbooks were printed versions of newsletters authored most likely by a single person.⁵¹ Through the ensuing months, their popularity increased considerably. It was, however, a short lived first appearance. Soon after their arrival, news was suppressed again.⁵²

Regularly printed news had been seen by some as responsible for intensifying the worsening political condition of the early 1640s, leading to an attempt by the Commons on the 28th March 1642 to control publications discussing domestic affairs:

Resolved, upon the Question, That what Person soever shall print... sell any Act or Passages of this House under the name of a *Diurnal*, or otherwise, without the particular Licence of this House, shall be reported to a high Contemner and Breaker of the Privilege of Parliament, and so be punished accordingly.⁵³

For the most part, the attempt was unsuccessful – the Commons decree responded to a specific newsbook in a time when a number of others were printed regularly also. It therefore had little immediate effect on the news trade. When the first printed newsbooks appeared in November of 1641, they continued to provoke interest, in addition to a number of competitors.⁵⁴ Within the next few months, the number of periodicals steadily increased, with more on sale in London in the following years.⁵⁵

The majority of these publications were supportive of Parliament – speeches from the Commons were frequently published, even without express permission. That Parliament failed ‘to take collective action against it,’ A. D. T. Cromartie argues, suggests that ‘the printing of speeches, even if it was unexpected, was an accepted extension of manuscript circulation.’⁵⁶ It was, according to Raymond, ‘one unflattering newsbook’ in 1642 that

⁵¹ For excerpts, see: Raymond, *Making the News*, 35-52. In *The Invention of the Newspaper*, Raymond observes that manuscript accounts of proceedings in parliament had multiplied in the late 1620s, and that this continued with the parliaments of 1640 (101).

⁵² Raymond, *The Invention of the Newspaper*, 80, 90.

⁵³ *The Journals of the House of Commons: April 13th 1640 – March 14th 1642*, Vol. 2 (London: His Majesty’s Stationary Office, 1803), p. 501.

⁵⁴ Raymond, J., *The Invention of the Newspaper*, 20-21.

⁵⁵ See: Nelson, C., Seccombe, M., *British Newspapers and Periodicals*, 622-623 – November 1641 sees two publications listed (*Heads of Several Proceedings* and London bills of mortality), whilst December-March of 1642 witnesses a steady increase in the number of emerging serial publications.

⁵⁶ Cromartie, A. D. T., ‘The Printing of Parliamentary Speeches in November 1640 – July 1642’, *Historical Journal* 33:1 (1990), 26. Cromartie does not suggest that publishers were free to print all speeches, however –

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provoked censure and prohibition across the board. The Commons objected to a report in the *Continuation of the True Diurnall* which mixed the proceedings of both Houses of Parliament. ‘The specific offence’, Raymond writes, ‘was matched by a wider perception of decay’ in the quality and authenticity of news publications. All newsbooks were largely restricted by the subsequent punishment, though they continued to be published following a brief hiatus.⁵⁷

News during the Civil War Years and Interregnum, 1642-1660

With the abolition of the Star Chamber and High Commission before the Civil War (both holding jurisdiction concerning the restriction of printing presses), the number of newsbooks began to rapidly increase in London, signalling the next significant development in the history of the news periodical. Serialisation in printed and written news had helped to create a sustained readership as expectation of further information in following issues ensured a publication’s future purchase. By provoking continued interest, an author could create a narrative spanning a number of issues, particularly when following prosecution trials or criminal proceedings.⁵⁸ Joad Raymond has suggested that periodicity in printed news publications had its origins during this time, in the years of the Irish rebellion in the early 1640s. A periodical update on the news from Ireland became both ‘necessary and profitable’, and guaranteed a constant market for reports.⁵⁹

A second foundation behind periodicity, Raymond suggests, was the ‘newly promised permanence of parliament’.⁶⁰ The Triennial Act of 1641, designed to prevent long parliamentary intermissions, assisted the appearance of the newsbook by creating a stable environment for a serial documenting the progress of the Long Parliament to become more commercially viable.

The Civil War had also seen the rise of the pamphlet. Originally a short, quarto book, pamphlets took news information and used it for political means, swiftly causing the literary form to become closely associated with slander or libel. Pamphlets had been prominent in the

particularly, he notes that parliamentary debates surrounding the Grand Remonstrance were largely excluded from print during the period: ‘MPs collectively were clearly capable of denying the printers access to any genuine material’ (26). He also observes that the large-scale transmission of news between London and the provinces, including manuscript accounts of speeches, was a ‘well-established phenomenon’ even of the 1620s.⁵⁷ Raymond, J., *Pamphlets and Pamphleteering in Early Modern Britain* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), p. 140.

⁵⁸ For example, the newsletter to Lord Mostyn described below (dated May 9th 1676) begins a narrative of the trial of John Freke, accused of distributing a manuscript satire, *The Chronicle*, and continues to elaborate on its development in the following three letters.

⁵⁹ Raymond, *The Invention of the Newspaper*, 108, 119-120.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

latter half of the sixteenth century, where there was already the perception that they were ‘disreputable, potentially dangerous works that needed to be monitored’ by authorities.⁶¹ Typically representing a narrative of events written from a certain political stance or perspective, the pamphlet of the Civil War was considerably significant in influencing public opinion, not least due to the quantity published during the early 1640s. ‘We can chart the dramatic events of the crisis of 1641,’ Pettegree writes, ‘through successive pamphlet surges: the trial of the Earl of Stafford; the attack on Archbishop Laud; the fear of Catholic plots.’⁶² Over the years that followed, pamphlets represented ‘a conscious effort to engage the political nation’ on both sides of the conflict.⁶³ Through such publications, an author was able to pose an argument from a royalist or parliamentary viewpoint, to which a response (or numerous responses, and then counter-responses) would often be published.

After 1642, an ever more partisan press emerged, with the royal court in exile producing its own newsbook from January 1643.⁶⁴ *Mercurius Aulicus*, the court mercury, adopted an ‘elegant and facetious’ style in order to undermine parliamentary propaganda, and in turn provoked a number of regular newsbooks promoting parliamentary doctrine, of which *Mercurius Britannicus* (from August 23rd, 1643) was most prominent.⁶⁵ Whilst less-overtly partisan newsbooks continued to provide reports under the semblance of some form of neutrality, such as *A Perfect Diurnal*, they were produced alongside these more aggressively-political publications. A number of pamphlets printed in these years followed the same variety of stories that standard news periodicals would later consist of, including descriptions of legal trials and prosecutions.⁶⁶ These more occasional news pamphlets, however, did not provoke the same criticism as the later publications, which appeared more threatening as they promised a ‘continuous supply of news, meeting readers’ demonstrable needs.’⁶⁷

Press output during the Civil War increased so notably that it has frequently been termed ‘an explosion of print.’⁶⁸ As the market for news grew, so did the efficiency and

⁶¹ Raymond, *Pamphlets and Pamphleteering*, 8-9.

⁶² Pettegree, *The Invention of News*, 221.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, 221-222.

⁶⁴ The fact that Royalist news publications such as these were printed outside of the capital challenges the assumption that news was purely a London-based phenomenon. The *Mercurius Aulicus*, for example, was printed in Oxford until 1645 – the centre of Royalist authority at the time.

⁶⁵ Raymond, *Pamphlets and Pamphleteering*, 152.

⁶⁶ See, for example, the content of the print papers after the lapse of licensing, as described in chapter 4.

⁶⁷ Raymond, *Pamphlets and Pamphleteering*, 129. Much of this thesis considers the governmental perception of regular periodical news, and its attempts at suppressing or controlling it.

⁶⁸ Though perhaps, an ‘explosion of written information’ would be a more accurate description. If print numbers increased significantly during this period, one might speculate that professional manuscript news, in addition to

complexity of the evolving news trade. The structure of the press became progressively more sophisticated, reflecting a ‘combination of commercial and ideological forces.’⁶⁹ As a consequence, news dissemination steadily increased with its readers’ continued desire for information. It has been estimated that, by 1642, publication productivity had already increased by 550 per cent above the average for the 1630s.⁷⁰ Lapses in command of the press meant that by 1644, a dozen news titles were published weekly in London, with some selling over five hundred copies. In the eighteen years between 1641 and 1659, three hundred and fifty separate news titles emerged. Though Cromwell and the Rump Parliament attempted to introduce methods of controlling pamphlets and publications (enforced particularly rigorously between 1655 and 1658 with the banning of all news publications except those officially sanctioned by the government), it was not until after the Restoration with the Licensing Act of 1662 that a more rigid framework for the control of the press was established.⁷¹ By this point, civil war and revolution had ‘emboldened the lower orders’: exposure to regular news had inadvertently encouraged the public to expect to debate social and political affairs as openly as their superiors – much, no doubt, to the chagrin of the ruling authorities.⁷²

News after the Restoration: News and the Public, 1660 onwards

Under the 1662 Licensing Act, publications were subject to the Crown’s licensors, and a printer had to supply his name to all of his work for accountability.⁷³ Though the new legislation significantly restricted the output of the press following the Restoration, the 1660s nevertheless saw the emergence of a new government-authorised news periodical, the *London Gazette* (starting as the *Oxford Gazette* in 1665), which will be considered in closer detail

the less formal epistolary news forms, likewise increased. Censorship was considerably more difficult to enforce over scribal news, meaning that its content and growth was less-easily controlled.

⁶⁹ Knights, M., *Representation and Misrepresentation in Later Stuart Britain: Partisanship and Political Culture* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), p. 229.

⁷⁰ Raymond, *Pamphlets and Pamphleteering*, 165. Raymond notes that these figures are approximate as they are based on title counts in bibliographical reference works, which may include duplicates or are inaccurate due to omissions. Nevertheless, the statistics do reveal the considerable extent of the increase in publication numbers during this period.

⁷¹ Fox, *Oral and Literate Culture in England*, 394. It should also be noted that a tighter control on the press does not necessarily imply a restriction on the dissemination of news information in general. Though print could be censored relatively straight-forwardly, imposing control over oral and manuscript news forms presented a far more difficult task. Indeed, there is little to suggest that the quantity of circulating manuscript or oral news diminished alongside the variety of print.

⁷² Spurr, J., *England in the 1670s: ‘This Masquerading Age’* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers Ltd., 2000), pp. 165-166.

⁷³ Loveman, K., *Reading Fictions, 1660-1740: Deception in English Literary and Political Culture* (Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing Ltd., 2008), p. 34.

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later in this thesis.⁷⁴ The *Gazette* was, like the news sheets of the 1620s and 1630s, largely confined to foreign reports, but became the main official source of news.⁷⁵ Printed consistently throughout the following decades, the *Gazette* probably represents the most commonly seen news periodical of the later seventeenth century, made more influential due to its constant presence in the capital's coffee-houses, where a customer could 'for the price of a penny dish of coffee see the official *Gazette*... and no doubt join in the discussion of such news'.⁷⁶ Coffee-houses began to be inherently associated with the circulation of news, and were seen as 'a major outlet for the distribution of news and political polemic of all kinds in print'.⁷⁷ By the beginning of the 1660s, there were 82 in London alone, with more opening in provincial towns by the end of the decade.⁷⁸ Sir Roger L'Estrange (who would later become Surveyor of the Press) noted, in 1662, that the 'principall and professed dealers' in anti-government libel were 'observed to be some certain stationers and coffee-men, and that a great part of their profit depends on this kinde of trade'.⁷⁹ An attempt was made in 1675 to close the coffee-houses down, but it provoked 'an immediate outcry', followed by a 'grudging' acceptance that they be allowed to remain open on the condition of 'future good behaviour'.⁸⁰

In *Oral and Literate Culture in England* (2002), Adam Fox states that coffee-houses increasingly became:

The sites where people met to discuss current affairs, to express their views on the political situation and even to plot against the government. Ultimately, the coffee house provides the most vivid illustration of the way in which the

⁷⁴ Marchmont Nedham's earlier government-authorised news periodical, *Mercurius Politicus*, had been approved in 1650, and had continued to be printed through the decade leading to the Restoration.

⁷⁵ Fox, A., *Oral and Literate Culture in England, 1500-1700* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), p. 395.

⁷⁶ Spurr, *England in the 1670s*, 171.

⁷⁷ Fox, *Oral and Literate Culture in England*, 401.

⁷⁸ Ellis, M., *The Coffee House: A Cultural History* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 2004), pp. 172-173. Historiography has, however, still tended to focus on coffee-houses as a metropolitan phenomena. See, for example, Babington Macaulay, T., *The History of England* (New York, 1855), 1:276.; Habermas, J., *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*, 32-33; Sydney, W. C., *Social Life in England from the Restoration to the Revolution* (New York, 1892), p. 411; and Jones, J. R., 'Main Trends in Restoration England', *The Restored Monarchy, 1660-1688* (London: Macmillan, 1979), p. 26. Steve Pincus notes the trend in 'Coffee Politicians Does Create': Coffeehouses and Restoration Political Culture', *The Journal of Modern History* 67:4 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, Dec. 1995), 809.

⁷⁹ Quoted in: Fox, *Oral and Literate Culture in England*, 401.

⁸⁰ Pettegree, *The Invention of News*, 243. Also: Sutherland, *The Restoration Newspaper*, 8.

written word could act as a stimulus and an inspiration for oral exchange.⁸¹

Evidently, news had begun to have a greater effect on public understanding and political participation. Historiography has consequently looked to these institutions as early centres of public discussion.⁸² Despite the developments in news, readers in Britain still faced the same problems ascertaining the accuracy of reports as the reading public of the 1620s. It was believed that it was the reader's responsibility to establish the credibility of a story.⁸³ But how was one to do this? Increased numbers of publications did not necessarily mean higher quality in news reporting. Indeed, the requirement to produce regular reports frequently resulted in inaccuracy and invention, as evident from numerous charges against printers and writers for factual error, or for financially or ideologically motivated deceptions.⁸⁴ The communal interpretation of news via the coffee-house and other public spaces likely helped confirm the accuracy of a recent report in a reader's mind – readers might come to an accepted understanding of current events, even despite the fact that information obtained by word of mouth in coffee-houses across England was notoriously exaggerated and often unreliable. Spurr explains that, consequently, it was 'less what was said at the coffee-house, than their function as distribution centres for news and pamphlets which alarmed authorities.'⁸⁵ As the later seventeenth-century continued, the news of the coffee-house became increasingly political – amongst other influences, a reader had to assess how partisanship affected the way in which news was written. Party allegiance could effectively distort the truth of a report; the same person or event, Mark Knights writes, could be reported and read in 'radically different ways' by a Tory or Whig.⁸⁶

Contemporary critics blamed the 'coffee-house wit and press for exacerbating tensions' over the political and religious strife of the late-1670s and 1680s.⁸⁷ The Popish Plot and Exclusion Crisis had provided 'the most sensational news of the decade', with reports of Jesuit schemes of regicide intensifying concern over the position of Charles's Catholic heir,

⁸¹ Fox, *Oral and Literate Culture in England*, 404.

⁸² Notably, Jürgen Habermas's *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere* has been influential in considering the role of news in the creation of 'public opinion'. Habermas's theories will be considered in detail later in this thesis.

⁸³ Loveman, *Reading Fictions*, 45.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 22.

⁸⁵ Spurr, *England in the 1670s*, 176.

⁸⁶ Knights, M., 'Judging Partisan News and the Language of Interest', *Fear, Exclusion and Revolution: Roger Morrice and Britain in the late 1680s*, ed. J. McElligott (Gateshead: Athenaem Press Ltd., 2006), p. 205.

⁸⁷ Loveman, *Reading Fictions*, 85.

the Duke of York.⁸⁸ Political news pamphlets had continued to be printed after the Civil War, and had particular significance during these years. ‘In the autumn of 1678’, Raymond writes, ‘news broke of a Popish Plot to kill the King, place his Catholic brother on the throne, and return the kingdom to popery’.⁸⁹ With new partisan perspectives emerging in response to the event and ensuing crisis, the press, at a time of a lapse in licensing regulations, produced publications at an accelerated rate. Raymond suggests that news sheets and pamphlets ‘contributed to the mass hysteria over the event, influencing public opinion through fiction as much as fact and reason’.⁹⁰ Andrew Marvell’s *An Account of the Growth of Popery and Arbitrary Government in England* was published in 1677, charting ‘a design... to change the Lawfull Government of *England* into an Absolute Tyranny, and to convert the established Protestant Religion into down-right Popery’.⁹¹ L’Estrange’s much longer response, *An Account of the Growth of Knavery, under the Pretended Fears of Arbitrary Government and Popery* (1678), continued the debate, intensifying social anxieties by associating Marvell’s arguments (and others with similar views) with the debates from 1641 that led to the civil conflict – a state which few desired to return to.

There have been numerous suggestions concerning how the readership of the news publications changed, post-1660. Authors such as Steve Pincus have suggested that coffee-houses were ‘ubiquitous and widely patronized in Restoration England, Scotland, and Ireland and that they and the notion of the public sphere were defended by political and religious moderates as well as by more committed Whigs.’⁹² Historians of the genre have considered what class of person read the news, and have attempted to identify the intended audience. Knights warns against the danger of drawing ‘too close a distinction between an elite and popular readership’, particularly in London, where literacy rates were higher than in other regions.⁹³ Consequently, whilst newspapers ‘may have appealed to the “vulgar”’, they were also read by those considered ‘higher in the social scale’.⁹⁴ Raymond makes a similar observation when he states that newsbooks were read regardless of class.⁹⁵ Their price did not make them exclusive: purchasing news was certainly not above the means of most. Furthermore, it is quite possible to suggest that an individual could become well informed of

⁸⁸ Ibid. Both events are examined extensively throughout this thesis.

⁸⁹ Raymond, *Pamphlets and Pamphleteering*, 331.

⁹⁰ Ibid.

⁹¹ Marvell, A., *An Account of the Growth of Popery and Arbitrary Government in England* (1677), p. 3.

⁹² Pincus, ‘Coffee Politicians Does Create’, 811. See also: Atherton, ‘The Itch Grown a Disease’, 56: ‘Coffee-houses appear to have been socially very open, patronised by men and women, rich and poor.’

⁹³ Knights, M., *Politics and Opinion in Crisis, 1678-81* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), p. 169.

⁹⁴ Ibid.

⁹⁵ Raymond, *The Invention of the Newspaper*, 244.

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news regardless of their wealth or literacy, such was the nature and orality of the form. As Fox writes, word of mouth remained ‘as important a part of news gathering at the end of the seventeenth century as it had been at the beginning of the sixteenth’.⁹⁶ News continued to be communicated in a social context, but written news still had an effect on this process – it facilitated the oral transmission, providing a regular source for the spoken information.⁹⁷

More recently, Brian Cowan has argued to good effect that the coffee-houses of the 1660s became the ‘vital centres for the communication of news and for political debate in the British Isles’, even despite the perception that they represented ‘potentially dangerous centres for subversive activity from their very inception.’⁹⁸ Indeed, as we come to consider the modernity of non-print periodical news forms, the reader’s role in the transmission of news becomes increasingly important. Due to the nature of its production, scribal news (considered below) undoubtedly appeared in fewer numbers than its later printed counterpart. However, this did not necessarily limit its reach, or extent of influence. Steve Pincus has shown that ‘more than enough newsletters and separates were distributed for many outside London to develop sharp ideological critiques of the Caroline regime’.⁹⁹ In the capital, following the Restoration, a patron of a coffee-house could read a newsletter with relative ease and discuss its content – businesses took out subscriptions so that customers might read the domestic news of a newsletter alongside the latest news from the continent in the printed *Gazette*. Atherton has observed that by the early 1680s manuscript news was as ‘freely available as its printed cousin to most of the townsfolk of England. Most of England could read all the news.’¹⁰⁰ Subsequent oral dissemination of information meant that the content of the newsletter reached an audience far greater than its relatively limited physical form allowed. Thus, readers, in many ways, were as much a tool of dissemination for the news trade as the postal service – more so, in fact. Examination of the sources drawn upon by readers of news such as Roger Morrice and Narcissus Luttrell – to be analysed during our fourth chapter, ‘News Cultures in the Popish Plot’ – demonstrate that reader-transmission was integral to the dissemination, and even authentication, of news stories.

By the later seventeenth century, the public had begun to become constituted as ‘arbiter of public affairs’, in part because of more frequent appeals to the electorate during the Civil War and in the periods of controversy during the 1670s and 1680s. As government

⁹⁶ Fox, *Oral and Literate Culture in England*, 404.

⁹⁷ Raymond, *The Invention of the Newspaper*, 244-245.

⁹⁸ Cowan, B., ‘Rise of the Coffeehouse Reconsidered’, *The Historical Journal* 47:1 (Cambridge, Mar. 2004), 34, 44.

⁹⁹ Pincus, ‘Coffee Politicians Does Create’, 818.

¹⁰⁰ Atherton, ‘The Itch Grown a Disease’, 56.

control weakened and the Licensing Act lapsed, print publication numbers surged again – though it is important to note that this increase was most likely a result of partisan reaction to the political crisis of the period than due to the lapse of licensing legislation. ‘Historians,’ Loveman writes, ‘have seen in the debates of this period a growing acceptance in the necessity (if not the legitimacy) of appeals to public opinion in politics.’¹⁰¹ The government, already ‘deeply suspicious of the unfettered circulation of news and opinion’, were forced to set up counter-writers such as L’Estrange to direct and channel public opinion, in an attempt to limit the influence of unlicensed news. However, this meant that ‘the most subversive or scandalous publications appeared covertly... and had entered the public domain long before the authorities had got wind of them’.¹⁰² Indeed, D. F. McKenzie’s investigation concerning 1668 publications indicates that, despite the stipulations of the 1662 Licensing Act, only 11 per cent of titles bore some form of licence, which suggests that censorship had relatively little impact on the majority of publications, or that the state had little intention to employ it comprehensively.¹⁰³

The authentication of legitimate information was, therefore, important, as the reading public had to be informed in order to choose wisely, or to be directed towards the desired political perspective.¹⁰⁴ This was becoming increasingly difficult as the number of publications rose. Inaccurate reporting, though not as common as we might assume in the majority of news periodicals, cast doubt on the authenticity of the whole. The escalation of a number of ‘plots’ in the 1670s and 1680s only further encouraged the uncertainty of news:

The Popish Plot, the Meal Tub Plot, the Rye House Plot, Monmouth’s rebellion, the ‘warming pan’ Plot and the Revolution itself all either promoted speculation as much as fact or provoked allegations that they were concoctions of fictions and fabrications.¹⁰⁵

Repeated inaccurate or contested reporting, as seen in the conflicting narratives and counter-narratives of news pamphlets and periodicals through the later-1670s and 1680s, inevitably

¹⁰¹ Loveman, *Reading Fictions*, 85-86.

¹⁰² Spurr, *England in the 1670s*, 172.

¹⁰³ McKenzie, D. F., ‘The London Book Trade in 1668’, *Making Meaning: ‘Printers of the Mind’ and Other Essays*, ed. Peter D. McDonald and Michael F. Suarez (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2002), p. 118.

¹⁰⁴ Knights, ‘Judging Partisan News’, 206.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*

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drew future reports into discredit.¹⁰⁶ At the very least, readers were likely to become steadily more critical (and more readily disbelieving) of contemporary news reports. By the beginning of the eighteenth century, Daniel Defoe's periodical *Review* contained an entire section targeting the various errors and inventions of his contemporaries.

A second lapse of the Licensing Act in 1695 saw news periodicals become a more permanent aspect of the political culture. Raymond Astbury's consideration of the Act suggests that whilst there is little evidence to imply a desire for relaxation in press control in the years following the Glorious Revolution (in fact, the Licensing Act was again renewed in February 1693), amendments to the Act stimulated by repeated appeals and petitions from publishers steadily made the legislation more controversial.¹⁰⁷ Pamphlets calling either for its reform or abolition were published, and in 1694, a committee was appointed to renew laws already lapsed, or due to do so.¹⁰⁸ Though the committee called for the Act to be renewed in early 1695, the Commons ultimately rejected their proposal, instead calling for a 'Bill for better regulating of Printing and Printing Presses'.¹⁰⁹ The Bill was eventually passed, and the Act was allowed to lapse – subsequent press control relied on the effective use of prosecution for the authors of 'seditious' publications.¹¹⁰

Though this post-dates the period considered in this thesis, it is worth noting that the number of publications printed after was remarkable. In *Representation and Misrepresentation in Later Stuart Britain*, Mark Knights states that 'in 1704 just nine newspapers issued nearly 44,000 copies per week. In total about 2.3 million copies circulated that year'.¹¹¹ The periodical press became increasingly widespread across the country, as the defunct-legislation no longer imposed controls on provincial news printing. News was no longer a predominantly London experience. Knights quotes a visitor to England in the late seventeenth century to illustrate the success of the subsequent dissemination of news throughout the country:

England is a country abounding in printed papers which
they call pamphlets, wherein every author makes bold to

¹⁰⁶ See chapters 4 and 6.

¹⁰⁷ Astbury, R., 'The Renewal of the Licensing Act in 1693 and its Lapse in 1695', *The Library* 5:33 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1978), p. 298, 302.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid*, 303, 309.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid*, 309.

¹¹⁰ Philip Hamburger, 'The Development of the Law of Seditious Libel and the Control of the Press', *Stanford Law Journal* 37 (1984–5), 735.

¹¹¹ Knights, *Representation and Misrepresentation*, 226-227.

talk very freely upon the affairs of the state, and to publish
all manner of news.¹¹²

London remained the capital of publishing, but ‘improved communications, rising provincial literacy, and, more importantly, the lapse of the restriction on publishing outside London’, significantly increased the potential of publishing outside of the capital.¹¹³ Indeed, the beginning of the provincial newspaper was signalled in 1701, with the first publication of the *Norwich Post*. Daily news publications appeared the following year (the first being the *Daily Courant*); prior to this, tri-weekly periodicals had been present in the capital since 1695. By the summer of 1712, Sutherland estimates that the *Post Man* and *Post-Boy* had a circulation of almost 4,000 each per issue, and the *London Gazette*, 6,000. By the 1720s, *Mist’s Weekly Journal* and *Craftsman* circulated ‘in the region of 10,000 copies.’¹¹⁴ Provincial newspapers emerged from Exeter and Bristol between 1700 and 1702, with publications from Worcester, Stamford, Newcastle, Nottingham, and Liverpool following later. As the eighteenth century progressed, the provincial press steadily increased in output: ‘around 150 titles were ventured in sixty different towns.’¹¹⁵

Despite the rapid growth, authorities still attempted to enforce some form of control over the industry. In an effort to limit, in particular, the influence of the Whig press, stamp duty was added to a tax to be levied on various other commodities.¹¹⁶ The tax was, according to Sutherland, ‘designed to hit the newspapers’ – it was to be a ‘1/2d. on every printed half sheet or less, and 1d. on every whole sheet, together with a duty of 1s. on every printed advertisement.’¹¹⁷ On August 1st, 1712, the bill took effect – but was largely unsuccessful at limiting the development of periodical news. Though it occasioned the closure of some publications (it had its greatest impact on the cheapest papers, as it formed a larger percentage of their purchasing price), such as *The Spectator*, most were able to continue by passing some of the increased expenditure onto their consumers. Within a short time, a number of periodicals had altered their structures and quantity of issues per week in order to avoid the tax completely. Even when the widespread evasion had become evident, successive governments ‘failed to amend the Stamp Act of 1712’.¹¹⁸ Though a new Act in 1725 imposed

¹¹² Ibid, 231.

¹¹³ Ibid, 232.

¹¹⁴ Sutherland, *The Restoration Newspaper*, 228-230.

¹¹⁵ Pettegree, *The Invention of News*, 246.

¹¹⁶ Sutherland, *The Restoration Newspaper*, 32.

¹¹⁷ Ibid.

¹¹⁸ Ibid.

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a higher duty again, papers continued to work around the legislation. Taxes continued to increase throughout the eighteenth century, but the growing news culture in Britain was secure.¹¹⁹

Thus, the history of print through the seventeenth century seems to read as a progressive tale of a news form steadily developing into modernity as publishing expanded and restrictions decreased. This impression – that it was print that pushed the news culture forward – is one that historians of the period have tended to re-enforce. As quotations above make clear, they often slip into a whiggish admiration of the new worlds of information, opinion, and popular participation in politics stimulated by the growth of the press. This history is, however, incomplete. It disregards the significance of other news forms, particularly manuscript news, in the development of the periodical news document, and to the creation of a ‘public’ actively seeking political participation. Before we begin our detailed investigation of the interactions of types of news, it is worth retelling the story of news in the seventeenth century – this time with manuscript at the centre, as a first step in challenging the progressive print-based narrative.

Manuscript News

In 1923, J. G. Muddiman observed that ‘news-letters and their origins have not been understood in modern times.’¹²⁰ More recently, Mark Knights in *Politics and Opinion in Crisis* (1994) again considered the lasting gap in criticism: ‘the attention paid by historians to printed newspapers has unduly overshadowed the importance of manuscript newsletters in disseminating reports of events in Parliament and London’.¹²¹ Alex Barber explains: ‘We are steeped in a dominant historiographical tradition that is committed to the power of print culture.’¹²² Manuscript news, he observes, ‘continued to be important well after 1695 and into the 18th Century.’¹²³ Ian Atherton has similarly stressed its significance:

Manuscript was the more important form of written news until the early eighteenth century; it was more plentiful than printed news; it was more accurate, less censored, and regarded as more authoritative; it preceded the regular

¹¹⁹ Raymond, *Pamphlets and Pamphleteering*, 383.

¹²⁰ Muddiman, J. G., *The King's Journalist, 1659-1689: Studies in the Reign of Charles II* (New York: Augustus M. Kelly, 1971), p. v.

¹²¹ Knights, *Politics and Opinion*, 174.

¹²² Barber, “‘It is Not Easy What to Say of our Condition, Much Less to Write It’”, 294.

¹²³ *Ibid.*

printing of news; and, for historians, it usually makes a better form of historical evidence.¹²⁴

Considering its estimation by contemporaries – Sir Roger L’Estrange wrote that manuscript news was ‘commonly the more seditious and scandalous’ and ‘by the help of transcripts, well nigh as publick as the other’ – it is surprising that more attention has not been paid to the newsletter.¹²⁵ It was, after all, ‘the manuscript separates’, Fox writes, ‘which the government had most occasion and most reason to fear’.¹²⁶ Their apparent availability, coupled with the difficulty involved in policing and controlling their production or identifying authors, would appear to make manuscript news a significant, comparatively safe way of describing and discussing contemporary matters of contention. Scribal publication was ‘less amenable to government control’, making ‘unlicensed newsletters... a constant thorn in the side of the government’.¹²⁷ ‘The advent of the press,’ Harold Love writes, ‘did not extinguish older methods of publication through manuscript.’¹²⁸ It remained throughout the later seventeenth century the ‘safest vehicle for the publishing of controversial opinion and unauthorized news’.¹²⁹

Manuscript news had existed in England throughout the sixteenth and seventeenth century, and emerged as a development of the standard conventions of epistolary communication. In *The Culture of Epistolarity* (2005), George Schneider sets out to make a clear distinction between sixteenth century ‘newsletters’ and ‘letters of news’. Though serving a similar epistemological function – the communication of news information – the latter was likely to represent part of a letter from family, friends, or clients, whereas the former mediated a ‘rather novel social relationship where writer and recipient might be – and, more importantly, might remain – strangers to one another’.¹³⁰ Newsletters went some way in altering the traditional modes of epistolary exchange as they transformed it into a business transaction, demonstrating a ‘diminution of conventional epistolary form in favor of a

¹²⁴ Atherton, ‘The Itch Grown a Disease’, 40.

¹²⁵ Public Record Office, SP29/51/10i.

¹²⁶ Fox, *Oral and Literate Culture*, 396.

¹²⁷ Spurr, *England in the 1670s*, 173.

¹²⁸ Love, *The Culture and Commerce of Texts*, 3-4; Knights, M., ‘The Long-Term Consequences of the English Revolution: State Formation, Political Culture, and Ideology’, *The Oxford Handbook of the English Revolution* ed. Michael J Braddick (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), p. 526.

¹²⁹ Fox, *Oral and Literate Culture in England*, 395.

¹³⁰ Schneider, G., *The Culture of Epistolarity: Vernacular Letters and Letter Writing in Early Modern England, 1500-1700* (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 2005), p. 161.

standardized, generic format'.¹³¹ Though initially these newsletters still carried some of the conventions of the traditional 'letter of news', including personalised salutations and closing signatures, by the Restoration they were dropped and substituted for the original date and location of composition. Newsletters depersonalised information, instead turning 'towards professionalisation and institutionalisation, toward less intimate, less personal relationships between the writer and reader, toward greater consciousness of aesthetic form, and a wider distribution of material.'¹³²

These professional newsletters (termed 'pure newsletters' by Richard Cust), emerging from a group of semi-professional journalists, have been seen as the 'forerunners of the internal news-sheets of the 1640s'.¹³³ By 1605, they had become 'the cornerstone of the information market for Europe's elites.'¹³⁴ Cust suggests that study of these newsletters reveals significant information regarding the way in which provincial readers were kept informed of public affairs, using the example of Joseph Mead, a Cambridge theologian. Mead ensured that his patron, Sir Martin Stuteville of Suffolk, was kept up to date with the latest news by sending him as many as four newsletters weekly, with information coming from a variety of London correspondents.¹³⁵

By the 1620s, there had been a notable increase in the number of manuscript newsletters of this type, in addition to those covertly discussing domestic issues of politics. These existed alongside the corantos of the period, and it is unlikely that, during this time, the scribal news market was seriously threatened by the emergence of printed material. More could be said in a newsletter, and they occasionally included corantos as a supplement with news of overseas occurrences. Raymond has suggested that this implies a 'functional differentiation': scribal periodicals covered all manner of news from London, whilst recognising the 'adequate coverage' of foreign events in printed publications.¹³⁶ A second increase in manuscript news followed in the early 1640s. Though Parliament was concerned with secrecy, 'reports of Parliament circulated relatively freely in manuscript', which played

¹³¹ Schneider, *The Culture of Epistolarity*, 160.

¹³² *Ibid*, 163.

¹³³ Cust, R., 'News and Politics in Early 17th Century England', *Reformation to Revolution: Politics and Religion in Early Modern England*, ed. Margo Todd (London: Routledge, 1995), pp. 234-235. Atherton has contested Cust's definition of the newsletter, stating that the division between 'pure newsletters' and 'letters of news' is 'too simple to encompass the wide range of letters that carried news... Only a broad definition, from professionally written newsletters to ordinary correspondence that refers in passing to an item of news, can convey the wide range of manuscript sources of news in the seventeenth century' – Atherton, 'The Itch Grown a Disease', 41.

¹³⁴ Pettegree, *The Invention of News*, 182.

¹³⁵ Cust, 'News and Politics in Early 17th Century England', 234-235.

¹³⁶ Raymond, *Making the News*, 90.

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a significant role in keeping people informed.¹³⁷ Scribal news containing transcripts of speeches or accounts of proceedings were available for those who could afford them. These were serial publications; they varied considerably in the time between each update.¹³⁸

It has been suggested that the newsletter may have been less available than its later printed counterpart, though L'Estrange's statement concerning the numbers obtainable (previously quoted above) does bring this into question. Harold Love has observed that scribal production, operating at 'relatively lower volumes' than print publication, was still able to sustain 'the currency of popular texts for very long periods and bring them to the attention of considerable bodies of readers.'¹³⁹ It was, however, likely to have been more expensive due to the relative cheapness of print and, for customers outside of London, the costs of a carrier. Knights writes that, unless available in the coffee houses, the expense of newsletters put them 'beyond the reach' of many.¹⁴⁰ Nevertheless, as we have previously acknowledged, the oral culture of the period bears a significant influence to the extent of a document's dissemination. Knights is correct in his assertion that the physical newsletter may indeed have been beyond the reach of many (excluding those available to see in coffeehouses, etc.), but the reach and extent of its content is certainly debatable. This is a question that this study will address in detail.

Spurr has described the distribution of newsletters further, stating that 'from about £5 a year, subscribers received weekly, twice weekly or by every post, a digest of news which had been sent into the office and supplied by various officials and correspondents.'¹⁴¹ To compare, the printed *Gazette* was priced at one penny, and published twice weekly through the majority of the later seventeenth century. The newsletters relied on a network of 'postmasters, customs officers, naval storekeepers, garrison officials and others' to send in news, and who would receive the newsletter in return. 'It is likely,' Spurr continues, 'that these officials were then able to make a profit by retailing the news to their informants and friends and in the tavern or coffee-house of their town'.¹⁴² Though one might feasibly consider a newsletter as having a comparatively restricted influence (due to the perception that it is to be received and read by a single individual), Spurr's argument suggests that, though more expensive, manuscript news still had considerable influence as the very manner of its composition encouraged news-gathering and the circulation of information. Thus, rather

¹³⁷ Atherton, 'The Itch Grown a Disease', 40.

¹³⁸ Raymond, *Invention of the Newspaper*, 101-102.

¹³⁹ Love, *The Culture and Commerce of Texts*, 38.

¹⁴⁰ Knights, *Politics and Opinion*, 175.

¹⁴¹ Spurr, *England in the 1670s*, 168.

¹⁴² *Ibid.*

than a closed-network of news, the manuscript periodical trade stimulated the further dissemination of content outside of the author-recipient mode of transmission.

It is worth noting that the price of manuscript news had, in fact, decreased considerably since the earlier half of the seventeenth century. Newsletters had represented a significant expense in comparison to the corantos of the early 1630s, with authors charging substantial fees. John Pory, for example, received £20 yearly from the Viscount Scudamore for his weekly newsletter. Hand-written news required more costly paper, making printed news of the period a cheaper option for many. Raymond uses a bill of disbursements from 1641 that ‘gives the price of ‘two printed declaracons’ as 2*d.*, and a ‘diurnall of parliament Occurrences’, evidently a manuscript, as 1*s.* 6*d.*’ There is, in addition to this, the costs of the carrier to consider.¹⁴³ Following the Restoration, however, newsletter authors charged much less for their services, presumably due to an extended paying readership, more-developed postal-system, and a more competitive business market.

Consequently, by the 1670s, a number of newsletter offices existed within the city of London. Henry Muddiman and Joseph Williamson had procured licenses to produce regular written news, and ran efficient, long-standing organisations.¹⁴⁴ Cheaper and more-widely distributed than their pre-civil war counterparts, these new newsletters were purchased by a ‘socially-diverse’ readership, from ‘the elite to the more humble.’¹⁴⁵ Their letters maintained a standard length and appearance in order to create a ‘print-like regularity within a variety of scribal hands’.¹⁴⁶ As a result, Muddiman’s and Williamson’s newsletters were closer in content and style to the printed *Gazette* than the letters of news that Schneider has described. There existed an important difference, however – like most manuscript news forms throughout the later seventeenth century, a significant portion of the newsletters was dedicated to domestic reports. The distinction was significant: ‘in a time of rigid press control [manuscript newsletters] enabled news to be circulated that would never have been permitted to appear in print.’¹⁴⁷ It was news information ‘that a printer, more vulnerable to reprisal, might have been reluctant to touch.’¹⁴⁸ Thus, there arose the perception that, in comparison to print, newsletters provided the ‘hard news’, which was only available through these newsletter services.¹⁴⁹ Popular observations of the newsletters’ relative exclusivity no doubt

¹⁴³ Raymond, *The Invention of the Newspaper*, 91.

¹⁴⁴ Spurr, *England in the 1670s*, 168-169.

¹⁴⁵ Atherton, ‘The Itch Grown a Disease’, 53.

¹⁴⁶ Schneider, *The Culture of Epistolarity*, 171.

¹⁴⁷ Sutherland, *The Restoration Newspaper*, 6.

¹⁴⁸ Love, *The Culture and Commerce of Texts*, 127.

¹⁴⁹ Spurr, *England in the 1670s*, 168.

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helped cement the belief. Contrasts in content and coverage between print and manuscript news forms will be examined throughout each period covered during this study.

In addition to the larger newsletter establishments of the later seventeenth century, a variety of smaller, competing businesses emerged. These were typically shorter-lived operations, catering for a specific clientele requiring certain information. Though smaller, the reach of these newsletter businesses was as extensive as the main companies, with manuscripts regularly sent from the capital to various regions. Spurr describes two minor booksellers with shops near Temple Bar, whose newsletters were sold to a mix of professional men – ‘clergy, doctors, lawyers, soldiers – merchants and civic officers, gentlemen and aristocrats’ – throughout England during the 1670s.¹⁵⁰ It would appear that there existed a national market for a number of rival newsletter companies to subsist throughout the period. Presumably, manuscript news customers chose to subscribe to a certain newsletter by selecting a periodical that focused on a specific area of coverage or shared political sympathies, in much the same way that printed news clients filtered their information through choice of publication.

Mostyn’s newsletters are likely to have come from one of the main manuscript news organisations in London, and cover a myriad of topics common to the news genre during this period. The documents are characterised by their single sheet length, standard marginal indentation, and head-note. Like the licensed newsletters of Williamson and Muddiman, this normally consists of the locale of original production and the date, e.g. ‘*London, May 16th, 1676*’. They are unsigned (typical of the majority of professional manuscript newsletters by the 1670s), and are written in a variety of scribal hands – their chronological order and tendency to retrospectively build on previous reports suggests the letters originate from the same news office. In terms of physical appearance, there is little variation in paper size, each leaf having been folded and sealed with wax so that the address could be written on the reverse of the letter.

In terms of periodicity, newsletters were received from London to Mostyn’s home in North Wales on a weekly basis, presumably transported by a carrier. These carriers operated throughout England and Wales as part of the postal system: their service was integral to the effective dissemination of both manuscript and print news. Consequently, the development of the post office has been seen as one of the principle factors affecting the success of the news trade outside of London throughout the sixteenth and seventeenth century.

¹⁵⁰ Ibid, 169.

‘In a few decades from the beginning of the seventeenth century,’ Pettegree writes, ‘communication by post became quicker, cheaper, and more frequent.’¹⁵¹ This was to be a vital transformation for the dissemination of news.¹⁵² During the 1500s, official mail had worked much in the same way as it had in medieval times, with the main responsibility for ensuring the delivery of the post falling on local agents, ‘principally the king’s sheriffs.’¹⁵³ It presented a costly expense – private individuals wishing to send a letter had to employ their own carriers to transport it from the capital, or from town to town.¹⁵⁴ The 1630s saw the first of the ‘government posts’ out of London – a weekly mail distribution along an established postal route. A second weekly post followed in 1649, and a third in 1655.¹⁵⁵ By 1660, letters left the capital on Tuesday, Thursday, and Saturday evenings.

‘It was,’ according to Pettegree, ‘generally (and correctly) surmised that the royal post functioned more as a source of revenue and intelligence than as a service to commerce.’¹⁵⁶ Though the national post had been improved through the previous decades, London was ‘ill-served.’¹⁵⁷ Significant development followed in 1680 in the form of the ‘penny post’ – a network of stations within the city where mail could be sorted for immediate delivery. This new post, Sommerville writes, ‘increased the velocity of information above even a daily schedule.’¹⁵⁸ Deliveries were made hourly, or up to five times daily for more distant locations within the city.¹⁵⁹ The effect on commercial news was substantial:

Written reports could now reach a newspaper within a few
hours of some important event, and through the penny post

¹⁵¹ Pettegree, *The Invention of News*, 167.

¹⁵² Analysis of the time it took for written and printed news to reach its destination in Restoration Britain has been significant in recent criticism – it has been suggested that delivery time had an important influence on the way in which news was read by the receiver. The relevance of news – the ‘newness’, so to speak – affects one’s experience of the present. A reader of a newsletter in the provinces received information at a rate where the events that were being described to them may have already reached a conclusion by the time of the letter’s arrival, or developed significantly by the next post. Daniel Wolfe has suggested that regular news was significant in the creation of the ‘present’ as reports caused their audience to create a conception of an event that could be altered by further information (Wolfe, D., ‘News, History, and the Construction of the Present in Early Modern England’, *The Politics of Information in Early Modern Europe*, ed. Brendan Dooley and Sabrina A. Baron (London: Routledge, 2002), pp. 10-13.) See also John Sommerville’s *News Revolution in England*, in addition to Tony Claydon’s recent article regarding the construction of the present: ‘Daily News and the Construction of Time in Late Stuart England, 1695-1714’, *The Journal of British Studies* 52:1 (January 2013), 55-78.

¹⁵³ Pettegree, *The Invention of News*, 171-173.

¹⁵⁴ Fox, *Oral and Literate Culture in England*, 369-371.

¹⁵⁵ Sommerville, *The News Revolution*, 35.

¹⁵⁶ Pettegree, *The Invention of News*, 243.

¹⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁸ Sommerville, *The News Revolution*, 83.

¹⁵⁹ Sutherland, *The Restoration Newspaper*, 48.

the circulation of newspapers and news-letters to London was greatly facilitated at little cost.¹⁶⁰

In this way, the ‘news’ of the news became even more timely. Of course, the risk of publishing false news was correspondingly increased – regular reception of news information designed for swiftly transferring to readers in a competitive market meant that reports had to be verified quickly.¹⁶¹

Atherton has suggested that manuscript news maintained a popular regard as it was thought to be more reliable than print: ‘printed news was only a rung above rumour on the ladder of credibility,’ whilst manuscript news fell between ‘trustworthy separates and untrustworthy newsbooks on the scale of reliability.’¹⁶² When popular commercial print news had increased in the 1620s, ‘one of the strongest and quickest reactions to this growth judging by literary sources, was ridicule.’ Plays such as Ben Jonson’s *The Staple of News*, satirised the growing business of news: ‘the common themes of this mockery was that the written news was untrustworthy: intelligencers were inconsistent, peddling lies, and that the truth was no concern of theirs.’¹⁶³ By the later seventeenth century, this awareness of news credibility was no less acute.

Though it was information that was purchased, this by no means guaranteed the credibility of the news. The same was true of manuscript news, of course – scribal news, however exclusive, was no more based on ‘absolute certainty’ than reports of any other kind.¹⁶⁴ The difference was in contemporary perception – whilst ‘counter-publications’ arose when mistakes or errors in reporting appeared in print news, there was little serious response to inaccurate or poorly-authenticated manuscript news reports. Through published accusations and numerous authorial assertions that theirs was the only ‘truthful’ paper, print publications repeatedly drew attention to the inaccuracy of the form.¹⁶⁵ It is quite understandable that a reader may have looked to manuscript news – where the lack of a publisher or limited copies of the text made it difficult to contest its accuracy, and where its

¹⁶⁰ Ibid, 49.

¹⁶¹ Ibid.

¹⁶² Atherton, ‘The Itch Grown a Disease’, 47.

¹⁶³ Ibid, 43.

¹⁶⁴ Raymond, *The Invention of the Newspaper*, 89-90.

¹⁶⁵ See, for example, the papers published during the Popish Plot and Exclusion Crisis discussed in chapter 3, ‘The New Media of the Popish Plot.’

very form accentuated its more-exclusive content – as the more accurate of the news forms.¹⁶⁶

Subsequently, the question of whether manuscript news was more seditious than its printed counterpart has been a contentious one in recent historical criticism. Though Raymond has written that ‘the greater liberty available in private newsletters has perhaps been overestimated’, it is evident that the majority of subversive rumour or unrestricted reporting took place through scribal news.¹⁶⁷ Fox observes that ‘thousands of libellous verses on affairs of state are known to have been written in the last four decades of the seventeenth century’, and that ‘almost all of them were disseminated through scribal publication’.¹⁶⁸ ‘It is clear enough,’ writes Harold Love, ‘that the choice of scribal over print publication was often made through a desire to evade censorship.’¹⁶⁹ The government was sensitive to the more potentially seditious content of manuscript news, which perhaps explains the increased number of prosecution trials against both the authors and receivers of newsletters in the later seventeenth century. On 28th February 1679, for example, Samuel Amey was sent to Newgate for writing seditious libels in letters. In August of the same year, an author named Singe was under investigation by the Lord Chief Justice for an account of a legal trial appearing in manuscript. In December, yet more authors of newsletters were examined by Privy Council for similar alleged offences.¹⁷⁰

The newsletters to Thomas Mostyn in North Wales provide similar examples of prosecution trials against authors of seditious news during the 1670s. In a letter dated May 16th 1676, the author discusses a man accused of writing libel in a newsletter: ‘Most thinke that he is not the Author, but unwilling to own it came through his hand, because he would not discover his friend.’¹⁷¹ A previous letter stated that ‘His majestie is much incensed att it’, and that he was resolved to ‘trace it as far as can bee to finde out the Author or make some one an Example for the rest.’¹⁷² Evidently, governmental authorities sought some way to effectively exert control over the scribal production of news.

The attempt is hardly unsurprising. Perhaps one of the most significant effects that the rising trade and availability of news had on seventeenth century culture was the fact that it

¹⁶⁶ However, though the ‘exclusive’ mode of their transmission might have emphasised a sense of manuscript news accuracy, it also makes the newsletters less ‘modern’ – see ‘Conclusion.’

¹⁶⁷ Raymond, *The Invention of the Newspaper*, 92.

¹⁶⁸ Fox, *Oral and Literate Culture in England*, 392.

¹⁶⁹ Love, *The Culture and Commerce of Texts*, 185.

¹⁷⁰ Knights, *Politics and Opinion*, 177.

¹⁷¹ Bangor University, Bangor Archives, MS Mostyn 9089, fol. 9r, May 16th 1676. Where superscript has been included in the newsletters, contractions have been expanded and indicated with italics.

¹⁷² BU MS Mostyn 9089, fol. 8r, May 9th 1678.

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brought accessible political information to all levels of the social scale. Those literate individuals (and, by extension, anyone they shared the information with) were, by the 1620s and after, capable of discussing national politics with considerable sophistication – an effect that, by the 1670s with the emerging importance of coffee-houses as centers of social intellectual interaction, had increased exponentially. News contributed to a process of polarisation as many readers argued without the ‘consensual phraseology and polite restraint’ of their social superiors.¹⁷³ With the targeting of audiences through the polemical publications of the later 1670s and early 1680s, a paradoxical dichotomy began to arise – a governmental desire to suppress lay participation in political discussion, alongside a need to foster popular support for political causes.¹⁷⁴

The move towards popular appeal has been seen as one of the most significant factors in the creation of the national public, as it contributed to a sense of integration between local and national society. Historically, there had been little cohesion between regional and national trends and public inclinations due to the lack of means to achieve such an accord. Disseminated regular news, however, exposed individuals across the country to similar knowledge and experiences at a relatively similar time. It provoked comparable responses regardless of the location, increasing the potential for a nationwide reaction to contemporary issues of controversy or debate, across the social scale. Cust had suggested that this aided a sense of ‘national significance’ to locally occurring events by placing them in a wider context of comparable or related incidence, fundamentally altering the way in which they were perceived. Furthermore, whenever there was an incident in the provinces deemed worthy of reporting, ‘news of it was likely to reach the capital’, and set alongside information of what was happening in London. This combination of details further developed the amalgamation of regional and national society, enabling readers to form a ‘mental link’ between local events and their contextual national implication.¹⁷⁵ This idea will be addressed throughout the development of the thesis.

The first chapter will begin to establish a comparison between the manuscript and print news forms at the beginning of our period of study, during the summer months of 1676. This ‘control period’ will be used to consider the typical characteristics of the Restoration

¹⁷³ Cust, ‘News and Politics’, 247-248.

¹⁷⁴ See, for example, chapters 3 and 5 – the Whig and Tory news publications surrounding the Exclusion Crisis sought to attract support for or against exclusion through the public forum of news.

¹⁷⁵ Cust, ‘News and Politics’, 240-241. Benedict Anderson and Jürgen Habermas’s theories of the public will be considered as the thesis develops.

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news sheet and scribal letter, drawing particular attention to methods of authentication, trends in coverage, authorial style, and editorial selection.

Chapter 1: News of the 1670s

This chapter will begin to establish the comparative case-study approach we intend to pursue throughout the progression of our discussion, beginning with an examination of the news from June-August 1676 as something of a ‘control-experiment’; that is, a stage in our period without the sense of significant political or social emergency that periodically characterises the later 1670s and 1680s. The selected time-frame offers the opportunity to evaluate and establish the state of news at the beginning of our chosen period – a time that the findings of subsequent chapters will be analysed against in order to evaluate significant development. To do so, this examination will consider the principal attributes of the printed and scribal news forms – content, length, and editorial selection, etc. The chapter will compare and contrast the features of the published *London Gazette* with the manuscript newsletters sent to the Mostyn Estate and to the Newdigate family across the same period.

The News of the 1670s

By 1676, news in London had reached a fairly settled state. Restrictions imposed by the 1662 Licensing Act enforced a more structured framework for the control of the press than had existed during the interregnum.¹ Though much of the legislation restored the orders of the 1637 Star Chamber, where regulations had been imposed on the importation of books and the appointment of licensers, the Act stipulated that presses could not be established without the approval of the Stationers’ Company. Thus, by the early 1670s, the only permitted printed news was the government’s own official newspaper, the *London Gazette*, published twice weekly.² Established in 1665 by Joseph Williamson and Henry Muddiman as the *Oxford Gazette* (so named due to its original place of publication, with the king and court away from the capital during the plague years), the *London Gazette* became the standard-bearer for published news – its style and structure would be emulated in the print periodicals that arose after licensing lapsed once more in 1679.

Interestingly, the *Gazette* had its origins in the scribal news form. Through the earlier 1660s, Muddiman had run a successful newsletter business alongside Williamson, then a

¹ Fox, *Oral and Literate Culture*, 394.

² Spurr, *England in the 1670s*, 168. However, that is not to say the Print Act was wholly effective – in *Censorship and the Press, Vol. 3: 1660-1695* (London: Pickering & Chatto, 2009), Geoff Kemp observes that ‘Restoration censorship, and licensing in particular, was a blanket policy with many holes. While press output fell in the four years after the Printing Act’s introduction... across the years 1662-79 no more than 50 per cent of pamphlets carried a license’; ‘less than 0.5 per cent of titles from 1641-1700 were inquired into as suspect (400 out of 100,000).’ (p. xv.)

Secretary of State. Headed 'Whitehall' to emphasise their esteemed standing, Muddiman's letters likely represented the most reputable source of news available.³ Undoubtedly with the promise of further correspondence, postmasters and MPs supplied information from their localities, which the editor might include in his newsletter, and – if of potential interest to the government – pass on to Williamson.⁴ Letters to the author reveal that business grew much by word of mouth: 'Sir,' began the correspondence from William Duckett, MP for Calne, 'I am earnestly desired by Mr. Charles Seymour, son to my lord Seymour, that you would let him receive a letter weekly from you, and he will satisfie you to your own demand for it.'⁵

1659 had seen Muddiman's first foray into print, with the *Parliamentary Intelligencer*. First published at 8-pages, then 16, the newsbook continued into the Restoration, before coming to an abrupt halt in the summer of 1663 when the Surveyor and Licenser of the Press, Roger L'Estrange, was granted the prerogative of writing 'all Narratives of relations not exceeding two sheets of paper'.⁶ Though L'Estrange effectively supplanted Muddiman as the author of published news, Muddiman's newsletters continued with the privilege of free postage. The newsletters, it seems, largely maintained the upper-hand – they were popular, more profitable, and often enclosed L'Estrange's publications within them, making the printed news subsidiary to the scribal newsletter.⁷

L'Estrange's continued reluctance to consider domestic events in his new periodicals (a significant characteristic of print news in general through the later-seventeenth century, as we shall see) resulted in popular public criticism – first for the reduction in issues published (once-weekly, instead of twice), and then for the apparent decrease in information of value. Even when L'Estrange doubled the size of his publication to match the earlier *Intelligencer*, he appeared only to have given his readers 'the same amount of printed paper' as Muddiman's periodical, 'with about half the news.'⁸

When the court moved to Oxford and the prospect of an 'official' journal operating within its vicinity arose, it was Muddiman who was invited to edit it. Thus appeared the *Oxford Gazette*, 'Published by Authority', on November 7th, 1665. J. G. Muddiman writes:

³ Sommerville observes that by the mid-1660s, Muddiman's newsletters had long established and maintained a 'standard for reliability' – *The News Revolution*, 64.

⁴ Muddiman, *The King's Journalist*, 145-147. Muddiman includes correspondence to the newsletter author from various MPs, typically thanking the author for his letters and supplying information regarding recent events.

⁵ Quoted in: Muddiman, *The King's Journalist*, 147.

⁶ Quoted in: Fritze, R. H., Robinson, W. B., *Historical Dictionary of Stuart England* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1996), p. 427

⁷ Muddiman, *The King's Journalist*, 166.

⁸ *Ibid*, 165. Sommerville, *The News Revolution*, 60-63.

The *Gazette* was exactly the same size and shape as Muddiman's news-letters (a whole sheet folded once), more easily folded up with them than the preceding pamphlets; and, it must be admitted, was entirely supplementary to the news-letters, which contained parliamentary proceedings and other news not allowed to be printed.... The "paper," later on to be termed "newes paper," was in being.⁹

The *Gazette* was immediately popular.¹⁰ Within a matter of months, the court had returned to London, and the *Oxford Gazette* was duly re-titled.

Across a vast number of geographical locations, the *London Gazette* covered all manner of news – in just the three issues from the 26th June to the 3rd of July, 1676, for example, stories come from Naples, Warsaw, Lirge, Vienna, Copenhagen, Amsterdam, Strasburg, Spire, Cologne, Hamburg, Brussels, Prague, and Paris, amongst others – all in the space of six sides of paper. It was, however, almost entirely foreign news alone. Though a reader of the *Gazette* could consider themselves well informed of current continental development, a comparably comprehensive level of knowledge regarding events at home was considerably more difficult to acquire.

It is for this reason, John Spurr writes, that those who 'hungered for hard news' continued to subscribe to the services of the scribal newsletter.¹¹ Evidently, the market for such information was sufficiently large; by the 1670s, a number of newsletter offices existed within the capital. Henry Muddiman and Joseph Williamson had procured licenses to produce regular written news, and ran the largest efficient and long-standing organisations, with clients throughout Britain.¹² Their letters continued to maintain a standard length and appearance in order to create a 'print-like regularity', despite the variety of scribal hands.¹³ As a consequence, their newsletters were quite distinct from the conventional 'letters of news' described by Schneider in the previous chapter. Though popularity had declined against the emergence of the printed periodical (which was cheaper, published more

⁹ Ibid, 179.

¹⁰ Sommerville, *The News Revolution*, 63; Muddiman, *The King's Journalist*, 178.

¹¹ Spurr, *England in the 1670s*, 168.

¹² Ibid, 168-169.

¹³ Schneider, *The Culture of Epistolarity*, 171.

frequently, and in larger numbers), hand-written letters again grew in regard as the decade neared the domestic political crisis of the late 1670s and beyond.

Comparing the News

To begin, we will consider the physical product. As the *Oxford Gazette*, the official printed periodical's development drew on several historical and contemporary models:

Nedham's monopoly of news under Cromwell was one; the *Paris Gazette* was the obvious source of the title. But in contrast to these two, the *London Gazette* was not published in pamphlet form; instead it reverted to the broadsheet style of the earliest Dutch papers.¹⁴

Printed front and back in two columns on a single sheet, the *Gazette* was a 'true newspaper, a half sheet of paper 11 ¼ x 6 ¾ in. printed on both sides'.¹⁵ It was, according to James Sutherland, a 'complete innovation', replacing the established structure of the newsbook with 'a two-page newspaper, set for the first time in double columns, and costing 1d.'¹⁶ With approximately 2,330 words of news per issue during the period covered in this chapter, and a tendency to separate the news according to its location and date, the *Gazette* maintained a perceptible level of structural continuity.¹⁷ It was a structure that, for the rest of the seventeenth century at least, was to become the 'normal format for an English newspaper.'¹⁸

Though letters were less consistent in terms of wordage, the authors of scribal news maintained their own stylistic conventions for reporting recent events. Rarely longer than the space offered by a single piece of paper, the average newsletter length from June-August 1676 is 279 words.¹⁹ Newsletters typically marked the distinction between reports in one of two ways – within in a single passage of writing, where stories are separated by a small dash, or through a new paragraph. Like the *Gazette*, letters kept their own style of heading too: a location for the manuscript's production (in both the newsletters to Mostyn and Newdigate, this is normally 'London'), and the date of its composition. Earlier newsletters, such as those held in the MS. Carte collection dating from the Civil War some decades previously, are

¹⁴ Pettegree, *The Invention of News*, 238.

¹⁵ Handover, P. M., *A History of the London Gazette, 1665-1965* (London: The Curwen Press, 1965), p. 10.

¹⁶ Sutherland, *The Restoration Newspaper*, 11.

¹⁷ See Appendix, fig. 2.1. Also: Sommerville, *The News Revolution*, 63.

¹⁸ Sutherland, *The Restoration Newspaper*, 11.

¹⁹ See Appendix, fig. 1.1

mostly indistinguishable in terms of heading style and textual organisation.²⁰ Thus, the ‘paratext’ of the newsletter was long-established by the Restoration period.

In terms of the physical manuscript, the newsletters to Mostyn are approximately 12 ½ by 7 ¾ inches, with the text covering the entirety of one side (though most often with a margin, in which additional stories are occasionally written vertically).²¹ Frequently – and particularly during periods of controversy, where one might presume the demand for further information was strongest – letters continue to the first quarter or half of the second side. Unrestricted by the structural limitations of print production, manuscript news was capable of utilising a certain amount of organisational flexibility, allowing it to react sufficiently to developing circumstances.²² Adequate space was then left for the manuscript to be folded without revealing its contents (typically in thirds twice horizontally, and once vertically), and sealed with wax, with the address on the reverse. Page size does occasionally differ – though rarely above the measurements described above.

The letters to the Newdigate family are similar, though from June-August 1676 more frequently longer than those sent to Mostyn, regularly carrying over to a second or third side. Appearing thrice-weekly, the scribal periodical has been identified as, at least initially, the product of official newsletter author Joseph Williamson.²³

In both print and scribal news, their individual structures are perhaps their most stable of features. There are few instances across our period where the standard structure and length of the news types diverge from the forms established by the mid-1670s.²⁴

Content

Perhaps where we see the largest deviation between print and scribal news is in the extent of their respective coverages. By 1676, the *Gazette* had long established itself as the arbiter of foreign news. Reports regarding developments on the continent were nowhere better represented than in the most recent issue of the government’s official periodical, where dispatches from on-location news-gatherers seemed to provide the majority of information.

²⁰ See, for example, the newsletters from MSS. Carte 77 and 228, held in the Bodleian Library at Oxford University.

²¹ News content continues into the margins of 10 of the 14 newsletters sent to Mostyn between June and August 1676.

²² During the Popish Plot (to be considered in the following chapter), for example, the letter to Lord Mostyn breaking the news is approximately 900 words, or over three-times as large as the average for the 1676 sample selection (see Appendix, fig. 1.1).

²³ Barber, “It is Not Easy What to Say of our Condition, Much Less to Write It”, 298

²⁴ Though there are indeed instances. See, for example, the letter to Mostyn breaking the news of the Popish Plot in the following chapter.

As such, we see the *Gazette* of June 29th 1676 reporting on the movements of the French fleet around Naples, the Prince of Orange's troops in Brussels, the siege at Maastricht, and Louis XIV's entertainment at Versailles, amidst a litany of other (mostly European) news events.²⁵

The following issues demonstrate a similar level of coverage. Of the seven publications from June 26th-July 20th, continental military conflict represents the majority of stories reported, which is somewhat characteristic of the *Gazette* throughout the period. The story of the siege described on June 29th is developed through the issues from the 3rd, 6th, 13th and 17th of July: 'on Tuesday last, the Prince of *Orange* invested *Maestricht* on the side of *Tongres*'; '*Maestricht* is now actually besieged'; 'The *Prince* of *Orange* has changed his quarter from *Smeermaes* to the Abby of *Hocht*'; 'The last night the Trenches were opened in two places'.²⁶ Reports of Ottoman forces marching on Warsaw also appear on the 3rd and 10th: 'the approach of the Ottoman Forces the more surprizes us, for that we have for some months past flattered our selves with the hopes of a sudden Peace'; 'On the other side, *Ibrahim* Bassa advances with the *Ottoman* Forces.'²⁷ The *Gazette* reports a siege at Phillipsburg on the 3rd: 'The Imperial Troops... work with great diligence to advance their approaches'; and the transport of arms and ammunitions to Strasburg on the 17th: 'A great number of small Boats –four of which were carried on one Wagon, being arrived with 18 pieces of Cannon... will decamp to morrow morning.'²⁸

With international news constituting the vast majority of every *Gazette* (99.6% of the news content in the *Gazette* of this period concerns foreign events), each report typically follows a similar structure.²⁹ The news most often appears either as a re-telling, as in the report from July 10th:

Vienna, July 5. It is said that the Emperor has given out Commissions for the raising of 3000 men, for the reinforcement of his Forces in *Pomeren*... His Imperial Majesty understanding that great differences are like to arise between the *Confederates* in *Bremen*, about the

²⁵ *London Gazette*, no. 1108, June 29th 1676.

²⁶ *London Gazette*, no. 1109, July 3rd 1676; *London Gazette*, no. 1110, July 6th 1676; *London Gazette*, no. 1112, July 13th 1676; *London Gazette*, no. 1113, July 17th 1676.

²⁷ *London Gazette*, no. 1109, July 3rd 1676; *London Gazette*, no. 1111, July 10th 1676.

²⁸ *London Gazette*, no. 1109, July 3rd 1676; *London Gazette*, no. 1113, July 17th 1676.

²⁹ See: Appendix, fig. 2.1.

partition of their Conquests, is sending a Person of Quality thither to adjust them.³⁰

Or as a first-hand account, so that it appears the original source of information has simply been transcribed into the publication:

Madrid, July 15. We are here very much concerned at the ill news we now first receive from *Sicily* of the loss of ours and the Dutch Fleet sustained the second past at *Palermo* by that of *France* ... Our Forces in *Catalonia* have now taken the Field; they are not above 8000 Men; and we reckon the French not to be much stronger.³¹

The foreign news ‘paragraph’ has received much attention in recent criticism. ‘In most cases,’ Will Slauter has written, ‘foreign news did not come directly from correspondents belonging to the individual gazette, but from other periodicals.’³² News was copied internationally, and arranged within publications for print:

The organization of gazettes as a series of bulletins from different locations had the advantage of giving visual coherence to the news while avoiding the clutter that would have resulted from making the source of each paragraph explicit.³³

Though Slauter largely writes in relation to the eighteenth century, the paragraph as the ‘basic unit’ of news is certainly perceptible earlier. By the later seventeenth century, the expectations of a news story – an introductory reference to its source, for example, and a focus on time and place – were long established.

In all of the issues of the *Gazette*, domestic news is almost entirely lacking – it makes up a mere 0.4% of the news content appearing in the *Gazette* of June-August.³⁴ Aside from a

³⁰ *London Gazette*, no. 1111, July 10th 1676.

³¹ *London Gazette*, no. 1114, July 20th 1676.

³² Slauter, W., ‘The Paragraph as Information Technology’, 264.

³³ *Ibid.*, 264-268.

³⁴ See: Appendix, fig. 2.1.

short report from Abergavenny in the issue from July 13th (regarding the ‘Primary Visitation’ of the Bishop of Llandaff), and the news of a ‘scandalous’ speech at Oxford from July 20th, news from Britain is largely unrepresented.³⁵ Of course, the absence of intra-national reports in the *Gazette* has not gone unnoted: ‘historians make much of the fact that domestic news was weirdly missing.’³⁶

Though it certainly limited the extent of the periodical’s content, a self-imposed restriction on domestic news is hardly surprising for the government’s own newspaper. Knowledge of domestic events – the machinations and everyday actions of local and national government and politics – it was thought, would inspire public disorder; a blurring of the social hierarchy for political participation. This is a view perhaps best summarised by revisiting the writings of Sir Roger L’Estrange (Surveyor of the Press until 1679, when licensing lapsed) in an issue of the *Intelligencer* published in the 1660s:

A *Publick Mercury* should never have *My Vote*; because I think it makes the *Multitude* too *Familiar* with the *Actions* and *Counsels* of their *Superiours*; too *Pragmatical* and *Censorious*, and gives them, not only an *Itch*, but a kind of *Colourable Right*, and *License*, to be *Meddling* with the *Government*.³⁷

This was, evidently, an opinion shared by the government; from 1672-1679, several Secretaries of State were largely responsible for the content of the *Gazette*.³⁸

Though its editors received information from agents abroad and from correspondents ‘all over England’, very little domestic news found its way in to the content of the *Gazette*.³⁹ Barbara Shapiro, writing of the print news of the 1620s, states that ‘since foreign news was considered less disruptive than domestic, most early English news reporting concerned matters foreign.’⁴⁰ Clearly, this remained the case for the news of the mid-1670s. Ironically, more domestic news could be derived from the paper’s few advertisements than from the

³⁵ *London Gazette*, no. 1112, July 13th 1676; *London Gazette*, no. 1114, July 20th 1676.

³⁶ Sommerville, *The News Revolution*, 68.

³⁷ *Intelligencer Published for the Satisfaction and Information of the People*, no. 1, August 31st 1663.

³⁸ Schultheiss-Heniz, S., ‘Contemporaneity in 1672-1679: the Paris Gazette, the London Gazette, and the *Teutsche Kriegs-Kurier* (1672-1679)’, *The Dissemination of News and the Emergence of Contemporaneity in Early Modern Europe*, ed. Brendan Dooley (Surrey: Ashgate Publishing Ltd., 2010), p. 121.

³⁹ Pettegree, *The Invention of News*, 239.

⁴⁰ Shapiro, *A Culture of Fact*, 87.

main content of the publication itself. By 1671, the *Gazette* had begun printing ‘personals’ included at the end of the news sheet, typically concerning ‘notices of cheats and runaway servants, stolen horses and lost dogs, kidnapped children and misplaced “notebooks”, as well as other appeals for lost goods, missing persons, and ‘wanted’ criminals, etc.⁴¹ From June-August 1676, the content of the advertisements is representative of the period in general. On June 26th, for example, there is notice of one ‘*Evan Evans*’:

A welchman, servant to *Morgan Borfield*... Run away on Sunday, the 11 instant with 25 *l.* and upwards, in Money. He is about 20 years of age, full fac’d, black short curl’d hair, swarthy and freckles in his face; he had a Hair-Camblet Coat on, and a Serge Wastecoat, with silver Buttons, a sad Cloth-coloured pair of Breeches, gray Stockings. Whoever give notice of the said *Evans* to his said Master... shall have 3 *l.* Reward.⁴²

The three other ‘advertisements’ of the issue appeal for information concerning two stolen horses and a lost dog. Whilst proving ‘another thin edge of entry for domestic news’, the detail of the personals ‘exceeded anything found in the foreign news’.⁴³

In terms of non-advertisement domestic news, the small amount that appears in the *Gazette* of the 1670s is largely superficial and highly inconstant from issue to issue – sometimes a mention of the Queen’s travels through England; sometimes a report of an execution (though no description of the act itself, or specific details of the crimes prosecuted); or sometimes, weeks without any inclusion of the recent news from home at all.⁴⁴ Thus, we see a brief recognition of domestic news in the *Gazette* of July 13th 1676, reporting ‘the Right Reverend Father in God, *Williams*, Lord Bishop’ and his sermon to ‘a very great Congregation’, and in the *Gazette* of July 20th, a report concerning the expulsion of ‘*Balthazar Vigares*’ from Oxford University for ‘scandalous expressions’, but nothing more in the remaining issues across the months.⁴⁵ Given the seemingly random nature of its inclusion and the lack of a discernible pattern (despite, as evident from the newsletters, a

⁴¹ Sommerville, *The News Revolution*, 69.

⁴² *London Gazette*, no. 1107, June 26th 1676.

⁴³ Sommerville, *The News Revolution*, 69-70.

⁴⁴ *Ibid*, 69.

⁴⁵ *London Gazette*, no. 1112, July 13th 1676; *London Gazette*, no. 1114, July 20th 1676. See: Appendix, fig. 2.1.

relatively uninterrupted flow of domestic news), it is quite possible that domestic information was included in the print periodical only when there lacked sufficient continental news to fill an issue. This being the case, it is perhaps relatively easy to imagine why a reader might turn to a scribal newsletter for the ‘hard news’ that Spurr has described. Nevertheless, the decision to include only foreign reports does not seem to have significantly lessened the availability of news information – with such a large selection of sources to draw from across a wide variety of international locations, the *Gazette* from June-August, 1676, is rarely in need of material to fill the pages.

This may help explain the differences in terms of wordage between the printed periodical and the manuscript newsletter. With a content mostly focused on domestic news, and reliable domestic news comparatively harder to acquire given the restrictive nature of domestic information dissemination, the newsletters to Mostyn in North Wales are more prone to inconsistency in terms of length.⁴⁶

Nevertheless, the type of content reported in scribal news represents a significant contrast to the news of the print periodical. Whilst the *Gazette* maintains a foreign focus with infrequent domestic news, the newsletters to Mostyn show quite the opposite: a domestic focus, with occasional foreign news. On average, the news to Mostyn is approximately 76% domestic, and 24% international.⁴⁷ ‘Naturally,’ Grant Tapsell has written, ‘there was a professional imperative here, with manuscript newsletter writers highlighting the privileged information that they could provide, and thus asserting their supremacy over the whole print medium.’⁴⁸ Those stories of domestic criminal prosecutions that occasionally appear in the *Gazette* without detail are here described in full, often with descriptions of the crimes themselves. The newsletter from the 27th June, for example, begins the report of one ‘mr. Jonkes of ye common councill’, to be prosecuted for a speech ‘concerning our present greivances’:

That the frequent ffiers every where are thought to bee
upon designe by a company of Villainies for
Impoverishing the nation.... That the growth of Popery is
great disheartening to his majesties subjects – That the
French grow power dayly and have encroached upon us in

⁴⁶ At approximately 122 words, the shortest of the thirteen newsletters from June 13th to August 29th 1676 is just under a third of the length of the largest, at approximately 379. See Appendix, fig. 1.1.

⁴⁷ See Appendix, fig. 1.1.

⁴⁸ Tapsell, G., *The Personal Rule of Charles II, 1681-85* (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2007), p. 95.

our trade to the value of 700: 000 ... and at last hee concluded that their might be a comon councill cal'd for the further debate of these things that they would all unanimously joyne in a Petition to his majestie for the calling a Parliament: for the redress of these evils.⁴⁹

The scribal periodical freely describes the content of Jonkes' speech, and his trial develops through the letters that follow. On July 1st, the substance of the speech is clarified, with the addition that Jonkes is now 'comitted to the Gate-House where he continues still'; the letter of July 4th reports a request for Habeas Corpus; July 18th sees the arrest of two men for suggesting 'to this or the like effect that 500 Courtiers rather deserv'd hanging then Jonkes Imprisonment.'⁵⁰

No doubt due to their being comparatively more difficult to police, the Mostyn manuscript news is considerably less restricted in terms of domestic detail, as shown through the trial of Jonkes above. Had the same story appeared via a print periodical, the report would surely have been censored prior to publication. This may help explain the newsletters' re-emerging popularity: whilst the strict legislation controlled and limited the growth and techniques of print news, manuscript news could experience a 'renaissance'.⁵¹ With a method of control that relied almost solely on self-imposed regulation based on the threat of possible prosecution, and authors relatively difficult to trace, newsletters offered a comparatively safe and profitable form for the dissemination of recent domestic news. Even restrictions on manuscript news were 'lighter' than those on the printed – likely as a result of their seemingly limited reach.⁵²

From June-August, the newsletters to Mostyn in North Wales cover a variety of topics, within a number of recurring motifs: stories report on the warrant, arrest, and trial of alleged criminals; the decisions of the court and council; controversies within the upper echelons of society, and the deaths of prominent regional authorities, in addition to topics that might seem somewhat more mundane to a modern reader, such as the appointment of bishops and other local officials.⁵³ Though considerably shorter than the *Gazette*, the newsletters offer up an intriguing selection of the day's domestic news. With this in mind, it is perhaps fairly

⁴⁹ Bangor University, Bangor Archives, MS Mostyn 9089, fol. 19r, June 27th 1676.

⁵⁰ BU MS Mostyn 9089, fol. 21r, July 1st 1676; fol. 22r, July 4th 1676; fol. 24r, July 18th 1676.

⁵¹ Raymond, *Pamphlets and Pamphleteering*, 326.

⁵² Atherton, 'The Itch Grown a Disease', 40.

⁵³ Though no doubt important to a provincial authority such as Sir Thomas Mostyn. From June-August, there's rarely a newsletter that does not comment on all of these issues to some extent.

straightforward to understand the attraction of the newsletters to a reader. ‘The news worth talking about,’ Spurr has written, ‘was not simply the broadsheet material of politics and policy, foreign affairs and taxation, it also included the mundane details of trade and agriculture, the excitements of new scientific discoveries or bizarre events, and the sensation of crime, rumour and scandal.’⁵⁴ In contrast to the print publications of the period, manuscript news certainly seemed to best fill the niche.

Letters reported the apprehension of a Popish book-seller, ‘taken into Custody by a messenger for publishing the Masse Book in Latin and English, and selling them openly.’⁵⁵ They described the surprising discovery that the Count d’Bujon was, in fact, merely a French barber in disguise – the ‘count’, it seems, had acted the part so well that he was ‘not in the least suspected.’⁵⁶ Others reported the ‘ffamous Doctor man sir de Rabel a Welshman... grown in great credit at Court for his admirable medicines’,⁵⁷ and on September 26th, this strange occurrence:

Upon the Wednesday night last was seen a Phoenomenon,
or a thing like a blazing starre in the Aire, which many of
the Common People have seem’d much astonisht at, it
being of an unusuall biggness and of a dreadfull shape.⁵⁸

As with the corantos of the 1620s, stories of a curious or remarkable nature no doubt proved popular. The ‘blazing starre in the Aire’, however, met a rather underwhelming end: ‘[It proved to be] only a large Kite made by Boyes, who hung a Paper lanthorn at the end of it, and therein a candle lighted... and this was the end of the dreadfull Comet.’⁵⁹

Where foreign reports are included in the Mostyn newsletters, they typically form no more than around a quarter of the manuscript, and appear after the main domestic news.⁶⁰ Like the *Gazette*, scribal foreign news characteristically concerns military developments, with the Prince of Orange’s siege at Maastricht forming the main focus of non-domestic news through June-August. The siege is referenced first at July 4th: ‘forreigne Letters Confirme the [invasion] of maestricht by *the* prince of orange who begins to forme a seige’, and developed

⁵⁴ Spurr, *England in the 1670s*, 166-167.

⁵⁵ BU MS Mostyn 9089, fol. 26r: July 25th 1676.

⁵⁶ BU MS Mostyn 9089, fol. 28r: August 1st 1676.

⁵⁷ BU MS Mostyn 9089, fol. 32r: August 15th 1676.

⁵⁸ BU MS Mostyn 9089, fol. 46r: September 26th 1676.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

⁶⁰ See Appendix, fig. 1.1.

through the letters from the 18th and 25th July, and 1st August: ‘the Prince of Orange advanceth in the siege at Maestracht’; ‘he advances apace in the siege, and is believed will within a weeke make himself master of the place’; ‘The Prince of Orange commanded 2000 Dutch Horse and foote to attempt the place again.’⁶¹ Though typically offering a briefer description of the progression of the siege than the *Gazette* does in the issues through July, the newsletters effectively summarise its development rather than supplying the whole of the narrative. So, whilst the *Gazette* of July 17th offers a lengthy account of the news from ‘*the Camp before Maestricht*’, the Mostyn newsletter of the 18th simply states: ‘Foreign Letters say that the Prince of Orange advanceth in the siege at Maestricht, being assisted with the troops of the Rhingrave, and those of Haynault.’⁶²

This process of editing the foreign news from the *Gazette* in order to summarise only the most significant reports included is one that continues through the newsletters. We might perceive this aspect of scribal news as part of an argument towards its comparative modernity – Daniel Woolf has suggested that ‘so great was the flow of information that the news-conscious town-dweller was obliged to come to terms with the relative importance of an event, its national, international, or local significance, or be overwhelmed by it.’⁶³ Newsletters seemed to have had an active role in facilitating this process – summarisations of the news allowed longer, often convoluted narratives to be shortened into one or two manageable sentences. The letter from the 25th July, for example, comes between two issues of the *Gazette* that fall either side of the taking of the Spanish-controlled region, Aire-sur-la-Lys: ‘Its said by some that the french hath taken Aire, and denied by others.’⁶⁴ In an issue from the 24th, the *Gazette* had previously reported the likelihood of a French capture of the area – in the issue that followed, an account confirmed it. More direct references to the print periodical can be seen in the letter from the 1st of August: ‘The *Gazette* sayes that an Halfe moon at maestricht was wone by the valour of 200 English’, referring to the *Gazette* of July 31st, which gave a lengthy account of the attack.⁶⁵

One can reasonably assume that the *London Gazette* likely forms a large part of the scribal newsletter’s foreign news source.⁶⁶ The newsletter editor’s references to the *Gazette* demonstrate an interesting and acknowledged distinction between the two news forms (i.e.

⁶¹ BU MS Mostyn 9089, fol. 22r; fol. 24r; fol. 26r; fol. 28r.

⁶² *London Gazette*, no. 1113, July 17th 1676; BU MS Mostyn 9089, fol. 24r, July 18th 1676.

⁶³ Woolf, ‘News, history and the construction of the present’, 87.

⁶⁴ BU MS Mostyn 9089, fol. 26r, July 25th 1676.

⁶⁵ BU MS Mostyn 9089, fol. 28r, August 1st 1676; *London Gazette*, no. 1117, July 31st 1676.

⁶⁶ Though by no means all. There are numerous details relating to foreign reports which only appear in the newsletters.

that one is primarily for foreign news, the other domestic). As a consequence, there is an inherent sense of the reader's part in the acquisition of news: namely, that to obtain a comprehensive understanding of contemporary events, a reader should consult both forms. Manuscript foreign news in the Mostyn periodical lacks the specific detail of the *Gazette* because a relatively comprehensive periodical exists to provide it – whilst maintaining the market niche for domestic news, the manuscript author need only point to the *Gazette* for further information regarding foreign events.

The letters sent to the Newdigate family make a similar reference to the news sheet, whilst emphasising their superiority over the print medium, and the exclusivity of their information: 'you will have an account in the newsbook of the present posture of the Armyes abroad, so that I shall not need to repeat it here but shall add what is not made publick.'⁶⁷ As with the Mostyn newsletters, the sentiment emphasises the need to consult both forms.

It is important to note, however, that this is an understanding that arises only from the manuscript news. That is, whilst the newsletters may appear to reference the news of the *Gazette* (with the implication of further foreign news to be had from the paper than present in the current newsletter), the news sheet does not offer a comparable allusion, despite its lack of domestic content. Given the 'official' opinion of domestic news, this is hardly surprising.

The letters to the Newdigate family offer a different balance of news again. Though initially providing a comprehensive coverage of foreign affairs with some domestic reports, the manuscript periodical soon becomes overwhelmingly focused on foreign news. The sieges at Maastricht and Philipsburg (both also covered in the *Gazette* and Mostyn newsletters), for example, represent two of the main news stories reported from June-August, with the military conflict on the continent featuring heavily in general.

Beginning in the letter of June 28th, the scribal periodical to Newdigate begins to describe the Prince of Orange's movements in the Netherlands: 'It is not to be doubted but that we shall in a post or two hear that the Prince of Orange has besieged Harbory or some other important place.'⁶⁸ Subsequent letters report that the prince 'arived neare Maestricht & caused it to be in vested', that 'the trenched before Maestricht were opened at night', and that the siege 'grows now very hot.'⁶⁹ Newsletters report the mobilisation of Denmark's '10000 foot and 6000 horse' ('though the King of Sweden is at present there with 20000 men to

⁶⁷ Bodleian Library, MS Newdigate 293, Lc. 345r, July 7th 1676.

⁶⁸ BL MS Newdigate 293, Lc. 341r, June 28th 1676.

⁶⁹ BL MS Newdigate 293, Lc. 343v, July 4th 1676; Lc. 350v, July 19th 1676; Lc. 352r, July 24th 1676.

oppose the passage'), and the great 'destructions' at Stockholm, following the conflict.⁷⁰ In doing so, the news to Newdigate across the period provides a relatively full catalogue of the summer of 1676's military occurrence, most of which relate to the Franco-Dutch War (1672-1678).

Given the perceptible escalation of the conflict as the summer months progressed, the fact a foreign focus characterises the newsletter's content is perhaps understandable. Numerous newsletters report that 'the Elector of Brandenburg is now ready to take the field', 'the states are on their march', or that 'the seige of Phillipsburg grows ever day warmer', amongst a litany of other significant developments.⁷¹

Alternatively, an examination of the newsletter's author may offer a better explanation for the foreign focus. Joseph Williamson had previously run the *Gazette* with the philosophy that 'if there had to be newspapers then they should emanate from the government and contain as little illuminating news for the public as possible.'⁷² As with the printed periodical, the foreign news of the scribal letter provided a way to disseminate information without offering the domestic content disapproved of by official authorities. This may explain why, in some newsletters across the period, the Newdigate manuscripts adopt a structure similar to that of the *Gazette*. Instead of using a line-break to mark a new story as was customary, for example, the letters from July 24th and August 1st introduce individual reports with the date and location first, as was the printed periodical's style: 'Hamburg July the 24th'; 'Hague July 7th'.⁷³ The manuscript of the 24th transcribes an account of a siege with the header 'from the camp before Maestricht' – a technique consistently used by the *Gazette* throughout the 1670s.⁷⁴

Despite their similarities however, the domestic reports that do appear in the Newdigate manuscripts are often more detailed than that which had begun to appear in the *Gazette* of the period. The account of Jonkes' arrest (also reported in the Mostyn newsletters), for example, receives no small amount of attention:

⁷⁰ BL MS Newdigate 293, Lc. 341r, June 28th 1676; Lc. 345r, July 7th 1676

⁷¹ BL MS Newdigate 293, Lc. 342r, June 30th 1676; Lc. 343v, July 4th 1676; Lc. 356r, August 1st 1676.

⁷² Alan Marshall, 'Williamson, Sir Joseph (1633–1701)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004; online edn, Jan 2008 [http://0-www.oxforddnb.com.unicat.bangor.ac.uk/view/article/29571, accessed 14 March 2013]

⁷³ BL MS Newdigate 293, Lc. 352r, July 24th 1676; Lc. 356v, August 1st 1676.

⁷⁴ In July 1676 alone, the *Gazette* uses this technique in the issues from the 13th, 17th, 20th, and 27th, amongst numerous others across the remaining months.

Yesterday one Mr Jonkes of London linen draper was by one of the Councill, committed prisoner to the Gatehouse, for haveing on the 24 instant at a common hall then assembled for the choeseing of officers for the next year in a most seditious manner , openly moved & stirred at persons there present, that before they did proceed to the choice officers (which was the only occasion of that assembly) they should goe to the Lord Mayor & desire him to call a common Councill that they might make an addresse to his Majesty to call a new parliament...⁷⁵

Similar reports – mostly of criminal prosecutions – appear through the letters that follow. A report of July 4th describes the trial of a Lord ‘concerning the killing of a boy some time since in st James Parke’; July 7th sees another committed to the Tower ‘for writing into the Country scandalous and seditious letters to defame the Government and Lords of his Majestyes privy Counsell.’⁷⁶ Concessions were clearly made to domestic news.

The Pursuit of Credibility

John Sommerville has written that factual accuracy and the establishment of legitimate information became ‘the facile claim of all journalists in the seventeenth century’.⁷⁷ Ian Atherton agrees:

Aware of widespread criticism, and wishing to emulate the reputation of the separates (many of which they also produced), newsletter writers were always at pains to stress the reliability of their information. They regularly prefixed items with their sources and were careful to point out which stories were likely to prove less reliable.⁷⁸

⁷⁵ BL MS Newdigate 293, Lc. 342v, June 30th 1676.

⁷⁶ BL MS Newdigate 293, Lc. 343r, July 4th 1676; Lc. 345v, July 7th 1676.

⁷⁷ Sommerville, *The News Revolution*, 65.

⁷⁸ Atherton, ‘The Itch Grown a Disease’, 47.

By the 1670s, the need to provide proof of accuracy to reports was as pressing as it ever had been. As such, the pursuit of credibility is a perceptible feature in both the *Gazette* and scribal newsletters from June-August 1676.

Sommerville has emphasised the ‘authorial anonymity’ of the *Gazette* as contributing to its claim of accuracy, writing:

Corantos and mercuries had been required to reveal some of their identity in their imprint. Nedham, Muddiman, and L’Estrange were real, live journalists, known by name, who happened to have a connection to the government. Now the news was written by government clerks, it did not behoove them to remind readers of the fact. By an odd psychology, anonymity gave their reports greater credibility.⁷⁹

Certainly, there is little in the *Gazette* of June-August 1676 to suggest the identity of an author. This is, however, a feature not exclusive to the printed periodical. Like the writers of the *Gazette*, Sommerville’s explanation could be applied to the authors of the newsletters, which are, for the most part, similarly anonymous. Atherton writes of manuscript news: ‘accuracy was the goal, and any authorial interjection or editorial comment would be likely to detract from that end.’⁸⁰ The unsigned commercial newsletter of the 1670s (in contrast to the often signed pre-civil war newsletter) placed purposeful emphasis on the form’s objectivity: ‘This conscious semi-anonymity may have been a deliberate echoing of printed newsbooks, where, it has been suggested, the periodical assumed its own identity, greater than the identity of the author hidden behind it.’⁸¹ Aside from an infrequent personal pronoun (typically addressing an omission or responding to a request), identity remains absent from the newsletters, with the majority of manuscripts possessing an authorial authority comparable to that of the *Gazette*.⁸²

⁷⁹ Sommerville, *The News Revolution*, 67-68.

⁸⁰ Atherton, ‘The Itch Grown a Disease’, 47.

⁸¹ *Ibid*, 54.

⁸² Pronoun usage - in the newsletter of July 25th, for example, the author introduces a report with ‘I omitted to mention in my last letter ...’ (BU MS Mostyn 9089, fol. 26r, July 25th 1676). Evidently in response to a request, the newsletter of July 4th concludes with ‘I sent mr. mostyn a Catalogue of Books &c. by Denbigh carrier last Saturday’ (BU MS Mostyn 9089, fol. 22r, July 4th 1676).

Across the news forms, consistent attempts are made at editorial objectivity. Tony Claydon offers possible explanations for this:

This lack of any mission to comment upon, or to explain, the news may have stemmed from a lack of editorial resources. It may also have arisen from a fear that excessive intervention in the presentation of information would lead to accusations of bias in a medium that was trying to build its reputation through objectivity.⁸³

Certainly, this reasoning seems appropriate in the context.⁸⁴ Claydon's observations do, additionally, support the notion of manuscript's relative flexibility in comparison with print – as explored above, news summaries allowed the scribal author to present information concisely, whilst preserving credibility. Print news, eager to maintain the image of objectivity, presented stories in full to the point of questionable significance – there is little comparable sense of editorialised or condensed news reports to be had from the *Gazette*.

Both the *Gazette* and newsletters make use of repeating introductory phrases at the beginning of news stories which indicate the level of reliability one might attribute to the report that follows. These phrases form a significant part of what Barbara Shapiro has termed 'matters of fact', or the language of news. They are, in essence, recognisable news-genre indications of accuracy: 'Because editors and publishers were not themselves eyewitnesses to the events reported, they attempted to assure their readers that their accounts rested on reliable sources.'⁸⁵ Introductory prefixes, such as 'letters from Paris tell us', or 'From Germany they write', emphasised the first-hand or on-location account of the news, habituating readers to the expectation of evidence and credible news relations in reports: though these values were 'more often enunciated than realised', they helped 'create and develop an audience that desired "facts" concerning the "news" and appropriate evidence for confirming it.'⁸⁶ Interestingly, they also drew attention to the manuscript origin of the printed

⁸³ Claydon, T., 'Daily News and the Construction of Time', 67. Though Claydon discusses the daily periodicals of the early eighteenth century, the observation is retrospectively applicable.

⁸⁴ As we consider the various papers that arose after licensing lapsed in 1679 later in the thesis, it will become apparent that the perceived need for objectivity seemed to increase with time. As competition grew in the print medium, accusations of bias and impartiality were ever-more common.

⁸⁵ Shapiro, *A Culture of Fact*, 92.

⁸⁶ *Ibid*, 90.

news report – the ‘letter’ referred to in a story’s introduction was the ‘reliable source’ of its information.

The *Gazette* and newsletters of the period frequently employ this ‘letters from’ assurance – ‘From the *Rhine* our Letters tell us’, ‘From *Stockholme* we have Letters from the 3rd of *May*, which say’, and ‘our Letters from *Starsburg* of the 3rd instant, give an account’ all appear in the *Gazette* of June 1st, 1676.⁸⁷ More tentative qualifying introductory phrases emerge in the form of ‘It is said that our Ambassadors are parted from *Charleville*’, ‘it’s believed, our General, the Duke of *Luxemburg*, will endeavor’, and ‘We are told that the French plenipotentiaries are expected’.⁸⁸ Again, Shapiro emphasises the recognisable, established function of these introductions:

Sometimes tentative language was employed. A printed report might be accompanied by a qualifying statement such as, “But the advice not coming from a constant hand, we must expect the certainty hereafter”... In other instances, ‘tentativeness was often indicated simply by “’Tis said” or “It is reported.”⁸⁹

Such phrases indicated that the news was not as yet certain – but that time would acquaint the reader with further information. As the *Gazette* of June 1st indicated in relation to the uncertain movements of French troops through the Rhine, ‘it is probable we may in a few days hear of some action.’⁹⁰

An admission of uncertain news was not necessarily of detriment to a periodical’s claim to credibility. Should news information later prove inaccurate, subsequent issues might amend the mistake whilst maintaining the publication’s reputation for reliability. In an issue of the *Gazette* from June 29th, for example, the author seeks to correct an error from an earlier report: ‘What hath been reported of a Commotion at *Grand Cairo*, and of the soldiers mutinying... proves a mistake; for we have Letters from thence of the 25 of *March*, which speak not of any such thing.’⁹¹ The issue from July 24th reports a similar conflict: ‘The news we had of taking Anclam by the Elector of *Brandenburgh* is contradicted, our last Letters

⁸⁷ *London Gazette*, no. 1100, June 1st 1676.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*

⁸⁹ Shapiro, *A Culture of Fact*, 93.

⁹⁰ *London Gazette*, no. 1100, June 1st 1676.

⁹¹ *London Gazette*, no. 1108, June 29th 1676.

telling us, that the Elector expected his Artillery, Before he could formally besiege it; That the place was very strong, being Garrison'd by 1500 chosen men.'⁹²

Sommerville has suggested that this act of revising reports in subsequent issues may have had the effect of making a publication appear more reliable, in spite of the acknowledgement of previous factual error. He writes: 'Correcting mistakes did not call the *idea* of facts into question. Indeed, it may have given readers more confidence in news discourse, by contrast with other rhetorics.'⁹³ Corrections reminded the readership that the paper was striving for factual accuracy – in itself, an endeavor worthy of merit.

The newsletters to Newdigate use the same techniques. Most information reported in the manuscripts from June-August begins with the established news introduction: 'We have letters from Stockholme which say ...'; 'Our french letters just now arrived tell us ...'; 'We have letters from Naples... ', and so on.⁹⁴ Like the *Gazette*, tentative news reports, or ongoing events with an uncertain outcome, are followed with the assurance of further information in a future issue. During several stories, the author of the scribal newsletter remarks upon the expected outcome of the recent news. On June 28th, for example, it is written: 'It is not to be doubted but that we shall in a post or two hear that the Prince of Orange has besieged Harbory or some other important place.'⁹⁵ Comments pertaining to the accuracy of unconfirmed news reports are included alongside the story as assurances of 'truth' – the letter of June 28th, for example, states: 'Though we have as yet from Holland onely the account of the defeat of the Swedes fleet, yet we doe not doubt the truth thereof, though yesterday there is some abandonment as to the case.'⁹⁶

In the Mostyn newsletters, 'some say' or 'it is said' is more often the adopted style of introducing reports. Like the *Gazette*, the phrasing allows for some later amendment, whilst preserving the objectivity expected of news reporting: 'Like others engaged in the discourses of fact, news reporters and editors insisted on impartiality.'⁹⁷ Nevertheless, with the latest news difficult to prove until confirmed through numerous reports, both manuscript and print news often focussed instead on maintaining an assertive authorial voice – that is, the impression of credibility, rather than accuracy proved through confirmed fact. Kate Loveman explains:

⁹² *London Gazette*, no. 1115, July 24th, 1676.

⁹³ Sommerville, *The News Revolution*, 65.

⁹⁴ BL MS Newdigate 293, Lc. 345r, July 7th 1676; Lc. 350r, July 19th 1676; Lc. 353r, July 27th 1676.

⁹⁵ BL MS Newdigate 293, Lc. 341r, June 28th 1676.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*

⁹⁷ Shapiro, *A Culture of Fact*, 93.

Readers enticed to examine a work beyond its title page based their estimate of its credibility in large part upon the style or narrative voice of the author. Writers would seek to replicate standards of credibility, affecting impartiality and offering circumstantial details: dates, times, places and, where necessary, descriptions of the surroundings.⁹⁸

The tone of the news, it would seem, had almost as much of an effect on reader perception as actual factual accuracy. Methods of authentication – such as the specific details Loveman describes above – could be used to emphasise the author’s claim of validity. Thus, the majority of news stories reported across the various scribal and print forms are typically presented through a series of ‘facts’ or statements. In the Mostyn newsletters, this is usually through specifying the day and details of an event: ‘Last Friday one Lawrence... was taken into Custody by a messenger for publishing the Masse Booke in Latin and English, and selling them openly.’⁹⁹ The *Gazette*, and occasionally the Newdigate newsletters, supplies a location and date to each report, as in this from the August 3rd: ‘*Hamburgh, Aug. 7.* We are told that nothing now retards the Surrender of Stade, but the payment of the 400000 Crowns to the Bishop of *Munster* by the Duke of *Zell*’.¹⁰⁰ In each of the periodicals, ‘ostentatious rhetoric’ is avoided, with a focus on impartiality and concisely-delivered news stories.¹⁰¹ As Loveman has observed: ‘The best language for advancing truth-claims might then not be that of a persuasive rhetorician, nor even of a cultured gentleman, but of the plain-speaking, blunt fellow. Plain-speaking, or the appearance of plain-speaking was, however, a rhetoric with a skill of its own.’¹⁰² Barbara Shapiro agrees: ‘The appropriate reporting style for news, like most discourses of fact, was to be plain and unadorned.’¹⁰³ Without the embellishment of a work of fiction, a news report could give the impression of accuracy simply from the manner of its communication. With most news forms emulating these techniques (including many of the later periodicals that would arise after licensing lapsed), the style of the genre was well established by 1676.

⁹⁸ Loveman, *Reading Fictions*, 37.

⁹⁹ BU MS Mostyn 9089, fol. 26r, July 25th 1676.

¹⁰⁰ *London Gazette*, no. 1118, August 3rd 1676.

¹⁰¹ Loveman, *Reading Fictions*, 37.

¹⁰² Loveman, *Reading Fictions*, 37-38.

¹⁰³ Shapiro, *A Culture of Fact*, 94.

By 1676, the manuscript newsletter seems to have offered a news content that demonstrated a comparably more flexible, varied, and even editorialised, approach to news. Indeed, we might consider the handwritten periodical of the mid-1670s as more representative of the news cultures and interests of later periods than the printed *Gazette*. Even the Newdigate letters (which maintained a largely foreign focus until the emergence of the Popish Plot – see chapter three) reported on domestic news to a greater extent than the major print periodical of the period. Nevertheless, a certain ‘status quo’ for news had been established by the 1670s – a reader could reasonably expect where to find details of current international conflict, or where to look to read about the most recent decisions of the king and court at home. For the news forms themselves, respective structures and styles had become customary – for the newsletters such as those sent to Mostyn, this was a content and organisation not significantly different from the newsletters of decades previous.

Methods of proving and protecting the credibility of the news forms – though still lacking somewhat, given the difficulties of proving accuracy without multiple confirmations of a report – at least had no major platform for rebuttal in the public sphere as yet. Indeed, only the Popish Plot and ensuing crisis, representing perhaps the most significant emerging news story of the period, would have a significant effect on the way in which news was fundamentally presented to the reader and responded to by the public – the style, content, and even the availability of news itself would change as the later 1670s and early 1680s progressed.

It is this period – the months during and following the emergence of the Popish Plot in 1678 – that will form the basis for the following chapter.

Chapter 2: The News of the Popish Plot: the *Gazette* and Manuscript Newsletters

When news of an alleged popish conspiracy to overthrow the monarch broke in the summer of 1678, it emerged into a society well accustomed to a traditional fear and mistrust of Catholicism. Though religious reform had fundamentally altered and revised the tenets of Christian devotion in England, Scotland, and Wales by the later seventeenth century, Catholicism on the continent was still ‘very much in the ascendant’.¹ A seemingly ever-present threat of violent intervention into the established Protestant state had steadily strengthened the conviction that the ‘greatest ambition’ of the Papists ‘was to root out Protestantism with the maximum of bloodshed and cruelty.’² With the King’s brother and heir married to a Catholic and widely known to have converted himself, popular anxiety increased as the possibility of a popish monarch again became quite real. John Kenyon explains: there was ‘[no] doubt as to what would happen if the Catholics seized control; all good Protestants would burn’.³

Historians have offered a number of arguments to explain the traditional and contemporary causes for public and political anti-Catholic feeling in England by the 1670s. John Miller examines the English Reformation and the effect of the penal laws regarding Catholic recusancy passed through the sixteenth and early seventeenth century, in addition to ‘the emergence of Louis XIV as the most powerful ruler in Europe and the self-styled champion of Catholicism.’⁴ With the Duke of York heir to the throne, ‘the spectre of a regime in England like that of Louis XIV in France, complete with the bloody persecution of Protestants’ was never too far away from popular imagination.⁵ Kenyon, introducing the Popish Plot in a similar vein, looks also to the recent successes of Catholicism on the continent during the mid-seventeenth century, citing the forceful expulsion of Protestantism to the peripheries of Europe by the end of the Thirty Years’ War as a cause for much of the mistrust and unease. Confident in its ability to repel direct attacks, Kenyon suggests that the

¹ Miller, J., *Popery and Politics in England, 1660-1688* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1973), p. 67.

² Miller, *Popery and Politics*, 67.

³ Kenyon, J., *The Popish Plot* (London: Heinemann Ltd., 1972), p. 3. In the Mostyn newsletter dated April 18th, 1676 (Bangor University, Bangor Archives, MS Mostyn 9089, fol. 4r), the author reports a ‘Confident discourse among many people that the Duke of York is turn’d papist.’

⁴ Miller, *Popery and Politics*, 67. The history and influence of Catholicism in England during and prior to the Restoration governments is established throughout the book. In *Protestantism and Patriotism: Ideologies and the Making of English Foreign Policy, 1650-1668* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), Steven Pincus similarly suggests that continental conflict reminded the English of the ‘political evils of absolutism’, coinciding with revived concerns regarding the growth of Popery – radical Protestantism, or ‘Popery in disguise’, Pincus suggests, became a similar concern (p. 365).

⁵ Miller, *Popery and Politics*, 67.

government and people of England became aware that their 'Protestant citadel' could, therefore, 'only be captured by a conspiracy from within.'⁶

More recently, historians such as Jonathan Scott have looked to the intellectual debate stimulated by the restoration of the monarchy in order to explain the public and political response. Scott suggests that attempts both to enforce and revise the policies of the religious settlement met opposition across the social and political spectrum – opposition to the arbitrary government of both church and state 'furnished the context for the revival of radical activity and writing during the 1670s.'⁷ Revived arguments supporting the notion of the divine right of monarchy (and thus, the absolute power of the sovereign authority) seemed to ever-more closely resemble popish doctrines. Arguments turned to a supposed 'design to convert "the nation's religion to popery" and its legal constitution to "downright tyranny".'⁸

Though supporting Scott's observations, Mark Knights also suggests that many concerns stemmed from political and social anxiety for the future, rather than simply from the revived troubles of the past. He writes: 'it is impossible to ignore the fact that there were grave anxieties about the imminent impact of popery under James that gave a new dimension to the political and religious problems.'⁹ During his discussion, the succession crisis is linked to the larger debate regarding popery and arbitrary government, though with the addition that the king's unwillingness to engage with the exclusion dispute seemed to 'place the future of Parliament at risk and to open the way to the destruction of Protestantism.'¹⁰ Like Scott, Knights considers the effect of the prolonged perception of popish practices in Church of England affairs: 'After the Restoration, many dissenters or zealous protestants saw the high-churchmen's insistence on ceremonies as indicative of popish inclinations, and condemned them as papists in masquerade.'¹¹ Anti-papal feeling is well documented by the historiography – there was, evidently, sufficient cause for an ingrained sense of public and political anxiety by the later 1670s.

⁶ Kenyon, *The Popish Plot*, 2-3.

⁷ Scott, J., *England's Troubles: Seventeenth-Century English Political Instability in European Context* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), p. 374. Also see pp. 365-388. During 'Radicalism and Restoration', Scott connects this to a wider reaction, suggesting the Restoration created an unstable situation in which long-standing religious problems that had affected England could intensify exponentially: Scott, J., 'Radicalism and Restoration: The Shape of the Stuart Experience', *The Historical Journal* 31:2 (1988), pp. 453-467. See also: Claydon, T., Corns, T. N., *Religion, Culture, and National Community in the 1670s* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2011).

⁸ Scott, *England's Troubles*, 375. Scott quotes the arguments of Andrew Marvell.

⁹ Knights, *Politics and Opinion*, 11.

¹⁰ *Ibid*, 11-12.

¹¹ *Ibid*, 12.

Thus, when a relatively unknown chaplain named Titus Oates came forward to swear knowledge of a Popish conspiracy to usurp Charles II before a Justice of the Peace, the story spread amongst the public with a speed that is perhaps understandable.¹² In recent times, unofficial news sources had already gone some way towards intensifying popular anxieties: ‘in the months before the Popish Plot broke the press played a part in arousing fears of Catholic-inspired disasters.’¹³ Frequent reports of Popish treachery and tyranny had emerged throughout the mid-1670s, each more unfounded than the last.¹⁴ But as the narrative of the Plot developed, subsequent reports – such as the murder of Sir Edmundberry Godfrey, the authority that Oates had confessed to – only seemed to lend to its credibility.¹⁵ Even in spite of the limited actual evidence (the chaplain’s testimony remained unpublished until the following April, for example) and a sceptical king, talk of the alleged ‘Plot’ was rife through the coffee-houses and market-places of London, fuelled by a news trade that sought to respond in considerably different ways.¹⁶

Manuscript news took the story head-on, discussing at length the ‘horrid and unheard of Practice of the Jesuites.’¹⁷ In contrast, and with an unwavering resolution, the *Gazette* ignored it almost entirely, only acknowledging the Plot by proxy through the official governmental proclamations it was obliged to publish. Pamphlets were produced – and after licensing lapsed, periodicals arose. The alleged conspirators were vilified, and the significance of the Plot discussed extensively – its legitimacy contested from paper to paper. Regardless of whether one believed it or not though, its narrative and representation was shaped and cultivated in the news of the period. Through the later months of 1678, the story lingered at the heart of news development. So much so, in fact, that without these continued reports, it is likely the Plot could not have hoped to have remained in the public eye for so long, or to such a significant effect.

This chapter will make a comparative analysis between the newsletter collections and the *London Gazette*’s response to the event across September-December 1678 (prior to the lapse of the Licensing Act), before moving on to an investigation of the ‘new’ news media stimulated into production during the following chapter. Of the events of the later seventeenth century, the Popish Plot must be ranked amongst the highest in terms of social impact and political controversy, in addition to influence – for our specific focus, there is perhaps

¹² Coward, B., *The Stuart Age: England, 1603-1714* (1980; Harlow: Pearson Education Limited, 2003), p. 325.

¹³ Schwoerer, L., *The Ingenious Mr. Henry Care* (Stroud: Tempus Publishing Ltd., 2004), p. 47.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 47-48.

¹⁵ For more details, see: Miller, *Popery and Politics*, 155-161.

¹⁶ Miller, *Popery and Politics*, 97.

¹⁷ BU MS Mostyn 9089, fol. 118r, October 26th 1678.

nowhere better suited to begin an examination of the particular treatment of a single news story across the news forms as they begin to increasingly determine their respective news-niches, as identified by the established 'status quo' of the mid-1670s.

The examination will explore a widening in the distinctions between manuscript and print news considered in the previous chapter – particularly with regard to content and editorial selection – and will consider the role of news in the creation and construction of the 'present' (that is to say, the growing perception of a discernibly distinct 'present' time, separate from the past or future). September-December 1678 has been chosen as the period of study as it includes the emergence of the story in each of the print and manuscript periodicals, in addition to the initial development of the Plot across the publications.

The Emergence of the Plot within the Newsletters

To 1678, domestic content continued to occupy the majority of the Mostyn newsletter as it had in 1676, with a portion of each typically considering the significant foreign news of the day. When news of the Plot finally emerged in the letter dated October 26th 1678, it marked a change in the balance of news within the manuscript: 'the Plott wch scarcely received Credence is now displayed to the shame of the Papists, who had soe little Cause to murmur under soe Gracious a Prince.'¹⁸ Over the issues that followed, the news story remained almost the exclusive focus of each letter. Whilst foreign news had occupied, on average, 24% of the 1676 newsletter's content, it now declined to a mere 0.4% across the period examined in this chapter, whilst the newsletters themselves rose in length by almost twice as much – to 517 words per letter.¹⁹ Scribal news adapted in order to respond sufficiently to the increased amount of circulating information regarding the Plot, and in a manner relative to the perceived significance of the news story: 'the turn of events in 1678-9,' Sutherland writes, 'was such that what was happening at home made any other sort of news seem to most Englishmen irrelevant.'²⁰

Whilst the *Gazette* would ignore the emerging story, only revealing partial pieces of information through largely contextless proclamations (see below), the newsletters followed its progress in full throughout its appearance and development. In this way, they are perhaps more illustrative of 'modern' concepts concerning news relation:

¹⁸ BU MS Mostyn 9089, fol. 118r, October 26th 1678.

¹⁹ See Appendix, figs. 1.2 and 1.1.

²⁰ Sutherland, *The Restoration Newspaper*, 13.

Media accounts today claim their authority by claiming fidelity to the facts of a situation or event. Indeed, much criticism of mainstream, commercial journalism is based on the claim that the facts are either distorted or hidden. By contrast, full and accurate accounts are seen as those that enable access to the complete truth.²¹

Thus, this first newsletter to Mostyn concerns the Plot alone, with other domestic or foreign news reports entirely absent from the manuscript. It describes in detail the king's speech regarding 'a designe the Jesuites and others had *against* his Person & Governemnt', the discovery of a 'list ... found in Mr. Langhorne's Chamber' seemingly in accordance with Oates' testimony, and the strange circumstances surrounding the murder of Sir Godfrey ('strangled & dead before he was toucht with a sworde').²²

At over 900 words, the letter far exceeds the average word-count of the 1676 sample selection, continuing through to a second side and sent within a separate envelope, in contrast to the customary single-side newsletter, with the address on the reverse.²³ In order to sufficiently provide an account of the news story, the author evidently increases the standard length of the scribal periodical – as a consequence, the newsletter can then offer a far greater amount of detail. Editorial manipulation of the news structure is significant to a discussion of modernity: where the printed *Gazette* maintained an inflexible structural organisation, dictated by the limitations of its paper and type-size, manuscript news could adapt to administer a larger influx of news content.

Interestingly, this newsletter is also one of the first across the period that offers an authorial reflection on the news story, towards the close of the manuscript: 'thus far this horrid designe has prospered but God preserve me for the future; & I hope this may open the eyes of a great many good and worthy Persons that have been too long misled by their Hellhound Priests.'²⁴ The inclusion departs from what had been (and would generally continue to be) a largely impartial relation of news events – it is, essentially, a value-based concluding sentence relating to the wider consequences of the news story, and without introducing further information. Such an inclusion of course complicates a discussion of

²¹ Hamilton, J. W., 'Remaking Media Participation in Early Modern England', *Journalism: Theory, Practice, Criticism* 4:3 (August 2003), 303.

²² BU MS Mostyn 9089, fol. 118, October 26th 1678.

²³ See p. 41. Also: Appendix, fig. 1.1.

²⁴ BU MS Mostyn 9089, fol. 118v, October 26th 1678.

‘modernity’ in relation to the newsletters. The concepts which make up ‘modern objectivity’ place emphasis on the importance of impartiality and detachment.²⁵ We have seen elsewhere that authorial interjections, or editorial comments on the news were likely to detract from this.²⁶ Though this is infrequently repeated over the remaining newsletters, such comments remain a feature of many of the news forms of the period.²⁷ Maintaining a sense of objectivity might have been the general intent (as noted in the previous chapter), but was not always the case.

Nevertheless, the work of Kathryn Murphy and Anita Traninger has suggested that, in some cases, impartiality could be considered ‘a failure of necessary engagement, particularly in times perceived as national emergencies.’²⁸ In this estimation then, the newsletter’s uncharacteristic interjection could in fact represent an appropriate response to the controversial news – an infrequent, but expected break from its established and seemingly-objective manner of news relation.

The letters that follow the first from October 26th sustain the extent, if not length, of coverage.²⁹ Across the final months of 1678, news reports regarding the development of the Plot continue to characterise the newsletter, to an increasing sense of intensifying political crisis. The arrests detailed in the letter of November 14th no doubt added a certain amount of credibility to the Plot – at the very least, the reports implied legitimate Popish connections to the conspiracy: ‘one Collins a Priest was yesterday seized att wild House & remains in Prison’; ‘Powell a Merchant (whom *the Gazet* mentions) is still missing. hee was last seen in ye Company of Papists & not since heard of.’³⁰ November 19th described an appeal to the king for the raising of a militia so that ‘there maybe a further search for Popish Armies’.³¹ In the same issue, it was reported that a discoverer of the Plot had suggested that ‘most of the chiefe familys of Roman Catholique in England were to be concern’d in the Plot, either to

²⁵ Murphy, K., Traninger, A., (eds.) *The Emergence of Impartiality: Towards a Prehistory of Objectivity* (Leiden: Brill, 2014), p. 10.

²⁶ See previous chapter: ‘The Pursuit of Credibility.’ Such reflections might resemble a modern editorial piece however, better suited to framing the Popish Plot in a manner reflecting the popular reaction.

²⁷ See, for example, the new print news forms emerging in 1679, considered in the following chapter. Comparatively, the newsletters to Mostyn do appear generally more objective in their relation of news events.

²⁸ Murphy, Traninger, *The Emergence of Impartiality*, 11.

²⁹ Even if we remove the unusually large letter of October 26th from the sample examined in this chapter, the average word count for the manuscripts across the period is 471 – or 69% longer than the 1676 newsletter average. See Appendix, figs. 1.1 and 1.2.

³⁰ BU MS Mostyn 9089, fol. 120v, November 14th 1678.

³¹ BU MS Mostyn 9089, fol. 121r, November 19th 1678.

assist with hand or purse' – a list of twenty-four names, many holding titles of regional authority, was included alongside.³²

Manuscript news gave sufficient cause for public anxiety. As time passed, the Popish Plot seemed to grow in significance, rather than diminish as much of the events described through the domestic news of 1676 had after their initial reporting. News, it has been suggested, played no small part in the public's response to this. Sommerville has observed that interest in the Plot could not have been sustained without 'constant, unrelenting efforts to keep it in the forefront of public attention'.³³ Manuscript news piece-meal expanded the story across the months through a quickly-developing and up-dating narrative. The serialisation of the news form subsequently allowed an editorial allusion to future issues, perhaps best demonstrated in the letter of November 25th, regarding the pursuit of further news: 'a few dayes will acquaint us with it, And who are the greatest Criminalls.'³⁴ Clearly, the expectation of future information became an important part of the scribal periodical's coverage. Certainly the methods by which the story of the Plot was developed had the potential to stimulate a sustained interest in the news report, as Sommerville has suggested.

Similar trends are perceptible across the newsletter collections. In terms of a greater focus on domestic news, the letter to the Newdigate family discussing the Plot for the first time (though still maintaining a significant coverage of other news developments), begins an account of the early details of the emerging news story:

You will without doubt heard from all hands of A Plott that hath been discovered against the kings person & expect to have An Account of A thing of that Importance, All I can tell you is That the *Lords* of the Privy Councell Upon the Informations that have been given have caused severall persons to be Apprehended & committed to Newgate, for High-treason In conspiring against the life of the King. ... The Chiefe actors In this horrid designs were according to the Informations to have been certain priests & Jesuits of whom some are apprehended & others not yet found.³⁵

³² Ibid.

³³ Sommerville, *News Revolution*, 90. See the following chapter for more information regarding the Popish Plot and emerging print periodicals.

³⁴ BU MS Mostyn 9089, fol. 122r: November 25th 1678.

³⁵ Bodleian Library, MS Newdigate 294, Lc. 689r, October 3rd 1678.

Like the letters to Mostyn in North Wales, much of the domestic news that follows in subsequent issues focuses on the Plot. The news from October 5th, for example, offers the details of those ‘committed to custody’.³⁶ October 10th introduces the report of the missing Sir Godfrey – a story developed in four of the five letters that follow to the 26th October.³⁷

The Newdigate newsletters sustain the Plot as a significant news story across later 1678 much in the same way as through the Mostyn collection. Though they often maintain a more editorially reserved coverage than the Mostyn newsletters (that is, they tend to report the news without linguistic embellishment, in contrast to the Mostyn newsletters’ ‘massacre’ of Sir Godfrey, or ‘poor flock’ of mislead Papists),³⁸ simply continuing to report on domestic news was enough to make the Plot seem as though it were, in fact, intensifying in terms of political and social consequence – with every new piece of legislation placing increasing amounts of restrictions on Papists, or reports regarding a variety of prosecutions for alleged involvement in the conspiracy, the effects of the Plot continued to develop, and the story remained. In a manner similar to the letters sent to Mostyn in North Wales, the expectation of further information may have helped sustain interest. When discussing the details surrounding the murder of the Justice, for example, the author writes that, though the parts of the story were still unclear, ‘a little time may better inform us.’³⁹

Parliamentary newsletters sent to the Duke of Ormond across the final months of 1678 provide a considerable amount of detail regarding the governmental consideration of the Plot. Through transcribed speeches and summarised resolutions, the letters from November-December record the legislative responses to the alleged conspiracy, in addition to an intriguing narrative of development. The six newsletters from November 18th to December 7th detail numerous addresses to the king ‘for the safety of his Majesty’s Person, and preserving the Peace & Government of the Nation’,⁴⁰ the proposal, agreement, and passing of an appeal to raise the militia for the security of ‘the peace of the kingdom’,⁴¹ and a variety of bills imposing restrictions on Catholic subjects, including ‘the more easy & speedy conviction of

³⁶ BL MS Newdigate 294, Lc. 690r, October 5th 1678.

³⁷ BL MS Newdigate 294, Lc. 693v, October 10th 1678; Lc. 695r, October 19th 1678; Lc. 696v, October 21st 1678; Lc. 697r, October 22nd 1678; Lc. 698r, October 26th 1678.

³⁸ BU MS Mostyn 9089, fol. 118r, October 26th 1678.

³⁹ BL MS Newdigate 294, Lc. 695r, October 19th 1678.

⁴⁰ Bodleian Library MS Carte 72, fol. 416v, November 27th 1678.

⁴¹ Proposal at: BL MS Carte 72, fol. 414r, November 18th 1678. Lord’s decision to allow at: BL MS Carte 72, fol. 416v, November 27th 1678. King’s approval at: BL MS Carte 72, fol. 420r, December 4th 1678.

Popish Recusants and for the more effectual execution of the laws against them.⁴² These letters provide a concise account of the Plot's political consequences, and offer insight into the nature of the governmental response – their documented actions certainly suggest the perceived need for hasty resolution. Though authorial comment is wholly absent from the newsletters, a reader might derive a fairly comprehensive contextual understanding from the nature of the parliamentary recordings alone. Numerous reports of restrictive legislative actions limiting the freedoms of Catholics, for example, no doubt demonstrated the extent of the perceived threat.

Much in the same way as the *Gazette* would through later 1678, these newsletters occasionally include transcriptions of speeches from Parliament. The letter from November 2nd offers the transcript of an address to the king, also printed in the *Gazette* of October 31st-November 4th. Though similar to its printed counterpart, the speech of the newsletter is considerably longer – where the *Gazette* concludes after mentioning a requirement for recusants to submit to the Oaths of Supremacy and Allegiance, the remaining parts of the speech in the newsletter (a further twenty-four lines) describe additional appeals to the king; that a 'more effectual Law be passed for preventing *the said* Popish conspiracy, & for the preservation of Yor Majestie's person, & the Religion & Government'; that 'a strict care that no unknown or suspicious persons may have access near Yor Majestie's Person'; and for the appointment of 'sufficient Guards of the Trayned Bands within the City of London ... Middlesex, Westminster, Southwark, & other parts adjacent as shall be thought meet.'⁴³ Whether due to the limitations of its imposed length or reluctance to discuss potentially controversial news, the *Gazette*'s coverage of the speech is limited. In contrast, the newsletter's relative freedom with regard to structure and content (i.e. no real maximum length, or rigorously-imposed and restricted coverage) allows the author to offer a fuller account of the news. The speech is included on a separate page, with the handwritten note, 'Address to *the King* about papish Recusants. Received 3. November 1678.' Most likely, it was sent alongside the newsletter of November 2nd.⁴⁴

Coverage within the *Gazette*

Each of the scribal periodicals illustrates that there was a considerable amount of domestic information circulating within the manuscript news form. Consequently, when we

⁴² BL MS Carte 72, fol. 420r, December 4th 1678. The bill is also discussed in BL MS Carte 72, fol. 416r and fol. 424r.

⁴³ *London Gazette*, no. 1352, October 31st 1678; BL MS Carte 72, fol. 399r, November 2nd 1678.

⁴⁴ BL MS Carte 72, fol. 399r, November 2nd 1678. The previous letter is at: BL MS Carte 72, fol. 398r.

compare the scribal periodical to the printed paper of the period, the distinction between the two is rarely more defined. Whilst manuscript news invariably responded to the Plot through an ongoing and developing narrative of the domestic situation, the *Gazette* maintained its traditional manner of coverage. Thus, during the single Mostyn letter in which the Plot is first described, more direct information regarding the news story is revealed than is provided through the printed *Gazette* over the entirety of the controversy. The news that characterises the printed periodical of later 1678 is, as previously, almost entirely foreign-sourced.

As it had in 1676, the *Gazette* continued to report primarily on European military engagement – the majority of its news information from September-December concerns the Elector of Brandenburg’s territorial conflict with Sweden, and its effect on surrounding areas.⁴⁵ Other recurring news stories regarded similar affairs – the approach of opposing forces to Maastricht,⁴⁶ the French army’s march on Cologne,⁴⁷ internal military conflict within Hungary – amidst a litany of other reports detailing current and recent continental disputes.⁴⁸

Though appearing only periodically, where domestic news was printed, it covered much the same grounds as the newspaper’s reports of two years previously. Stories typically concerned the arrival of merchant trading vessels, with the majority of domestic news printed as the closing-pieces of the news sheet.⁴⁹ Despite the controversy of the Plot, the view of the official periodical of the government regarding the inclusion of contentious domestic news had clearly not changed. With the story likely raising questions regarding succession and the proposed actions of parliament, editors were almost certainly acutely aware of the continued necessity for restrictions on domestic news to discourage public discussion.

The requirement to publish the official notices and proclamations of the government must, therefore, have presented a particularly difficult problem. Parliament responded to the Plot through a series of proclamations, often outlining newly-imposed legislative restrictions or orders. Though not addressing the story directly in the way that manuscript news had, the inclusion at least brought the issue to print news – eight of the nine issues published between October 24th and November 21st feature at the beginning of the news sheet a proclamation

⁴⁵ See, for example: *London Gazette*, no. 1344, October 3rd 1678. Much of what follows in subsequent issues continues to provide accounts from various locations of the military proceedings.

⁴⁶ *London Gazette*, no. 1345, October 7th 1678. The story is continued through the issues that follow.

⁴⁷ *London Gazette*, no. 1347, October 14th 1678.

⁴⁸ *London Gazette*, no. 1350, October 24th 1678.

⁴⁹ See issue 1350, for example. As suggested in the previous chapter, the inclusion of any domestic news is likely the result of a lack in sufficient continental development to fill the issue, hence its inconsistent appearance from issue to issue.

discussing some new anti-papal measure or parliamentary order.⁵⁰ The *Gazette* of October 31st, for example, introduces ‘the following Proclamation to be published’:

*This His Royal Proclamation straitly Charge and Command all Persons being Popish Recusants ... that they do on or before the Seventh day of November next ensuing (under pain of His Majesties highest Displeasure, and of the Severest Execution of the laws against them) depart and retire themselves and their families from His Majesties Royal Palaces of Whitehall, Somerset House, and St. James, the Cities of London and Westminster, and from all other Places within Ten miles distance of the same.*⁵¹

Similar proclamations appear in the issues that follow: on November 11th, ‘*Popish Recusants*’ are ordered to ‘*repair to their respective Places of Abode... and do not at any time thereafter remove or pass above Five Miles from thence*’, and on the 18th, that naval officers ‘*take special Care, and use their utmost Diligence, for the Apprehending of all Popish Priests*’.⁵²

Though clearly responding to the Plot, these proclamations offered little detail regarding its development or unravelling – rather, they provided only limited information concerning the political reaction. If the paper’s goal was to discourage speculation, then these official parliamentary notices were worse than saying nothing at all: ‘The information which the government did decide to issue that winter was just sufficient to create ambiguity without resolving it, and its actions partook of the kind of panic it was its duty to discourage.’⁵³ With talk of the Plot rife, and the public ‘gripped by the kind of panic not seen since 1666’, the *Gazette*’s lack of direct coverage seemed bizarrely at odds with reality:⁵⁴

The paper’s obvious reluctance [to discuss the Plot] indicated to the public that something was wrong at the top. After Parliament was dissolved, news of the plot

⁵⁰ Issues 1350 to 1358, excluding 1356.

⁵¹ *London Gazette*, no. 1352, October 31st 1678.

⁵² *London Gazette*, no. 1355, November 11th 1678; *London Gazette*, no. 1357, November 18th 1678.

⁵³ Kenyon, *The Popish Plot*, 238.

⁵⁴ *Ibid*, 78.

was weirdly missing from the *Gazette*... The paper did not have to carry comment in order to encourage speculation. Indeed, the less comment, the greater the speculation.⁵⁵

Proclamations, often included without context or introduction, certainly seemed to offer the opportunity for much public speculation to arise.

We might consider the proclamation printed in the *Gazette* of November 4th to explore this further. The notice, ‘by the kings most Excellent Majesty’, offered a reward to those who could ‘*make Discovery of any Officer or Soldier of His Majesties Horse or Foot-guards, Who, having formerly taken the Oaths of Allegiance and Supremacy ... Hath since been Perverted, or hereafter shall be perverted to the Romish Religion*’.⁵⁶ Through proclamation alone, the *Gazette* had stated that there had been ‘*an Horrible Design against [the king’s] Sacred Life*’ only once, during the issue from October 24th – subsequent proclamations offered very little further detail regarding the particulars of the Plot.⁵⁷ Without the addition of context, what significance might a reader have interpreted from the proclamation of November 4th? Ambiguity engendered speculation; a reader could be forgiven for thinking the little news information the *Gazette* provided was indicative of a larger and widespread problem.

Indeed, though reluctant to provoke discussion, through its printed proclamations the *Gazette* may well have done more to keep the story of the Plot alive and increasing in terms of significance than had it simply reported on its developments as part of its normal news-coverage. ‘Proclamations or other official announcements,’ Sommerville writes, seemed designed ‘for no other purpose than to raise questions in the public mind ... And of course, they were precisely for this purpose.’⁵⁸ With the desire to engage with the Plot and ideas of succession contested between Whig and Tory political factions within Parliament (to be discussed in greater detail during the following chapter), the opposition had discovered a way to discuss the Plot on a public-wide scale: ‘the *Gazette* could not refuse to print official proclamations, and [Whig sympathisers] had found a way of forcing the government to issue

⁵⁵ Sommerville, *The News Revolution*, 91.

⁵⁶ *London Gazette*, no. 1353, November 4th 1678.

⁵⁷ *London Gazette*, no. 1350, October 24th 1678.

⁵⁸ Sommerville, *News Revolution*, 91.

them.⁵⁹ With subsequent proclamations illustrating the details of discovering Catholic conspirators, it is easy to see how the *Gazette* may have contributed to popular anxiety: ‘*pray that God will bring to light more and more all secret Machinations against His Majesty and the whole Kingdom*’; ‘*many Popish Recusants, who are notoriously known... have notwithstanding, by the connivance or negligence of those by whom they ought to have been Prosecuted, escaped Conviction*’; ‘[searches ordered] *through all Houses within their respective Parishes, Hamlets and Villages*’.⁶⁰ Such notices surely encouraged the belief that conspiracies were rife, and that the Papists could be anywhere amongst the people.

Though there lacked a coherent print account, an implied narrative could nevertheless arise through a reader’s interpretation of the ‘official notices’. Aimed as they were at ‘*Popish Recusants*’, the proclamations printed in the *Gazette* at least inadvertently seemed to confirm the Catholic conspiracy. Without exploring the grounds for imposed orders, however, the severity of the proclamations continued to suggest an imminent danger: steps were being taken to protect the monarch and religion, and readers, Kenyon writes, might easily think ‘first, that it was entirely proved, and second, that it was much more serious than it was.’⁶¹ Evidently, a reader could still interpret significant information, regardless of the ambiguity of the *Gazette*’s printed articles. Certainly, the paper’s unwillingness to report on the contentious news story did not damage reader enthusiasm – Sommerville has observed that sales ‘climbed to a new high of seven thousand’ during this time.⁶² Sustained interest for the story seemed to drive the demand for any news, regardless of the *Gazette*’s irregular coverage.

Stylistic Changes and Continuities: Newsletters and the Construction of ‘the Present’.

Changes in the structure and style of the news forms were forced by a number of different factors – particularly, the speed with which new information arose, and its relative uncertainty during the developing crisis. Despite the increased amount of circulating news information, difficulties with the acquisition of legitimate or confirmed news remained a part of the printed and scribal periodical’s content. With the Popish Plot having stimulated an increased social dissemination and discussion of news by word of mouth, however, proving

⁵⁹ Sommerville, *News Revolution*, 91. The development of this debate and its impact on print news is discussed in greater detail during the following chapter.

⁶⁰ October 29th, November 11th, November 18th.

⁶¹ Kenyon, *The Popish Plot*, 238.

⁶² Sommerville, *News Revolution*, 90-91. Also see: Childs, J., ‘The Sales of Government Gazettes during the Exclusion Crisis, 1678-1681’, *The English Historical Review* 102:402 (Jan., 1987), 103-106. Childs put the average sale per issue between September 9th to December 5th, 1678, at 6,973 (104).

the accuracy of a report during this period was likely considerably more complex than it was in 1676. As rumour circulated through the public, the potential for inaccurate information was largely increased. Coffee-house talk turned the Plot into the first ‘media-driven investigation’: ‘each political move that was made, and some that were not, were revealed, debated, celebrated and vilified in the coffee houses.’⁶³ As the Plot became an issue of national importance, rumour spread from London to the provinces.⁶⁴

In the newsletters to Mostyn, unverified information is treated with some caution. Where reports are uncertain, the author is careful to acknowledge it: ‘Last sunday mr. oates made some discovery as if her *majesttie* knew of some part of the Plott. ... But of this wee must report a uncertain account, before wee allow any credit to such Reports.’⁶⁵ Comparable practices appear in the Newdigate letters, where unverified stories are introduced with the implication of rumour as the context, with the purpose of indicating to the reader both the dubious authenticity, and the need for a critical approach to the news story: ‘Wee have no more of the taking of Conyers ... & therefore shall put this to the Rest of the stories that have past so briefly about town’; ‘The towne is full of discourse about the absence of Sir Edmund Berry Godfrey.’⁶⁶

Where reports remain unconfirmed, introductory phrases are included before the news, much in the same manner as the periodicals of 1676. In the Mostyn newsletters, numerous reports begin with openings such as ‘it is so far true that ...’, and ‘it does appear ...’⁶⁷ These phrases were used to indicate that the report that followed was not yet confirmed – they allow for subsequent change. Though the Newdigate newsletters occasionally do the same (‘it is believed ...’, for example),⁶⁸ the periodical most frequently makes use of a more established technique also utilised by the printed *Gazette*. With information from the continent still providing much of the news, manuscripts sent to the Newdigate family often introduce foreign news information with ‘Our letters from the parts give an account of...’, or a number of location-variations on ‘The Brussels letters tell us...’⁶⁹ Such phrases, Barbara Shapiro has explained, had become established news standards for introducing reports: news

⁶³ Sommerville, *News Revolution*, 88; Pincus, ‘‘Coffee Politicians Does Create’’, 822.

⁶⁴ Spurr, *England in the 1670s*, 262.

⁶⁵ BU MS Mostyn 9089, fol. 122r, November 25th 1678.

⁶⁶ BL MS Newdigate 294, Lc. 695r, October 19th 1678.

⁶⁷ BU MS Mostyn 9089, fol. 118v, October 26th 1678.

⁶⁸ BL MS Newdigate 294, Lc. 696v, October 21st 1678.

⁶⁹ BL MS Newdigate 294, Lc. 695r, October 19th 1678; Lc. 700r, November 2nd 1678. Further news from France, Jamaica, Genoa, Germany, Marseilles, and Hamburg, among many other locations, are introduced in the same manner across the Newdigate newsletters.

stories, she writes, ‘were presented as coming from reliable sources... there was frequent emphasis on the source and credibility of reported “matters of fact.”’⁷⁰

For the most part, the news of each of the manuscript periodicals between September-December avoids rumour, instead referring to information from sources seemingly more credible, or less prone to questions of accuracy. Consequently, much of the news reported appears as statement of fact, like so: ‘the King in his speech to the Houses on Monday takes notice of a designe the Jesuites and others had *against* his Person & Government’; ‘A Proclamation is Issued out for encouraging all Papists to take *the* Oaths of Alleginace & Supremacy in the Country’.⁷¹ Both the Newdigate newsletters and those sent to the Duke of Ormond similarly avoid speculative or unverified claims – the latter, in particular, benefits in terms of credibility due to its parliamentary connections. Presented often as a series of concisely-summarised resolutions, the scribal periodical leaves little room for conjecture: ‘Resolv’d That an humble Address bee presented to his Majesty’; ‘A Bill for the better discovery & conviction of Popish Recusants & for the more effectual execution of the Laws *against* them was read a 2d time & Committed.’⁷²

The pursuit of credible information came with its own problems, however. Twice from October to November, the author of the newsletters to Mostyn is forced to acknowledge failure to obtain the latest news: ‘The Houses sit late this night, so *that* I could not recover the news of this day’; ‘The 2 Houses are now sitting past 8 at night, so that I am dissappointed of this dayes news’.⁷³ With the narrative of the Plot developing quickly, it seems that there was a choice to be made between the inclusion of authenticated reports and the swift updating of information. Despite widespread talk of the Plot, authors continued to encounter difficulties in securing a steady flow of credible developing news.

It is here that we might begin to consider manuscript news’ role in the construction of the ‘present’, as identified by Daniel Woolf.⁷⁴ Critical analysis of the perception of the ‘present’ has considered this period in relation to its origins, and to modernity. Reinhart Koselleck, writing of the period 1500-1800, suggests that ‘in these centuries there occurs a temporalisation of history, at the end of which there is the peculiar form of acceleration

⁷⁰ Shapiro, *A Culture of Fact*, 96.

⁷¹ BU MS Mostyn 9089, fol. 118r, October 26th, 1678; fol. 121r, November 19th 1678.

⁷² BL MS Carte 72, fol. 416, November 27th 1678; fol. 420, December 4th 1678.

⁷³ BU MS Mostyn 9089, fol. 121r, November 19th 1678; fol. 122r, November 25th 1678.

⁷⁴ Woolf, ‘News, history, and the construction of the present’ in early modern England’. See also: Claydon, ‘Daily News and the Construction of Time.’ Claydon looks primarily at the later-seventeenth and early-eighteenth century, post 1695.

which characterises modernity.⁷⁵ Mark Turner, writing of the nineteenth century, has stated specifically that serialised periodicals played an important role in establishing these notions of time, providing, he argues, ‘the rhythm of modernity.’⁷⁶

With its rapidly updating narrative, the manuscript news of the later 1670s began to challenge the contemporary perception of the ‘present’ that Woolf has described:

[People] of all classes in the Middle Age and in the sixteenth century inhabited a remembered past... and an expected future. In contrast to us, they conceived of the present as an instant rather than a duration, through most of the period recognising no “present” beyond that instant.⁷⁷

News readers, Woolf writes, received information ‘slowly, sporadically, and sparsely, unless they were directly caught up in the events by proximity.’⁷⁸ The effect was to create a sense of the present considerably different to our modern understanding – by the time the recipient of a periodical had read a news story, the event reported ‘*already belonged to the past.*’⁷⁹

Analysis of the newsletters of the Popish Plot seems to illustrate a new relationship between news media and the perception of time. Manuscript news reacted directly to an uncertain crisis, offering regular narrative developments in a manner that more closely resembles Woolf’s modern construction of the present, where the news narrative is formed and disseminated at a speed sufficient to cause a concurrent and extensive public response – ultimately, through the creation of ‘current events’. The Popish Plot represented a unique opportunity for the ‘construction of the present’ via manuscript news – with new details emerging periodically over the final months of 1678, the news story was very much a prolonged ‘current event’; it neither belonged to the past nor future, but distinctly to the present.

Tony Claydon has explored this idea more recently, with regard to news post-1695. Discussing the 1690s press, he considers the emergence of reports that developed over days

⁷⁵ Koselleck, R., *Futures Past: On the Semantics of Historical Time* (Chichester: Columbia University Press, 2004), p. 11.

⁷⁶ Turner, M., ‘Periodical Time in the Nineteenth Century’, *Media History* 8:2 (2002), 185.

⁷⁷ Woolf, ‘News, history, and the construction of the present’, 82.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 84. Woolf’s italics.

or weeks as ‘central to a progressive and fluidly developing sense of time.’⁸⁰ The news of the manuscript periodical during this period certainly seems to fit the idea – as the Popish Plot remained a persistent feature of the manuscript through the final months of 1678, new details continued to emerge periodically. After the initial letter, news of the Popish Plot arrived to Mostyn with regularity. Whilst the newsletters of 1676 had included numerous news reports from both domestic and foreign locations with few ongoing stories from letter to letter, the newsletters from 1678 are almost entirely domestic, include more information, and concern the development of the Popish Plot more or less alone.⁸¹ Arrests were reported on November 14th; conspirators revealed on the 19th; rumours of the queen’s involvement on the 25th; the mystery surrounding the death of Sir Godfrey throughout. In the Newdigate newsletters, the absence of the Justice of the Peace was reported initially in the letter of October 10th; updated first with the rumours of his whereabouts on October 19th, and second with the discovery of his death on October 21st. Further details regarding an inquiry into his murder, and the mystery of his demise, were offered in the letters from October 22nd and 26th.⁸² In letters rarely more than a few days apart, the news of the Plot was developed over the weeks that followed its emergence.

In contrast, the printed *Gazette* featured the story of Edmundberry Godfrey only via proclamation in the issue dated October 17th – and there, with none of the particulars of the newsletter.⁸³ When the story did appear again (during the proclamation of October 24th), it was only to put forward a reward to those who might ‘*Discover the Manner and Circumstances of the Murther*’.⁸⁴ Few further details were offered, so that there is little comparable sense of development in the printed news form. Consequently, the print periodical at this time seems to have little part in the habituation of readers to changing narratives and developments (and thus, that ‘reality might not be exactly as it had first seemed’) that Claydon has described.⁸⁵

The *Gazette*’s foreign news held a similarly static role. Woolf’s description of sixteenth-century news, where inconsistent reports ‘did not much disrupt the gentle trickle of time through daily, weekly and yearly routines’, is more easily applicable to the *Gazette* of the 1670s than any other news form of the period.⁸⁶ Given the lack in significant change in

⁸⁰ Claydon, ‘Daily News and the Construction of Time’, 61.

⁸¹ See Appendix, fig. 1.2.

⁸² BL MS Newdigate 294, Lc. 693v; Lc. 695r; Lc. 696v; Lc. 697r; Lc. 698r.

⁸³ *London Gazette*, no. 1348, October 17th 1678.

⁸⁴ *London Gazette*, no. 1350, October 24th 1678.

⁸⁵ Claydon, T., ‘Daily News and the Construction of Time’, 63.

⁸⁶ Woolf, ‘News, history, and the construction of the present’, 87.

terms of content, the news in the *Gazette* faced very much the same acquisition problems as it had previously. With most information coming from the continent, updates were intermittent, causing pauses in ongoing news stories. During the issue from October 31st, for example, the news from Hamburg reported that there was ‘nothing new since our last’, instead reiterating the details of the previous update.⁸⁷ The sense of uncertainty and of a rapidly-developing narrative discernible in manuscript news is almost entirely absent from print, which tends to deal mostly in matters of fact (such as the movements and numbers of military forces, as described above).

Given the distance that much of the continental print news was travelling prior to publication, much of the news reported was subject to a considerable delay, putting a significant portion of the *Gazette*’s coverage regularly in the realm of ‘past events’. Woolf uses the example of an earthquake that struck Lima, Peru, on the 20th October 1687, taking ‘the whole winter’ before appearing in the *London Gazette* on the 24th May, 1688.⁸⁸ Many similar examples (albeit often to a lesser extent than the several month delay) are evident across the later months of 1678 – in the issue from October 10th, for example, we see a twelve-day delay in the news reporting the movement of war-ships ‘from *Palermo* to *Barcelona*’; the news from Vienna of October 7th regarding a new ‘Treaty of Commerce’ is reported in the *Gazette* two weeks after the event.⁸⁹ By ignoring the domestic uncertainty, the *Gazette* rarely partakes in the modern construction of the present that we might perceive within the coverage of the manuscript periodical.⁹⁰

From October-December 1678, the beginnings of a significant phase in the development of news are discernible. When we compare the manuscript and print news of the Popish Plot prior to the lapse of licensing, the specific distinctions between the two are increasingly perceptible. Where print held a niche for foreign news, manuscript was undoubtedly the place to turn for domestic – especially during a time where the need to discourage public participation in political discourse reinforced limitations in circulating print information. Perhaps more significantly, the ability and apparent willingness of manuscript

⁸⁷ *London Gazette*, no. 1352, October 31st 1678.

⁸⁸ Woolf, ‘News, history, and the construction of the present’, 86.

⁸⁹ *London Gazette*, no. 1346, October 10th 1678; *London Gazette*, no. 1349, October 21st 1678. Similar delays, to a greater and lesser extent, are present throughout the *Gazette* of later 1678 and beyond.

⁹⁰ If a ‘present’ did arise in the *Gazette* of this period, it was one significantly different to the modern understanding. Claydon explores the idea that early-eighteenth century print news ‘fragmented the present into a series of geographically separated constructions of contemporary time’, which seems the most fitting for the *Gazette* of the later seventeenth century too – see: Claydon, T., ‘Daily News and the Construction of Time’, 63.

news to adapt in order to suitably respond to the perceived importance of an emerging story demonstrates a news form far more ‘modern’ than the technologically more advanced printed *Gazette*. As has been suggested, a sustained focus on the news of the alleged conspiracy likely helped keep the story in the public’s eye – though affected by the Plot, news clearly had its own effect on the popular response.

It is only with the manuscript news of the period that we begin to see ‘the social and psychological experience of news’ that Woolf has described first acquire something like its modern form.⁹¹ With a focus on development and domesticity, manuscript had a role in the construction of the present unmatched by its printed counterpart. Nevertheless, as the news forms became more distinct in terms of domestic/foreign focus, it likely became all the more necessary for a reader to form a composite of news from both the print and manuscript periodical. With manuscript news more clearly defining itself through a domestic coverage, and print noticeably limited to foreign, there still remained no single source from which a reader could reliably acquire a full understanding of foreign and domestic events. As we begin to consider the news cultures created by the Popish Plot over the following chapters, this may help explain the popularity of the coffee-house, where print and scribal news could be discussed alongside each other, without the expenditure of purchasing both.

Though still faced with problems regarding legitimacy and acquisition, manuscript and print news continued to utilise stylistic methods of emphasising authenticity. As the ‘new’ news of the Popish Plot developed shortly after, the need to consistently prove legitimacy became ever more pressing.

Despite its reluctance to discuss the contentious news of the day, a significant amount of information could still be interpreted from the news of the *Gazette*, albeit inadvertently. Partisan politics had played its part in ensuring the inclusion of the printed proclamations – the debate that developed between Whig and Tory factions was one that continued into the print news that emerged in the following year. When licensing lapsed in 1679, the *Gazette*’s structure and style began to be emulated through a number of published periodicals – some of which sustained a coverage that was part-newsletter, part-*Gazette* in terms of content. Alongside the production of a multitude of pamphlets, the Popish Plot stimulated a significant growth and demand for the periodical – its effect on the industry, as we shall see in the following chapter, marked a noteworthy stage in the development of news.

⁹¹ Woolf, ‘News, history, and the construction of the present’, 82-83.

Chapter 3: The New Media of the Popish Plot

The lapse of the Licensing Act in early 1679, during the period directly following the emergence of the Popish Plot, could not have come at a more opportune time for the development of news. As domestic events continued to develop in terms of social significance and political import, print-news found comparatively freer (though not actually *permitted*) to address the controversy, albeit still with no small amount of limitations and potential for prosecution. Though an inadvertent lapse, Sommerville has suggested that ‘the excited state of public opinion’ made it increasingly difficult even to discuss a possible reinstatement of the legislation.¹ Geoff Kemp, writing in *Censorship and the Press*, suggests a rather more politically-motivated reason for the lack of a replacement bill during the Popish Plot and ensuing crisis years, where the press:

articulated and organised division, and both this and the resulting backlash of suppression had longer-term ramifications for censorship: habituating the public to partisan debate, identifying liberty of the press as a (Whig) party cause, and, conversely, suggesting that censorship could be a liability for any party out of power.²

Over the months that followed, press output increased substantially. ‘The press’, Raymond has observed, was ‘driven into frenzied production once again’.³ By 1680, over two-thousand titles were produced – a publishing figure only previously exceeded at the Restoration in 1660, and during the 1640s.⁴

Where domestic news had appeared in print only through the briefest and most irregular asides of the occasional *Gazette*, a multitude of domestically-focussed print periodicals now arose – by July 1679, Benjamin Harris’s twice-weekly *Domestick Intelligence* (from July 7th), the *English Intelligencer* (from July 21st), and the short-lived

¹ Sommerville, *The News Revolution*, 89. Harold Weber notes that the Second Exclusion Parliament of 1680 attempted to revive the act, but its efforts ‘met with no success’ – Weber, H., *Paper Bullets: Print and Kingship under Charles II* (Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky, 1996), p. 172.

² Kemp, *Censorship and the Press*, xvi. Philip Hamburger has argued that the delayed re-enactment of licensing was a result of exclusionist forces in the House of Commons, and the desire to influence public opinion through print: Hamburger, P., ‘The Development of the Law of Seditious Libel and the Control of the Press’, *Stanford Law Journal*, 37 (1984–5), 682–683.

³ Raymond, *Pamphlets and Pamphleteering*, 331.

⁴ Kemp, *Censorship and the Press*, xiv; see also, Raymond, *Pamphlets and Pamphleteering*, 164.

Faithful Mercury (from July 22nd), all appeared on a regular basis. Given the contrast to less than a year previously, when a single newspaper held the monopoly on print periodical news of all kinds, it is perhaps no wonder that critical attention regarding news in the later seventeenth century has ‘unduly overshadowed’ the significance of other forms.⁵ The period was undoubtedly important for the development of the printed periodical – if only for showing that a clear and considerable demand for a variety of print news existed – and yet, given its relatively quick suppression and political control (even with licensing no longer providing the kind of censorship publishers had come to expect), perhaps not as significant as we might initially assume.

This chapter will consider the former part of this argument first – that is, the emergence of the news forms and their specific style and structures (in addition to the non-periodical print news publications); subsequent chapters will examine the latter – the response stimulated by the ‘new’ news media, and the longer-term effects of the unlicensed period through the so-called ‘Tory Reaction’. We will examine in detail the variety of print periodicals that arose over the months following the lapse of the Licensing Act, in addition to those news forms that had already re-emerged by later 1678 in response to the domestic controversy. In particular, the news-pamphlet will be introduced as an important vehicle for the dissemination of politically-motivated news information, where single events were typically discussed at length in order to illustrate political and social implication (see ‘Pamphlets and the Plot’ below). As such, the chapter considers a time-frame that ranges from October 1678-December 1679, with a focus on ‘new’ news titles.

We will begin by considering the printed news pamphlets that circulated alongside the *London Gazette* and manuscript newsletters during the latter half of 1678, following the Popish Plot’s emergence and prior to the lapse of licensing.

The Pamphlet News Sheet

Offering a concise definition of a pamphlet is complex. Unlike most other print-news forms through the 1670s and beyond, pamphlets varied considerably in terms of length, structure, content, size, and dissemination. This was largely due to printing methods, where the physical attributes of a publication were determined by the particular treatment of the paper on which it was printed – that is, the number of times the paper had been folded to form

⁵ Knights, *Politics and Opinion*, 174.

a quarto (twice), or octavo (thrice). A pamphlet could, therefore, consist of between one and sixteen, or eight and ninety-six, pages.⁶

Its manner of relation was similarly varied. Characteristically used for political purposes, the content of each pamphlet differed considerably depending on the author's intentions. Where an account could appear seemingly impartial in one pamphlet, a second might build on a long-established narrative of prejudice and vitriol to counter the claims of the first – as, indeed, we shall see occurring through the pamphletary-development of the Plot.⁷ With variety as one of the few factors paradoxically *connecting* pamphlets then, by what method might we seek to group them?

There are in fact a number of shared attributes. In terms of the news product itself, pamphlets were rarely bound (unlike lengthier publications), most often appearing stitched:

Stitching was intrinsic to their simple and convenient production; every reader was familiar with its appearance. ... By the later seventeenth century, in some contexts, “stitched book” was used synonymously with “pamphlet”.⁸

Much as the half-sheet printed on two sides characterised the published periodical, the ‘stitched book’ came to typify the pamphlet. In terms of genre, pamphlets most frequently represented a one-off literary reaction to a current event, conveying information from a chosen political perspective. This definition – which helps explain the pattern of pamphletary development and emergence – will characterise our approach to analysis of the form throughout the chapter.

Through the seventeenth century, pamphletary news had emerged most characteristically in times of crisis. During the early 1640s, for example, amidst the political turmoil eventually leading to the English Civil War, the form had seen a rapid increase in numbers. Raymond, writing of 1641, observes that ‘pamphlets appeared by the dozen, as

⁶ Raymond, *Pamphlets and Pamphleteering*, 5. *A Brief Narrative of the Several Popish Treasons and Cruelties Against the Protestants in England, France, and Ireland Giving a Full Account of the Popish Plot* (1678), for example, stood at 6 pages, whilst the similarly-themed and timed *An Account of the Several Plots, Conspiracies, and Hellish Attempts of the Bloody-minded Papists* (1679), stretched to 48.

⁷ *A True and Perfect Narrative of the Late Terrible and Bloody Murther of Sr. Edmondberry Godfrey* (1678), for example, claimed to offer ‘a true and impartial account’ regarding the murder of the Justice of the Peace, whilst *The Dreadful Apparition; or, the Pope Haunted with Ghosts, in Relation to Sir Edmundbury-Godfrey’s Murther* (1680) was unmistakably clear about whom it considered responsible. See below for further information.

⁸ Raymond, *Pamphlets and Pamphleteering*, 81.

delays in printing news decreased, and the spin on the news, its manipulation in order to encourage a particular interpretation or response, increased.’⁹ Most notably, the ‘Grand Remonstrance’ (1641), controversially ordered to print by Parliament, detailed the various recent transgressions of Charles I and their attempts to secure the safety of the realm against:

the great dangers and feares, the pressing miseries and calamities, the various distempers and disorders, which had not only assaulted, but even overwhelmed and extinguisht the liberty, peace, and prosperity of this Kingdom ... and undermined the foundation and strength of his own Royall Throne.¹⁰

With Parliament palpably appealing to public opinion through the pamphletary mode (indicating, perhaps, the perceived effectiveness of the form), the king had little choice but to reply via the same medium – *His Majesties Declaration* (1641) emerged shortly after, contesting the claims of the ‘remonstrance’, whilst taking particular care to appear as though the reply was a courtesy, rather than necessity or defence:

Although We do not believe that Our House of Commons intended, by their Remonstrance of the State of the Kingdome, to put Us to any Apology, either for Our past or present Actions ... We shall not think it below Our Kingly dignity to descend to any particular which may compose and settle the affections of Our meanest Subjects.¹¹

Over the subsequent months, a series of response and answer pamphlets between the privy council of Charles I and Parliament followed.

Through the ensuing civil war years and interregnum, the pamphlet continued to be utilised heavily on both sides of the conflict, intensifying particularly by the later 1650s when

⁹ Raymond, *Pamphlets and Pamphleteering*, 206, 202.

¹⁰ *A remonstrance of the state of the kingdome of England* (1641), p. 3.

¹¹ *His Majesties declaration to all his loving subjects* (1641), p. 1.

it became increasingly clear that the Protectorate had begun to fail.¹² Publications drawing attention to the usurpation of Charles I by Cromwell, or debating the authority of varying methods of sovereignty, stood in stark contrast to those that emerged arguing for the legitimacy of oligarchic government. With the majority of pamphlets supporting the return of monarchical rule, publications such as *The Devils Cabinet-Councell* (1660) offered new histories detailing Cromwell's 'unlawful' acquisition of power, commenting on his 'endeavours to make himself famous and popular' through the manipulation of news: 'the News books are taught to speak no language but *Cromwell* and his party.'¹³ Other pamphlets (opportunistic, by their very nature) seized the chance to publish at a time when the risk of retribution was diminished. *A Copie of Quaeries* (1659) began by informing its reader that the pamphlet's 'Quaeries' had been intended for publication two years earlier in 1657, but postponed to a comparatively safer time: '*the time then being so malevolent and the chiefe subject of them, being in his full power and Tyrannie, that neither the Author nor Printer durst publish them.*'¹⁴ Much in the same way as I have discussed elsewhere with regard to other news forms, the pamphlet of the 1640s-1650s and beyond owed much of its influence to its orality: 'Most of the newspapers of this period, and the 20,000 or so pamphlets, were designed for performance.'¹⁵ Their range thus extended far beyond the limitations of reader-literacy.

By the early 1660s, pamphlet-publication represented an effective way to disseminate news of the newly-restored monarchy with heavily pro-royalist leanings. Accounts celebrated the return of royal authority, where the people had awaited Charles II's arrival in London with 'a flame of Love and Duty', and with 'acclamations ... loud, and universal.'¹⁶ Other pamphlets (often through song set to various tunes) described with adulation the king's march from Dover, or the regional celebrations that took place in support of the king's return.¹⁷ Even the newly-established government had a part in utilising the form. Charles II ('brought

¹² A number of critical works have been produced which consider these pamphlets in some detail. See, for example, Raymond, *Pamphlets and Pamphleteering*, 202-275; Skerpan, E., *The Rhetoric of Politics in the English Revolution, 1642-1660* (Columbia and London: University of Missouri Press, 1992); Holstun, J., *Pamphlet Wars: Prose in the English Revolution* (London: Frank Cass & Co. Ltd., 1992).

¹³ *The devils cabinet-councell. Discovered or the mistery and iniquity of the good old cause. Laying open all the plots and contrivances of O. Cromwell, and the Long Parliament, in order to the taking avay the life of his late Sacred Maiesty of blessed memory* (1660).

¹⁴ *A copie of quaeries, or A comment upon the life, and actions of the grand tyrant and his complices* (1659).

¹⁵ Scott, *England's Troubles*, 231.

¹⁶ *England's Gratulation on the Landing of Charles the Second, by the Grace of God Kiug [sic] of England, Scotland, France, and Ireland, at Dover* (1660).

¹⁷ For example: *The Glory of these Nations, or, King and Peoples Happinesse, being a brief Relation of King Charles's Royall Progresse from Dover to London* (1660); *Gloucester's Triumph at the Solemn Proclamation of King Charles the Second; on Tuesday the 15th. Day of May 1660* (1660).

to the throne with a noisy propaganda campaign’, according to Raymond) found little cause to suppress the print trade initially – it was not until 1662 that legislation appeared for the prevention of seditious or unlicensed books and pamphlets.¹⁸ 1660-1663 witnessed the largest increase in terms of press output for almost two decades – an increase that eventually coincided with a re-emerging realisation of an unregulated press’s potential for widely-disseminated subversion.¹⁹ The government-perception of the pamphlet’s extent of influence during this time is perhaps no better summarised than during an issue of Sir Roger L’Estrange’s *Intelligencer* from 1663:

’tis none of the worst ways of *Address to the Genius*, and
Humour of the Common People; whose *Affections* are much
more capable of being *tuned*, and *wrought upon*, by
convenient *Hints*, and *Touches*, in the *Shape*, and *Ayre* of a
Pamphlet, then by the *strongest Reasons*, and *best Notions*
imaginable, under any *other*, and more *sober Form*
whatsoever.²⁰

With a renewed focus on licensing and state-controlled censorship, annual press output subsequently dropped rapidly to its lowest point since the later 1630s.²¹ It was not until the Popish Plot of 1678 and lapse of licensing in 1679 that press output once again rose to comparable levels.

Pamphlets and the Plot

It has been suggested that the pamphlet of the Popish Plot era was instrumental in shaping not only its narrative, but the nature of the public response.²² In form, the pamphlet of the later 1670s was not considerably different to any of its earlier incarnations – we might instead consider their arrival as the re-emergence of reactive literary news media during a particular set of circumstances. Like those of the 1640s, publications continued to differ considerably in terms of length and style – *The Horrid Popish Plot Happily Discover’d* (1678), for example, took up the space of only a single broadside, whilst *A Letter Written*

¹⁸ Raymond, *Pamphlets and Pamphleteering*, 324.

¹⁹ *Ibid*, 164, 323.

²⁰ *The Intelligencer*, no. 1, August 31st 1683.

²¹ Raymond, *Pamphlets and Pamphleteering*, 164.

²² *Ibid*, 323. Mark Knights also considers the effect the form had on public opinion during this time in *Politics and Opinion* (156 onwards).

upon the Discovery of the Late Plot (1678) appeared in print at forty-five pages.²³ Even prior to the lapse of licensing, the pamphlets that emerged during later 1678 continued to vary in terms of content from publication to publication.

While the *Gazette* through September to November supplied information regarding the Plot only through the vague and incomplete narrative proclamations inadvertently offered, a number of printed pamphlets emerged presenting, by comparison, a far greater amount of current information, albeit often through a politically-motivated lens. The latter pamphlet noted above, for instance, thanked an imagined recipient for ‘the News your last brought me, of the discovery of that horrid Plot’, before connecting it to a wider crisis, where feigned Catholic loyalty to the monarch had caused the Government to ‘put confidence in them, that so they might more secretly lay their designs’.²⁴ Catholics, it was suggested, must either ‘forsake their Church, or concur in the most mischievous Designs’.²⁵

Other pamphlets produced during the same period, prior to the lapse of licensing, employed similar methods to discuss the recent news. *A Brief Narrative of the Several Popish Treasons and Cruelties Against the Protestants in England, France, and Ireland* (1678) likewise connected the Plot to a tradition of Catholic conspiracy, but offered a more detailed reporting, with a sense of steadily-intensifying crisis. The Plot, it stated, ‘was like to have proved more Bloody and Barbarous than any that went before it, being against the Life of our Lord the King and all his good protestant Subjects, the Subversion of the Government, destruction of our Religion, &c.’²⁶ Referencing in some detail one of the more contentious Plot-related stories, the author recounted and considered the murder of Sir Edmundberry Godfrey, who ‘meerly for thus doing his duty, others of the Tribe were so devilishly enraged against him, that they contrived his death.’²⁷

A Brief Narrative provides an account of the murder in a level of detail that far surpasses even the manuscript newsletters. The murderers, the author writes

wheadled in Sir *Edmund-bury* into an Eminent House in
the *Strand*, under pretence of bringing him to some that

²³ *The Horrid Popish Plot Happily Discover'd, or, The English Protestants Remembrance* (1678); Burnet, G., *A letter written upon the discovery of the late plot* (1678).

²⁴ Burnet, *A letter written upon the discovery*, 2.

²⁵ *Ibid*, 45.

²⁶ *A Brief Narrative of the Several Popish Treasons and Cruelties Against the Protestants in England, France, and Ireland* (1678), p. 5.

²⁷ *A Brief Narrative*, 5. *A Full and Certain Relation Concerning the Horrid Plot of the Papists* (1678) likewise focussed on the murder of Sir Godfrey with a relatively-unmatched level of detail, describing, over the course of its 8 pages, the suspicious manner and circumstances of his death.

could discover more of the Plot, that there they forc'd him into a Room, and Jesuits and one priest flinging him down, clapt a pillow on his face ... finding still some life, with a Neckcloth they Strangled him.²⁸

There are few particulars given to illustrate the information's accuracy, aside from the brief mention of 'a person come in who acknowledges himself privy to it.'²⁹ Much of the pamphlet's narrative goes unsupported in terms of legitimising detail – moreover, it frequently asserts an understanding of motivation as though it were truth. Inclusions regarding the murderers' actions, such as their 'intending to Murther his Reputation as well as his person', suggest an intimate knowledge of the event's development, despite there being no actual evidence to support the claim.³⁰

We might look to the purpose of the pamphlet in order to understand the manner of its news relation. The form was considerably less geared towards keeping a recipient reliably informed of the most recent events than it was to illustrating a political argument. Though the printed *Gazette* seemed to strive for factual accuracy, a similar technique was hardly conducive to the pamphlet's purpose – a clear message was to be delivered to the reader; a narrative that played on preconceived notions or instilled a palpable bias within the text itself was necessary in order to ensure the desired reader-reception of the news. Furthermore, though a discernible legitimacy of information no doubt emphasised the credibility of the pamphleteer's claims, even an unsupported narrative could create an effective argument – the events *had* transpired, after all; who was to say that one author's interpretation was any further from the truth than another's?

This was a particular aspect of pamphlet publication that played out through later 1678 and beyond (and one that would characterise the new print newspapers emerging in 1679). Much as it had during the 1640s, pamphlets created a printed news dialogue, often building on or contesting the claims of an original.³¹ When licensing lapsed and the number of pamphlets increased in 1679, for example, news emerged declaring that the Plot was of Presbyterian design. A Catholic named Elizabeth Cellier, former midwife to the Duchess of York, had arranged for the planting of fabricated evidence to validate the claim in what

²⁸ *A Brief Narrative*, 6.

²⁹ *Ibid.* There is also brief mention that 'there is yet no certainty' of the location in which the culprits initially hid the body – a comparatively minor detail.

³⁰ *Ibid.*

³¹ See Raymond, *Pamphlets and Pamphleteering* (206) for more detail regarding the pamphlets and counter-pamphlets of the early 1640s.

became known as the ‘Meal-tub Plot’.³² Dozens of pamphlets contesting the accuracy of this news sprung up in short succession – *England's Remembrancer, for the late discovery of the horrid plot: found in a meal tub ... The design of the papists in this plot was, to put it off themselves, and lay it upon the Presbyterians: making [them] the designers of the change of government and the murderers of His Majesty, &c* (1679); *A Full and true narrative of one Elizabeth Middleton ... endeavouring to turn the late hellish-plot on the non-conformists* (1679); *The new plot of the papists by which they design'd to have laid the guilt of their hellish conspiracies against His Majesty and government, upon the dissenting protestants* (1679), to name but a few. Though it likely created a fairly confusing news-narrative of plots and counter-plots, the dynamism of the pamphletary news form played no small part in sustaining interest in the news story. With accounts regularly emerging even after almost a year since news of the Popish Plot first broke, new evidence of Catholic treachery could again give rise to a fresh wave of anti-papist public feeling.³³

Indeed, through 1679 news of the Plot remained at the forefront of the printed pamphlet. Publications promising further information regarding the Plot's development (or the intriguing details of some new discovery) continued to appear, offering the latest news that the author had acquired. *A True and Perfect Relation of the Wicked and Bloody Plot* (1679) promised an ‘Exact Account’ regarding ‘that never to be forgotten Matter’; *A Narrative and Impartial Discovery of the Horrid Popish Plot* (1679) offered an account ‘Never before printed’, and documented recent Popish attempts to burn London to the ground, which ‘no ingenious, impartial man can question ... has long time been, and to this day is vigorously carried on by the Jesuites and other Papists’.³⁴ *An Impartial Account of Divers Remarkable Proceedings in the Last Sessions of Parliament Relating to the Horrid Popish Plot, &c* (1679) reported at length the most recent parliamentary actions in response to the conspiracy, beginning with the ‘Articles of Impeachment of High Treason, and other high Crimes and offences’ against those who had ‘for many years now last past ... contriv'd and carried on a Traiterous and Execrable Conspiracy and Plot within this Kingdom of England’.³⁵

³² So called due to the location of the planted evidence.

³³ Knights, *Politics and Opinion*, 225.

³⁴ *A True and perfect relation of the wicked and bloody plot that was conspired against His Majesty, and the alteration of the Protestant religion* (1679), *A narrative and impartial discovery of the horrid Popish plot* (1679), p. 27.

³⁵ *An impartial account of divers remarkable proceedings in the last sessions of Parliament relating to the horrid Popish plot, &c.* (1679), p. 3.

Much of the other pamphletary news that emerged was simply plot-related, or built on the excitement the Plot had stimulated. *The Popish Plot More Fully Discovered* (1679) gave information of a new papal scheme to kill the king, describing the testimony of ‘*Clement Cane*’, who, it said, had been offered a thousand pounds to collaborate in a conspiracy for ‘The Murder of his Sacred Majesty’.³⁶ *The Reputation of Dr. Oates* (1679) once again brought ‘The First Discover of the horrid Popish Plot’ back into the narrative, in response to those who had attempted to invalidate his evidence.³⁷ Pamphletary news seemed to build on what had gone before to an extent far beyond the continuity of the print periodical during this time. It existed within a larger context, where the news story of the Popish Plot (and a history of seemingly recurring Catholic conspiracies) formed the backdrop for each individual publication. We might suggest that it is for this reason that many of the pamphlets of the Popish Plot era tend to focus on a single aspect – an event such as Godfrey’s murder, for example, or a single testimony – in order to illustrate yet another damning article of evidence in the political rhetoric against Catholicism. ‘The whole story’, such as it was, was unnecessary to include in each, existing as it did outside of the text, in a public consciousness created by an abundance of news, history, and continuous information.

This was not a new effect of news distribution. Traditional forms of information transferral, both public and private, built on external and pre-existing narratives. Sermons, religious celebrations, popular entertainment in the form of plays and songs, all depended on a shared cultural understanding of historical experience. Whether intended or not, the news made use of similar assumptions, relying on its audience’s knowledge of lengthy contexts and backgrounds to current situations. Thus, even the new media – though seemingly ‘new’ in terms of its vigour and rate of production – depended on established notions in order to function as intended. The effect, or ‘public consciousness’, was, however, perhaps exaggerated by a level of dissemination that surpassed the limitations of what had gone before.³⁸ News depended not just on the knowledge of national and international history – the events and eras that had characterised contemporary society – but on the often complex and still-developing occurrences of the current day.

³⁶ *The Popish Plot more fully discovered being a full account of a damnable and bloody design of murdering His Sacred Majesty* (1679), p. 3.

³⁷ *The Reputation of Dr. Oates (the first discoverer of the horrid Popish Plot) clear'd in the tryal of Thomas Knox ... and John Lane ... wherein is set forth their endeavours to scandalize the doctor, thereby to invalidate his evidence, and how the lords in the Tower, and others, hired them to do it* (1679).

³⁸ The effect of news on the public will be considered at length during the later chapter, ‘News Cultures in the Popish Plot’.

Thus, all news was, essentially, serialised – a single pamphlet depended on the periodicals and newsletters that had described and established its context; in turn, those publications depended on their own sources, which in turn relied on their own, and so on, until a single story eventually became part of the ubiquitous ‘news’ – an account that existed not just in a single publication, but in a multitude of news sources, each contributing and constituting a part of the whole.

In any case, the pamphlet news sheet’s part in this should not be underestimated. Though an older news form, there was by 1679 a relatively unmatched diversity and quantity of news information circulating via the pamphlet, albeit perhaps less reliable in terms of accuracy than other established forms. Nevertheless, as Raymond has observed, the speed with which it disseminated news of the Plot is ‘a testimony to the effectiveness of these pamphletary modes.’³⁹ Clearly, the majority of pamphlets were aimed at mediating a reader’s interpretation of the news, taking the plot away from an isolated event and putting it against a back-drop of traditional Catholic treasons and machinations. By frequently placing news information after an (often lengthy) history of perceived papal treasons from an anti-Catholic perspective, an author could exert a certain amount of control regarding a reader’s interpretation of the news that followed.

The ‘grand narrative’ that pamphlet news offered likely had a significant effect on the impact and reception of periodical news. By establishing a tailored history of prior events, pamphlet news connecting recent occurrences to a wider perspective of Catholic conspiracy allowed periodical news reports to be received via a specific and well recognised context – each news story relating to the Plot (and, indeed, those merely sharing similar themes) could take on greater meaning through a pamphlet-influenced interpretation – a role of consequence in a centuries-old narrative. Thus, an event such as the discovery of a conspiracy to redirect blame for the Popish Plot to a branch of Protestantism could be linked to the Plot itself, a history of secret Catholic artifice, and the anxieties surrounding succession, as a series of connected events. At a rate of several published daily, pamphlets no doubt continued to play a significant role with regard to news reception during and after the emergence of the Plot.⁴⁰

In order to consider this in further detail, in addition to the likely reader-response of the pamphletary form and its claim to authority, we must now examine the particular style and technique of the news type, in addition to its physical appearance.

³⁹ Raymond, *Pamphlets and Pamphleteering*, 341-342.

⁴⁰ Sommerville, *The News Revolution*, 88.

Pamphlets and the Plot – Style and Techniques

Other than in terms of production numbers, what is perhaps most striking about pamphlets is the sheer variety that arose during this period, with regard to register and style. From accounts that resembled the reports of the newsletters coming to Mostyn in North Wales to those indistinguishable in many ways from the parliamentary newsletters directed to the Duke of Ormond, pamphletary news was disseminated through all manner of structures and authorial voices. Thus, we are in fact dealing with lots of different ‘kinds’ of news. To consider the variety, we shall examine a small number of pamphlets in order to illustrate particular deviations – *An Impartial Account of Divers Remarkable Proceedings, The New Plot of the Papists*, and *An Account of the Publick Affairs in Ireland, since the discovery of the Late Plot* (1679).

Though news was often the focus of the pamphlet, the majority resisted adopting the half-sheet, double-column style of the published *Gazette*, as much of the new print periodicals would throughout 1679. Typically, content appeared as blocked-paragraphs, better suited to the often-longer narratives of the pamphlet form than the sub-headed news of the printed periodical, where location and date marked a change of focus.

An Impartial Account, The New Plot of the Papists, and An Account of the Publick Affairs in Ireland, all make use of full title-pages, where the complete name of the pamphlet covers the entirety of the first side, often with publishing-information included – *The New Plot of the Papists*, for example, notes the location and date of production: ‘London, Printed for Robert Hartford at the Angel in Cornhil near the Royal Exchange: M. DC. LXXIX.’⁴¹ Occasionally, as with *An Impartial Account*, the title-page was used to describe the contents of the pamphlet in more detail by listing its articles in succession beneath the title. Both the adopted title-page and listed contents were reminiscent of traditional pamphleteering, where, during the 1640s, for example, pamphlets such as *A Copy of a Letter concerning the Traiterous Conspiracy of the Rebellious Papists in Ireland* and *An Answer to the New Motions or, A Serious and Briefe discussion of Certaine Motions now in Question* (amongst many others), employed similar structural methods.⁴² These title-pages largely summarised the content of the publication. It seems quite feasible that a reader might acquire the ‘headlines’ of the news from the covers alone, without actually having to read the pamphlet

⁴¹ *The New Plot of the Papists by which They Design'd to have laid the Guilt of their Hellish Conspiracies against His Majesty and Government, upon the Dissenting Protestants* (1679).

⁴² *A copy of a letter concerning the traiterous conspiracy of the rebellious papists in Ireland* (1641); *An answer to the new motions or, A serious and briefe discussion of certaine motions now in question* (1641).

itself – and even more so when we consider that the title-pages could be posted in public areas as a form of advertisement.

An Impartial Account of Divers Remarkable Proceedings (unlike the majority of pamphlets, consisting of several documents – bills, speeches, news-pieces and other papers – collected and printed together as a single publication) offered news of parliamentary development in a manner highly comparable to the newsletters sent to the Duke of Ormond considered during the previous chapter – though considerably more detailed. Like the newsletter, *An Impartial Account* begins with transcripts of parliamentary interactions before reporting the latest government resolutions. Whilst the manuscript periodical often showed only the resolution itself, however, the pamphlet here includes in full the official explanatory article leading to the summation of the parliamentary decision. With regard to the impeachment against ‘William Earl of Powis’ and ‘William Viscount Stafford’, for example, a lengthy tract explaining their part in the Plot offers a comprehensive account of its development, though this is unlikely its purpose.⁴³ The article explores the reasons for impeachment – the narrative thus follows their actions, rather than the development of the Plot.

Nevertheless, *An Impartial Account* offers a version of events fuller in many ways than those that appear elsewhere. Those involved, the details of their plan, and the extent of their preparations all form part of the article. Knights, writing regarding the news of these parliamentary pamphlets, has observed that, though they contained ‘information about proceedings hitherto regarded as unsuitable for the public domain, were left unmolested by Parliament.’⁴⁴

As per the parliamentary newsletters, authorial voice is almost wholly absent from *An Impartial Account*. Rather, the pamphlet reports the proceedings with a focus mostly on specific detail, such as the hour of their meeting (‘about Three of the Clock in the Afternoon’), or the physical movements of Parliament (‘The Commons immediately returned back to their own House’).⁴⁵ Descriptions included offer easily-verified ‘facts’ (such as the listing of recently-expired Acts), transcripts and copies of bills, and other official documentation.

In comparison with *An Impartial Account*, *The New Plot of the Papists* is significantly more polemical. Writing from a palpable anti-papist perspective, the author introduces the

⁴³ *An Impartial Account*, 3.

⁴⁴ Knights, *Politics and Opinion*, 180.

⁴⁵ *An Impartial Account*, 3.

news of the pamphlet with a sentiment characteristic to many of the pamphlets that emerged following the Plot:

Certainly had not *Catiline* liv'd before the coming of Christ, he would have been taken for a *Jesuit*, so like was he to them in his Conditions, his Tenets, and his Practice. His conditions were Bloody and Cruel. ... How near the *Catilines* of this Age, whose Plots against His Majesty and His Government have been so lately Discovered, followed [his] footsteps ... Here had been Plot upon Plot, and greater Ills attempted to conceal the Shame and Ignominy of former Impieties; Treason so foul and horrid, that Treason it self could not Rest till it had Reveal'd it.⁴⁶

There could be little confusion regarding the intended message, as was no doubt its purpose – the Plot was merely one in a series of Catholic treacheries, and their danger could not be underestimated. Given the prevalence of pamphlets promoting their news through a similar manner of relation, it seems likely that this news form in particular played a part in influencing perception of the Plot.

With a structure more comparable to the majority of pamphlet publications than *An Impartial Account*, *The New Plot of the Papists* presents its news much as a longer narrative – a report similar in terms of relation to those of the newsletters, but at a length and level of detail exceeding them greatly. Like the news of the periodical, much of the detail is situated in place and time – aspects of the narrative are typically preceded by the contextual information that identifies the moment of their occurrence: ‘Upon *November 1 1679*’; ‘Upon *Saturday*’; ‘On *Sunday at Four of the Clock*’, and so on.⁴⁷ The effect is to create an authoritative authorial voice, and lends a sense of authenticity to a report generally lacking in terms of other authenticated information.

An Account of the Publick Affairs in Ireland illustrates a further common pamphlet technique. In a section preceding the news information entitled ‘Reader’, the author addresses the recipient directly, stating: ‘*I think it some service to the Publick Safety, that the true extent of our Dangers and Security be known, and that we do not rend our Friends in pieces,*

⁴⁶ *The New Plot of the Papists*, 1.

⁴⁷ *Ibid*, 3, 4.

instead of our Enemies.'⁴⁸ Over the next few pages, the pamphlet defends the Duke of Ormond's commitment to Protestantism and the government before discussing related news. Many of the pamphlets emerging in 1679 utilised similar techniques, though most without the separate subtitle that is here included. The practice was particularly useful to a pamphlet's unique purpose – much in the same way as many of the Popish Plot-era publications included anti-papal histories of Catholicism preceding the news, an address to the reader could direct a recipient's attention so that they might consider the news that followed through the author's imposed perspective: here, that the Duke '*hath been still on the Loyal side*' and '*is acting an extraordinary part; that by his Influence and Interest he comes to know and divert the Evils that might happen*'.⁴⁹

An Account demonstrates the importance of pamphlets to news reception in other ways too. As part of its relation, it situates official proclamations in the narrative of the news story, observing (after reporting Oates' testimony regarding the discovery of the Plot) that Parliament issued 'Several Orders and Proclamations as followeth'.⁵⁰ The proclamations of later 1678 are then listed and discussed. *A Brief Narrative* (considered above) does the same with regard to the murder of Sir Godfrey, and subsequent proclamation: 'everybody concluded he was killed before, and lately carried thither: Hereupon the King publisht a Proclamation, promising 500*l* reward, and pardon to any one concern'd that should discover the rest'.⁵¹ The news-pamphlet could clearly make the connection between the vague sorts of domestic news appearing inadvertently in the printed *Gazette* to the overarching news narrative simply by providing the context – its polemic could then influence not only the news that it related, but also the reader's interpretation of the 'official' notice. Though appearing from a wide and diverse assortment of structures and manners of relation – from objectivity to subjectivity, narratives, addresses, and official documentations – the pamphlet of the Popish Plot evidently had the potential to command a considerable influence over news reception in general: 'for all the hubbub of the rapidly maturing information market, pamphlets still played a dominant role in the discussion of public affairs.'⁵²

⁴⁸ *An Account of the publick affairs in Ireland, since the discovery of the late plot* (1679).

⁴⁹ *Ibid*, iii-iv. This is then followed by news of the Duke's actions to limit the powers of Catholicism in Ireland.

⁵⁰ *Ibid*, 3.

⁵¹ *A Brief Narrative*, 6.

⁵² Pettegree, *The Invention of News*, 244.

Periodicals and the Plot

During the previous chapter, we established that the *London Gazette* of 1678 had maintained its monopoly over the print periodical. Published, serialised news remained very much devoted to non-domestic reporting, ignoring, as much as was possible, the news of that most recent controversy. Where domestic news was included, reports were often vague or of little real significance to daily life – and even then, appearing seemingly at random from issue to issue (and more commonly, not at all). Only after the lapse in publishing legislation in 1679 would the print periodical news form see any significant change.

The lapse of the Licensing Act, Scott writes, resulted in a ‘flood’ of publication – not least for the print news form.⁵³ Where the *Gazette* had continued more or less alone only a year previously, an increasing number of periodicals appeared in short succession. Though authorities attempted to maintain a measure of control through a repeated assertion that the King had an ‘inherent, or “prerogative” power over the press’, and could thus continue to enforce some form of censorship, through 1679 periodical news continued to grow in popularity – so much so, in fact, that by 1681 the *Gazette*’s sales had dwindled to a mere four thousand in the face of increasing competition.⁵⁴

This section will consider in detail the print periodicals that emerged shortly following the news of the Plot, in addition to those that arose post-licensing. As with our consideration of pamphletary news, analysis will focus on the content, structure and style of the ‘new’ news sheets, in addition to examining the ‘periodical-particular’ problems of proving and maintaining the perception of legitimacy in a competitive news-environment. We shall conclude by considering the effect of increased news (both via the print periodical and news-pamphlet) on the ‘construction of the present’, as identified during the previous chapter.

The *Weekly Pacquet of Advice from Rome*

When news of the Plot emerged in later 1678, licensing laws continued to inhibit the growth of the print news-trade. Even as the news of the Catholic conspiracy and aftermath was spreading through scribal and pamphletary modes of dissemination, the *Gazette* remained the sole staple of the periodical press. It was not until December of 1678 that something resembling a news periodical appeared, in the form of Henry Care’s *Weekly Pacquet of Advice from Rome*.

⁵³ Scott, *England’s Troubles*, 183.

⁵⁴ Sommerville, *The News Revolution*, 89; 93. This marks a rather significant change – only two years previously, the *Gazette* had seen its sales rise to a new high of seven-thousand, prior to the emergence of competing periodicals (90-91).

Though often considered the first of the new periodicals to emerge, the *Weekly Pacquet* was not a standard news sheet, and should not be perceived as such.⁵⁵ Care's periodical borrowed its structure from a variety of new and traditional news publications. Its dated eight-page arrangement, like the newsbooks of the 1640s, dedicated the majority of its content to a serialised 'History of Popery', with its final two pages to the *Popish Courant* – a parody of recent Catholic occurrences from a Catholic perspective in a manner reminiscent of the 1620s translated coranto. With reports separated by location and date (e.g. 'Rome, November 29'), the style was the *Gazette*'s – thus, we have the reports of a news sheet under the title of a coranto within the arrangement of a newsbook.⁵⁶

A somewhat unusual example of contemporary news-dissemination, the *Weekly Pacquet* seems to have formed a bridge between pamphlet and periodical. Care's publication performed a task hitherto reserved for the pamphlet, where news followed a lengthy, contextualised history – but the *Weekly Pacquet* was no one-off literary reaction. Printed weekly through 1679 (the first weekly-publication to appear this year, months before the *Domestick Intelligence*, etc.), Care set out his purpose from the offset: 'To give you a thorough insight into the Doctrines and Practices of [Catholicism], that none may be sillily seduc'd for want of due warning', and to offer 'an Historical Account gradually of the Usurpations, Cruelties, &c. of the Bishops of Rome and their creatures'.⁵⁷ Like many of the news-pamphlets, the *Weekly Pacquet* took a timely approach in reminding English readers the history of Catholic treacheries: 'the subtle, yet obvious, sub-text of the *Weekly Pacquet of Advice from Rome* was that it showed what might be expected from a Catholic king of England.'⁵⁸

The periodical was no less clear regarding its intended audience: 'all true English Protestants, but especially those of the Cities of *London* and *Westminster*'.⁵⁹ Though the history of the Reformation continued to monopolise the majority of the content, frequent reports and comments appeared with a developing 'current focus' over time.⁶⁰ During the first issue, for example, a report regarding the recent murder of Sir Godfrey was included:

⁵⁵ Sommerville, for example, introduces *The Weekly Pacquet* as the first of the 'opposition newspapers' (*The News Revolution*, 92). Harris lists the publication alongside the 'bi-weekly newspapers' emerging after the Plot (*Restoration*, 142).

⁵⁶ *Weekly Pacquet of Advice from Rome*, no. 1, December 3rd 1678.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

⁵⁸ Schwoerer, *The Ingenious Mr. Henry Care*, 13-14.

⁵⁹ *Weekly Pacquet of Advice from Rome*, no. 1, December 3rd 1678.

⁶⁰ Sommerville, *The News Revolution*, 92.

Troynovant, Sept. 16. Here is lately discovered a strange Miracle beyond that of St. *Denis*, or Mistris *Winifred*. A Gentleman first stifled, and then strangled; that should afterwards get up, and walk invisibly almost five Miles, and then having been dead four days before, run himself through with his own Sword, to testifie his trouble for wronging *Catholick* Traitors, whom he never injur'd.⁶¹

Though plainly satirical in nature, the adopted style was clearly the *Gazette*'s: an italicised preamble to situate the news story, followed by the report itself.

Through the issues that followed, 'news' stories continued to appear under a similar style of reporting – the second from December 10th discussed the progress of the Plot, advancing 'untowardly here for the Interest of the *Catholick Cause* ... scarce a Priest dares shew his head, for fear of the Nooz.'⁶² January 17th reported 'a further and true discovery of the Murther of Sir *Edmund-bury Godfrey*, our English Proto-Martyr in this cursed Conspiracy'.⁶³ 'Care,' Lois Schwoerer writes, 'was among the first to exploit in print the journalistic opportunities of the Popish Plot.'⁶⁴

Though continuing, for the most part, in its parody of the 'global Catholic conspiracy' rather than reporting much in the way of new discoveries, the *Popish Courant* offered a frequent commentary on the condition of contemporary London. In this 'weekly caricature', Sommerville suggests, 'the periodical became timely.'⁶⁵

By early 1679, Care's periodical remained the sole competitor to the *Gazette*. Though occasionally contemplating domestic news, the *Weekly Pacquet* avoided censorship – doubtlessly due to the brief and indirect nature of its engagement with current events. All the same, the *Weekly Pacquet* was an interesting addition to the periodical press – it was, in fact, to be published longer than any other Whig periodical of the crisis years.⁶⁶

Nevertheless, with new paper yet to emerge, the status quo changed little in reality for the periodical press. This is, no doubt, why historians of the era have tended to focus their

⁶¹ *Weekly Pacquet of Advice from Rome*, no. 1, December 3rd 1678.

⁶² *Weekly Pacquet of Advice from Rome*, no. 2, December 10th 1678.

⁶³ *Weekly Pacquet of Advice from Rome*, no. 7, January 17th 1679.

⁶⁴ Schwoerer, *The Ingenious Mr. Henry Care*, 44.

⁶⁵ Sommerville, *The News Revolution*, 92.

⁶⁶ Schwoerer, *The Ingenious Mr. Henry Care*, 53.

attention on the press of later-1679, where an ‘avalanche’ of new print developed once licensing had expired.⁶⁷

The Periodical Press of 1679

Benjamin Harris’s *Domestick Intelligence, or News Both From City and Country* was the first of these to be published, on July 7th, 1679. The *Domestick Intelligence*, like the vast majority of print periodicals that would emerge through the following years, adopted a structure essentially indistinguishable to the *London Gazette*. Stories appeared in two columns; a banner separated the periodical’s title from the main body of text; page-size was the same; differentiation between news stories was marked via a new paragraph; print size, and even word-count, was more or less identical. Where the *Domestick Intelligence* differed was in content.

As the name suggests, the *Domestick Intelligence* focussed on news from the home country. Beginning at a point still well within the heightened excitement of the Popish Plot, its initial reports were heavily characterised by the news story. Issue 1 considered the trial of Richard Langhorne, who, it reported, continued to protest innocence of any part in the conspiracy: ‘[Langhorne] pretended ignorance as to the Plot, or that he was any way concerned in it’. Other stories continued in the same vein – a relation regarding one ‘*William Ireland*, who was lately executed for Treason in designing to murder his Sacred Majesty’, and a lengthy account of a recently-discovered conspirator, entitled ‘*A True and Impartial Narrative of the manner of Apprehending that Arch-Jesuite, Peter Caryl*’, were the reports that followed.⁶⁸

Subsequent issues illustrate a similar focus. The second, printed July 10th, reported ‘further Account of the late Horrible Plot to Murder his Sacred Majesty’, relating, like *The Popish Plot More Fully Discovered*, the testimony of ‘Clement Cane’.⁶⁹ Issues that followed through the remainder of July offered accounts of seemingly-unending developments: ‘one that made discovery of the horrid Plot ... hath accordingly taken Sir *Tho. Gascoyn* and his two sons into Custody’; the alleged conspirator Langhorne ‘brought from *Newgate* in a Sledge, to the place of Execution’; a new plot to ‘Pistol the King in St. *James Park*’.⁷⁰ With the print press continuing to draw upon the consequences and development of the Plot as a

⁶⁷ Spurr, *The Post-Reformation*, 165.

⁶⁸ *Domestick Intelligence or News Both from City and Country*, no. 1, July 7th 1679.

⁶⁹ *Domestick Intelligence or News Both from City and Country*, no. 2, July 10th 1679.

⁷⁰ *Domestick Intelligence or News Both from City and Country*, no. 3, July 14th 1679; *Domestick Intelligence or News Both from City and Country*, no. 4, July 17th 1679; *Domestick Intelligence or News Both from City and Country*, no. 6, July 24th 1679.

major source of current news – both in the periodical news sheet and pamphlet – it is perhaps unsurprising that the news story remained in the public eye for so long after its initial emergence.

Other papers appearing shortly after the *Domestick Intelligence* sustained the trend in news-content. The *English Intelligencer* (first published July 21st, 1679) began its first issue with an account of the trial of four ‘Romish Priests’, before reporting a ‘published letter’ entitled ‘*Reflections on the Earl of Danby in relation to the Murther of Sir Edmundberry Godfrey*’.⁷¹ Later issues, such as that from July 28th, were characterised by their focus on further prosecutions against Catholics, and continuing discoveries: ‘From *York* they write, that there were two Jesuits seized there this last Week’; ‘Here is a discourse of a Person who ... is able and willing to discover the whole of the Plot’.⁷²

Yet more Plot-related domestic news emerged in the form of July 22nd’s *Faithful Mercury*. Though short-lived, its two issues through later July reported a Catholic claim that ‘there has been no Plot at all against His Majesties Person’, the discovery of some ‘considerable particulars relating to the Plot’, and the king’s ‘consideration of the great Expence and Trouble the Citizens of *London* have been at ... ever since the Discovery of the *Popish Plot*’.⁷³ It therefore seems reasonable to observe that, by the summer of 1679, a wealth of Plot-related information continued to circulate via the periodical press.

Of course, with a heavy reliance on the pre-existing, long-term narrative of the Plot, the new print news may in fact have been more similar to the traditional news of the pamphlet than initially appears. The *Domestick Intelligence*, the *English Intelligencer*, and the *Faithful Mercury* all seem to have largely depended on the well-established story to support and authenticate their news, and to make sense of their approaches and content-choices – much like the traditional narratives of the pamphlets. Thus, these new periodicals are perhaps less ‘modern’ than a Whiggish interpretation of news-history might suggest.

Even disregarding the Plot as the shared focus, much of the news that appeared in the new print papers after licensing had lapsed was domestically-concerned. Though generally sustaining a London-centric content throughout, maintaining a domestic focus across numerous papers saw a variety of news from the provinces feature to an increasingly greater extent – the *Domestick Intelligence* from July 10th, for example, features reports from Essex,

⁷¹ *English Intelligencer*, no. 1, July 21st 1679.

⁷² *English Intelligencer*, no. 3, July 28th 1679.

⁷³ Amongst other similar stories. *Faithful Mercury*, no. 1, July 22nd 1679; *Faithful Mercury*, no. 2, July 25th 1679.

Northamptonshire, York, and Southampton.⁷⁴ Alongside news of the Plot, reports of fires,⁷⁵ murders,⁷⁶ criminal prosecutions,⁷⁷ and royal appointments and movements,⁷⁸ in addition to all manner of other stories concerning a whole myriad of domestic events, regularly made frequent appearances. To consider the contrast between these and the ‘official’ news of the government, we might briefly compare the new print periodicals to the *Gazette* of July 1679.

Much as it been had prior to the lapse of licensing, the content of the *London Gazette* was characterised by continental news, with domestic news appearing occasionally in the form of royal proclamations and judicial circuit announcements.⁷⁹ Where other domestic reports were included, they tended towards merchant news and the actions of the nobility (movements and entertainments, etc.) The issue of July 10th is illustrative of the *Gazette*’s typical extent of coverage – reports include proclamations ‘For Dissolving this present Parliament’ and for ‘*commanding the Judges, and all Magistrates, to apprehend and punish all such as frequent any Field Conventicles*’, accounts of foreign nobles visiting ‘*Munich*’, ‘*Cologne*’ and ‘*Brussels*’, a lengthy transcript of the ‘the Articles of the Treaty lately concluded between the Elector of *Brandenburg*’ and the king of France, and the arrival of various ships into port.⁸⁰

The *Gazette*, Sommerville suggests, ‘tried to stay above the fray, hoping to maintain a good example for the happier, more settled times ahead’, but acknowledges that ‘periodicity subverted the best editorial intentions.’⁸¹ Certainly, this was true for later 1678 – as examined in the previous chapter, the requirement to publish proclamations saw Plot-related news characterise the content of the *Gazette* for several months. By July 1679, however, proclamations were in shorter supply – of the six issues that directly follow on from the 10th to the end of July, in fact, only one further proclamation is published. As a consequence, the domestic reports that do appear continue to do so irregularly, and concern merchant news

⁷⁴ *Domestick Intelligence or News Both from City and Country*, no. 2, July 10th 1679. News from Scotland and Ireland features heavily too.

⁷⁵ *Faithful Mercury*, no. 2, July 25th 1679; *Domestick Intelligence or News Both from City and Country*, no. 3, July 14th 1679; *English Intelligencer*, no. 2, July 24th 1679.

⁷⁶ *Domestick Intelligence or News Both from City and Country*, no. 1, July 7th 1679; *English Intelligencer*, no. 1, July 21st 1679.

⁷⁷ *Domestick Intelligence or News Both from City and Country*, no. 2, July 10th 1679; *Domestick Intelligence or News Both from City and Country*, no. 8, July 31st 1679.

⁷⁸ *English Intelligencer*, no. 1, July 21st 1679; *Faithful Mercury*, no. 2, July 25th 1679.

⁷⁹ Proclamations appear in the issues from the 10th and 21st (issues 1424 and 1427). Circuit notices appear on July 3rd, 7th, and 17th (issues 1422, 1423, and 1426).

⁸⁰ *London Gazette*, no. 1424, July 10th 1679.

⁸¹ Sommerville, *The News Revolution*, 90.

more or less alone.⁸² Thus, though licensing had lapsed and domestic news had begun to appear in all manner of other printed publications, the *Gazette* continued at the level it had established by 1676. This may indeed have been the point – in a time of increasing news information exploring the actions of parliament and the significance of local and regional events, the *Gazette* maintained its steadfast foreign focus – which also likely explains the decline in its circulation. Licensing may have lapsed, but the opinion of the authority behind the government's official paper had not.

Nevertheless, the *Gazette* soon faced competition to its foreign news too. Though to a less detailed extent than the longer-established paper, all of the print periodicals appearing across the summer of 1679 regularly dedicated space to continental news as part of their coverage. The *English Intelligencer*, for example, opened with domestic reports but ended with the most recent foreign news, as did the *Faithful Mercury*. The *Intelligencer*'s first issue reported an 'extraordinary Council' held by the King of Denmark, a proposed marriage for the Queen of Spain, and the demolition of 'several unnecessary Covents' in Rome in order to fund 'the war against the *Turks*.'⁸³ Even the *Domestick Intelligence* by its fourth issue reported 'by Letters from *Geneva*' that the French king had demanded to build 'a *Popish Church*' in the city.⁸⁴ Like the Mostyn newsletters do at various occasions, much of the foreign news that appears in this and subsequent issues seems to summarise the most important recent news from across the seas – thus sustaining a domestic focus, whilst keeping a reader sufficiently informed of continental development. Sutherland suggests a more prosaic reason for its inclusion in the new papers: 'although most of them printed some news from abroad, it was perhaps as often as not to fill up a gap in the day's paper rather than to meet any demand from their readers.'⁸⁵

Nevertheless, periodical news by the summer of 1679 clearly possessed a content rich in regularly-updating and circulating domestic news (and an adequate helping of foreign news too). With a number of serialised publications appearing through July discussing all manner of domestic occurrences, we might observe that, in comparison to only a few months previously, the periodical press had seen significant change. As the publications emerged adopting an established style (made popular by the *Gazette*), new techniques and practices

⁸² Occasionally, very brief mention is made of other domestic news, such as a 'Popish Priest' executed for 'exercising his Function' in the issue from the 21st, and two more from the 28th. Little further detail is offered, other than the enacting of the sentence. *London Gazette*, no. 1427, July 21st 1679; *London Gazette*, no. 1429, July 28th 1679.

⁸³ *English Intelligencer*, no. 1, July 21st 1679.

⁸⁴ *Domestick Intelligence or News Both from City and Country*, no. 4, July 17th 1679.

⁸⁵ Sutherland, *The Restoration Newspaper*, 13.

were implemented. The way in which news was related to the reader, both in terms of structure and style, shall now be examined in greater detail, before a consideration of the particular issues these new periodicals faced with regard to authenticity and legitimacy.

Periodicals and the Plot: Structure and Style

Though the majority of the new periodicals emerging in 1679 adopted the structure of the *Gazette*, there were a number of changes made to various aspects of its organisation and manner of relation. The *Gazette* had long-established a particular composition for print periodical news, using a structure to which the public had no doubt become accustomed by the later 1670s. A decision to emulate this in the new print periodicals made much commercial sense. A recognisable template invoked certain reader expectations – a sense of familiarity, the conventions of the genre, and a measure of accuracy – all of which had the potential to assist a paper's initial and ongoing reception. For the most part, the structure deviated little from the established form – of the three papers emerging in July 1679, all divide the news into two columns, make use of a bannered-title in a manner similar to the *Gazette*, and consist of a single half-sheet, printed both sides.

Where they differed most in terms of structure was in their organisation and separation of content. Focussed as they were on domestic news primarily, foreign news appeared at the end of each issue, with domestic preceding. In the *Gazette*, the opposite was more frequently the case (aside from those instances where proclamations were to be published). The particular manner in which domestic news was separated from international within the periodical offered further distinction – the *Faithful Mercury*, for example, illustrated the division by including a blank-line between each section.⁸⁶ Both the *Domestick Intelligence* and *English Intelligencer*, though discussing domestic news first with foreign after, did so without the line-break, so that foreign news followed on directly from the domestic.⁸⁷ The *Intelligencer* was also somewhat more inconsistent in its separation – occasionally, as with the issue from July 28th, foreign and domestic reports were mixed alongside one another, so that 'Letters from *France*' appeared between news from London and a report from '*Fleetstreet*'.⁸⁸

The trend for separating domestic and international reports may present an interesting challenge to the current view of contemporary news-reception in later-seventeenth century

⁸⁶ See: *Faithful Mercury*, no. 2, July 25th 1679.

⁸⁷ See: *Domestick Intelligence or News Both from City and Country*, no. 7, July 28th 1679; *English Intelligencer*, no. 1, July 21st 1679.

⁸⁸ *English Intelligencer*, no. 3, July 28th 1679.

Britain, which tends to consider domestic news as being received and digested by readers within a continental context.⁸⁹ Here is an acknowledged break between the two – a paratextual distinction conspicuously marking the change of focus. The effect this might have had on a reader's interpretation of the news is to have isolated the domestic from international, allowing an interpretation of domestic events within a primarily national context (e.g. connections between grouped regional reports regarding the consequences of the Popish Plot in consideration of the national implication.) Though a reader might determine for themselves a thematic connection between domestic and international reports, the new news periodicals did not necessarily facilitate this.

In general, the manner in which news stories were separated from one another was a particular aspect of the new print periodicals that continued to fluctuate. Though its first issue separates news stories via a new paragraph as the *Gazette* did, the *Domestick Intelligence* occasionally distinguishes between reports via a line-break, as in the issue dated July 10th. Here, available content seems to dictate how stories are separated – where space allowed (due, presumably, to a lack of suitable recent information), breaks in the text were included to illustrate the distinction between reports. Where news was in greater supply, such as during the issue dated July 22nd, reports follow directly on from one another.

The *Domestick Intelligence* employed a number of similar techniques in order to effectively make use of available space, whilst maintaining the standard physical length of each news sheet. At various instances through July, type-size was reduced part-way through the closing news-story to increase the amount of information that could be included in the issue. This can be seen during the first from July 7th, where the final two paragraphs of the news sheet appear smaller in order to provide a sufficient amount of information to the concluding report.⁹⁰ During the issue from the 22nd, type-size was reduced again to include a brief update to an earlier story.⁹¹ The decision gave Harris's news sheet a certain amount of adaptability lacking in the printed *Gazette* – even if space was deficient, news stories could be made to fit.

To varying degrees, each of the new print periodicals maintained a different approach in their introduction to the news. The way in which they situate a news story in terms of location and date often varied from periodical to periodical and even issue to issue, in comparison to the *Gazette*'s consistent 'location: date' prefix preceding each report. Both the

⁸⁹ See, for example, Jonathan Scott's *England's Troubles* – 'the internationality of contemporary [English] perceptions has been significantly appreciated by historians' (p. 9).

⁹⁰ *Domestick Intelligence or News Both from City and Country*, no. 1, July 7th 1679.

⁹¹ *Domestick Intelligence or News Both from City and Country*, no. 5, July 22nd 1679.

Faithful Mercury and *Domestick Intelligence* situate the news story during its narration, as so: ‘On *Tuesday* night last, there brake out in *Kent-Street* in *Southwarke* a Fire’.⁹² We might consider this a more modern approach to news relation, where detail forms part of the narrative, rather than a subtitle to the report.

Nevertheless, even this was fairly inconsistent. Though initially introducing its first story with a technique similar to the *Gazette*’s (‘*London, July 18*’), the *English Intelligencer* soon took on a style more comparable to the *Faithful Mercury* - the majority of remaining reports appearing without the introduction to situate its location (and often without mention of a date at all). Thus, though general structure was reminiscent of the *Gazette*, some differences (in themselves, somewhat variable) developed through 1679

Change was perhaps more noticeable in the new print periodicals in terms of authorial voice. Though the *Gazette* had established a formal register, seemingly objective and consistently unwilling to comment on recent events other than to report them, certain stories detailed in the news of the emerging papers were reported from a clear and unambiguous perspective. The first issue of Harris’s paper, for example, concluded a report regarding the ongoing trial of Richard Langhorne (see above) with the prediction that ‘if he still continue obstinate, no doubt but he will receive the just reward of his horrid Crimes and Treasons.’⁹³ The *Domestick Intelligence* allowed little room for discussion regarding Langhorne’s innocence.

Similar judgements appear throughout the new publications. Writing of the king’s proclamation granting liberty ‘to all Dissenters (except Papists)’, the author of the *Faithful Mercury* observes that the action was ‘as much as can be desired or expected by sober and unbyassed Christians’.⁹⁴ Individual reports like these could be worded in such a way as to leave little doubt regarding the desired reader-reception - the *English Intelligencer*, for example, offered an account of ‘Father *Lewis*, a Jesuite, and pretended Bishop’ during its second issue, and framed the report using a particularly suggestive lexicon:

Now the aforesaid Father *Lewis*, being by nature covetous,
and having a longing desire to be fingring some of his
Brothers Gold ... the information of which by his cunning
insinuation he wheadled out of a Woman belonging to the

⁹² *Faithful Mercury* (London, England), Friday, July 25th, 1679; Issue 2.

⁹³ *Domestick Intelligence or News Both from City and Country*, no. 1, July 7th 1679.

⁹⁴ *Faithful Mercury*, no. 1, July 22nd 1679.

Family, and he living in the same house, took an opportunity to make a disturbance in the night-time ...⁹⁵

Comparable to the pamphlets of the era, the phrasing of reports such as these could effectively direct a reader's interpretation of the news. Thus we have the majority of the news press during this time geared in some way towards reader-manipulation.⁹⁶ An emerging political bias is apparent.

By later 1678 and early 1679, it is perhaps still too early to truly identify a 'Whig' dialogue – we might instead consider a 'proto-Whig' inclination to the new publications. The new periodicals, reporting on the Plot from a position of anti-Catholic sentiment, as we have seen above, leaned towards what would become in the months and years that followed the Whiggish partisan focus – exclusion. Whether intended or not, a concentration on domestic events, characterised through reports regarding the narrative of the Plot in the period directly following the news of its exposure, repeatedly emphasised the apparent threat of Catholicism. As a consequence, the news followed a path of development that largely leant itself to the Whig argument. This, alongside the political competition that arose in the subsequent years, will be discussed to a greater extent in the later chapter, 'News in the Tory Reaction.'

This inherent political bias again suggests similarities to pamphlet news. The new periodicals may have broken away from the pamphlet's universe in terms of structure and eventual variety, but only slowly, and only to some extent. It is, then, problematic even to consider the novelty and modernity of the new print news, and the idea of the print periodical transforming a news-situation previously shaped by pamphlets. Once again, we must question a Whiggish perception of print news development.

Periodicals and the Plot: Proving Legitimacy

With periodical news vying for the custom of its readers in the face of increasing commercial competition, the question of accuracy – a problem even for the longer-established forms of news, as we have previously considered – continued to feature heavily in the news sheets. The increase in circulating domestic information was apt to have enlarged concerns regarding accuracy and the development of news stories, rather than subduing them; as Raymond has observed, 'the increase in news brought no resolution, but broadened the

⁹⁵ *English Intelligencer*, no. 2, July 24th 1679.

⁹⁶ The following chapter will consider the effect of the press on the reader during this period.

range of possibilities and amplified the uncertainty.⁹⁷ Consequently, the manner in which each periodical sought to address rumour, amend reports and correct mistakes, and even criticise the accuracy and honesty of its competitors, was likely to have a considerable effect on its reception.

In this, the new periodicals differed from the *Gazette*. Where the *Gazette* largely avoided including reports of questionable legitimacy, much of the emerging news addressed rumour in particular directly. ‘The talk of the town’ became something of a recurring feature, with periodicals habitually considering the truthfulness of current gossip and conjecture. During its first issue, for example, the *Domestick Intelligence* considered a recent popular rumour:

Here has been great discourse, and abundance of falsities reported concerning a Child of 3 years of Age, who could speak divers Languages, and the ignorant imagine it is by Inspiration, whereas his Father is so ingenuous to acknowledge that the Child speaks nothing but what he or others have taught him, and would only have the People admire the Childs memory at such an age ...⁹⁸

Denouncing and discrediting rumour accentuated a paper’s authority and claim to legitimacy. So much so, evidently, that the second issue of the *Domestick Intelligence* was printed with the tagline ‘published to prevent false reports’ appearing below its title.⁹⁹ ‘Restoration-era newspapers,’ Barbara Shapiro writes, ‘insisted on the truthfulness and impartiality of their accounts as well as the deceptiveness and partisanship of their rivals.’¹⁰⁰ The focus was on maintaining a claim to accurate news reporting, even when the reports themselves invoked a certain amount of scepticism – twice during July, Harris introduces news reports with an acknowledgement of their peculiarity, but an emphasis on credibility: ‘By Letters from a place called *Much-Waltham* in this County, we have this strange but true Relation ...’; ‘There

⁹⁷ Raymond, *Pamphlets and Pamphleteering*, 346.

⁹⁸ *Domestick Intelligence or News Both from City and Country*, no. 1, July 7th 1679.

⁹⁹ *Domestick Intelligence or News Both from City and Country*, no. 2, July 10th 1679.

¹⁰⁰ Shapiro, *A Culture of Fact*, 98.

is a very strange but credible Relation from a place called *Shewall* in the Parish of *Stock Edith* ...¹⁰¹

Both the *English Intelligencer* and *Faithful Mercury* make similar observations. The *Intelligencer* frequently cautions its readers against circulating gossip, such as during the issue from August 2nd: ‘There was a report about Town, that *Coniers* the Jesuit that was designed to have killed the King at *Windsor*, was taken at *Reading*, a Town in *Barkeshire*, but there is nothing of Truth in it.’¹⁰² The *Faithful Mercury* treats rumour much the same:

It is strongly reported about the Town, That there having been a long time a Treaty on foot, beyween the Most Christian King, and the Prince Regent of *Portugal*, for the delivery of the City of *Goa* ... But because we hear nothing of this in our Letters from *France*, we suspect the Truth of it.¹⁰³

In the issue preceding, a more extensive rebuttal of current rumour is included:

There are divers reports that have lately been the Subjects of common Discourses about the Town, especially in the Coffee-Houses, and from hence disperst into most Countries in *England* ... That her Majesty would go to the *Spaw* in *Germany* ... That His Royal Highness has lately been in *England* ... That the Duke of *Landerdale* has desired to quit his Employment ... That his Majesty has granted Mr. *Langhorn* a Reprieve, &c. But because they are equally as groundless, as they are ridiculous and fabulous (and the last report is already proved to be false) it is confutation enough to them.¹⁰⁴

Establishing the truth was the clear domain of the news piece. Certainly, the focus on accuracy seems to have characterised much of the new print periodicals approach to news

¹⁰¹ *Domestick Intelligence or News Both from City and Country*, no. 7, July 28th 1679.

¹⁰² *English Intelligencer*, no. 4, August 2nd 1679.

¹⁰³ *Faithful Mercury*, no. 2, July 25th 1679.

¹⁰⁴ *Faithful Mercury*, no. 1, July 22nd 1679.

relation. With much stock put in to proving the legitimacy of the news, the occasion for the emerging periodicals to discredit the work of their commercial competitors soon arose.

As early as the second issue of the *Domestick Intelligence*, published prior to the arrival of its later rivals, the acknowledgement of potential rebuttal from critics for the inclusion of questionable information was apparent:

*Whereas in the Paper Published on Munday last under this Title, there was a mistake of one word, of which we are sensible our Implacable Enemies the Papists will make the greatest Advantage they can, we being none of the Infallible Tribe, do hereby acknowledge our Error (which we have seen they will be hang'd before they will do).*¹⁰⁵

Criticism from competing periodicals appeared soon after: 'Whereas the matter of Fact concerning the Gentleman That was kill'd in the *Temple* hath been most erroneously and falsely related in a Pamphlet call'd *The Domestick Intelligence* ... it is therefore thought fit to give you the following account'.¹⁰⁶

Pamphlets saw similar disparagement from the periodicals. The *English Intelligencer* of July 21st reported the publication of 'a Letter', titled '*Reflections on the Earl of Danby in relation to the Murther of Sir Edmundbury Godfrey*', and began the brief report with the introduction: 'In this letter there are so many falsehoods suggested ...'.¹⁰⁷ Circulating news was open to criticism – not even the *Gazette* was exempt. The *Domestick Intelligence* of only a few months later drew attention to a report '*falslie and maliciouslie published in the Gazett*' concerning the identity of 'two of the Deliverers of the Petitions presented to His Majesty'.¹⁰⁸ Such was the importance of accuracy that the *Gazette* was forced to respond with the justification (and counter-criticism) that, though acknowledging the '*gross Mistake*' through a letter of complaint, it 'had rise from those that affirmed they saw those two Gentleman [and] was however not so great an one, as theirs, who gave out *That the King returned a most gracious Answer*'.¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁵ *Domestick Intelligence or News Both from City and Country*, no. 2, July 10th 1679.

¹⁰⁶ *English Intelligencer*, no. 5, August 9th 1679.

¹⁰⁷ *English Intelligencer*, no. 1, July 21st 1679.

¹⁰⁸ *Protestant (Domestick) Intelligence or News Both from City and Country*, no 56, January 16th 1680.

¹⁰⁹ *London Gazette*, no. 1478, January 15th 1680.

Sommerville has observed that the *Gazette* had begun to ‘take notice’ of the emerging periodicals by August of 1679.¹¹⁰ Certainly, by December it had thoroughly involved itself in the accuracy debate. Its issue of December 18th began the ongoing practice of illustrating and correcting its competitors’ inaccuracies: ‘*The Domestick Intelligence, published yesterday, having given an account of the great apprehensions of the Island of Jamaica ... It is necessary for the disabusing of the World, which is every day most grossly imposed upon by those Pamphlets, to repeat what we told near two months since ...*’¹¹¹

The effect of the perceptible struggle to emphasise a single paper’s trustworthiness over another’s within the periodicals of the Popish Plot era and aftermath was likely that the overall perception of accuracy declined as circulating print information increased. Repeatedly drawing attention to mistakes and inaccuracies was undoubtedly damaging to the reader’s sense of legitimate news information in print. ‘Papers,’ Pettegree writes, ‘were all too gleefully eager to point up each other’s errors. It seems not to have occurred to them that by impugning their rivals they damaged the credibility of the genre as a whole.’¹¹²

With rival newspapers drawing from much of the same sources to report on the same stories, attempts at originality could lead to the same event being reported in different ways, depending on the periodical: ‘this inevitably caused readers some perplexity, particularly if they read the same report in different places.’¹¹³ As the author of the later *Spectator* noted of the newspapers in 1712:

They all of them receive the same Advices from abroad,
and very often in the same Words; but their way of
Cooking it is so different, that there is no Citizen, who has
an Eye to the Publick Good, that can leave the Coffee-
house with Peace of Mind before he has given every one
of them a Reading.¹¹⁴

Rivalry and criticism could only draw further attention to the differences in accounts. Scribal news, not subject to the same kind of public disparagement, must have seemed comparably more consistently reliable, and may go some way towards explaining its continued popularity

¹¹⁰ Sommerville, *The News Revolution*, 91.

¹¹¹ *London Gazette*, no. 1469, December 15th 1679.

¹¹² Pettegree, *The Invention of News*, 264.

¹¹³ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁴ *The Spectator*, no. 452, August 8th 1712.

during this period – even in a time where print news had arguably begun to surpass it in terms of its previously unrivalled domestic content. Regardless of whether it was any more accurate, the simple lack of repeated assertions of erroneousness from highly-visible competitors likely went some way in protecting the manuscript newsletters’ claim to credibility.

New Media and the Construction of the Present

During the previous chapter, we suggested that the rapidly updating narrative of manuscript news began to challenge the contemporary perception of the ‘present’ that Woolf, amongst others, has identified. We considered that the *Gazette*, as the sole print-periodical and ‘true news’ form of 1678, largely failed to replicate the same sense of development, and consequently played a comparably less significant role in the habituation of readers to changing narratives and developments. How then, did the new media of later 1678 and 1679 affect this dynamic?

An increased level of circulating information via the print medium likely had a significant impact. Pamphlets, with the frequency of their publication and penchant for changing the established narrative (albeit for political objectives), may well have partaken in the same provocation of a concurrent and extensive public response that I have attributed to manuscript news elsewhere. Supplying new details piecemeal over later 1678 and beyond prolonged the life of the Popish Plot as a current event, which, as Claydon has observed, is integral to a ‘progressive and fluidly developing’ perception of the present.¹¹⁵ The new periodicals, though concerned with a variety of news-stories, similarly sustained the Plot’s development, reporting new discoveries and revelations well in to 1679.

In most other ways however, pamphlets affected the perception of the present more problematically. Framing a news report within a contextual account often stretching back several decades was unlikely to create an effective sense of the present. The pamphlet author’s interests were in unambiguously connecting an evocative past to a recent event, often making the narrative more of a history than news piece. Those that published with a view to discussing the entire event following its conclusion (or rather, making a premature conclusion for the purposes of a political argument) removed the sense of uncertainty we have seen with manuscript news – as Claydon writes of the 1690s (equally applicable to our

¹¹⁵ Claydon, T., ‘Daily News and the Construction of Time’, 61. The gradual unravelling of the Plot very much represents an example of Claydon’s ‘progressive expectation’ (where un concluded news created a ‘space between fixed history and unknowable future’) via the news periodical (p. 74).

own period), ‘news media no longer used the word “history” to describe its coverage of recent events, but the papers often came close to the sort of finished accounts we expect from that genre of writing.’¹¹⁶

Though evidence of reader response is lacking (see chapter 4), it is difficult to imagine a coherent sense of the present arising from the pamphlets, where, in numerous publications, the same event is described at the same time in different ways: ‘[Readers] were being presented with a complex, multilayered, and fragmented picture ... with many different versions of time playing simultaneously.’¹¹⁷ Pamphlets regarding the Earl of Danby’s part in the Plot, for example, circulated widely in later 1678 and early 1679. While *Some Reflections upon the Earl of Danby* reported that the earl had ‘as much reason to wish [Sir Godfrey] out of the World as any Papist’, its responding pamphlet, *The Earl of Danby Vindicated*, suggested that ‘God will clear his Lordships Innocencie in due time, to the shame of his Enemies’, emphasising the ‘falsity and Malice’ of opposing reports.¹¹⁸ *A Compleat and True Narrative of the Manner of Discovery of the Popish Plot* offered a similar response to *Some Reflections*, observing that ‘[the author] lays the foundation of all his said Arguments upon this notorious Lye of his own Invention (viz.) That the Earl of Danby knew of the Popish Plot, a long time before his Majesty had heard any thing of it.’¹¹⁹ *An Impartial State of the Case of the Earl of Danby* acknowledged the conflicting pamphletary reports concerning the Earl’s innocence: readers, it stated, ‘are in great doubts what to believe of him, finding so many stories Contradicting one another.’¹²⁰

Such narratives may have destabilised perceptions of the present. Confusing and disputing an account of the news or its significance likely cast doubt on the narrative reported. Which ‘present’ described in each of the pamphlets best represented the real order of events? The new print-periodicals, serialised as so to develop stories over several issues, had the potential to offer a more easily-comprehended understanding of time.

Where the delay caused by a focus on news from the continent kept the majority of the *Gazette*’s content focussed on stories already long since occurred (or ‘already belonging

¹¹⁶ Claydon, ‘Daily News’, 74.

¹¹⁷ Claydon, ‘Daily News’, 75. Though Claydon writes regarding the news of the early 1690s, his argument is highly relevant to the later 1670s, where the same effect can be seen.

¹¹⁸ *Some Reflections upon the Earl of Danby, in Relation to the Murther of Sir Edmundbury Godfrey, in a Letter to a Friend* (1679); *The Earl of Danby Vindicated: In Reflections Upon a Paper Intituled, Some Reflections Upon the E. of Danby, in Relation to the Murther of Sir Edmunbury Godfrey* (1679).

¹¹⁹ *A Compleat and True Narrative of the Manner of Discovery of the Popish Plot to His Majesty, by Mr. Christopher Kirby, with a Full Answer to a Late Pamphlet Entituled [Reflections upon the Earl of Danby], in Relation to the Murther of Sir Edmundbury Godfrey* (1679).

¹²⁰ *An Impartial State of the Case of the Earl of Danby, In a Letter to Member of the House of Commons* (1679).

to the past', to paraphrase Woolf), the new print periodicals' domestically-concentrated coverage provided a content consistently more timely.¹²¹ Their role in creating the sense of a contemporaneous present was, therefore, arguably greater than that of the longer-established periodical. While the *Gazette* of September 8th-11th, for example, opened with a story reporting the news from Turin from August 24th, the *Domestick Intelligence* of September 12th reported an account of a libellous accusation made against a Lord from the previous day.¹²² Even accounting for international calendar differences, the majority of the news reported in the *Gazette* is considerably older than the *Domestick Intelligence*'s. Domestic news – much easier to collect and edit in a timelier manner – was clearly more integral to the reader's sense of the 'present'.

Furthermore, the new print periodicals' acknowledgement of 'talk about town' – the rumour and gossip of any given moment – engaged with the relative uncertainty of the present, where further detail could confirm the legitimacy of a news story, or alter it completely. Acknowledging that an item of news might soon prove false had the potential to destabilise the idea of the present by imposing a qualified reality, forcing its reader to accept a 'speculative' current-situation – an unconfirmed 'present', with potential for substantial change. Of course, the 'present' was uncertain by its very nature. It seems likely that rumour further developed this understanding, in addition to creating continued progressive anticipation, where readers were more aware of a developing and updating news-narrative, and the 'present' created by the distinction between the news already reported and the expectation of news to come. Consequently, we might suggest that directly following the lapse of licensing, the periodical press began to possess a greater role in the construction of the present.

To conclude: it is clear that later 1678 and 1679 witnessed a remarkable change for print news. Where previously a limited and considerably restrained press had operated, the Popish Plot stimulated a rapid increase of published, domestically-focussed news forms, at a time of a lapse in licensing regulations. Pamphlets, written to appeal to a mass audience, appeared by the millions – serialised newspapers, though far fewer, were emerging to a periodical press unaccustomed to competition.¹²³ As Knights has observed: 'with so much

¹²¹ Woolf, 'News, history, and the construction of the present', 84.

¹²² *London Gazette*, no. 1441, September 8th 1679; *Domestick Intelligence or News Both from City and Country*, no. 20, September 12th 1679.

¹²³ Knights, *Politics and Opinion*, 168. Knights puts the number of pamphlets in circulation between 1679-1681 at 'between five and ten million.'

printed paper available, it would be surprising if it did not have an important effect in shaping and reflecting public opinion.¹²⁴

Through a wide variety of structures and individual styles, popular print news found itself geared primarily to the discussion of domestic occurrences to an extent far surpassing the years that preceded. For the first time during the period considered in this thesis, we might consider print news in a context of modernity previously attributed only to the more traditional forms of news dissemination. Content was comparably freer, and the majority of emerging periodicals carried a relatively full coverage of current events both at home and abroad. Though mostly adopting a structure initially similar to the *London Gazette*, a small number of noteworthy changes were made to its established form. The manner in which news information was organised and presented to the reader was distinct to the emerging periodical – emphatically anti-papal, and seemingly interested in influencing its readers to the same.

Problems associated with news relation continued to hamper the development of the new media – most likely, to a greater extent than it had its earlier counterparts. Increased circulation of the print news forms, coupled with less restrictive publishing regulations, enabled authors to respond rapidly to emerging news content, both in pamphlets and periodicals. For the former, this typically represented a publication contradicting the claims and polemic of an original – for the latter, a report included during an issue criticising the inaccuracy of its competitor. The overall effect of this on news-reception is of some significance to the extent of influence this new media had. Though it is difficult to acquire an accurate representation of contemporary response, repeated allusions to inaccuracy or political agenda may have had a detrimental effect on the perception of reliable information. As we shall come to see during the later chapter, ‘News in the Tory Reaction’, the perception was utilised in political opposition publications as a way of discrediting print news in general during the early 1680s – an effect which would, ultimately, witness the developments in print news considered during this chapter revert to a state comparable with the periodical news-trade of mid-1678.

The rise in circulating news information may have increased the role of print news with regard to the readers’ construction of the present. With both pamphlets and periodicals focussing much of their extended coverage on the Plot, the current event remained ‘current’ far longer than it might have done without their sustained interest. This, coupled with a primarily domestic focus, kept the news of the new media more in line with our established

¹²⁴ Knights, *Politics and Opinion*, 169.

understanding of the present than print had thus far managed. The experience of the news during this period – the effect of increased information concerning domestic controversy, and the way in which news was compiled in order to form a coherent narrative – will form the basis of our next chapter, ‘News Cultures in the Popish Plot’.

Chapter 4: News Cultures in the Popish Plot

Examining the reader that emerged during the years surrounding the Popish Plot and subsequent Exclusion Crisis is complex: news rarely elicits an easily-examinable response, particularly with regard to the individual reader, given that there is little personal account of news reception during the later seventeenth century. Where news of an event provokes a mass reaction, contemporary public opinion is more-plainly discernible.¹ Individual response, and the evidence of its occurrence, is highly-scattered between news texts, existing, for example, at the edges of a news sheet, or in the private correspondence of a newsletter recipient. Even this is hard to come by – where we might hope to see an indication of a reader’s reaction to a newsletter in its margins, for instance, the evidence is lacking.² Such absence might be explained by the meticulous collection of the news in surviving documents – the quantity and condition of the Mostyn newsletters, for example, might indeed indicate that they were intended for preservation from the start, providing a constant account of the era’s events – and thus encouraging a less lasting contemporary interpretation, or reaction to the news, in the form of marginalia (effectively, readers saw the letters as an archive of the past, which they did not wish to contaminate with their fleeting reactions). Ian Atherton provides an alternative explanation:

Most newsbooks and newsletters (except those to the secretaries of state) were not annotated by the reader; such marginalia on texts often circulated amongst friends would have been to impose one interpretation on all subsequent readers.³

What few studies of reader reaction there are tend to focus on the diaries and records of individuals to extrapolate information about readers in general – thus presenting the problem of typicality.⁴ Readers do not, for the most part, retain careful diaries or collections of the

¹ For example, it is evident that news of the Popish Plot in 1678-79 played on long-standing public anxieties; we might speculate that the numerous rumours that arose in the months following the outbreak of the news story are implicative of the general public reaction. In *Popery and Politics in England*, Miller makes note of some of the ‘popular reactions’ circulating in the provinces (160).

² None of the Mostyn newsletters examined in this thesis, for example, contain marginalia that might help elucidate the manner of its reception.

³ Atherton, ‘The Itch Grown a Disease’, 51.

⁴ For example: Kevin Sharpe’s study of William Drake, and his annotations: Sharpe, K., *Reading Revolutions: The Politics of Reading in Early Modern England* (London: Yale University Press, 2000).

news events of the day. What historians are left to examine, therefore, are the ways in which news information was re-used, and re-purposed. And of course, such re-use is a subtly different thing to the original reaction. New motives, and the rules and constraints of new genres, begin to intrude between the first response and the modern scholar. Nevertheless, whilst re-use does not show us an immediate reaction to the news, it does at least indicate a considered contemporary response: ‘One way of reading the news,’ Atherton suggests, ‘was to write it down, for preservation.’⁵ We are fortunate that, in relation to the later-1670s, a small number of such records exist.

There are a few readers who kept a chronological narrative of the events represented in the news sheets of the later seventeenth century; of whom, Roger Morrice and Narcissus Luttrell will be examined during this chapter. Though records of other political diarists exist, such as Samuel Pepys (1633-1703), Morrice and Luttrell’s works will be considered as a focussed case-study of news reception; they alone maintain a relevant and uninterrupted personal record of the news during the period examined in this chapter: the emergence of the Popish Plot.

It is best, perhaps, to begin with an account of these two individuals. Prior to his ejection from the vicarage of Duffield in 1662 for failing to adhere to the Act of Uniformity, Morrice (1628-1702) had been a puritan minister.⁶ After the Restoration, he became private chaplain to the statesmen John Maynard and Denzil Holles, both of whom have been described as ‘parliamentarian veterans of puritan persuasion’.⁷ Under their tenure, Morrice began to periodically document the significant news events of the day in his *Entring Book*, written between 1677-1691. This book, published for the first time in 2006, comprises of over 900, 000 words of carefully chronicled news, covering many of the significant occurrences of the period, in addition to providing a thorough account of restoration society.⁸ Though there is little information regarding the purpose of the *Entring Book*, a number of historians have offered possible explanations. Notably, Mark Goldie has speculated that the *Entring Book* ‘is so detailed, and its appearance so like a newsletter, that its author must have been, in effect, a full-time journalist, perhaps supplying newsletters to a group of

⁵ Atherton, ‘The Itch Grown a Disease’, 46.

⁶ Goldie, M., ‘Morrice, Roger (1628/9–1702)’, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004; online edn, May 2011 [<http://0-www.oxforddnb.com.unicat.bangor.ac.uk/view/article/37785>, accessed 11 Jan 2012]

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ McElligott, J., ‘Roger Morrice and the Reputation of the *Eikon Basilike* in the 1680s’, *The Library*, 7th series, 6:2 (June, 2005), pp. 119-120.

presbyterian-whig politicians'.⁹ The absence of a surviving newsletter penned by Morrice, however, has provoked further consideration of Goldie's suggestion: though Mark Knights acknowledges that Morrice's news entries are written as though intended for an audience, he observes that 'no surviving newsletter appears to have been written by Morrice, and there is no evidence that he was circulating news for profit. He was, then, perhaps a writer of news rather than a commercial newswriter.'¹⁰

Knights compares Morrice to other 'writers of news' of the period, suggesting that their works can, in part, be attributed to the novelty of the news phenomenon:

The collection of news, prompted by the spectacular plotting in the later Stuart period, engrossed both amateur and professional newsmonger. News was an item to be collected, sometimes pored over, sometimes kept private, sometimes shared.¹¹

As Thomas Rugg, a contemporary to Morrice and fellow news chronicler, noted, '[I write] as well for my owne satisfaction as of such friends as shall happen to have a perusal hereof.'¹² Morrice's motivations for keeping a journal of the news may well have been for a similar purpose. Tony Claydon's recent work supports the notion: 'The purpose of such accumulations can be opaque to modern scholars, but they look like archives of completed events intended for later historical reference.'¹³ Whatever the reason, the *Entring Book* represents one of the fullest accounts of English society in the closing decades of the seventeenth century.

Narcissus Luttrell (1657-1732) was trained as a solicitor, became a Middlesex Justice of the Peace, and served as an MP in the Exclusion Parliament from 1679-1680, and in Parliament from 1690-1695. At the time of his death, he was obituarised in *The London Evening Journal* as 'an exclusionist and a staunch whig'.¹⁴ Like Morrice, Luttrell chronicled contemporary events; his narrative begins in 1678 with the Popish Plot, and spans the

⁹ Goldie, 'Morrice, Roger'.

¹⁰ Knights, M., 'Judging Partisan News', 215.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² *The Diurnal of Thomas Rugg, 1659-1661*, W.L. Sachse (ed.) (Camden Society, 3rd series, vol. 91, 1961), p. 1.

¹³ Claydon, 'Daily News and the Construction of Time', 75.

¹⁴ Henry Horwitz, 'Luttrell, Narcissus (1657-1732)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004; online edn, Jan 2008 [http://0-www.oxforddnb.com.unicat.bangor.ac.uk/view/article/17226, accessed 11 Jan 2012]

following three decades, until 1714. Anna Battigelli has suggested that this activity formed one of the ‘three lifetime habits’ of his textual adult experience, the other two being the acquisition of ephemera, and the keeping of comprehensive ‘reading notebooks’.¹⁵ Luttrell’s assortment of printed materials (now dispersed, but forming the basis of the Burney collection in the British Library) represents one of the ‘preeminent surviving collections of seventeenth century serials.’¹⁶ The majority of Luttrell’s chronicles were compiled from the newsletters and newspapers of the period.¹⁷ Knights has compared the works of Luttrell to Morrice, suggesting that Luttrell too was provoked into writing by the controversies of the time, and their coverage in the new media.¹⁸ Certainly, both are clearly influenced by the news forms that began to emerge in the 1670s and after.

We might also suggest that record keeping, in the manner of Morrice and Luttrell, represents an attempt to chronicle contemporary society for historical reference.¹⁹ Certainly, Luttrell in particular appears to have maintained a three-pronged approach; by building a considerable collection of printed materials, recording the news, and reflecting on the meaning of new publications, Luttrell seems to catalogue the state of mind of the era. It is likewise certainly possible that Morrice’s detailed recording in fact represents a written history, which may explain the selective nature of the content of the *Entring Book*.²⁰

A reading of the entries in Morrice’s *Entring Book* and Luttrell’s *A Brief Historical Relation of State Affairs* corresponding to the emergence and development of the Popish Plot will form the basis of this chapter. Though the survival of such detailed news collections, and the evident close engagement with news culture, may make Morrice and Luttrell atypical, there are enough parallels with evidence from others (as we shall see) to suggest that the basic experience revealed by their accounts was shared by many contemporaries. The analysis will consider how emerging reports of the Popish Plot affected the frequency, ordering, and content of their entries, in addition to comparing common areas of interest, the balance between domestic and foreign coverage (and how this altered with the development of the Plot), and the effects of the new kinds of print information considered in the previous chapter.

¹⁵ Battigelli, A., “‘To Conclude Aright Within Ourselves’”: Narcissus Luttrell and the Burden of the Protestant Reader, 1678-88’, *The Reader Revealed*, ed. Sabrina Alcorn Baron (London: The University of Washington Press, 2001), pp. 75-77.

¹⁶ Nelson, C., Seccombe, M., *British Newspapers and Periodicals*, vii.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁸ Knights, ‘Judging Partisan News’, 215.

¹⁹ See, for example, Claydon’s article quoted above.

²⁰ Such as Morrice’s decision to largely ignore gossip and rumour until it was authenticated. See below for further detail.

Furthermore, the theoretical ideas advanced by Jürgen Habermas and Benedict Anderson will be applied to the reader of the later seventeenth century; particularly, the concept of an abstract community formed through the circulation of news, and the role of news in creating and developing what might be termed the ‘public’.

The *Entring Book*

Morrice’s *Entring Book* is structured much like the newsletters of the period. Each entry is separated by the date, in a frequency that typically matches the periodicity of the manuscript publications. Generally, the first news reported is domestic, and concerns the political activities of the House of Lords or Commons. Foreign news is interspersed throughout entries, in a manner dissimilar to the newsletters, which typically separate domestic and foreign reports. The varying length of the entries would suggest that, like both printed and handwritten news forms, Morrice’s *Entring Book* was subject to the availability of news information, despite his being ‘astonishingly well connected and well informed’, as McElligott has observed.²¹

Morrice rarely makes the precise origins of the information he reports on known, but frequently refers to ‘witnesses’, or ‘papers’, in an attempt to consider the authenticity of the news.²² This need for verification is typical of the news forms we have considered; in a time of rapidly developing and updating news stories, readers continued to question the legitimacy of emerging information. His attempts at proving accuracy are similar to those of the editor of the newsletters to Mostyn:

Morrice repeatedly distinguished between credible reports, probable reports, and truthful reports, and frequently intervened to offer his judgement about the veracity or likelihood of any account or possible events.²³

Like the editor of the newsletters, the author is careful to confirm the reality of certain reports. In his examination of the Popish Plot, to be analysed later in this chapter, numerous examples arise.

²¹ McElligott, ‘Roger Morrice’, 119.

²² For example, he refers to ‘very Credible witnesses’ during the entry from July 9th 1678, and a ‘Paper’ discussing the Popish conspirators on November 2nd. Morrice also regularly refers to ‘Informacions’ (such as during his entries from November 15th and 28th 1678, and January 7th 1679).

²³ Knights, ‘Judging Partisan News’, 216.

It is probable that Morrice acquired his news from a number of different sources. Indeed, it has been suggested that

Morrice's *Entring Book* provides evidence of the importance of oral sources of news and information, and of the interdependence and intermingling of these oral sources with printed and handwritten forms of communication.²⁴

Essentially, prior to the emergence of the Plot, it is likely that Morrice's main sources of news came from a combination of printed sources, such as the *London Gazette*, and handwritten or oral sources, such as the information that was passed on through the forum created in the markets and coffee-houses of the capital.

The *Gazette*, in particular, clearly represents a major reference point: frequently, the origins of Morrice's news seem to arise here. In the entry for July 13th 1678 for example, Morrice writes 'Elsenburg is taken by the Danes from the Swede'²⁵ – in the *Gazette* of July 11th, a similar report is included: 'Copenhagen, July 9. The 8th instant in the evening the Castle of Elsenburg was surrendered to the Danes'.²⁶ When the Plot subsequently arose as a major story, stimulating an increase in news production and variety, Morrice's entries comment on a wider range of source materials, particularly with regard to orally-transmitted information. This will be examined in further detail later in the chapter, as the effect of the Popish Plot on the reader is considered.

Occasionally, Morrice's news actually precedes the information of the *Gazette*. On the 9th July, 1678, Morrice reports that 'the Lorraines have lost very few or none Considerable, either for Number or Quality But the Prince of Baden'²⁷ – the *Gazette* reports the same, but at a later date: 'Brussels, July 12 ... on the *Imperialists* side very few were killed, but many wounded, amongst whom is the Prince of *Baden*'.²⁸ Presumably, as the periodicity of Morrice's entries appears to be dependent solely on the availability of current information, he was able to report the incident before the *Gazette* could provide an account of the event in its next published issue. This raises a significant question: namely, how 'new' to

²⁴ McElligott, 'Roger Morrice', 132.

²⁵ Morrice, R., *The Entring Book of Roger Morrice, 1677-1691*, Volume 2, ed. Mark Goldie (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2007), p. 74.

²⁶ *The London Gazette*, no. 1320, July 11th 1678.

²⁷ Morrice, *The Entring Book*, 74.

²⁸ *The London Gazette*, no. 1319, July 8th 1678.

the reader is the news? In this instance, where delays caused by publication periodicity evidently allowed news to disperse through other channels prior to print publication, the impact of such news is questionable. When applied to domestic news, this is more apparent still. Oral news spreads fastest from its point of origin. In the capital, it is probable that an individual would hear about an event by word of mouth long before the same incident came to be described in a printed publication. The consequence of this was that the public could speculate on every aspect of the news story – its truth, its extent, its political or social import – before an ‘official’, or at least, wider-reaching, account was relayed through a printed news sheet like the *Gazette*. Morrice’s writing allows for little personal reflection on the news; when we consider Luttrell’s chronicles, however, the effect is more noticeable.²⁹

Despite some differences, the content of the *Entring Book* prior to the Popish Plot is most comparable with the newsletters. Morrice’s mix of foreign and domestic news is balanced in the favour of English political or social occurrence. In a similar process to the editor of the newsletters to the Mostyn Estate, however, Morrice selects significant or interesting reports from the continent to supplement news of domestic events. In a typical example from the July 9th 1678, he writes of peace between ‘France Holland and Spaine’, the ‘terrible Hail stone in France’, and regimental movements in Flanders, in addition to providing information regarding the Scottish elections, notable actions within the House of Lords, and the developments in a continuing domestic criminal prosecution.³⁰ When news of the Plot breaks later in the year, Morrice’s narrative turns almost entirely to the development of that news story. Between August 1678 and January 1679, each dated recording in the *Entring Book* specifically refers to either the Plot or its effects. Furthermore, the focus becomes exclusively domestic.

The reason for this change is apparent. As discussed elsewhere, the Popish Plot represents one of the first major news reports covered and developed across a range of media – in a variety of printed and handwritten periodicals, and by word of mouth. In the months following its emergence, it is represented more in the news than any other contemporary event. Amongst the public, the Plot became a source of constant anxiety and fear. As Barry Coward has written, ‘the country was gripped by a wave of anti-Catholic hysteria and panic like that of 1640-2’:

²⁹ The analysis of the writings of Narcissus Luttrell (regarding the speculation regarding Godfrey’s death), below, describes this idea in further detail.

³⁰ Morrice, *The Entring Book*, 74.

Letters of the time are full of rumours that the French and Spanish had landed, that “night riders” had been seen, that Catholics were arming themselves secretly, that bombs had been placed under churches.³¹

As a puritan, it is unsurprising that the threat of a Catholic uprising similarly became the focus of Morrice’s concern. Of course, the Plot had an important international dimension within itself: it alluded to a much wider, longer-standing concern regarding the threat of Catholic intervention from abroad. Rather than the emerging news story displacing all other reports, therefore, we might consider it as a story which absorbs all others. The Plot became a way of discussing a wide range of concerns; related reports – from abroad or otherwise – could be interwoven into the narrative of the Plot with relative ease.

Despite Morrice’s focus, the entries actually reveal little regarding his feelings towards the alleged conspiracy. A number of historians have commented on the nature of Morrice’s delivery, with McElligott describing the *Entring Book* as ‘a dispassionate chronicle of public affairs.’³² The lack of personal opinion may provide further evidence that Morrice’s journal was intended for a newsletter audience, emulating the more formal of the news forms of the period. His first two Plot-related recordings are typically subdued: ‘August 12. Dr. Tonge shewed Mr. Kirkby 43 Articles of the Plot and desired the King might see them. September 2. Oates discovers himselfe (first) to Mr. Kirkby lodging at Fax Hall.’³³ In order to assess the nature of Morrice’s response therefore, other methods must be considered.

Though he does not remark upon it himself, the Plot altered the manner of Morrice’s recordings in a number of ways. By considering these changes, an observation regarding his reaction to the news can be made. In particular, there is a notable increase in the frequency of the entries. There are, for example, 37 recorded during the months of November and December 1678, after news of the Plot began to develop; in comparison, only 39 entries are recorded for the entirety of the six months preceding.³⁴

That the rise in entries during this period directly follows the emergence of the conspiracy as a news story is surely no coincidence. The Popish Plot had a clear influence on Morrice as a reader – it became the prominent focus of his recordings. This rise in frequency also follows the increase in the availability of news material regarding the Plot, as discussed

³¹ Coward, *The Stuart Age*, 327.

³² McElligott, ‘Roger Morrice’, 119.

³³ Morrice, *The Entring Book*, 75.

³⁴ *Ibid*, 62-89.

in the previous chapters. The emerging news story, plainly of significance to the social and political well-being of the country, seems to have become a clear source of concern – certainly, the manner in which Morrice follows its progression suggests that it had developed in to the main pursuit of his news investigations. For Morrice at least, the demand for constantly updating and developing information is clear – what this might tell us about readers in general is less so. While news of the Plot undoubtedly stimulated the interest of its readers, and to those the information was subsequently disseminated, how the public then drove the demand for updates is only observable by considering the news-market – though we might view Morrice’s narrative as an individual chronicle of this effect. The lively competition of the domestic news-market in the following year (most of which was still preoccupied with news of the Plot, and related stories, as we have seen), suggests that such demand existed. By Autumn of 1679, the *Domestick Intelligence*, the *English Intelligencer*, and the *Weekly Pacquet*, and others, all were published on a regular basis.³⁵

Nevertheless, though the frequency of Morrice’s recordings increase, the length of his entries remain variable. Whilst the recording dated the 9th of November, 1678, has a length similar to that of the newsletters to Mostyn, the following is considerably shorter. Both the increase in the number of entries and the varying length of each recording give the impression of a rapidly developing narrative: Morrice updates the *Entring Book* as and when information becomes available.

Consequently, his entries at the time of the Plot’s emergence reveal a desire to understand the development of the Plot chronologically. As new information surfaced, Morrice wrote in the margins of his manuscript so that the information was ordered as it happened in reality, rather than as it became known to the larger public. These retrospective recordings are characteristically shorter than Morrice’s sequential entries, due to the space available in the margins of his work. Generally, they consist of a single sentence at most, typically reporting a particular development of the news story: ‘Oates, Tonge and Kirkby appear before the King and Counsell’; ‘Sir Edmondbury Godfrey was missing. On the 17 found neare Primrose hill’; ‘Oates examined by the Commons who sent for the *Lord Chief Justice* Scroggs and he seals Warrants before them’.³⁶ These entries are significant, as their presence suggests that the importance of the Plot became increasingly evident to the public as the news story developed. As it did so, Morrice added to his earlier recordings in order to provide a fuller and more coherent narrative. This may also indicate that the author was

³⁵ Nelson, Seccombe, *British Newspapers and Periodicals*, 661.

³⁶ *Ibid*, 75.

indeed interested in providing a history of his time, rather than recording for a newsletter or any of the other suggestions considered above. His attitude towards the recent past is certainly that of an historian – the ‘key events’ are recorded, and trivia largely ignored.

Undoubtedly, the rise in print periodicals enabled Morrice to source his news from a wider variety of locations. In his first full consideration of the Plot on November the 2nd 1678, he writes,

there is a Paper goes commonly abroad, tells us, That the Popish conspirators had provided publick Officers of State who should have succeeded those that are now, if the conspiracy had succeeded.³⁷

This entry refers to one of the claims made by Titus Oates during his confession of the Plot to Sir Godfrey. Morrice is careful to withhold judgement regarding the authenticity of the claim; when he refers to the document, he begins with the prefix, ‘It saith’. In doing so, Morrice is able to make a clear distinction between his writings, and the assertions of the ‘paper’. Similarly, when discussing the murder of Sir Godfrey, Morrice is forced to draw attention to the lack of a verified story. He writes that Godfrey’s murderer ‘kept him there till Munday night, trapan’d him into the house (I think) by a constable under pretence’.³⁸ Discovering the truth behind the rumours and polemic of the new publications must have been difficult; certainly, more so than presuming the accuracy of a longer established periodical.

Consequently, the *Gazette* remains a significant influence on Morrice’s *Entring Book*. In numerous entries between November 1678 and January 1679, Morrice’s recordings either appear to have their origins in the news from the *Gazette*, or appropriate certain parts in full. On November 18th, Morrice makes a note of the proclamation appearing in the *Gazette* of the same day: ‘A Proclamation for apprehending George Conyers, Le-Phaix, Richard, Simonds, Walsh and Beeston’.³⁹ Several times in November, he transcribes these proclamations in full.⁴⁰ Often, Morrice appears to look to the *Gazette* as a way of authenticating information gathered from seemingly less trustworthy sources. The periodical’s status as the ‘official’ news sheet of the government no doubt helped confirm the validity of its claims to the reader.

³⁷ Morrice, *The Entring Book*, 75.

³⁸ *Ibid*, 77.

³⁹ *Ibid*, 81.

⁴⁰ On November 11th, and the 25th. Though the title of another appears in Morrice’s entry for the 30th, along with an allowance of paper space in order to copy it, the proclamation itself is absent.

In certain instances, referring to the *Gazette* could be the more apparent method of obtaining seemingly-legitimate information. Events abroad, for example, less easily verified by Morrice in London, could be substantiated by the foreign-focussed ‘official’ news sheet.

Of course, Morrice was a Whig, and the *Gazette* the paper of traditional political authority. One might assume to find a more reluctant or sceptical author in Morrice when referencing the ‘official’ periodical, but the *Gazette*’s role in news culture seems to have transcended its political origin. By the later 1670s, it had been established long enough to provide a seemingly ‘reliable’ source of information, regardless of its traditional affiliation.

All the same, the *Gazette* was by no means Morrice’s primary source of information. Following the emergence of the Popish Plot, the content of his narrative continues to comprise of a composite of a number of different news forms. We may look at Morrice’s representation of the trial of William Staley in order to consider this. On November 15th, 1678, Staley had been arrested ‘for speaking very desperate and horrid words against the King’.⁴¹ In his *Entring Book*, Morrice makes note of the arrest on the day that it occurred. The timing of Morrice’s entry suggests that his news information was received orally; it is improbable that a written report could arise and circulate in the time between Staley’s apprehension and Morrice’s recording. The trial is first reported in the *Gazette*, however, in the issue dated for the 21st-25th:

This day Mr. *William Staley* was brought to his Tryal before my Lord Chief Justice *Scroggs*, and other His Majesties Judges, in the Court of the *Kings Bench*, and being indicted of High-Treason, for Treasonable Words against His Majesties Life, was Convicted, and had Sentence past upon him; To be Drawn, Hanged, and Quartered.⁴²

Similarly, Morrice is able to report Staley’s execution prior to its coverage in the *Gazette*. On the 26th November, he writes, ‘Mr. Staley was Executed Yesterday’⁴³ – it is not until the 28th that the *Gazette* is able to report the same: ‘This day Mr. *William Staley* was drawn upon a

⁴¹ Morrice, *The Entring Book*, 80. For a full description of the trial of Staley, see Kenyon, *The Popish Plot*, 98-99.

⁴² *The London Gazette*, no. 1358, November 21st 1678.

⁴³ Morrice, *The Entring Book*, 83.

Sledge from *Newgate to Tyburne*, and there Hanged and Quartered according to the Sentence past upon him.⁴⁴ Evidently, Morrice receives his information elsewhere.

As Morrice's news is a composite, it typically offers a fuller account of events than the *Gazette* and other printed and handwritten news sources provide. Morrice is able to use aspects of all, and supplements written news with acquired oral information. For example, whilst the *Gazette* reveals very little as to how Parliament assessed the threat of the Plot (aside from the implications that can be drawn from the proclamations printed during and after November, 1678), Morrice's *Entring Book* frequently alludes to the concerns of the Houses of Lords and Commons. On November 5th, 1678, his entry begins, 'They both talke very much about this dangerous Plott'.⁴⁵ A similar entry on the 30th November further emphasises the fears of the Commons: 'That Popery groweth and inceaseth and the danger thereof'.⁴⁶ Throughout the second half of 1678 and early 1679, in fact, Morrice provides a substantial account of parliamentary discussion and decision. Knights offers an explanation as to the source of the parliamentary news:

Older forms of oral dissemination endured, of course, at alehouses, markets, on the highways and, in London, at the Inns of Court, booksellers' stalls, the Exchange and Westminster Hall, the latter a favourite haunt of Roger Morrice.⁴⁷

It would appear that, often, orally-communicated news offered current information that print or hand-written material could not: in certain areas of London, 'the latest news could be found on everyone's lips'.⁴⁸ Those best informed were those who had access to the widest variety of sources.

Nevertheless, despite the growing availability of printed pamphlets discussing the implications of the Plot, Morrice does not refer to any throughout September, 1678, to January, 1679.⁴⁹ Knights has placed the number of pamphlets circulating between 1679-1681 at between five and ten million, with an average print run of 2,300.⁵⁰ Though prior to the

⁴⁴ *The London Gazette*, no. 1359, November 25th 1678.

⁴⁵ Morrice, *The Entring Book*, 76.

⁴⁶ *Ibid*, 85.

⁴⁷ Knights, 'Judging Partisan News', 204.

⁴⁸ Fox, A., *Oral and Literate Culture*, 346.

⁴⁹ Other than the 'paper' discussed above, briefly mentioned in the entry for November 2nd, 1678.

⁵⁰ Knights, *Politics and Opinion*, 168.

lapse of the Licensing Act, it is reasonable to assume that Morrice would still have had access to a relatively wide variety of printed materials by late 1678 and early 1679; certainly, following the emergence of the Popish Plot, there was a surge in the number of pamphlets produced.⁵¹ His decision to refrain from discussing pamphletary news may offer insight into Morrice's editing practices. By choosing not to comment on pamphletary information, Morrice may have been attempting to avoid including content not easily verified. Furthermore, if we accept Goldie's suggestion that Morrice's entries were intended for use in commercial newsletters, then it is possible that pamphletary news was avoided due to the demands of his clients. McElligott has written that

Morrice may have been valued by others – the 'you' of the *Entring Book* – for his judgement; partisan and ambiguous news had to be filtered to fit some type of interpretive framework ... he was engaged in two types of judgement: the first weighed credibility.⁵²

We can postulate that the difficulty of assessing the accuracy of pamphlets – of separating the 'facts' from the polemic – may have influenced Morrice's decision to avoid discussing pamphletary news, and its varied interpretations of contemporary events, within the *Entring Book*. Of course, pamphlets were also often late with information compared to oral news sources and the *Gazette*. Morrice's recordings, as we have seen, develop quickly during this period – by the time pamphlets emerged, the author had already established the key events pertaining to the specific time.

The distinction Morrice makes between the authenticity of pamphlet news and information from other sources is intriguing. Evidently, Morrice was more inclined to accept the credibility of news from trusted oral sources than reports of parliamentary activity published in pamphlet form. Gathering information through a network of reliable social contacts was a long-established method of news acquisition; its accuracy had likely been proven time and again over the years. By the later seventeenth century, this was certainly no less true; indeed, it may in fact have been easier to accept information as authentic if it came from a less politicised or more trusted, though less formal, source. Though published pamphlets and periodicals were the newer form of information transferral, and their

⁵¹ Raymond, *Pamphlets and Pamphleteering*, 331.

⁵² Knights, 'Judging Partisan News', 216.

production increase had been seen as indicative of a turn towards a literate culture, it is evident that readers still relied on traditional methods of news acquisition. Furthermore, it is likely that to a certain extent, these older methods were more readily accepted as sources of legitimate information.

Morrice does, however, engage in one topic that received much coverage in the pamphlets of the period. It has been noted elsewhere that the murder of Sir Edmund Berry Godfrey had a clear and considerable impact on contemporary news readers. In Morrice's *Entring Book*, it is first described on the 2nd November: he states that a reward is issued to be 'given to any person, that should discover the Manner and Circumstances of Sir Edmund Bury Godfreys Murther',⁵³ in reference to the proclamation printed in the *Gazette* of October 17th-21st:

*And as a Reward to such as shall make a Discovery of the Murtherers, His Majesty is Graciously pleased hereby to promise to an Person or Persons who shall make such a Discovery, whereby the said Murtherers, or any of them, shall be Apprehended, the Sum of Five hundred pounds.*⁵⁴

In four of the five following entries, Godfrey's story is developed further. The event is similarly represented in the Mostyn newsletters, the *Gazette*, Luttrell's chronicles, and in numerous other printed pamphlets and periodicals of the time.⁵⁵ Of the many developments in the narrative of the Popish Plot, the death of Godfrey is the only incident to appear in all of the news forms. The event significantly increased public anxiety. Oates had sworn his confession of the Plot before the Justice of the Peace: his subsequent murder seemed to confirm the Plot's existence – and to verify Oates's claims.

A number of historians have remarked on this effect. C. J. Sommerville has stated that 'when that very justice, Sir Edmund Berry Godfrey, was found murdered a month later it increased the sense of a conspiracy penetrating high into the government'.⁵⁶ Coward has noted that the death of Godfrey 'dispelled all doubts' over the reality of the Popish Plot.⁵⁷

⁵³ Morrice, *The Entring Book*, 75.

⁵⁴ *The London Gazette*, no. 1348, October 17th 1678.

⁵⁵ A small selection printed in late 1678, for example: *A Sermon at the Funeral of Sir Edmundberry Godfrey; A Poem on the effigies of Sir Edmund-Bury Godfrey, who was barbarously murdered November the 20th, 1678; By the King, a proclamation for the discovery of the murtherers of Sir Edmund-Bury Godfrey.*

⁵⁶ Sommerville, *The News Revolution*, 88.

⁵⁷ Coward, *The Stuart Age*, 326.

Similarly, John Miller writes ‘Oates’s story seemed devastatingly and independently confirmed by the murder of Sir Edmund’.⁵⁸ Evidently, its representation across the news forms was due to its perceived significance; though Morrice does not expressly comment on it, it is clear that the event had a considerable impact on the contemporary public.

Morrice’s narrative of the Popish Plot continues into January 1679. As with the news sheets and letters, its subsequent developments form a considerable part of the content throughout the ensuing months. It is clear that the emergence of the Plot as a news story had a significant effect on the manner in which Morrice received and recorded contemporary events, altering the frequency of his entries, and the character of the *Entring Book’s* content. A desire to understand the news sequentially (indicated through later additions to earlier entries) supports our notion of a text designed primarily for historical reference. With an abundance of new news content circulating, this is perhaps understandable – news emerged piecemeal, with the narrative of events often developing anachronistically. Morrice’s construction of news thus seeks to make sense of a complex, controversial news narrative. Analysis of the chronicles of Narcissus Luttrell, as we shall see, reveals a very similar purpose.

A Brief Historical Relation

Beginning in September 1678, Luttrell’s recordings start with the emergence of the Plot, and, like Morrice, follow the story through to its conclusion and beyond. The manner in which Luttrell records events, though dissimilar to Morrice in terms of frequency and ordering, illustrates a remarkably similar approach to the reception of news. Where Morrice often records numerous entries over a number of weeks as developments become available, Luttrell includes only a single, comparatively lengthier entry per month, summarising the most relevant news of the period. Both, however, create a chronicle of events.

Chronicling in the manner of Luttrell is perhaps indicative of an attempt to record the latest news as recent history, rather than as developing and evolving stories. Luttrell’s monthly updates group reports from different times under the single news story they describe, with the effect of offering the news as a complete narrative. The ‘present moment’ that Claydon has described thus never has the chance to appear, or at least – not on paper. Reader

⁵⁸ Miller, J., *Popery and Politics*, 158.

interest was clearly in understanding the news as a complete narrative, hence Morrice's later additions, and Luttrell's decision to record substantial amounts periodically.⁵⁹

Between September 1678 and January 1679, Luttrell maintains an almost entirely domestic news coverage. As with the *Entring Book*, the Popish Plot is represented to a far greater extent than any other news event during this time. The domestic controversy caused much alarm; its place at the forefront of Luttrell's initial writings is expected. Indeed, it is probable that it was the Plot itself which stimulated the desire in Luttrell to record the significant events of his era. His narrative begins by breaking the news of the alleged conspiracy:

About the latter end of this moth was a hellish conspiracy, contrived and carried on by the papists, discovered by one Titus Oates unto Sir Edmondbury Godfrey, justice of peace, who took his examination on oath.⁶⁰

Morrice's account of the Plot takes place in a pre-existing framework of structured news recording. Since 1677, he had been regularly reporting the news in his *Entring Book*; the emergence of the Plot as a news story considerably altered the manner in which he did this. Luttrell's reaction to the news is no less dramatic – indeed, it seems to have provoked him into writing. 'It is not coincidental,' Anna Battigelli has written, 'that Luttrell's reading, collecting, and excerpting began in earnest with the allegations of a Popish Plot to assassinate the king in September 1678'.⁶¹ Though Horwitz has observed that 'what is known or may be surmised of his political views is not altogether consistent', there is indication that Luttrell later became a Whig sympathiser, and that he supported the claims for exclusion.⁶² The Popish Plot once again brought a fear of Catholic uprising to the forefront of contemporary politics, together with the dangerous implications of a potential Catholic heir to the throne. Certainly, the Plot seems to have been of considerable political importance to Luttrell; this may explain why he chose to record its developments in the period that followed.

⁵⁹ See: Claydon, 'Daily News' for more, where the author also observes that the print periodicals of the early eighteenth century often offered the news in the same way.

⁶⁰ Luttrell, N., *A Brief Historical Relation of State Affairs from September 1678 to April 1714*, Volume 1 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1857), p. 1.

⁶¹ Battigelli, "'To Conclude Aright Within Ourselves'", 77.

⁶² Henry Horwitz, 'Luttrell, Narcissus (1657–1732)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004; online edn, Jan 2008 [<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/17226>, accessed 1 Feb, 2012]

As with Morrice, the murder of Sir Godfrey is noted in detail in Luttrell's chronicles. Luttrell's account, however, is far more comprehensive:

On Saturday the 12th of this month was sir Edmondbury Godfrey, a justice for the peace of Middlesex, missing, and so continued till Thursday morning following, when he was found murdered on Primrose Hill, near Hampsted; his stick and gloves sett up against the hedge, his money and watch in his pockett, and his sword sticking in his body, but not bloody (which is an argument he was run through when dead), and he had a livid circle round his neck, as if he had been strangled.⁶³

The description is highly comparable to that included in the newsletter to Mostyn, dated October 26th 1678:

Sir Edmundberry Godfrey a Justice of Peace that took the first examinacons... he went out of his house on a Satterday and was never heard of nor found till thursday following in a ditch near Hamstead with his sworde run through his heart and body but neither sworde nor clothes nor place bloody... it appeared evidently that he was strangled & dead before he was toucht with a sworde, the blood being settled about his throat and a mark likewise on the outside.⁶⁴

We can likely assume that only nine days after the discovery of his body, information in print regarding the manner of Sir Godfrey's death was scarce.⁶⁵ Reports detailing the nature of his discovery may instead have been disseminated either through manuscript documents, by word of mouth, or most likely, by a combination of both. That both the letter to Mostyn and Luttrell's recordings are so factually close suggests that the story was disseminated both

⁶³ Luttrell, *A Brief Historical Relation*, 1.

⁶⁴ BU MS Mostyn 9089, fol. 118v, October 26th 1678.

⁶⁵ Sutherland, *The Restoration Newspaper*, 49-50. During the course of this thesis, I have not been able to find a published account that predates this letter to Mostyn.

widely and rapidly, and that it had, within a short time, become a significant development in the narrative of the Plot.⁶⁶

Morrice's account has already shown that news of the Plot stimulated public discussion, and the oral dissemination of information. Luttrell's entry for October 1678 reveals an understanding of the hazards of accepting this information as fact. When considering the murder of Sir Godfrey, he writes,

his death caused variety of talk: but that which is most remarkable are the severall reports that run about whilst he was missing; that he was gone into the country; that he was at a relations house in town; and lay secrett there whilst he was courting of a lady. Others reported that he had really killed himself; which the posture he was found in confuted.⁶⁷

As a reader, Luttrell is careful to withhold judgement until there is clearer confirmation of a report's authenticity. Presumably, Morrice would have been aware of these rumours too; in the *Entring Book*, however, he refrains from commenting on them, stating only 'The manner of Sir Edmund Bury Godfrey's Murther is not yet discovered'.⁶⁸ As with other unverified sources, Morrice is evidently reluctant to discuss rumour or speculation as part of his news narrative.

In a manner similar to Morrice's *Entring Book*, the *Gazette* has a noticeable influence on Luttrell's chronicles. Frequently, it seems as though the author's recordings have their origins in the news from the *Gazette*. Luttrell's entry for December, for example, makes note of 'Letters from Ireland', which 'inform us of the apprehension of Peter Talbott, titular archbishop of Dublin, and col. Talbott ... on account of the plott discovered in England, and that they were committed close prisoners'.⁶⁹ The *Gazette* of December 5th had printed a letter in full, describing the arrest: 'Peter Talbot *the titular archbishop of this city ... is now a close*

⁶⁶ Pettegree identifies news of the murder of Sir Godfrey as the point 'where the political crisis was brought to a head' – Pettegree, *The Invention of News*, 240. Though some historians reserve an increase in narrative uniformity for the rise of print material, where a typically larger audience received the same information from a single source, Morrice's and Luttrell's accounts of Godfrey's death at least suggests that the oral transferral of news in London during later 1678 was consistent enough to allow a similar representation of the event to emerge in both scribal records.

⁶⁷ Luttrell, *A Brief Historical Relation*, 1-2.

⁶⁸ Morrice, *The Entring Book*, 76.

⁶⁹ Luttrell, *A Brief Historical Relation*, 4-5.

prisoner; as is also his Brother Colonel Talbot'.⁷⁰ Given the specific wording, it seems likely that Luttrell had his information from the *Gazette*. Later in the month, the *Gazette*'s report that 'great numbers of Men that had been seen in the Isle of *Purbecke* ... appears hitherto to be no other than a Mistake' is echoed by Luttrell: 'About the 7th or 8th was a report of great numbers of men haveing landed in the Isle of Purbeck in Dorsetshire ... but, upon examination, it prov'd a mistake.'⁷¹

Repeatedly throughout October to December, 1678, Luttrell makes note of the printed proclamations that appeared in the news sheet. The first he considers concerns the 'discovery of the murtherers of the said Sir Edmundbury Godfrey, promising the reward of 500 pounds and pardon', with a further eight referred to over the following months.⁷² Despite the *Gazette*'s apparent reluctance to discuss the implications of the Plot, it is clear that its requirement to print official declarations allowed readers to acquire, at the very least, an understanding of the significance of the conspiracy. The government evidently perceived a serious threat; new legislation appeared an observable attempt to diminish the danger. Consequently, it is perhaps understandable why reports of the proclamations appear in the newsletters to Mostyn, and in Morrice's and Luttrell's news recordings alike. To readers, their presence in the news sheet perhaps had an implied meaning – like Godfrey's murder, they seemed to verify the existence and severity of the Plot. Though, in comparison to the emerging pamphlets and papers of 1679, the *Gazette* was the older, official news source, it clearly retained its position within the hierarchy of print-news reporting. In the period of crisis, where new information in various print forms was constantly arising, the *Gazette* still seems to have offered a relatively consistent and influential method of authenticating the latest news.

Though at odds with the politics of both Luttrell and Morrice as Whigs, the *Gazette* had been established a sufficient amount of time to have appeared distinct to its readers from the government. A decade's worth of periodical news from a source increasingly familiar over time no doubt offered some assurance of authenticity to the reader, or at least a consistently-available source of news to which readers had become accustomed. With little real competition over the preceding years, referring to the *Gazette*'s most recent reports when discussing the news likely became fairly common practice.

⁷⁰ *London Gazette*, no. 1362, December 5th 1678.

⁷¹ *London Gazette*, no. 1364, December 12th 1678; Luttrell, *A Brief Historical Relation*, 5.

⁷² Luttrell, *A Brief Historical Relation*, 2.

Certainly, Luttrell's account continues to cover a variety of the same events. From the author's comments on the news of the King's speech to Parliament on the 9th November, reported in the *Gazette* of the 7th-11th, we might observe a distinction between the way in which he and Morrice edit their source material. Whilst Morrice typically summarises proclamations or transcribed speeches without offering personal judgement, Luttrell edits in such a way that draws attention to certain articles or ideas. Of the king's speech, he writes,

the king came into the house of lords... [and] came to assure them of his readinesse to comply with all the lawes that shall secure the protestant religion, and that not only during his time, but also of any successor, so as they tend not to impeach the right of succession, nor the descent of the crown in the true line.⁷³

Luttrell follows the above with an explanation: Parliament, he suggests, had applied

themselves earnestly to the prosecution of the popish plot, and went on now very unanimously, and came even to consider about excluding the duke of York from the crown as a papist; which occasioned the preceding speech of the king.⁷⁴

Though the motivation behind the King's speech is not commented on elsewhere, Luttrell perceives a specific political purpose to the rhetoric. As a supporter of exclusion, it is possible that he was attempting to emphasise the ideological dissimilarity between the considerations of Parliament, and the demands of the monarch. In contrast to Morrice during this period, the interpretation of news information forms an important part of Luttrell's narrative form.

This is most likely a result of the fact that Luttrell often appears to write retrospectively. As he summarises the news at the end of each month, Luttrell is able to comment on the consequences of an event, rather than describing each new development as it emerges, as Morrice does. Of the story concerning the missing John Powell (reported on the

⁷³ Luttrell, *A Brief Historical Relation*, 2-3. The last part of the inclusion quotes the King's speech directly.

⁷⁴ *Ibid*, 3.

23rd through a proclamation issued by the king), for example, Luttrell writes, ‘This gentleman was missing some time, which occasioned the proclamation by his majestie, out of his royall goodnesse; but it proved after that he was still alive.’⁷⁵ Writing with hindsight enables Luttrell’s chronicles to maintain a relatively more coherent narrative in comparison to Morrice, and reveals a different type of reader. By waiting until a fuller picture of the news is formed, Luttrell is able to avoid discussing the false reports and irrelevant information that emerge as news stories develop. Morrice’s recording style is different; he writes as new information becomes available, building an understanding of an event such as the Plot an entry at a time. Consequently, his account is more commonly amended than Luttrell’s, as and when the latest details of an event arise.⁷⁶ These methodologies, though different from one another, nevertheless maintain a rather similar approach to the purpose of gathering news – as considered during the introduction to this chapter, both provide a relatively full history of the time; a record that, whether collected in a series of smaller, individual parts or longer pieces chronicled periodically, still offers a comprehensive account of the period.

Despite the technical differences in the way both authors record the news, the emergence of the Plot as a news story evidently had a significant effect on Luttrell too. Like Morrice, the penchant to follow the story’s progression is noticeable. Indeed, over the course of the ensuing years, Luttrell subsequently amassed a comprehensive collection of documents relating to the Popish Plot. Following on directly from January 1679, his records continue to discuss the story as it develops, and as it eventually formed a significant part of the back-story to the later Exclusion Crisis.

News Communities and the ‘Public’

We may now consider the theories of Benedict Anderson and Jürgen Habermas to examine the seventeenth century reader of news in further detail. In *Imagined Communities* (1991), Anderson posited the notion that news was significant in creating an ‘extraordinary mass ceremony’, whereby there was a ‘simultaneous consumption’ of the newspaper between the reading public.⁷⁷ He describes how the news is interpreted in ‘silent privacy’:

⁷⁵ Luttrell, *A Brief Historical Relation*, 3.

⁷⁶ For example, the marginalisation of the first short entries discussing the emergence of the Plot most likely suggest that they were included after the entries that follow them chronologically; presumably, when Morrice first became aware of the details.

⁷⁷ Anderson, B., *Imagined Communities*, 34. Perhaps a little belatedly, Anderson suggests that the newspaper ‘only became a general category of printed matter after 1700’; 25.

Yet each communicant is well aware that the ceremony he performs is being replicated simultaneously by thousands (or millions) of others of whose existence he is confident, yet of whose identity he has not the slightest notion ...

What more vivid figure for the secular, historically-clocked, imagined community can be envisioned?⁷⁸

Anderson's argument is compelling: the idea that as readers consider the newspaper they are aware that others are inherently connected to the same information suggests the formation of a 'community of the mind': that is, a public connected to one another through a shared knowledge, or more specifically in this context, a shared reaction to a depicted event.

In Luttrell and Morrice's narratives, this is most evident in their accounts of the Plot. Both follow the development of the story closely, alluding to its perceived significance. Luttrell, in particular, acknowledges a shared reaction to the news story – his comment regarding the 'variety of talk' following the disappearance of Sir Godfrey, for example, suggests an awareness of others receiving and digesting information at the same time as the author. Though Morrice's account of the Plot does not comment on it expressly, his entries show that there was a large quantity of rapidly circulating information available. The experience of receiving news during this period, therefore, where there was a clear knowledge that others were receiving and reacting to the same information, may indeed have gone some way towards creating the 'imagined community' that Anderson writes of – a nation of people connected by the immediate significance of contemporary events.

Consideration of the newsletters exposes a similar effect. In particular, scribal news sent to the provinces provides a fitting demonstration of Anderson's notion of the 'silent privacy' of news interpretation, nevertheless connected to a wider community of readers. A number of newsletter offices, such as that run by Henry Muddiman in the 1660s and 1670s, sent regular scribal periodicals from the capital; though addressed to a single recipient and sometimes tailored to meet that individual's interests, the majority of the content of the newsletter was copied, and sent to numerous customers across the country. Certainly, those receiving the newsletters were aware of the commercial context of the particular news form; others were privy to the same information, and performed the same 'ceremony' of reception. The consequent formation of an 'imagined community' between the readers of newsletters is

⁷⁸ Ibid, 35.

a conceivable development. It is possible to envisage an abstract connection between the individuals subscribing to a regularly produced scribal periodical.

Additionally, it is likely that where readers of the *Gazette* are concerned, the ‘simultaneous act’ that Anderson writes of is more apparent still. Of the printed news sheets, the *Gazette*, prior to the lapse of the Licensing Act, was probably the most available, and almost certainly the widest read. Both Luttrell and Morrice make note of the printed proclamations featured in the periodical between August 1678-January 1679; their access to news information, in addition to their physical proximity to one another, and to the publisher of the *Gazette*, suggests that the way in which they received the information is likely to have been a very similar experience; the same information acquired through the same medium, read at a similar time. As the *Gazette* was relatively inexpensive and was circulated widely in the capital, it is probable that a substantial number of others also shared the experience. In this instance, it is all too easy to imagine the enacting of Anderson’s ‘extraordinary mass event’. The formation of a community as a result of heightened exposure to news information is a plausible proposal – certainly, this is one of the first instances in which a representation of a series of events reached an extensive number of people across Britain, and elicited wide-scale interpretation and public discussion.

Of course, news reception in London during this time need not take place in ‘silent privacy’ – and perhaps most frequently did not. We have seen already that the coffee-house was established by the later 1670s as a hub of news discussion – a ‘public’ space for the reading and interpretation of news events. While Anderson’s ‘silent’ consumption might best describe an individual’s reading of the news, metropolitan news reception was often a public affair, and not at all characteristic of the ‘privacy’ of Anderson’s ‘imagined community’. Knowledge and understanding of an event was gathered within the public sphere through an amalgamation of first-hand exposure to print and scribal news, in addition to orally-transmitted information. Coffee-houses, and other public-spaces, facilitated the process – they were a seventeenth century development, and the new abundance of news material to be found there was received with popular enthusiasm. We might observe that news during this period was in fact responsible for forming not just a community of thought, where individuals were connected by the private experience of news reception, but a physical network of news dissemination and interpretation – a community; not just an imagined one.

With regard to the later seventeenth century, we might also (or instead) consider the notion of small communities connected to a larger context of news exposure and public response. It has been suggested above, for example, that Morrice received much of his news

from trusted oral sources. Numerous spaces existed within the public domain whereby groups of people could discuss and exchange news information. Their experience of news, therefore, was framed within a context of communal participation – the events depicted had the potential to affect society as a whole; subsequent discussion naturally drew attention to the possible consequences of the reported news, and allowed for speculation with regard to cause. Rather than just the private reception of news connected to an imagined community then, we might also discern the formation of ‘real’ communities, in which news was traded, interpreted communally, and considered in a wider context, integral to public reception during this time.

This notion still allows for a simultaneous consumption of news. Oral news, for example, was transmitted rapidly, and London was of a relatively small size. In the coffee-houses or markets, or anywhere people might gather to discuss the most recent events, news could be traded from person to person in quick succession, and again elsewhere just as quickly – a human network of news recipients and correspondents could form. In the capital, at least, oral news might travel at a speed sufficient for Anderson’s ‘simultaneous consumption’ to occur, with the benefit of always being more contemporary than its printed counterpart (inevitably, a slower method of disseminating new information, with a content unavoidably dated by the time of its publication). Morrice, for example – as we have seen above – was able to acquire the news from such sources first. This was very much a public method of dissemination – though oral news surely represents our oldest mode of information transferral, news might continue to spread most quickly through the form.

We must, however, question this idea with regard to the provincial reception of news. Unlike within the capital, the time delay in news dissemination between London and other regions in Britain did not allow for a ‘simultaneous’ act to occur across the country. Regionally, reception of the news was staggered. Communities across Britain would receive reports of the latest news at a variety of different times. Consequently, the information a provincial reader might acquire had the potential to be ‘old news’ long before its arrival. During the Popish Plot, where the narrative of events unfolded quickly through the proclamations of the *Gazette* or reports from the latest domestic newspaper, provincial readers must have been acutely aware of the delay in dissemination. By the time they had read of the prosecution of the alleged plotters or the discovery of some new conspiracy, the situation in the capital had undoubtedly changed. Oral news could do little to stem the effect

– though it may well have gotten to provincial regions earlier than printed, there could still be little chance for a simultaneous reaction to take place.⁷⁹

Though this fundamentally altered the nature of provincial news reception, it may have still been possible for an inter-regional community of readers to form to some extent, even without simultaneous reception. Delayed news was still capable of provoking a reaction – a similar sense of connection to that explored above could form simply through the exposure to news, alongside the knowledge of others digesting and interpreting the same information across the country. Luttrell’s chronicles, for example, demonstrate the effect of widespread news regarding the Plot on the public. In his entry for December 1678, he writes

About the 7th or 8th was a report of great numbers of men haveing landed in the Isle of Purbeck in Dorsetshire, which so alarmed that country, that they all rose immediately in armes; but, upon examination, it prov’d a mistake.⁸⁰

Across the country, the circulation of information regarding the alleged conspiracy had created widespread fear. Frequent updates and developments sustained it, and seemed to further confirm the reality of the threat; the subsequent rumours and talk of the coffee-houses and markets made the notion of a Catholic uprising all the more imminent. As reports like the one Morrice comments on in November, 1678 (that there was ‘not a Papist of consideration for Estate or Creditt in England, nor Wales, who is not acquainted with the plot’), extended and circulated, public anxiety amplified.⁸¹ In the months that followed, false reports of advancing popish armies became increasingly common. A mass audience ranging across the country was, essentially, connected by the same imagined threat, albeit at a varying time.

In any case, it seems likely that the provincial reader’s sense of the present was substantially different to the reader’s in the city. Claydon has explored the effect of delayed news on the construction of time with regard to the early eighteenth century, writing that ‘travel delays created “fractured” presents’.⁸² This seems understandable – a reader in the north of England could not hope to develop the same sense of a fluid, changing present that a

⁷⁹ This may indeed explain why, during the Glorious Revolution of 1688 for example, communities in provincial regions are seen to have reacted to the circulating news and rumour at varying times – see ‘News and the Glorious Revolution.’

⁸⁰ Luttrell, *A Brief Historical Relation*, 5.

⁸¹ Morrice, *The Entering Book*, 80.

⁸² Claydon, ‘Daily News’, 67.

reader in London might, where news of domestic developments were far quicker to emerge and spread (though even the news-communities in London had to make sense of the intermittent, frequently delayed, and often anachronistically-ordered reports coming in from international sources).

The notion of ‘nationality’ has often entered the narratives of historians here. Anderson, for example, has suggested that the idea has its origins in the ‘imagined community’ created by the circulation of printed material.⁸³ In the later seventeenth century, it is indeed possible to observe a community of people emerging, connected by both the exposure to news information, and its subsequent discussion, interpretation, and consequence (as in the example noted above) within the public sphere. The various effects of news on its recipient considered above certainly suggest a move towards a public connected on a national, rather than a traditionally regional, level. News brought articles of social and political importance to the forefront of ordinary British life, presenting issues, such as the Plot, that had the potential to affect interconnecting communities of people throughout the country. As a facet of this it is also possible to observe, as Jürgen Habermas has, the development of ‘public opinion’ during this period, and the effect that news had on its growth in Britain during and following the later 1600s.

In his work *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere* (first published 1962), Habermas envisions a gradual move towards the formation of the ‘public’, motivated by the emergence of periodical news. In Britain, ‘from the middle of the seventeenth century on, there was talk of “public,” whereas until then “world” or “mankind” was usual ... whatever was submitted to the judgement of the people gained publicity’.⁸⁴ Consequently, Habermas views the use of news mediums by state authorities as significant to the formation of the ‘public’. He describes how the government ‘made use of this instrument to promulgate instructions and ordinances’, and that ‘very soon the press was systematically made to serve the interests of the state administration’.⁸⁵ As Luttrell and Morrice’s narratives indicate, the *Gazette* was used to publish proclamations regarding the Plot in the latter months of 1678. By addressing the ‘public’ through the periodical, Habermas suggests that the government actually aided in its formation: ‘the addressees of the authorities’ announcements genuinely became “the public” in the proper sense’.⁸⁶

⁸³ Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, 46.

⁸⁴ Habermas, *The Public Sphere*, 26.

⁸⁵ Habermas, *The Public Sphere*, 21-22.

⁸⁶ *Ibid*, 21.

In a similar manner, the effect of appeals to the public through pamphletary modes of news dissemination can be considered. Habermas writes,

A public sphere that functioned in the political realm arose first in Great Britain. ... Forces endeavouring to influence the decisions of state authority appealed to the critical public in order to legitimate demands before this new forum.⁸⁷

It is during this time – in the years leading up to the Exclusion Crisis – that the political parties began to become more independently defined. Whig and Tory political news pamphlets, to be discussed in greater detail during the following chapter, were circulated to as large a group of people as possible in an attempt to secure popular support. Indeed, Habermas writes that ‘party conflict penetrated in this fashion even into the disenfranchised segment of the population’.⁸⁸ Pamphlets sought to convey a clear political message, and news was presented to the reader with the intent of influencing the nature of their support.⁸⁹ Information was submitted to the public for critical assessment on a large scale; discussion and interpretation of the polemic within the public sphere actively encouraged continuing participation. As with the proclamations featured in the *Gazette*, the sense of a ‘public’ addressed as a whole through pamphlet publication became highly important to its formation. It attributed the collective populace with political and social significance, not only allowing, but encouraging, vigorous contemplation of current political development; and as an unintentional by-product, pamphlets stimulated thought of the greater community, connected by concerns of political import.

Evidently, there are some similarities between Habermas’s notion of the emerging ‘public’ and Anderson’s theory of the role of news in the formation of a ‘national’ community. Habermas considers the ‘public’ as initially a small but growing group of politically aware individuals, actively seeking discussion and participation. He suggests that this group – the ‘public’ –

⁸⁷ Ibid, 57.

⁸⁸ Ibid, 58.

⁸⁹ Though it is worth noting that Morrice seems reluctant to quote pamphlets as a source of information – the perception of authenticity clearly remained an issue for the reader.

found itself immersed within a more inclusive public of all private people, persons who – insofar as they were propertied and educated – as readers, listeners, and spectators could avail themselves via the market of the objects that were subject to discussion. ... The public of the first generations, even when it constituted itself as a specific circle of persons, was conscious of being part of a larger public.⁹⁰

As with the formation of Anderson's 'imagined community', Habermas proposes that emerging print information enabled an abstract connection to form between small groups of news readers, resulting in a sense of the larger 'public' – but both Anderson and Habermas's arguments focus on print as the solitary stimulant for this effect. With manuscript newsletters freely available in the coffee-shops of London, we need not consider print the sole force behind this development. Rather, we might instead consider the periods of political crisis and subsequent rises in news information of all types, in addition to the 'public' spaces offered by coffee-houses, as fundamental to the news-driven connection between groups and individuals, and to the formation of a larger public. Indeed, the social network for this sort of exchange may have been in place for some time earlier, as historians have begun to consider.⁹¹

Nevertheless, the development of the public was predominantly a city experience, Habermas suggests. In the more rural areas, he observes that the growth of 'the public' was still 'extremely small'.⁹² Certainly, the 'public' that Habermas writes of is more easily discernible in the capital, but the emergence of the provincial public should not be underestimated. We have seen elsewhere that news was received and disseminated in provincial regions – Anderson's theory might suggest that there could emerge a similar sense of a community connected by exposure to, and simultaneous interpretation of, news information. It is, therefore, possible to perceive a growing provincial 'public', ideologically comparable to the 'public' of the capital.

Prior to the development of periodical news, Habermas observes that:

⁹⁰ Habermas, *The Public Sphere*, 37.

⁹¹ See, for example, *The Politics of the Public Sphere in Early Modern England*, eds. Lake, P., Pincus, S. (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2007). In that collection: 'The politics of 'popularity' and the public sphere' by Lake, and 'Men, the 'public' and the 'private' in the English Revolution' by Ann Hughes. Both make the case (as, indeed, the collection does in general) for an earlier public sphere of oral discussion.

⁹² Habermas, *The Public Sphere*, 37.

The domain of “common concern” which was the object of public critical attention remained a preserve in which church and state authorities had the monopoly of interpretation ... in philosophy, literature, and art, even at a time when, for specific social categories, the development of capitalism already demanded a behaviour whose rational orientation required ever more information.⁹³

As the popularity of regularly produced news sheets and letters increased, Habermas notes a change in the attitude towards the responsibility for interpretation:

Private people for whom the cultural product became available as a commodity profaned [the ‘once sacramental’ character of the church and state] inasmuch as they had to determine its meaning on their own (by way of rational communication with one another), verbalise it, and thus state explicitly what precisely in its implicitness for so long could assert its authority.⁹⁴

Essentially, the discussion of news amongst the public took power of interpretation away from the church and state. Instead, individuals received and reacted to new information, and came to their own understanding as a result of the debate that arose within the public sphere. The social advancement was highly significant – along with the notion of greater political weight came a sense of better-defined individual identity. The coffee-house, in particular, has been seen as of considerable importance to this development.

As the popularity of coffee-houses, considered in the first chapter, has indicated, there existed a growing demand for a platform in which individuals could assess the contemporary issues of social and political significance featured in the news reports of the period. It is here where Habermas perceives the physical origins of the ‘public’: in coffee-houses, ‘critical debates ignited by works of literature and art was soon extended to include economical and

⁹³ Ibid, *The Public Sphere*, 36-37.

⁹⁴ Ibid, 37.

political disputes, without any guarantee ... that such discussions would be inconsequential, at least in the immediate context.⁹⁵ The coffee-house, Habermas proposes, 'not merely made access to the relevant circles less formal and easier; it embraced the wider strata of the middle class, including craftsmen and shopkeepers.'⁹⁶ Whilst Anderson's theory considers the formation of an 'imagined' community through regular news, Habermas's illustrates that a physical community was also being formed. We might indeed discern the development of an active politically-minded society, more inclusive than ever before – not just academic, intellectual, or upper-class, but growing, and down the social scale too. Gathering places such as coffee-houses played no small part in facilitating the change.

There is perhaps one more challenge to add to this examination. Though Anderson and Habermas's theories offer us an intriguing view of the effect of news on later seventeenth-century society, it is important to note that their arguments both seem to assume that media – especially print – informed and so created the public. Much of our discussion has demonstrated that the effect might in fact have been far more mutually productive than this. That is, as much as media influenced the formation of the public, the public influenced the creation of media. A pre-existent, actively participating 'public' community to an extent created 'news', as evidenced from the writings of Roger Morrice and Narcissus Luttrell, where the details of recent occurrences are discovered not necessarily from published news sources, but from pre-existent social communities. These were the places that news was generated, identified, and spread in its initial stages. Oral news, such as it was, then fed into manuscript and print, where it might reach a larger and more widespread audience. Furthermore, the demand for news undoubtedly helped form and maintain the emerging industry. Thus, there was perhaps a more reciprocal relationship between the media and the public than there initially appears.

Nevertheless, it is clear that news of all types had a considerable impact on both the individual reader, and the public as a whole. Luttrell and Morrice's writings indicate that whilst published news was significant to an individual's understanding of a current event, it was by no means the only source of seemingly credible information. Rather, a network of oral news sources, complimented by both handwritten and printed periodicals, formed a composite which offered a relatively complete narrative of an event. Often, it was only through this amalgamation of news sources that a reader could acquire an 'accurate'

⁹⁵ Ibid, 33.

⁹⁶ Ibid.

knowledge of contemporary occurrences. Additionally, the importance of oral news dissemination in considering the later seventeenth century news reader should not be underestimated. Though an older form of information transferral, Morrice and Luttrell's recordings illustrate its significance to the distribution and interpretation of news during this period. Indeed, it is likely that for a seventeenth century reader living in the capital, oral reception of news remained one of the principal methods of accruing knowledge.

The two news readers considered in detail in this chapter illustrate that when news of a particularly controversial incident arose, such as the Popish Plot, it stimulated active and sustained enquiry, increasing the demand for regular news, and the quantity of circulating information. In both Luttrell and Morrice's recordings, the Plot becomes the main focus of their attention by later 1678, and remains so for the entirety of the ensuing months. Furthermore, there is evidence to suggest that events such as the Plot actually altered the manner in which individuals received news. In Morrice's *Entring Book*, there is a clear rise in the frequency of entries following the emergence of the story. There is, additionally, a clear turn towards domestic news; though Morrice, for example, had previously maintained a balance between foreign and domestic reporting, news from the continent is largely absent from the *Entring Book* following September 1678.

Though Anderson's 'imagined community' is suggestive of later-seventeenth century news reception, we might also consider both an abstract association between readers of news within the provinces and capital, in addition to a physical community of small interconnecting groups of news readers, linked by a larger context of news dissemination and interpretation. Habermas's notion of the emerging 'public' would certainly appear to fit the latter of these seventeenth century news reception depictions, where groups of individual readers were connected through a sense of the larger 'public', though both Anderson and Habermas undervalue the significance of other news forms. It is evident too that emerging political methods of addressing and appealing to this group through the news periodicals and pamphlets of the period actually aided in its formation. The 'public' was being constructed; news offered the reader the opportunity to understand and discuss the developments portrayed, and to share in a communal and participatory interpretation of events.

Chapter 5: News in the 'Tory Reaction'

By the early 1680s, the ideological context of the Popish Plot – so comprehensively elucidated and explored in the pamphlets of the later 1670s, as we have seen – had evolved into something of even greater immediacy and significance to contemporary England. Where a history of anti-Catholicism had simply underlined the Plot's position in the narrative, the need for action became increasingly evident as the possibility of a Catholic successor to the throne became ever more real. Charles II was aging – though in good health, no direct heir to the throne had been produced during his reign. Should the king die, his brother – the Duke of York – would succeed.

York was Catholic. As a Catholic, he would, it was feared, 'not only feel obliged to promote Roman Catholicism but also seek to enhance royal power and to rule in an arbitrary fashion like Louis XIV in France.'¹ The comparison held water – on the continent during the previous decade, Louis XIV had managed a substantial inflation of the crown's authority over both the church and nobility, effectively making his power 'absolute'. Under a Catholic successor in England, 'all kinds of horrors could be expected.'²

Groups arguing for and against exclusion – a bill for the elimination of the Duke of York as successor, and for protection against popery and arbitrary government – began to emerge, eventually giving rise to the Whigs (supporters) and Tories (opponents). In parliament and public – and indeed, in the *press* – the argument commenced. Supporters sought to rally public opinion to a common cause, convince an electorate to vote for those who could further their agenda, and brought different 'Exclusion Bills' before each of the three parliaments of 1679-1681.³ It was as much public as it was parliamentary – out-of-doors, the debate continued.

Partisan politics found its way into the media almost immediately. Though the *Gazette* sustained, as ever, its selective coverage, the debate took shape as it developed in the public's interpretation, inspired heavily by the polemic of a multitude of pamphlets, and in the content of scribal newsletters and emerging printed papers. Information was widespread – perspectives and political opinions varied dramatically. As one newsletter author summarised as early as 1678: some suggested 'it could not well be hoped that the Laws sufficient for security could be obtained while the Duke was soe nigh to influence and obstruct their progresse as formerly they had seen and felt'; another 'That the thing proposed towards the

¹ Harris, *Charles II*, 137.

² Tapsell, G., *The Personal Rule of Charles II, 1681-1685* (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2007), p. 22.

³ Harris, *Charles II*, 138.

Duke was indeed very hard; but if Popery were a thing ... it was fit rather to doe something that was hard, than to lye groaning under what was intollerable.' Still others on the opposing side maintained that 'to deprive the least subject of his [Majesty's] presence was noe less than Banishment, and such a Deprivation as this would not onely bee a staine upon the Duke; but an affliction to the joys and comfort of the King'; 'That it is an unreasonable Act ... our ffeares of the Duke must be the Papist's hopes'; 'That the Plots were never more thick against Queen Elizabeth ... than during the time of the Queen of Scotts Imprisonment.'⁴

And yet, by 1684, the sense of urgency surrounding the Exclusion Crisis felt in the pamphlets and publications of the later 1670s and early 1680s seem to have faded. With the dissolution of Charles's parliament in 1681, political pressure regarding the issue of succession was, to an extent, withdrawn from the immediate focus of public concern. If we were to consider coverage in print news alone, we might in fact perceive an overall decline in public interest. Representation of the debate – once rife in the news pamphlets of earlier years – seemed to gradually disappear. Traditionally, this has indeed been the suggestion: 'Most studies of the Restoration period as a whole tend to treat the years between the dissolution of Charles II's last parliament in March 1681 and the king's death in February 1685 as ones of political anti-climax.'⁵

Recently, historians such as Grant Tapsell have sought to challenge this view, instead examining the continuing dominance of partisan politics on contemporary political life. The exclusion debate had, for some years, taken the forefront of public and governmental regard: following the dissolution of parliament, that level of interest did not simply dissipate. Indeed, many expected that Charles II would still honour the Triennial Parliaments Act of 1664, calling another parliament in the years that followed: those expectations continued 'far beyond the spring of 1681.'⁶

Tapsell examines a number of additional counter-arguments, establishing first that a degree of political polarisation existed by 1681 'as bad as that which had existed during the civil wars of the 1640s'.⁷ Political discussion thus remained passionate – events such as the Rye House Plot of 1683 (two plots, in reality, with an ambition to either capture the king and force the change of ministers and policies or to kill both Charles II and the Duke of York) drew attention to continued issues regarding succession, albeit now with the Whig cause appearing the opinion of dissent and political disloyalty. Partisanship continued even without

⁴ BL MS Carte 72, fols. 403-404.

⁵ Tapsell, *The Personal Rule*, 7.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 27.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 20.

parliament – with the expectation of another sitting after 1681, an apprehensive political atmosphere (and heightened tensions between opposing partisan groupings) remained.⁸ Widespread fear of Catholicism remained – so much so, that the Privy Council was forced into publishing a denial that Catholics had come into England under the guise of Protestants seeking protection from persecution abroad.⁹ As has been well documented, religious persecution within England turned to the dissenters and non-conformists – popular mistrust was encouraged and grew; prosecutions became increasingly common; punishments more severe. Even the Rye House Plot had been seen as a product of non-conformity.¹⁰

Hardly an 'anti-climax' then. Even so, if the expectation of further political discourse continued alongside a range of diverse partisan influences, how do we explain the apparent decline of print variety? Why did the emerging periodical press of 1679 – seemingly growing in terms of competition and popularity following the lapse of licensing and in the wake of domestic controversy – appear largely absent from the mid-1680s news market?

Through a consideration of the development of the news during the initial years of Charles II's so-called 'personal rule', this chapter will seek to provide an answer, before analysing the condition of the print, pamphlet, and scribal press in a period of relative political and social calm in order to evaluate lasting change. Examination of the Mostyn newsletters from 1681-1684 will illustrate that, even as the circulation of domestic news declined via the print-periodical press, scribal news retained its extent of coverage, and again presents a more consistently 'modern' representation of news transmission.

Though analysis of press development alone would initially appear to contradict the idea that news sustained domestic interest (as we shall see), it will become clear that the Popish Plot and Exclusion Crisis did indeed influence the development of news and society by further stimulating the growth of a news culture more responsive to a public sphere that was still engrossed in politics after the crisis. However, it is only when we go beyond the major print news of the period and take an interest in the detailed forms of the press, especially manuscript material, that this becomes apparent.

We have chosen a period during the summer of 1684 to compare news forms, as the initial period of disturbance regarding exclusion, and following the discovery of the Rye House Plot, had largely settled by this point. At a comparatively less contentious moment in

⁸ *Ibid*, 27-31.

⁹ *Ibid*, 79.

¹⁰ *Ibid*, 68.

history, we might better assess lasting change (both in terms of structure and content, and the more general 'status quo') to contemporary news.

The 'Tory Reaction'

During the previous chapter, we considered the development of news up to the initial months following the lapse of licensing in 1679, where we might summarise the condition of the news at that time as follows: domestic controversy had encouraged national interest at a time where the legal framework for censorship declined, leading to a variety of pamphlet, periodical, and scribal news sources openly trading in current and developing domestic information. We departed at a point where the new print periodicals had begun to emerge to increasing popularity – a development seemingly unlikely to be reversed.

The periodicals that emerged during the initial months following the lapse of licensing were largely Whig-sympathetic. Those previously examined – the *Weekly Pacquet of Advice from Rome*, and the *Domestick Intelligence*, for example – recurrently emphasised the danger Catholicism posed to society in the years following the emergence of the Plot. 'Everything,' Sommerville has written, 'became grist for the Whig mill. ... Their papers only ran news that could be related to the supposed global Catholic conspiracy'.¹¹ From there, it was not so much of a leap to exclusion – not, of course, that the papers suggested exclusion outright. Rather, there continued a sustained anti-papal content, likely aimed at maintaining both public concern, and the perception of a present Catholic threat.

Appeals to public opinion through the publication of Whig petitions to parliament appeared in several news sheets after 1679, typically emphasising the need to call a parliament in order to discuss protection for both the King and Protestantism.¹² The *Domestick Intelligence* published December 9th, 1679, featured a '*Humble Address and Advice*' to Charles II, asking 'That Your Majesty would consider the great Danger Your Royal Person is in; as also the Protestant Religion, and the Government of these Your Nations'.¹³ To obtain signatures, Whigs canvassed within the capital from home to home; the two petitions offered up before Charles in early 1680 contained 30,000 and 50,000 signatures respectively.¹⁴ Undoubtedly, Whig publications stressing the necessity for action against the Papists played no small part in acquiring such numbers. Over the next two years, similar

¹¹ Sommerville, *The News Revolution*, 92.

¹² Herman, M. C., *Historical Dictionary of Stuart England, 1603-1689*, ed. Ronald H. Fritze & William B. Robinson (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1996), p. 396.

¹³ *Domestick Intelligence or News Both from City and Country*, no. 45, December 9th 1679.

¹⁴ Herman, *Historical Dictionary*, 396.

petitions appeared often, restating the present danger of Catholicism, and the need for the preservation of parliament as the best form of protection for the king and country.¹⁵ The *Protestant (Domestick) Intelligence* published January 11th, 1681, included a petition to the Lord Mayor of London, calling for heightened security within the city to defend against '*the horrid and devilish design of the Papists*'.¹⁶ The issue that followed published a request for the sitting of parliament:

knowing no way (under heaven) so effectual to preserve his Royal Majesty (and 'tis) from the utter ruin and destruction threatened; as by the speedy sitting of this present Parliament ... We your Petitioners do beseech your Lordship ... to permit this present Parliament ... to Assemble and continue to sit until they have effectually secured us against Popery.¹⁷

Though it is difficult to gauge a sense of the public's receptiveness to petitions such as these, it seems likely that a partisan appeal through a widely-circulated printed newspaper had the potential to have a significant effect on a public already predisposed to anti-Catholicism. Here was a clear choice to be made – to support the succession of James to the throne (and, perhaps, the persecution of Protestant dissenters), or to oppose it. Petitioning forced many to 'commit themselves either to the "discontented" or to those who saw in the maintenance of the status quo the only refuge from chaos'.¹⁸ That is, to suffer under a Catholic successor, or to resist the change. With periodical news seemingly providing an efficient platform for the transferral and dissemination of politically-motivated discourse to the public, the requirement for partisan groups to use the press to their advantage became increasingly apparent.

Whig presence in the periodical news-press seems to have greatly outweighed the Tory initially. Sommerville has surveyed the response, observing that the earl of Shaftesbury ('the diminutive but fearless leader of the Whig opposition') understood the significance of the press with regard to achieving political change at a time where his opponents continued to

¹⁵ Herman, *Historical Dictionary*, 396.

¹⁶ *Protestant (Domestick) Intelligence or News Both from City and Country*, no. 87, January 11th 1681.

¹⁷ *Protestant (Domestick) Intelligence or News Both from City and Country*, no. 88, January 14th 1681.

¹⁸ Knights, *Politics and Opinion*, 256.

hope it might be ignored.¹⁹ Thus we see the Whig periodicals noted above emerging to relatively little competition, alongside a pamphletary effort so frequent it began to acquire a serialised nature, and even a manuscript newsletter circulation likely going out 'in over a hundred copies'.²⁰ Pamphlets such as *The Cry of Blood*, which gave an account of the 'Barbarous and Bloody Assault' of John Arnold, a justice of the peace for Monmouth, emphasised the continued threat from popish conspirators, likening the attack to 'that infamous Murder committed by the *Papists* on that Vigilant, Worthy, and Renowned Justice, Sir *Edmondbury Godfrey*.'²¹

Similar news-pamphlets offered accounts of recent accusations, prosecutions, or sentences served against Catholic offenders: *The Execution of William Howard* reported the Lord's part in 'Conspiring the Death of the King, and the Massacring all the Protestants in England, Scotland, and Ireland, and to introduce Popery.'²² Others, such as *Some Account of the Tryals and Condemnation of Five Notorious Jesuits*, offered detailed reports regarding the trials of those accused of conspiring to 'Subvert the Government, root out the Protestant Religion, and establish Popery'.²³ *Englands Grievances In Times of Popery* continued the pamphletary practice of providing a history for comparison – and thus, a comprehensive explanation 'why all Sober Protestants May Expect no better Dealing from the Roman-Catholicks, Should God for their Sins, suffer them to fall under the Popes Tyranny Again.'²⁴

This, of course, was the purpose of the Whig publications – popery and arbitrary power was the perceived counter-Reformation threat, and the crux of Whig ideology; news, however accurate, was tailored to draw attention to it.²⁵ In the initial years following the Popish Plot, we might suggest the practice had a significant measure of success. Certainly by 1681, the Whigs are said to have received 'extensive support' for exclusion, both in public and parliament.²⁶ And yet – we need only look to the accession of James, Duke of York, to the throne in 1685 to see that the Whig cause ultimately failed.

Analysis of what has become known as the 'Tory Reaction' may help explain the manner in which events unfolded post-1681, as well as the subsequent development of the

¹⁹ Sommerville, *The News Revolution*, 88. Whether it is, in fact, accurate to name Shaftesbury as the 'leader' of the Whigs is a subject of recent debate. See Harris, *Restoration*, 139-141.

²⁰ Sommerville, *The News Revolution*, 88-89.

²¹ *Clamour Sanguinus: Or, The Cry of Blood* (1680), pp. 1-2.

²² *The Execution of William Howard* (1680), p. 1.

²³ *Some account of the tryals and condemnation of five notorious Jesuits, popish priests, & traytors* (1679), p. 1.

²⁴ *Englands Grievances In Times of Popery* (1679), p. 1.

²⁵ Jonathan Scott and Tim Harris have both suggested that religious division and conflict stood at the centre of early Whig party identity. See: Scott, *Restoration Crisis*, 11-14; Harris, *Politics Under the Later Stuarts*, 8.

²⁶ Harris, *Restoration*, 183.

news trade. The reaction has received much attention from historians of the 'personal rule' era, and has come to include a number of distinct political and religious arguments characterising the Tory (and eventually, monarchic) response to popular Whig ideology. Most modern historians of the period tend to view 1681 as the 'turning point' in the Exclusion Crisis at the dissolution of the Oxford Parliament, where a third Exclusion Bill had been brought before the Commons.²⁷ With Charles II's decision to dissolve parliament, the legislative means to pass a law mandating exclusion was effectively removed. What followed was a 'rigorous drive' against the government's religious and political opponents, intended to 'destroy the Whig power base at the local level.'²⁸

News played no small part in doing so. Until the early 1680s, the governmental response to the new and comparatively less-restricted press was largely of limited effectiveness in terms of control. This was because there existed, Grant Tapsell has observed, a paradoxical view regarding the political use of news. Commenting on the news of the *Gazette* in particular, Tapsell writes 'whilst Charles II's personal rule *did* see efforts to restrict the output of the presses – particularly in relation to periodicals – this went alongside a novel attitude: that of trying to shape and influence the press, rather than just constraining it.'²⁹ We might see this in the use of the *Gazette* to publish official proclamations, as appeared on numerous occasions. 'This change', Tapsell continues, 'must also have had much to do with the growing experience that government and people had of the printing press; its dangers and potential uses.'³⁰ News offered political authorities the optimal opportunity to address the wider public; the structure and form of print news was already established by the later 1670s, in addition to relatively effective methods of dissemination and a seemingly enthusiastic reading public. With some confidence, a publisher could expect featured news to reach an audience far beyond the limits of the physical product; as we have seen with Roger Morrice's sources in the previous chapter, subsequent oral transmission of information was as efficient as the mechanical distribution of print news, if not more so.

Thus, though Whig opponents were slow to make use of the press, an opposition news-movement did begin to emerge. The reaction – initially, at least – did not seek to deny the facts, or to provide much in the way of an alternative set of news. Rather, it seems to have been the aim of the early Tory press to ridicule and denounce the Whig's interpretation of news information. Once an alternative ideology had been established by that means, they

²⁷ Harris, *Restoration*, 252.

²⁸ *Ibid*, 253.

²⁹ Tapsell, *The Personal Rule*, 12.

³⁰ *Ibid*.

could operate much in the same way as the Whig press had – providing the facts in a relatively neutral manner and allowing them to fall into the Tory narrative (as they did with the later Rye House Plot – see below). The following examination will first analyse the former part of this approach.

While the *Gazette* and *Tory Domestick Intelligence* (a title carefully chosen in order to draw readers away from the Whig paper of the same name) resolutely ignored contentious domestic reporting, other Tory papers sought to fight fire with fire: publications adopting the same style and format as Whig papers (and, indeed, the same titles) soon became available to the public, criticising and contrasting the claims of their political counterparts. Roger L'Estrange's *Observer*, for example, worked tirelessly to discredit the claims of the Popish Plot and the motivations behind exclusion after 1681. As Mark Goldie writes: 'Rumbustious and vitriolic, satiric and savage, week after week for six years and through two million words, Roger L'Estrange's newspaper, the *Observer*, corroded the foundations of Whiggery.'³¹

L'Estrange's paper focussed its attention to reports that could effectively rebuke the fundamental basis of contemporary Whig arguments. In criticising the authenticity of the Plot, for example, he undermined an important Whig reference for the necessity of exclusion, as well as the catalyst for the debate in general, and thus – its legitimacy.

The first issue of the *Observer* was quick to explain its purpose in publishing: 'Tis the *Press* that has made 'um *Mad*, and the *Press* must set 'um *Right* again.'³² Whig periodicals had beguiled and confused the public, and the *Observer* would make amends. L'Estrange explained the 'how' as follows:

My business is, to encounter the *Faction*, and to Vindicate the *Government*; to detect their *Forgeries*; to lay open the Rankness of their *Calumnies*, and *Malice*; to Refute their *Seditious Doctrines*; to expose their *Hypocisy*, and the *bloody Design* that is carry'd on, under the Name and Semblance, of *Religion*; And, in short, to lift up the Cloke of the *True Protestant* (as he Christens himself) and to shew the People, the *Jesuite* that lies skulking under it.³³

³¹ Goldie, M., 'Roger L'Estrange's *Observer* and the Exorcism of the Plot', *Roger L'Estrange and the Making of Restoration Culture*, ed. Anne Dunan-Page & Beth Lynch (Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing Ltd., 2008), p. 67.

³² *The Observer in Dialogue*, no. 1, April 13th 1681.

³³ *Ibid.*

In short, L'Estrange was using his news periodical to effectively make his opponents the subjects of their own arguments. His disdain for Whig publications was palpably clear – much of the first issue was given over to criticising the authors of opposition papers:

Q. *Well! but what do you think of Protestant Smith and Protestant Harris?*

A. Just as I do of *Protestant Muncer* and *Protestant Phifer*; a Brace of *Protestants* that cost the Empire 15000 Lives; and our own *Pretended Protestants* too, of Later Date, have cost *This Nation little lesse*.³⁴

L'Estrange was no more complementary in explaining the basis for his criticisms:

It is the business of every Sheet they Publish, to Affront the *Government*, the *Kings Authority*, and *Administration*; the *Privy-Council*; the *Church, Bench, Juries, Witnesses*; All *Officers, Ecclesiastical, Military, and Civil*: and no matter for *Truth or Honesty*, when a *Forg'd Relation* will serve their turn. 'Tis a common thing with them, to get half a dozen *Schismaticall Hands* to a *Petition*, or *Address* in a corner, and then call it, the sense of the Nation.³⁵

We have seen already that emerging periodicals were quick to draw attention to the questionable accuracy of their competitors. If we are to consider why the presence of Whig publications appears to decline post-1681, we can likely assume that criticisms such as L'Estrange's had a similarly detrimental effect on his competitors' claim to accurate news reporting. L'Estrange was a figure of reputation by the early-1680s: a 'prolific pro-government publicist', and a government licenser of the press.³⁶ His *Observer* no doubt carried an influence emphasised by the reputation of its author.

The *Observer*'s second issue began the task of framing the news through L'Estrange's particular structure. Though reminiscent at first glance of much of the other

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ Harris, *Restoration*, 217. Harris observes that 'some 64,000 copies of L'Estrange's tracts were in circulation in the two years before the launching of the *Observer*.'

print periodicals circulating in the later seventeenth century, the *Observer* uniquely took the form of a dialogue between two speakers.³⁷ Other news publications – such as the *Heraclitus Ridens* of earlier 1681 – had already used dialogue as a narrational technique for reporting the news, but it was the *Observer* that would come to characterise the form. The question and answer method of responding to his competitors' claims offered the author the perfect opportunity to reflect on recent news, most often under a heavily-disparaging 'answering' voice. Story by story, L'Estrange addressed and dismantled Whig 'discoveries':

Q. Have not you read Smiths Protestant Intelligence from Edinburgh, (Num. 21.) of [the Duke of Yorks calling for the Officers of the Scotch Army, and Ordering them to Attend their Charge, and have their Troups and Companies full, for Though his Majesty had not present use for them, it was not known but he soon might.]

*A. That's a Trick now to kill two Birds with one stone; and to craft an Odium upon his R.H. and his Sacred Majesty, at once: Upon the Former for designing and preparing for an Invitation; On the Other for Being Privy and Consenting to the thing.'*³⁸

During the first issue, L'Estrange had stated his intention to reduce the influence Whig periodicals had managed to gain on the reading public. It was the journalists, Goldie has written, L'Estrange 'relentlessly harried' until the closure of their papers.³⁹

A Short Answer to a Whole Litter of Libellers – L'Estrange's pamphlet of the previous year – had explained exactly why journalists were to blame for the current circumstances: 'they ly lurking in the Dark, like Poysonous Serpents, stinging what falls within their Reach, and blowing about their Venom.'⁴⁰ 'Libels' in print had taken away 'the Taste and Comfort of Humane Society, by Disseminating, Base Suspicious, Blowing up of Animosities, and Fewds, even to the Dividing of the Nearest Relations, & Friends.'⁴¹ Evidently, this was not just a

³⁷ In most other ways, the *Observer* maintained a familiar news structure – the dialogue was split into two columns over a double-sided single-sheet, printed in a typeface and size similar to most other periodicals, such as the *London Gazette*. There are a number of minor differences, however – see below.

³⁸ *Observer in Dialogue*, no. 2, April 16th 1681.

³⁹ Goldie, 'Roger L'Estrange's *Observer*', 72.

⁴⁰ L'Estrange, R., *A Short Answer to a Whole Litter of Libellers* (1680), p. 2.

⁴¹ *Ibid*, 8.

Tory criticism. Through the early 1680s, 'Charles's government exerted increasing pressure on the writer' – they were 'the primary agent of public discourse, the unitary source from which the power of the press flowed.'⁴² Authors of 'seditious' publications were to be abhorred and mistrusted: 'For all people are not fortify'd alike against the Force of *Evill Impressions*', as L'Estrange's pamphlet made clear.⁴³

Of course, L'Estrange's *Observer* was almost pamphletary in nature itself. The 'news' it actually contained was few and far between, and the paper was more of a response than a report. Still, it performed an important news function, as the pamphlets did – namely, to put a fresh perspective on older information, bringing 'old news' into the realm of 'current events', and making established Whig narratives timely again by drawing attention to their inaccuracies.

By 1681, at the *Observer*'s conception, the context of serial-news publication was already long established through the preceding decades of print production, and its significance not lost on L'Estrange. With readers accustomed to the style, his paper could be most effective by emulating that which it sought to condemn. Of course, using the press to combat the press presented its own particular problem. 'Such a strategy,' Harold Weber writes, 'contributed to the already unwelcome public debate, implicitly legitimating the press's transgression into affairs of state.'⁴⁴

Nevertheless, L'Estrange clearly recognised the importance of publishing periodically – it was the proven method of creating 'public opinion'. At an average of three times weekly over the six years from 1681-1687, L'Estrange's news sheet became a regular feature of the coffee-houses, taverns, and meeting places of London.⁴⁵ Though print runs are largely unknown, most early papers averaged approximately a few hundred; 'a figure that misleads, for multiple readership in public venues was the norm'.⁴⁶ Certainly, L'Estrange had ensured his publication was readily available to the public: it was inexpensive, and made use of a prose style 'designed to resonate with the lower orders: simple words, colourful language, and frequent allusions to activities or functions that were an everyday part of human

⁴² Weber, *Paper Bullets*, 174.

⁴³ L'Estrange, *A Short Answer to a Whole Litter of Libellers*, 8. Ironically, L'Estrange's journalistic writings were a staple of the era, in one form or another.

⁴⁴ Weber, *Paper Bullets*, 174. All the same, this would also come to characterise the Crown's use of the press in times of need. In early 1688, James II would commission Henry Care to author the *Publick Occurrences Truly Stated* with the hope of attracting popular royalist support, as we shall see in the following chapter.

⁴⁵ Harold Love, 'L'Estrange, Sir Roger (1616–1704)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004; online edn, Oct 2007 [http://0-www.oxforddnb.com.unicat.bangor.ac.uk/view/article/16514, accessed 28 May 2012]; Goldie, 'Roger L'Estrange's *Observer*', 71.

⁴⁶ Goldie, 'Roger L'Estrange's *Observer*', 69.

existence'.⁴⁷ Though borrowing much of the style made popular by its predecessors, the *Observer* remained fairly distinct from its competitors: 'as overwrought as its tone, transposing orality into print ... a riot of italics, capitals, and gothic black letter.'⁴⁸

To a greater extent than any of the other news periodicals, L'Estrange addressed the crisis that had characterised contemporary domestic news. Whilst Whig papers had tended to refer to the Exclusion debate through implication (the printing of petitions to the king for 'protection' against popery, for example), the *Observer* responded to the crisis so openly it seems astonishing L'Estrange largely escaped serious reproach:

*Q. And Then, How dare you speak as if you were against the Exclusion of His Royall Highnesse and the Association; when you see a Vote of the House of Commons (Jan 7. 1680.) that the Protestant Religion and the Kings Life cannot be safe without the Former ... do you not find it, in Terminis, Resolved That all Persons who advised His Majesty to Insist upon an OPINION against the Bill for Excluding the Duke of York, have given Pernicious Council to His Majesty, and are Promoters of Popery, and Enemies to the King and Kingdom? ... come come, Speak to the Question: Are you for the Exclusion, or not?*⁴⁹

Critical of Whig ideology, policies, and parliament, L'Estrange hardly needed to provide an answer: 'To borrow the Words of his Majesties *Declaration (Fol. 6.)* I am for [*any Expedient, by which the Religion Establish'd may be Preserved, and the Monarchy not destroy'd.*]⁵⁰ This type of response was to characterise Tory 'news' – whilst Whig publications sought to emphasise the danger that Catholicism presented to the state, playing on traditional and widespread fears in an attempt to make a compelling case for exclusion, Tory publications stressed, above all, the importance of maintaining order. 'Both historians and literary critics agree,' Weber writes, 'Tory propaganda played a significant role in transforming the political

⁴⁷ Harris, *Restoration*, 218.

⁴⁸ Goldie, 'Roger L'Estrange's *Observer*', 69.

⁴⁹ *Observer in Dialogue*, no. 4, April 23rd 1681.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

landscape of the early 1680s, turning the considerable fear of the Papists into an even greater anxiety about civil order.⁵¹

Most likely then, the government tolerated the *Observer's* presence due to its staunchly pro-royalist perspective. L'Estrange's periodical directly challenged Charles II's political opponents while praising the monarchy, though it would be mistaken to believe this represented a working relationship between news sheet and government in the manner of the *London Gazette*. Rather, the *Observer* was a product of Tory ideology, 'at its most unbuttoned and vulgar.'⁵² As Mark Goldie observes, 'there was nothing courtly about the *Observer*: it was a creature of the metropolis and marketplace' – a product of 'popular Royalism' and autonomous Tory loyalty, rather than a state-controlled opposition to Whiggish ideas of Exclusion and reform.⁵³

In any case, L'Estrange's paper offers us an acute example of the news form being used and recognised for its political influence – and perhaps the beginnings of an explanation as to why the Whig periodical presence began to diminish. We might measure the *Observer's* success by its longevity – L'Estrange's periodical long outlived the majority of its competitors, even surviving Tory attempts to close it with others for 'inflaming opinion.'⁵⁴ Thus, the idea that we began with – that news variety and its active engagement with domestic recent events seemed to decline in the years after the crisis – seems supported by the initial examination of print.

Alongside the *Observer*, a number of other Tory-authored periodicals began to appear, much along the same lines in terms of content and focus. By March 1681, the *Weekly Discovery* (5th February 1681), the *Heraclitus Ridens* (February 1st 1681), and the *Loyal Protestant and True Domestick Intelligence* (9th March 1681) had emerged to the news-market – with the *Heraclitus* in particular mocking the content of the Whig press.⁵⁵ As a dialogue between various characters and Whig caricatures – 'Mr. Popular', 'Jest', 'Earnest', and the less-subtly named 'Manassus Ben Harris', amongst others – the *Heraclitus* goes some way in illustrating Sommerville's observation that 'entertainment is never far from the periodical impulse.'⁵⁶ Issues rarely missed the opportunity to comment on Whig papers in the *Heraclitus's* particular style:

⁵¹ Weber, *Paper Bullets*, 174.

⁵² Goldie, 'Roger L'Estrange's *Observer*', 68.

⁵³ *Ibid*, 68-69. This contradicts Weber's argument that the government's press campaign was 'led by L'Estrange' – *Paper Bullets*, 174.

⁵⁴ Sommerville, *The News Revolution*, 93.

⁵⁵ *Ibid*, 94.

⁵⁶ *Ibid*, 94-95.

Earnest. What have you got there?

Jest. A most dreadful Divilogue; a

Batrachamyomachiacal combat between *Comus* and

Momus, in English, *Care* and his Brother *Monkey*. Here's

a young *Elephant* too, Bless us all! what will become of us
now?⁵⁷

More than any other news-publication of the early 1680s, the *Heraclitus* made shrewd use of the features of the genre for its own political means. Mock advertisements in the style the *Gazette* had popularised during the previous decade followed its derisive news content:

*Stollen or strayed from Mr. Henry Care, all his Modesty, Loyalty, and Brains, the Cheats having left in the room of them Impudence, Sediton, and Froth. If any persons can make discovery of all or any part of the said goods and chattels, so that he may have them safe and sound, and be his own man again, they shall have a noble reward for the whole, and ten groats for any one of them.*⁵⁸

Its purpose was not only to ridicule popular Whiggism, however, but to illustrate to its readers the 'dangers' of the Whig periodical, and the ideology it masked:

Jest. They are playing at the last Couple in Hell, or the Devil take the hindermost, or some such pretty sport it may be.

Earn. Sport d'ye call it? The foremost I think are in most danger of the Devil: Very pretty sort indeed, to see men dancing the old Jigg of 40. and 41. and so on: To see a Company of Lewd Py'de-Pipers, who pretend to be Popish Rat catchers, *Smith, Harris, Care* and *Curtis*, fidling us up

⁵⁷ *Heraclitus Ridens: At a Dialogue between Jest and Earnest, concerning the Times*, no. 9, March 29th 1681. 'Monkey' and 'Elephant' were the Tory-given epithets for Henry Care of the *Weekly Pacquet* and Frances Smith of the *Protestant Intelligence*. See: Goldie, 'Roger L'Estrange's *Observer*', 72.

⁵⁸ *Heraclitus Ridens*, no. 2, February 8th 1681.

the hill of Sedition, till we drop into the Gulph of Rebellion.⁵⁹

References to the Civil War could hardly go unnoticed. Via the news press, opposing political factions had become increasingly vocal – comparisons such as these (frequent in the years following the Plot) no doubt resonated with many.

Interestingly, the Tory *Loyal London Mercury* of the following year (14th June, 1682) offered more in the way of recognisable news – not just a response-narrative with occasional reports in the form of a periodical. The first issue offered an account of ‘16,000 men ... upon their march to the *Rhyne*’ alongside other foreign reports, and even some domestic news too: ‘their Majesties and their Royal Highnesses are in good Health’; ‘Several Warrants having been issued out by the Magistrates of this City, for the Suppressing unlawful Conventicles, & c.’⁶⁰ The news that appeared concerned ‘*such things Domestick as may without offence to Government, or abuse to the people be imparted*’, as the preface to the paper made clear.⁶¹ There was little interest, it seemed, in engaging with contemporary English politics, or with domestic news of a less trivial nature. Of course, even this publication began with a lengthy criticism of the previous Whig press, politically framing the news to follow:

*The Faction and Sedition which has been seemingly promoted in some of them, and the indiscreet Detection thereof in others, hath much reflected on the Government of the Nation ... many of their papers are rather Libels than News-books ... I [am not] that Mungrel Whig, who to gain a few Pence, Apeishly acts what he thinks is uppermost.*⁶²

Thus, the paper offered a news-content rather different from the earlier Whig periodicals, with a focus on news from abroad. Nevertheless, with a popular movement against the Whig press emerging and growing, Tory papers such as these could begin supplying news that could fall into their own political narrative – much as the Whigs had since 1679, with the

⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁰ *Loyal London Mercury or the Moderate Intelligencer*, no. 1, June 14th 1682.

⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶² Ibid.

issue of exclusion. Stories regarding the '*French Kings Pretence for Peace*', for example, might subtly emphasise the need for succession stability.⁶³

Where the Tory newspapers emerged to take on the Whig periodical press, Tory pamphlets appeared just as rapidly. With the addition of the new periodicals and pamphlets, the press of the early 1680s produced a level of publishing far greater than had existed before 1640. 'High levels,' Tapsell writes, 'do not necessarily have to correlate with periods of political crisis, but the circumstantial 'fit' between peaks of publishing in England and constitutional flashpoints in 1642, 1648-9, 1660, and 1679-82 is very close.'⁶⁴

Whilst Whig news-pamphlets framed accounts of current events through a history of anti-popery, linking each news story to the larger narrative, Tory pamphlets focussed their efforts on manipulating public perception of Whigs themselves. *The Character of a Modern Whig* (1681) described, in disparaging detail, the qualities of the contemporary Whig: 'He is a Certain Insect bred in the Corruption of the late Rebellion'; 'Meagre and Malicious, as representing on the one side the Puritanical Fool, on the other the Political Knave'; 'devoted himself, Life, and Fortune, to the utter Extirpation of Prelacy, and the Royal Race of the *Stuarts*.'⁶⁵ Its 'news' element (particularly evident in the latter, given the context of Exclusion) often emerged via an examination of recent events through a distinctly Tory-perspective, frequently redressing the news of a Whig paper or pamphlet. *The Character of a Modern Whig*, for example, remarks on the rise of petitions to the King (a regular feature of Whig publications during the early 1680s):

He hath been hatching Rebellion, and working under-ground
the Subversion of Church and State for these many years
past, but hath bestir'd himself with all imaginable
Application since the breaking out of the horrid *Popish-Plot*
... to disturb and divert his Governours with Petitions,
Grievances, Toleration, Comprehension, and a Thousand
Tricks and Artifices, when he hath seen their Endeavours and
Intentions bent and busied another way, and engaged in

⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁴ Tapsell, *The Personal Rule*, 11-12. See also: *Censorship and the Press*, ed. Geoff Kemp, xiv; Raymond, *Pamphlets and Pamphleteering*, 337-355.

⁶⁵ *The Character of a Modern Whig, or, an Alamode True Royal Protestant* (1681).

Rescuing us from the Imminent Dangers of our *Popish*
Adversaries.⁶⁶

This was the real 'purpose' of the pamphlet – to create an ideological context in which regular news could be received. With petitions making a frequent appearance in periodical newspapers, sentiments such as the above had the potential to have a significant effect on a reader's interpretation of the news.

Advice to the Men of Shaftesbury (1681) made similar allusions, drawing comparisons between the arguments Whig petitions had made for 'the protection of the religion' and the consequences of actually following their advices:

The Papists would destroy our Church and State; so would
the Common-Wealthsmen: The Papists would let up
Popery and absolute Monarchy; the other an *Amsterdam*
Religion, and Arbitrary Government in the hands of many;
but the latter designing Gentlemen say, They only
endeavour to secure Protestant Religion and Property.⁶⁷

Tory pamphlets used the words and phrases of the pro-Exclusionist petitions that had been printed in the Whig news periodicals, and associated them with subversion and hypocrisy. What played out in the news was a part of a larger 'official' turn against the Whig narrative and politics: in the following year, confident Whig candidates for sheriff elections were surreptitiously undermined by the Court – polls were nullified, and new Tory contenders elected in their place. As the King 'asserted authority over Shaftesbury and his party', religious dissenters took the place of Catholics as the 'main victims' of persecution – 'and the newspapers', Sutherland writes, 'kept reporting the results.'⁶⁸

Other Tory pamphlets related news of more specific events. As the reaction gathered momentum through the early 1680s, a number of pamphlets were produced offering news of current occurrences through the Tory perspective. The pamphletary-news response to the 'Rye House Plot' of 1683, for instance, perhaps represents the best example of this in action, and allows us a small 'case-study' of pamphletary news during the politically divisive years.

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ *Advice to the Men of Shaftesbury, or a Letter to a Friend Concerning the Horrid Popish Plot* (1681).

⁶⁸ Sutherland, *The Restoration Newspaper*, 175.

When news emerged of a new conspiracy to assassinate the king, the alleged conspirators were, surprisingly, not Catholic, but Whig. Charles II had fallen ill during the previous year, making the probability of a Catholic successor an imminent likelihood. Leading Whigs, including Lord Shaftesbury and others, went some way in making preparations for uprisings should the king die, with the eventual aim of summoning a parliament to determine the succession.⁶⁹ Though Charles recovered, their strategies remained in one form or another over the ensuing months. Simultaneous rebellions across various regions of England were planned, while a second group of conspirators discussed an assassination plot to take place at the Rye House farm in Hertfordshire as the King and Duke of York returned from Newmarket. Though scuppered by delays and set-backs at various stages, it seems that by June of 1683 a draft manifesto for the ruling of the country following the coup had been devised, only to be rendered useless when the plot was revealed to the government soon after.⁷⁰

Just as it had following the Popish Plot, pamphletary news took to the emerging story with little restraint, offering 'A History of the New Plot', 'a true and just account', and 'A True Narrative of the Confession', amongst numerous other narratives and explanations.⁷¹ The 'wicked contrivance' of the 'Barbarous and Inhumane Wretches' responsible for the alleged conspiracy was revealed, discussed, and dissected thoroughly through the months that followed the news story's emergence.⁷²

Accounts such as *An Account of the Discovery of the New Plot* (1683) reported, in detail, the unfolding of that 'Hellish and Damnable Conspiracy', and covered the events immediately following its initial discovery.⁷³ The narrative followed the confession of one 'Mr. West', a 'Councillor at Law' involved in the Plot but, 'moved by the sense of his unnatural Combination against his Sovereign', expressing a 'Deep, and past doubt, an unfeigned sorrow for his Offence'.⁷⁴ *An Account* explained how close the Plot had come to succeeding: 'Heaven not permitting so great a wickedness, prevented it most miraculously, as

⁶⁹ Harris, *Restoration*, 310.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 310-312. See: Harris, *Restoration*, 309-323, for a more detailed account of the plot and ensuing trial.

⁷¹ *A History of the New Plot, Or, A Prospect of Conspirators* (1683); *Here is a true and just account of a most Horrid and Bloody Plot Conspired against his most Sacred Majesty And his Royal Highnes* (1683); *A True Narrative of the Confession and Execution Of the three prisonrs at Tyburn* (1683).

⁷² *Here is a true and just account of a most Horrid and Bloody Plot Conspired against his most Sacred Majesty And his Royal Highnes* (1683), p. 1.

⁷³ *An Account of the Discovery of the New Plot* (1683).

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*

is conjectured, by his Majeties unexpected Departure from *New-Market* upon the breaking out of the late dreadful Fire in that Town'.⁷⁵

Others, such as *A True and Just Account of a Most Horrid and Bloody Plot* (1683), revealed the identities of the alleged conspirators:

Namely, *Jonn Rumsay*, Colonel, *Richard Rumbold* Minister,
Richard Nelthorp Esquire, *Edward Wade* Gentleman,
Richard Goodenough Gentleman, Captain *Walcot*, *William*
Thompson, *James Burton*, and *William Hone* Joyner, who, as
is testified upon Oath, did most Traiterously, and
Villainously design the death of his most Sacred Majesty ...⁷⁶

News-pamphlets such as these speculated on the consequences of the conspiracy – a hypothetical perspective news periodicals (particularly those vehemently claiming authenticity, like the *Gazette*) were less inclined to take: 'it is very likely, his Majesty, will, by, and with, the advice of his most Honourable Privy Council, issue forth a *Proclamation* for the apprehending of the Malefactors above named.'⁷⁷ These pamphlets also had a tendency to wax lyrical on the consequences and larger context - that is, the punishments and retributive measures the author thought necessary to re-establish monarchic and governmental authority:

These persons so discovered, and brought to condign
punishment, I hope may be an Example to all others for
the future, to forbear and abhor such bloody Contrivances
and inhumane Barbarity, as to Conspire the death of a
Prince, most Merciful, Gracious, and Pitiful ...⁷⁸

... and so on. Publications went beyond the act of factual reporting to the more dubious realm of editorialisation, where a seemingly objective news-account could often become the vehicle for personal opinion. Thus we have such summaries following the pamphletary-news:

⁷⁵ Ibid.

⁷⁶ *Here is a true and just account of a most Horrid and Bloody Plot Conspired against his most Sacred Majesty And his Royal Highnes* (1683).

⁷⁷ Ibid.

⁷⁸ Ibid.

I think no reasonable person can reckon less than severe punishment to be the Portion allotted *for* them: and it is undoubtedlie a dutie incumbent upon all persons to endeavour *to* make a *discovery* of the Malefactors ... who can do more for a Prince, then to studie how to detect the Villains that shall so imprudentlie undertake a design so monstrous, so inhumane, and so diabolical?⁷⁹

As before, providing authorial perspective directed a reader's interpretation of the news.

Much as the news pamphlets following the Popish Plot had, publications soon turned their focus to relating news of the trials and prosecutions that immediately followed the initial emergence of the story. As the Rye House Plot developed, pamphlets such as *The Condemnation, Behaviour, Last Dying Words, and Execution of Algernon Sidney Esq., An Account of the Sentance That Passed upon William Ld. Russell*, and *The Execution and Confession with the Behaviour and Speeches of Capt. Thomas Walcot* (all 1683) offered detailed news accounts regarding the trials and executions of conspirators.⁸⁰

The Condemnation reported the arrest, prosecution, and punishment of Algernon Sidney, from his being 'Impeached, Apprehended and Committed to the *Tower of London* for High Treason' to his trial 'as a false Traytor of our Sovereign Lord the King', and to his execution, where 'he layed down his Head, and had it struck off at One Blow.'⁸¹ *An Account of the Sentance* described the trials of four of the accused, 'having been Convicted of High Treason, for Conspiring the Death of the King', relating the passing of their various sentences. Perhaps because they follow the initial excitement, and respond to specific, well-detailed incidents (rather than the somewhat vaguer news of an emerging, but indistinct story – a 'plot' to kill the king), there is, it seems, less authorial speculation and personal judgement included in these later publications. Both *The Condemnation* and *An Account* offer a news-narrative comparable to the reports of the *Gazette* in terms of structure and manner of relation, if not content. Aside from a brief closing sentence at the end of *An Account* ('Sentance passed, they returned from whence they came, to expect the just reward of their

⁷⁹ Ibid.

⁸⁰ *An Account of the Sentance That Passed upon William Ld. Russell, Thomas Walcot, John Rouse, and William Hone* (1683); *The Condemnation, Behaviour, Last Dying Words, and Execution of Algernon Sidney Esq.* (1683); *The Execution and Confession with the Behaviour and Speeches of Capt. Thomas Walcot, William Hone, and John Rouse* (1683).

⁸¹ *The Condemnation, Behaviour, Last Dying Words, and Execution of Algernon Sidney Esq.* (1683).

Treason'), the narratives appear largely without the sort of personal observations perceptible in the pamphlets reacting to the initial controversy.⁸²

Through pamphlets, we might assume the Rye House Plot offered Tory interests a near-perfect opportunity to condemn Whig arguments, once and for all. Certainly, it might allow Whig ideas regarding exclusion to become irreparably associated to acts of treason and political-subversion. And yet, there is little mention of 'Whigs' specifically in the news-pamphlets emerging in the aftermath of the Plot.

In this, we might perceive the significance of *implication* to pamphletary news – though not referred to specifically as Whigs (aside from very occasionally),⁸³ eminent Whig politicians were named and implicated – their identification as 'Whigs' was hardly necessary. The allusion alone was surely sufficient – most of the named perpetrators were renowned supporters of exclusion; an argument that, as we have seen, had come to characterise the foundations of Whig politics during the early-1680s. With the prominent Whig politician Shaftesbury clearly implicated in the Plot shortly after (though having fled to and died in Amsterdam by then), the Whig connection was surely hard to miss.⁸⁴ It was a Whig plot in all but name, and the Tories 'had been right all along.'⁸⁵

The Government Reaction

Till now, we have largely omitted analysis of a specific governmental reaction to the popular growth of a Whig press advocating exclusion in the early 1680s, instead focussing on the Tory response. This is because, historiographically, examination of the former has largely been amalgamated with analysis of the latter, as contemporary allies. This suggests a degree of cooperation that is, however, difficult to quantify – and that raises questions to which an answer may be speculative at best, such as: how directed was Tory-news? How autonomous?

For the purpose of this section, we shall consider the government's foray into the emerging print-news industry as separate to the Tory-reaction, but connected in terms of influence and ambition. That is, to counter popular Whiggism, and to maintain monarchic stability.

⁸² *An Account of the Sentance That Passed upon William Ld. Russell, Thomas Walcot, John Rouse, and William Hone* (1683).

⁸³ See, for example: *Some Succinct Remarks on the Speech of the Late Lord Russel* (1683): 'a Whig is that sort of *Animal* that admires nothing, and praises none.'

⁸⁴ A number of pamphlets emerged connecting Shaftesbury to the plot and to the other conspirators, such as: *A Dialogue Between Anthony Earl of Shaftsbury, and Captain Thomas Walcott, upon their Meeting in Pluto's Kingdome* (1683); *A Satyr by way of Dialogue Between Lucifer, and the Ghosts of Shaftsbury and Russell* (1683).

⁸⁵ Sommerville, *The News Revolution*, 95.

Tim Harris has explained that it was, initially, the government's instinct 'not to try to woo public opinion but rather to neutralize or silence critics of the regime.'⁸⁶ With licensing lapsed, laws regarding sedition and libel became the main system of press-control, post-publication. Much as it had during the months following the Popish Plot, however, this method of news-censorship met with little real success initially.⁸⁷

Proclamations, printed in the *Gazette* during and after the emergence of the Popish Plot and considered earlier during this thesis, prove the government already understood the political value of news manipulation – that it represented a method of addressing the public on a large scale through carefully controlled communications. As a consequence, we see a combination of 'persuasion and suppression' emerge in the governmental reaction to widely-circulating pro-exclusionist news.⁸⁸

In addition to maintaining the *London Gazette* – appearing twice weekly with a print run of around 15,000 per issue, and consistently reporting government-favourable news – Charles II himself published under his own name, most notably in the form of his *Declaration* of 1681, which perhaps represents one of the most significant moments in the response to popular Whiggism.⁸⁹

The *Declaration* responded directly to the issues that Whig news had popularised and circulated – that is, the arguments for exclusion. In describing his reasons for dissolving Parliament, the king wrote:

We cannot after the sad Experience We have had of the late Civil Wars, that Murder'd Our Father of Blessed Memory, and ruin'd the Monarchy, consent to a Law, that shall establish another most Unnatural War, or at least make it necessary to maintain a Standing Force for the Preserving of Government and the Peace of the Kingdom.⁹⁰

With the clergy ordered to read the declaration to their congregations, Charles II's justification for his stance against the Whigs reached a considerable audience. The reaction to the king's publication has been well documented – there arose over two-hundred 'loyal

⁸⁶ Harris, *Restoration*, 215.

⁸⁷ Though it would later, once sufficient justification for more rigorous censorship had arisen – see below.

⁸⁸ Harris, *Restoration*, 214.

⁸⁹ *Ibid*, 217.

⁹⁰ *His Majesties Declaration to all his Loving Subjects Touching the Causes and Reasons that Moved Him to Dissolve the Two Last Parliaments* (1681).

addresses' to the monarch, expressing the gratitude of various regions for the *Declaration*.⁹¹ In 1681, at the cusp of the Tory-reaction and decline of popular Whig ideology, we might speculate that Charles II's declaration went some way in turning the tide against pro-exclusionist politics, allowing the emerging Tory news-press to flourish.

Through the months and years that followed, the *Gazette* – the government's official newspaper – continued to counter other news-publications on occasion, drawing attention to inconsistencies and errors in an attempt to discredit the reports of rival periodicals (or, indeed, any news that came from publications other than itself). In many issues, a section at the close of the news was dedicated to remarking on the mistakes of its competitors. A typical example can be seen at the end of the *Gazette* of April 11th, 1681: '*the Licentious Pamphlets that come out daily are so full of falsities and malicious Intentions, that it would be an endless work to go about to undeceive the World, as often as they are published ...*'⁹²

With Whig influence steadily declining as Tory publications gained weight, a series of government-authorised news-suppressions took place to little opposition. Many Whig papers were forcibly closed by order in 1682 – by 1683, the periodical press was considerably lighter in terms of variety.⁹³ While the Rye House Plot saw publications rise again (particularly in terms of pamphlets, as we have seen), it also offered the government reasonable justification for more complete censorship. *The Weekly Pacquet of Advice from Rome* – the last of the Whig papers – closed in July of 1683, leaving just L'Estrange's *Observator* and the *London Gazette* behind.⁹⁴

Though politically-motivated, the Whig periodicals had at least offered regular domestic news. By 1684, these were all but gone. The 'Tory reaction' – though continuing partisan interests, while offering little in the way of consistent news information – largely succeeded in discrediting the earlier press. Once accomplished, there was little to be gained by continuing to support the new periodicals and the public political partisanship they encouraged. News variety quickly declined, and the Tory papers were suppressed along with the Whigs.

Though periodical news had seen a series of steady progressions since the lapse of licensing in 1679 (albeit, with customary periodical setbacks), by 1684 we might be forgiven for thinking, at first glance, that nothing particularly significant had occurred. The state of news – which we will consider in more depth shortly – certainly did not seem to have

⁹¹ Tapsell, *The Personal Rule*, 37.

⁹² *London Gazette*, no. 1607, April 11th 1681.

⁹³ Tapsell, *The Personal Rule*, 102.

⁹⁴ Sommerville, *The News Revolution*, 95.

changed much. As Sommerville has observed, by the mid-1680s 'chastened citizens were reduced to almost the same news economy as before 1678.'⁹⁵

News after the Controversy

In order to consider the lasting effects of the period of change, we return to our case-study approach of analysis, with regard to the summer months of 1684. An examination of those surviving periodicals, in addition to the more traditional news forms, during a period of relative political and social calm (thus, without the same level of external pressures causing irregular news activity), will allow us to evaluate the consequences of the Popish Plot and Exclusion Crisis on the long-term development of news. We shall compare retrospectively to 1676 (prior to the emergence of the Popish Plot and ensuing controversy) in order to examine the change.

The *Gazette* had continued through the preceding years at its customary rate of publication – by 1684, it still appeared twice-weekly and had changed very little stylistically. In terms of content, however, there were small, but significant, developments.

To a greater extent than ever previously, domestic news had begun to appear on a regular basis, at the end of each news sheet. June's *Gazettes* contain, on average, 362 words of domestic news in each issue – or a 16% share of the average issue's total word count.⁹⁶ If we compare this to the 0.4% recorded in the summer of 1676, the change is quite apparent.⁹⁷ From June 2nd-August 14th 1684, twenty of the twenty-one issues published have a section dedicated to domestic news, normally separated by a line break. The content of these sections is varied, though a few 'types' of news stories reappear frequently: movements of the nobility and domestic criminal proceedings, for instance.⁹⁸ The issues dated June 5th and June 12th offer typical examples of inclusions:

Kings Linn, June 2. The Duke of *Norfolk* our Lord
Lieutenant, having appointed a General Master of the
Militia of the County of *Norfolk*, and of the City and
County of *Norwich*, his Grace arrived at *Norwich* on

⁹⁵ Sommerville, *The News Revolution*, 95.

⁹⁶ See: Appendix, fig. 2.2.

⁹⁷ See: Appendix, fig. 2.1.

⁹⁸ During June, 1684, for example, these appear as the most frequently reported subjects: mentions of nobility appear in the issues from June 5th, June 16th, and June 26th. Stories of developing criminal proceedings appear in the issues from June 2nd, June 9th, June 12th, June 16th, and June 19th.

Whitson Monday, having been received several Miles out of Town ...⁹⁹

A detailed account of the procession follows. From June 12th:

This day *William Sacheverel, George Gregory, and Charles Hutchinson*, Esquires, and the other Persons convicted in the last Term of a great Riot at *Nottingham*, appeared at the Kings Bench Bar, to receive the Judgment of the Court upon their said Conviction ...¹⁰⁰

Though an important development for the government's official periodical, the addition of domestic news raises an interesting question: namely, why does the periodical begin to print this manner of news now, after a lengthy-tradition of stoically avoiding its inclusion?

In order to consider this, it is worth noting that the period of political controversy had resulted in heightened competition between print news sheets, dropping sales of the *Gazette* by 1681 to just above four thousand – a considerable decline from the average 6,973 sold only a few years previously in 1678.¹⁰¹ John Childs has suggested that the decline in sales can be explained 'partially in terms of content.'¹⁰² Whilst the *Gazette* had, aside from publishing royal proclamations and official notices, ignored the Popish Plot and Exclusion Crisis, its competitors had not. 'The rapid atrophy of the *Gazette*', Childs observes, can be explained by the 'sudden growth of a relatively free press.'¹⁰³ Comparatively quickly, readers had been given access to a wider variety of relevant publications, freely discussing the domestic issues that faced contemporary society. With its content squarely aimed at reporting foreign events, the *Gazette* struggled to maintain the level of its previous sales.

This being the case, we might suggest two possible explanations for the inclusion of domestic news. The first considers the decline in sales, and the creation of a more inclusive content in order to re-secure some of the lost readership. If this was in fact the purpose, then the attempt was successful, to an extent: by July 1681, readership had increased to an average

⁹⁹ *London Gazette*, no. 1936, June 5th 1684.

¹⁰⁰ *London Gazette*, no. 1938, June 12th 1684.

¹⁰¹ Childs, J., 'The Sales of Government Gazettes During the Exclusion Crisis, 1678-1681', *English Historical Review* (1987), CII (CCCCII), 104. Also see: Sommerville, *The News Revolution*, 93.

¹⁰² Childs, 'Sales of Government Gazettes', 104.

¹⁰³ *Ibid*, 105.

of 4, 913 per issue.¹⁰⁴ Over the next few years, the *Gazette* continued to regain some of the lost ground: 'Much ... was probably recovered after the suppression of unlicensed newspapers in 1683 and the renewal of the Licensing Act in 1685.'¹⁰⁵ The security afforded to the 'official' paper of the government worked strongly in its favour: as competition diminished, sales of the *Gazette* rose once more.

Our second explanation considers the changing attitudes to news, and news dissemination. The period of crisis had seen domestic news emerge on an unprecedented scale – through all manner of widely-circulated publications to the extensive public discussion and interpretation of current events. It was, essentially, everything the government of 1676 – with its licensing laws and perception of danger in domestic news – had wanted to avoid. And yet by later 1683, the government had control of the press.

Though it had been their prosecutorial policy throughout the seventeenth century to use licensing laws to restrict news in print, or to respond aggressively to any perceived violation of acceptable standards, the lapse of licensing did not substantially limit the government's options for control.¹⁰⁶ Philip Hamburger has indicated that, even during the six-year gap in licensing legislation, licensing laws 'remained the basis of the Crown's prosecutions of the printed press.'¹⁰⁷ Now though, it relied on the power of royal prerogative rather than parliamentary statute for its authority. Though the press flourished whilst the means to suppress new papers established a legal foundation, it was not long before the Crown was permitted 'to prohibit unlicensed publications of news without a statute': 'Almost all prosecutions of printed material for "seditious libel" in the last five years of Charles II's reign (1680-1685) were for publications that contained news.'¹⁰⁸

The *Gazette*, of course, was allowed to continue – it had never been the problem. Even with a greater level of domestic news than ever previously, its content was nothing to fear – a certain amount of domestic coverage could be tolerated by the authority, provided it came via the form of its carefully-controlled periodical news sheet.

Certainly, the relationship the *Gazette* enjoyed with the government continued into 1684, with the trends reinforced during the period following 1678 generally maintained as

¹⁰⁴ Ibid, 104.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid, 105.

¹⁰⁶ Hamburger, "The Development of the Law of Seditious Libel", 674-675, 680.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid, 682.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid, 687, 689. Weber agrees: 'By far the most frequent charge brought by the government against those in the print trade was that of seditious libel' – Weber, *Paper Bullets*, 173. See also: Siebert, F., *Freedom of the Press in England, 1476-1776: The Rise and Decline of Government Control* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1952), p. 269.

time went on. 'Official notices' continued to appear frequently; unlike the domestic news included at the end of each news sheet, however, this information was given priority, featuring at the beginning of each issue before the relation of any other news, as the printed proclamations of 1679 had been (see chapter 2). In a number of issues published over June 1684, government notices regarding regional judicial circuits are included. The issue beginning June 9th reports the 'Affairs for the *Norfolk Circuit*, *Western Circuit*, and *Midland Circuit*'.¹⁰⁹ In the following two issues, details of the '*Northern Circuit*', the '*Home Circuit*', and the '*Oxford Circuit*' are reported.¹¹⁰

In a similar manner, the *Gazette* of 1684 is frequently used as a way of communicating announcements, and to a greater extent than it had been prior to 1678. News of resources granted for the funding of public events, for example, appear occasionally through the summer months of 1684. In the issue dated July 7th, it is reported that 'His Majesty has been Graciously pleased in His new Charter Granted unto the Borough of Newport ... a Monthly Market for the sale of all sorts of Cattel, Wool, Butter, Cheese, and all other Commodities'; news of a second grant 'to Ipswich in the County of Suffolk, a Fair' follows shortly after.¹¹¹ Unlike the official notices which appear at the beginning of each issue, these grants are included alongside domestic news. They are, nevertheless, distinct from domestic reports as they appear as new paragraphs, without a location or date. At other instances, the style of reporting comparable announcements varies from issue to issue: both the notice that the king has made 'Antonio Verrio' the 'Chief and First Painter', and the announcement of the arrival of a knight ordered to 'Register the Pedigrees and Arms of all the Nobility and Gentry' appear *with* the customary prefix: in the first, '*Whitehall*, June 30th'; in the second, 'London, July 2nd'.¹¹² Evidently, what constituted an 'official' notice had yet to be standardised. This may explain the inconsistencies in the manner of relating governmental announcements.

In any case, it seems that the content of the *Gazette* of 1684 is indicative of a government coming to terms with the need to participate in news communication – and indeed, that an announcement constituted news. The apparent trouble deciding on a suitable place for official communications – that is, at the beginning of each news sheet, as a separate entity, or included with standard domestic news, at the end – seems suggestive of a government beginning to accept official announcements as domestic 'news-stories', and,

¹⁰⁹ *London Gazette*, no. 1937, June 9th 1684.

¹¹⁰ *London Gazette*, no. 1938, June 12th 1684; *London Gazette*, no. 1939, June 16th 1684.

¹¹¹ *London Gazette*, no. 1945, July 7th 1684.

¹¹² *London Gazette*, no. 1943, June 30th 1684; *London Gazette*, no. 1944, July 3rd 1684.

perhaps more significantly, of a changing attitude towards public engagement with political rule. 'Charles II,' Pettegree writes, 'was canny enough to appreciate that the suppression of information offered no solution to political conflict: the court would have to make its own case.'¹¹³ While an 'official announcement' made the public a passive audience, news *informed* – by its very nature, it invited a more participatory role in the relationship between people and government: 'a broad cross section of people,' Pettegree continues, 'could now engage in public debate – even in an age where the newspaper trade was carefully controlled.'¹¹⁴

Despite these developments, however, the general content of the *Gazette* from June-August, 1684, is overwhelmingly consistent with the reports of the period prior to the Popish Plot and Exclusion Crisis. Sources of information are primarily letter-based, with some correspondence seemingly printed in full as part of the news sheet. During the issue from June 2nd, the majority of the news reported comes from two letters: the first from '*the Camp before Luxemburg*'; the second an account 'from the French fleet before Genoua.'¹¹⁵ As it had before, the greater part of each issue remains focussed on foreign news, whilst the particular emphasis again falls on continental military endeavour.¹¹⁶ The Great Turkish War of the previous year (a series of conflicts between the Ottoman Empire and Holy Roman Empire, amongst others) had characterised much of the news content of the *Gazette*. Consequently, there was little requirement for the paper to make any sustained significant change: commercial opposition had declined whilst foreign news interests increased. Within a relatively short period, the *Gazette* could claim a monopoly on print news once more.

Once again, an overview of print news alone would seem to support the idea that by 1684 public interest in the issues surrounding the Popish Plot and Exclusion Crisis had entirely declined, leading to an 'anti-climactic' post-crisis period.¹¹⁷ Though the crisis years had inspired enthusiastic public political participation and interest, the return to a significantly more limited news content would suggest a setback in the development of news culture. This interpretation, however, disregards that political debate was sustained through 1681-1683 by the Tory press, and that there were lasting changes to the content of the *Gazette*.

¹¹³ Pettegree, *The Invention of News*, 234-244.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid*, 244.

¹¹⁵ *London Gazette*, no. 1935, June 2nd 1684.

¹¹⁶ See: Appendix 2.2.

¹¹⁷ The examination of manuscript news indicates that whilst interest had indeed declined, it was a far more gradual process than can be gleaned from the interrupted development of the newspaper – furthermore, related issues continued to arise even in 1684. See below.

As the last of its Exclusion Crisis competitors, Roger L'Estrange's *Observer* also continued to print through the period. Much as it had before, the 'pamphlet-periodical' style L'Estrange had successfully utilised remained part news-commentary, part polemical monologue (albeit still between the faux question-answer sessions of the publication's persona and reader-representative 'Trimmer'). Though largely continuing in matters of current events, the *Observer* of June 7th considers Titus Oates' account of the Plot:

I do *Believe Otes'es Narrative, Just as far as the Jesuites
Believ'd it, that Dy'd under the Hands of Publique Justice;
And not One hair's Breadth further: For They did, most
Infalaby know, whether he spake True, or False, If he spake
Truth, 'twas Impossible for Them Not to Believe him: And if
he spake False, 'twas as Impossible for them to Believe him:
So that, without Determining either the One way, or the
Other, I do most Certainly Believe Otes in this Matter, Just as
the Jesuites Believe him.*¹¹⁸

The inclusion is also somewhat troublesome to a traditional interpretation of Exclusion Crisis issues as having come to a close years previously, with the dissolution of parliament (Tapsell's 'anti-climax'). It does, at least, suggest there was sufficient cause for L'Estrange to continue publicly questioning the credibility of Oates's narrative. If indeed these issues had been settled, what purpose would L'Estrange's periodical serve?

In any case – with Whig periodicals effectively suppressed, it was the Tory perspective alone that remained in print. With regard to the press, as we have seen, the government had managed to effectively exert control over production. 'Other pernicious genres', Goldie explains, 'such as scribal newsletters, survived.'¹¹⁹

Unlike print news, where prosecution effectively halted the discussion of unwelcome domestic news near the height of its popularity, representation of the Popish Plot and Exclusion Crisis within newsletters gradually decreased over time, as the stimulus for news (in this instance, the development of public and parliamentary debate regarding exclusion) diminished within the public sphere. It was a more natural end to the news story – an event

¹¹⁸ *The Observer in Dialogue*, no. 75, June 5th 1684.

¹¹⁹ Goldie, 'Roger L'Estrange's *Observer*', 72.

allowed to play out, develop, and diminish alongside its relevancy. Though it is unlikely that readers' interest in news of the controversy lessened significantly given the context and perception of importance, a lack of new information inevitably forced authors to pursue different stories.

By July of 1681, the newsletters to Lord Mostyn were still very much interested in the development of the exclusion debate. The letter from the 9th reported the story of 'Stephen Colledge, termed *the* protestant Joyner prisoner', sent to the Tower for allegedly planning a rebellion to 'subvert *the* Government and seize *the* Kings person'.¹²⁰ The king, Colledge had announced, 'was a papist, and *the* family of *the* Stuarts a cursed family'.¹²¹ Similar news dominated the content of the newsletters across the ensuing months. September 6th reported that 'the parliament of Scotland have past another Bill for Security of *the* protestant Religion, which reinforce *the* Lawes to be put into Execution equally against Papists and all other schismatiqs':¹²²

These things are carried in Scotland to the great disappointment of ye dissenting Brethren in London, who never expected *that* popery & Nonconformity (*which* they call Tender Conscience) should be brought thus together ... Nor do they know how to reconcile those proceedings *against* papists ... a great many have *that* the Duke's of that perswasion.¹²³

The religious tensions were plain to see – concerns over the Duke's religion, and the troubles it might later cause, clearly continued.

All the same, as time progressed, the newsletters gradually returned to their traditional focus, albeit initially with an even-heavier domestic slant to the news. The five manuscript letters from July 8th to July 22nd 1682 report the selection of sheriffs and the 'Whiggish objections' made to the new appointments (developing the story to a large extent across the five letters), and the movements of the king and the prince to Windsor, amongst other

¹²⁰ BU MS Mostyn 9090, fol. 137r, July 9th 1681.

¹²¹ Ibid.

¹²² BU MS Mostyn 9090, fol. 153r, 6th September 1681.

¹²³ BU MS Mostyn 9090, fol. 154r, 6th September 1681.

domestic news stories.¹²⁴ There is, however, still some news included that touches upon the earlier crisis:

Thursday in *the* afternoon one Sarah Goodwin sister to Colledge *the* Joyner was brought before ... one of ye Aldermen & by her husband accused of high Treason in saying *that* shee ... would kill the king therewith and likewise her husband ... that shee used very oppressive words *against* the *Prince* ... whereupon she was committed to Newgate for Treason.¹²⁵

Narcissus Luttrell noted the arrest in his own recordings: 'Mrs. Goodwin, sister to Stephen Colledge, lately executed for treason, was committed to Newgate, on the information of her own husband.'¹²⁶ Though a brief connection, it nevertheless alluded to the wider narrative of recent controversy and conspiracy. Of course, though the print periodicals wove the story into their political narratives (the Whig *Intelligencer*, for example – 'that [Goodwin] is a hot passionate woman, and zealous for the Cause, is certain'), the manuscript newsletters offered a more balanced view: 'but some say *that* ... they believe her husband has done this out of malice to be ridd of her, they having lived together very untowardly and sometimes *against* from one another.'¹²⁷ While the periodicals pushed overtly political perspectives and interpretations of current events, debating authenticity between them, the newsletters maintained a comparatively more-modern approach to news-reporting, providing a greater sense of impartiality.

Scribal news continued as such until the emergence of the Rye House Plot in 1683, whereupon it once again provided a news-narrative that covered the story in full across the ensuing weeks. The letter of June 23rd broke the news, reporting the plot's apparent political connections: 'The treasonable Conspiracy lately discovered *against* the life of his Majesty his Royal heighness and overthrowing of *the* Government, which admits of fresh discoursed

¹²⁴ BU MS Mostyn 9091, fols. 30-34. 'Whiggish objections' – fol. 33r, July 18th 1682; movement of royal family – fol. 31r, July 11th 1682.

¹²⁵ BU MS Mostyn 9091, fol. 31r, July 11th 1682.

¹²⁶ Luttrell, N., *A Brief Relation of State Affairs*, 209. Luttrell later notes that Goodwin was discharged, 'there being no other evidence against her' (217).

¹²⁷ *Loyal Protestant and True Domestick Intelligence*, no. 184, July 22nd 1682; BU MS Mostyn 9091, fol. 31r, July 11th 1682.

daily ... they are all of the whiggish party'.¹²⁸ In a manner reminiscent of the newsletters' past coverage of the Popish Plot, each issue developed the story through the months to follow. June 26th reported new findings, making a clear distinction between the uncertainty of the earlier Popish Plot and the reality of the newly-discovered conspiracy: 'Every day discovers a greater prospect into *the* treasonable Conspiracy *against* the life of his majesty and Royall highness, which appears so villainously to be perpetrated ... being attended with such proofes, as not in *the* least by any scrupulous person to be doubted.'¹²⁹ Accordingly, the account that followed was highly detailed.

Just as the conspiracy of 1678 had occupied the full attention of the newsletters, so too did the Rye House Plot. June 30th told of a 'proclamation for *the* Apprehending James Duke of Monmouth,' amongst others: 'they have traitorously Conspired together' for the 'Death and destruction of his Majesty and Royall highness'.¹³⁰ July 7th reported that 'most of *the* forraigne Ambassadors have complimented his majesty and Royall highness upon their happy deliverance from *the* Conspiracy *against* them'.¹³¹ August 4th described the publication of the king's proclamation, 'to all his loving subjects, concerning the treasonable Conspiracy *against* his sacred person and Government'.¹³² August 18th gave information regarding the questioning of a 'Nonconformist Preacher mentioned in his Majesties Declaration as concerned in the plott', whilst September 1st reported that 'Yesterday was held a Councill at Whitehall, where divers of the Plotters were examined'.¹³³ News of the conspiracy continued for the remainder of the year, only beginning to ebb once all of the plotters had been imprisoned, or executed, or had disappeared. The number of reports regarding the plot declined, and the newsletters moved on to other domestic stories.

Consequently, by 1684, the content of the scribal news to Mostyn in North Wales greatly resembles the news of pre-Popish Plot letters. Whilst the emergence and development of the Plot had seen the domestic news content of the newsletters rise to 99.6%, almost entirely eclipsing its foreign news inclusions, June 1684's newsletters contain, on average, 71% domestic news and 29% foreign.¹³⁴ The news divide had largely returned to the standard letter of 1676, where domestic news had averaged 76% and foreign 24%.¹³⁵ From June-

¹²⁸ BU MS Mostyn 9091, fol. 118r, June 23rd 1683.

¹²⁹ BU MS Mostyn 9091, fol. 119r, June 26th 1683.

¹³⁰ BU MS Mostyn 9091, fol. 120r, June 30th 1683.

¹³¹ BU MS Mostyn 9091, fol. 122r, July 7th 1683.

¹³² BU MS Mostyn 9091, fol. 128r, August 4th 1683.

¹³³ BU MS Mostyn 9091, fol. 132r, August 18th 1683; BU MS Mostyn 9091, fol. 136r, September 1st 1683.

¹³⁴ See: Appendix, figs. 1.2 and 1.3.

¹³⁵ See: Appendix, fig. 1.1.

August, 1684, familiar themes emerge once more: criminal proceedings remain a clear area of interest, as does news regarding recent merchant ship trade. As before, domestic reports are characteristically balanced with a small selection of foreign news.

It should be noted that this does not represent a regression in terms of modernity. Though coverage reverts largely to its pre-1679 content, manuscript still offers a comparatively full account of recent domestic news. The difference is that we once again see more variety in terms of coverage, where the crisis years had tended to direct the majority of the scribal news-stories to crisis-related events.

The letter to Mostyn from June 3rd 1684 provides a typical example of the scribal news arriving during the summer months. It begins by reporting 'about 100 Quakers & other Dissenters' accused of nonconformity, and a 'Gent committed to *the* Gatehouse'.¹³⁶ After news of their prosecutions, a report regarding some libel spoken against the king is included, followed by news of a 'Magnat ... for 100000 damages' sought by the crown.¹³⁷ The balance between domestic and foreign news is much the same as the newsletters sent to the Mostyn estate in 1676; foreign reports are included at the end of each manuscript, comprising approximately a quarter of the content.¹³⁸ Here, the report concerns conflict at the city of Luxemburg.

Though less noticeably than via print news, problems relating to the accuracy of scribal news-reports continued into 1684. The news from Luxemburg incorporates a note of caution regarding the legitimacy of the information:

The City of Luxemburgh is said to hold out still wee have had many sharing about it and some will have it now that it was surrendred last Wednesday but *the* Letters *the* last pacquet are silent in it yet *the* ffrench ambassadour sayes it is delivered ... but wee know not what credit to allow it.¹³⁹

This was a less common feature in manuscript news of the period, where scribal authors tended to emphasise the validity and extent of their news information, in comparison to the print news available at the time. Tapsell observes, 'there was a professional imperative [to manuscript news], with manuscript newsletter writers highlighting the privileged information

¹³⁶ BU MS Mostyn 9092, fol. 18r, June 3rd 1684.

¹³⁷ Ibid.

¹³⁸ See: Appendix, figs. 1.1 and 1.3.

¹³⁹ BU MS Mostyn 9092, fol. 18v, June 3rd 1684.

that they could provide, and thus asserting their supremacy over the whole print medium.¹⁴⁰ Where circumstance dictated, however, newsletter authors were still forced to acknowledge the uncertainty of their report, rather than have it proved inaccurate as the information developed.

In contrast to the newsletters of 1676, where authors occasionally failed to fill even a single side with scribal news, the letters from the summer months of 1684 show development in terms of length. Across June, the average newsletter stands at 506 words, in comparison to the 1676 average of 279 words.¹⁴¹ Typically, each letter makes use of all the space available to the author, whilst leaving enough room for an address when folded, and without carrying over to a second page. This makes the approximate physical length of each newsletter from June-August, 1684, a side and a half, in comparison to 1676's single side. It is probable that an increase in the availability of general news information accounts for the expansion in length – it seems likely that more news circulated in London following the early 1680s given the increase in news publications during the years of domestic crisis.¹⁴² Certainly, the author of the 1684 newsletters does not seem to struggle finding enough content to fill a manuscript, unlike the newsletters prior to 1679, where a lack of information occasionally resulted in a temporary hiatus between updates.¹⁴³ Undoubtedly, the sudden and prolonged availability of periodicals during the Popish Plot and Exclusion Crisis had exposed readers to a level of information that extended far beyond that which was regularly available during the previous period. Partisan interests had pushed political arguments to the forefront of popular news media, making current political developments constantly observable to an increasingly widespread audience.¹⁴⁴ Even after the new periodical papers were suppressed, letters continued to offer domestic news information.

Thus, the 'community of the mind', discussed in the previous chapter with regard to the experience of news, would evidently last beyond the immediate problem years of the Plot and Exclusion Crisis. In his study of the early to mid-1680s, Tapsell has written:

A news culture that extended far beyond London helped to bind the country together in terms of political knowledge and awareness. Paradoxically, this shared awareness was

¹⁴⁰ Tapsell, *The Personal Rule*, 95.

¹⁴¹ See: Appendix, figs. 1.3 and 1.1.

¹⁴² See chapter 3: 'The New Media of the Popish Plot.'

¹⁴³ See chapter 2: 'News in the Time of the Popish Plot.'

¹⁴⁴ Pettegree, for example, suggests that pamphlets alone may have accounted for between 5 and 10 million new publications between 1679-1681: Pettegree, *The Invention of News*, 244.

enormously important as a means of maintaining and deepening political divisions. Partisans were able to appropriate events in localities distant from their own as means of heightening fears locally, and binding together like-minded men and women.¹⁴⁵

Tapsell suggests that partisan authorities were able to make use of the 'imagined community' in order to relate news of regional events to individual localities. The implied consequences of a reported event in a region far removed from one's own could then be used on a national scale for political means. Authors were consequently able to 'advertise their solidarity and aims through news networks whose crucial nodes were coffee and alehouses, as well as a wider – and vibrant – civic culture.'¹⁴⁶ Though controversial domestic news had been reduced with the suppression of partisan news sheets, newsletters still allowed political factions to disseminate reports with implied political significance. Whig newsletters continued even after their printed counterparts had succumbed to governmental pressure:

Newsletters such as those written by Giles Hancock, known as "a little penny-post pocket devil" by his detractors, were stridently Whig, notoriously unreliable, and deliberately sensational. Still, they fulfilled a demand for domestic news and comment – particularly after the Whig newspapers disappeared – and despite official harassment and intervention, they continued to flourish.¹⁴⁷

Through newsletters, the 'imagined community', where the mass digestion and interpretation of contemporary events took place, could still be effectively influenced politically.

Though representation of the popular fears that had seized the public between 1679-1681 had diminished in scribal news (where, particularly in late 1678 and 1679, news of the alleged Plot and its consequences had formed the majority of each letter – see chapter 2), it is interesting to note that these themes continue to arise intermittently in the newsletters from June-August 1684, albeit to a lesser extent than during the early 1680s. Despite that, in the

¹⁴⁵ Tapsell, *The Personal Rule*, 92

¹⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 92

¹⁴⁷ Zook, M., *Radical Whigs and Conspiratorial Politics in Late Stuart England* (Pennsylvania: Pennsylvania State University, 1999), p. 6.

previous years, the *Gazette* had successfully weathered the problems caused by the exclusion debate through a greater control of the press (though one might have expected the issue to become *more* pressing as time progressed, rather than less so), and the suppression of its competitors had reduced its depiction in all forms of print news, newsletters still continued to discuss the motifs the crisis years had brought to the forefront of public and political attention. In the newsletter dated 7th June 1684, for example, the author writes of an enquiry 'after persons who repaire to Coffee houses and talk of popery and Arbitrary Government'.¹⁴⁸ Evidently, censorship had merely prevented print news from examining these subjects, rather than significantly diminishing the public's interest in their continued development: 'What the remarkable outburst of newspapers between 1679 and 1682 had demonstrated beyond all possible doubt,' Sutherland writes, 'was the popular demand for more news, a demand that was scarcely met at all by the official Gazette.'¹⁴⁹ With newsletters not subject to the same level of official scrutiny as print information, the possibility for sustained coverage of contentious domestic news stories remained as high as ever.

As a result of this, in the preceding years the government had made several attempts across the country to control the content and dissemination of newsletters, as it had print publication. In Edinburgh in January 1680, it was ordered that any newsletters sent to coffee houses must first pass before a privy counsellor.¹⁵⁰ At Bristol in the following year, a similar demand was issued that 'no printed or written news or pamphletts' was to 'be suffer'd to be read or published' in any 'coffee or tipling house but onely such as shall first be shewn to Mr mayor or the alderman of the ward.'¹⁵¹ In practice, these orders were difficult to enforce; Fox has stated that, by the early 1680s, 'there was an even greater variety of channels through which written news, whether in the form of private epistle or professionally written newsletter, could easily become common knowledge.'¹⁵² The inclusive news content of the manuscript newsletter was maintainable in a way that printed domestic news was not, resisting attempts to suppress circulating information even in the face of governmental opposition.

An examination of the news industry from 1679 to 1681 would illustrate a periodical press fuelled by domestic controversy, and flourishing. This being the case, it is perhaps no

¹⁴⁸ BU MS Mostyn 9092, fol. 19r, June 7th 1684.

¹⁴⁹ Sutherland, *The Restoration Newspaper*, 20.

¹⁵⁰ Harris, *Restoration*, 337.

¹⁵¹ Fox, *Oral and Literate Culture*, 379.

¹⁵² *Ibid.*

wonder that historians of the era have seen the subsequent decline as anti-climactic. A detailed analysis of the news forms, however, clearly indicates that arguments continued to rage. The Tory reaction was emerging and gathering pace – periodicals initiated, pamphlets disseminated. Even after the dissolution of Parliament, the debate remained significant enough to fuel another three years of partisan print-news, with the last of the Whig papers closed only when the Rye House Plot had offered sufficient justification for such an action. News, it seems – whether in pamphlet, print, or manuscript form, from the Popish Plot in 1678 to the Rye House Plot in 1683 – had characterised and facilitated the crisis. Increasingly, it was recognised as a major factor in both presenting partisan politics, and appealing to the wider public on an unprecedented scale. Though the seemingly-progressive domestic focus of the Whig print papers had declined with their suppression, this was not necessarily representative of a decline in public interest regarding contemporary politics and participation, as fuelled by the news.

And so: how significant a period for the overall development of news do we consider 1679-1683? The answer is not as straightforward as one might initially assume. With variety declining and print effectively reverting to its pre-crisis form post-1683, how much change was long-term? How much temporary, at best?

Again, we must separate the print-periodical from the more 'traditional' forms in order to provide an answer.

Even if we consider the new (albeit temporary) variety of print news (i.e. the periodicals emerging during the crisis years) as a step towards modernity, we must question how much value most actually offered as news sources. Roger L'Estrange's *Observer*, for example, often appeared more as a commentary on other writings than as an authentic conveyer of news. Though the content of the *Gazette* post-1683 indicates a less restrictive attitude towards controlled domestic-coverage, actual concessions made are minimal – but perhaps mollifying.

By comparison, manuscript periodicals continued to surpass print in terms of modern news practices, particularly with regards to consistency, and to the level of domestic reporting. Despite its position as a far older type of news dissemination, the scribal news of the later seventeenth century once more seems to resemble in concept a form more akin to our contemporary publications than its 'newer' printed counterpart, and emerging newspapers. In any case, by 1684 a certain 'status quo' had been restored: reader interest and politicisation was growing, and manuscript news still continued to offer the information that print news could, or would, not.

Chapter 6: News in the time of the 'Glorious Revolution'

Despite a relatively lengthy recent history of political debate and social controversy regarding his successor's religion, in 1685 after Charles II's death, James, Duke of York, ascended to the throne with little immediate protest or objection. The two rebellions that arose in the year that followed - the first in Scotland led by the Earl of Argyll, and the second with the purpose of placing the Duke of Monmouth on the throne in England – were both quickly defeated by the new king's standing army. Though unsuccessful, the rebellions had the result of strengthening the king's resolve against those deemed religious dissenters, some of whom were seen to have been involved in Monmouth's attempt to claim the throne.¹ When parliament finally met in November 1685, restrictions on the press were again reinforced – licensing was reintroduced, and the public reduced to 'almost the same news economy as before 1678.'²

Over the next few years, James II attempted at various occasions to implement change in religious law. On April 14th 1687, a Declaration of Indulgence was issued, allowing a greater freedom of public worship to non-Anglican subjects. The notice was published in the *Gazette*:

*There is nothing now that We so earnestly desire, as to Establish Our Government on such a Foundation, as may make Our Subjects happy, and unite them to Us by Inclination as well as Duty; Which We think can be done by no Means so effectually, as by granting to them the free Exercise of their Religion for the time to come.*³

Requirement to swear the Oaths of Allegiance and Supremacy was suspended, alongside 'all manner of Penal Laws in Matters Ecclesiastical'.⁴ 'But if the Declaration sounded less arbitrary than the 1672 Indulgence,' Spurr writes, 'it was blatantly pro-Catholic: James stated that he could not "but heartily wish" that all his subjects were members of the Catholic Church.'⁵ The issue intensified in the following year when, disappointed with the Declaration's initial reception, James reissued the document, ordering it to be read from

¹ Miller, *Popery and Politics*, 201, 205-206.

² Sommerville, *The News Revolution*, 95.

³ *London Gazette*, no. 2231, April 4th 1687.

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵ Spurr, *The Post-Reformation*, 175.

every pulpit in the kingdom.⁶ It has been suggested that in enforcing it, James hoped to 'drive a wedge' between Anglicans and dissenters 'when the Anglican clergy refused to read the Declaration from the pulpits.'⁷ Of course, if the king was indeed attempting to divide Anglicans and dissenters, then he was allowing the further formation of yet another largely unregulated forum for news information dissemination and discussion in order to do it. Pulpits – dissenting or otherwise – served a significant informative function, and the king's orders provoked an impassioned response. Within a short time, seven leading church bishops in London wrote a widely-disseminated petition to the king: 'it was this petition', Spurr writes, 'which became a symbol of the church's resistance to royal policy. ... Within weeks, the seven bishops had been charged with publishing a false, seditious and malicious libel.'⁸ If it was James's intention to divide religious factions, we might suggest it had some measure of success.

The complex political relationship between Dutch and English authorities has been the subject of recent criticism. Helmer Helmers has argued compellingly that the English Civil War had a lasting impact on the continent, influencing public opinion and stimulating debate about the nature of sovereignty and of royalism – a debate that found a measure of resolve in the restoration of the king in 1660: 'Charles II's restoration was also the restoration of his father, whose fate had made such a profound impression in the Dutch Republic.'⁹ The Restoration, it was believed, 'would revive the old friendship between England and the Dutch Republic, and usher in a new era of cultural and economic prosperity' – after the conflict of the mid-1650s, it was to be a welcome change.¹⁰

Royalism had found wide ideological appeal in the Dutch territories, and after 1660, Dutch expressions of royalism 'infused Restoration culture': art and drama took their inspiration from the royalist imagery developed in the republic in the previous decade – imagery that had returned with the monarch.¹¹ More importantly, it was agreed – at least on the Dutch side – that the restoration of the Stuarts in England would lead to the restoration of the House of Orange in the Dutch republic: 'The Stuart cause had profited both from concrete

⁶ Ibid, 178.

⁷ Coward, *The Stuart Age*, 341.

⁸ Spurr, *The Post-Reformation*, 178. Also see: Gibson, W., *James II and the Trial of the Seven Bishops* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009)

⁹ Helmers, H., *The Royalist Republic* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 259. Helmers' argument indicates that the First Anglo-Dutch War was not merely a militaristic conflict, but a struggle steeped in religious anxiety and economic rivalry (198-232).

¹⁰ Ibid, 261.

¹¹ Ibid, 263.

support of the Orange court and popular Orangism, but evidently, Orangism also drew strength from the popular appeal of royalism.¹²

Nevertheless, it became clear before long that Dutch popular hopes would not be realised through Charles II. When the restored king failed to repeal the Navigation Act (established by Cromwell during the Interregnum), married a Catholic, and offered William support only in words, 'Dutch devotion to Charles II soon dissipated.'¹³ The outbreak of the Second Anglo-Dutch War in 1665 violently widened the split: 'The "Dutch" king Charles had suddenly become an enemy of the state.'¹⁴

Domestically, the crisis point came in June of 1688, when the queen gave birth to a son: a male heir to the throne made possible a potentially lasting period of Catholic governance. Leading Protestants – both Whig and Tory – sought external intervention, pledging their support to William of Orange, should he bring 'a force to England against James.'¹⁵ William seized upon the opportunity, landing a fleet of ships on the shores of Torbay on the 5th November. With little resistance as his armies marched to the capital, coupled with James II's escape to the continent on 22nd December, the Prince of Orange reached London with the support of the majority of leading Whigs and Tories.¹⁶ The following April, after Parliament's decision that James II had legally abdicated the throne, William was crowned alongside his wife, Mary, as joint sovereign.

Though historians have considered the print and propaganda of 1688 in detail, the role of news in the event that became known as the 'Glorious Revolution' has been understated.¹⁷ Its use – by both opposing sides of the political conflict – had a considerable influence on the public, significantly affecting the manner in which it responded to the invasion before, during, and after its enactment. This chapter will examine the months leading up to and during William's conquest, focussing primarily on the content and coverage of the *Gazette* and other printed news sheets, in contrast to the Mostyn scribal newsletters. The role of pamphletary news texts, such as William's *Declaration of Reasons*, circulated prior to his arrival in England, will also be considered. To begin, a brief analysis of the news industry following Charles II's death in the years prior to the revolution is included.

¹² Ibid, 260.

¹³ Ibid, 264.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Coward, *The Stuart Age*, 341.

¹⁶ Ibid, 344.

¹⁷ See, for example: Schwoerer, L., 'Propaganda in the Revolution of 1688-89', *The American Historical Review* 82:4 (October, 1977), 843-874; Pincus, *1688: The First Modern Revolution*; Sharpe, *Rebranding Rule*.

The *Gazette* had continued throughout the change in monarchs as the prime purveyor of printed news. Competition in the form of other print periodicals was scarce; since the closure of the Whig and Tory papers that arose from the tumultuous previous years, no lasting publications had emerged, aside from Roger L'Estrange's ongoing *Observer in Dialogue*. From 1685-1687, the balance of coverage in the *Gazette* remained very much as it had in 1684; the majority of each issue consisted of foreign news, followed by a limited amount of domestic reports typically discussing ongoing criminal proceedings and the movements of the nobility, in addition to sporadically including notices of public interest. As it had been during the reign of Charles II, the *Gazette* continued, on occasion, to be used by the government to print proclamations, parliamentary speeches, or official announcements. At the beginning of James II's reign, for example, the bulk of the issue dated May 4th, 1685, transcribed a letter from the king calling for Parliament to assemble:

[We] call you at this Time in the beginning of Our Reign, to give you an opportunity not only of shewing your Duty to Us ... but likewise of being Exemplary to others in your Demonstrations of Affection to Our Person, and compliance with Our desires.¹⁸

Presumably, the intention of the king's address was to reinforce the need for 'Loyalty' and 'Duty' following his ascension to the throne.

Sommerville has suggested that in contrast to his predecessor, James II 'recognised that even an authoritarian government now needed to cultivate public opinion'.¹⁹ The impact of the press on the public during the previous years could hardly have escaped James's notice: during the Exclusion Crisis, competing Whig and Tory news sheets had had a significant influence on how the Duke had been popularly perceived as successor to the crown. This may explain why we see, in the *Gazette* of June 1st 1685, an article discussing the Earl of Argyll's gathering army in Scotland, in 'Defence of the Protestant Religion'.²⁰ The Earl's 'Summons' to the country is printed in full:

¹⁸ *London Gazette*, no. 2031, May 4th 1685.

¹⁹ Sommerville, *The News Revolution*, 95.

²⁰ *London Gazette*, no. 2039, June 1st 1685.

*Being by Gods Blessing come safe to this Place, with a Resolution according to a Declaration emitted for Defence of the Protestant Religion, and our Lives and Liberties, against Popery and Arbitrary Government. ... These are to require all the Heretors, Tenants, and others, and all Sensible Men within the Division of Cowal, between Sixty and Sixteen, with all their useful Arms, and two weeks Loan, to come.*²¹

Its presence in the *Gazette* is uncharacteristic of the paper during the period, given the nature of the address, and the *Gazette*'s traditional reluctance to acknowledge domestic matters of controversy. Certainly, during Charles II's reign, there are few examples of comparable content. Of course, if the paper was allowed to report on Scottish developments because they were not considered truly 'domestic', then it was a considerable flaw in the *Gazette*'s selective-reporting policy. The two kingdoms – England and Scotland – were clearly connected. Any news from the 'foreign' country came with significant implications for England, given their obvious political associations.

Whatever the reason for its inclusion, the summons is followed by an editorial discussing the Earl's recent actions, laden with negative association and connotation. The author writes, 'We do not yet know the certain number of the Rebels, but sure it is, that most of those that are with them are come by force, and fear of having their Houses burnt, and themselves Murdered'.²² The Earl's son, the author states, threatened to 'put all to fire and Sword', should his request be defied. In contrast to the *Gazette* of a few years previously, this shows a more selective, politically-motivated editing and authoring process, and a paper more willing to include the details of potentially controversial information in order to achieve a political goal. While minor concessions to domestic news had been made during and after the Exclusion Crisis, this change suggests a developing role for the more traditional *Gazette*. In a period of political controversy and innovation, the *Gazette* was being used to a greater political effect.

We may indeed see James II's influence in the change. Certainly, there is evidence to show that the king was interested in manipulating print news for political stability. In February 1688, James sponsored the *Publick Occurrences Truly Stated*, a published

²¹ Ibid. The Summons is quoted in part above.

²² Ibid.

periodical penned by none other than Henry Care, author of the *Weekly Pacquet of Advice from Rome*.²³ Where the *Weekly Pacquet* had emphasised the dangers Catholicism posed to society through a lengthy history of its Church, the *Publick Occurrences* sought to defend the king's policies, particularly the notion of liberty of religious conscience.²⁴ In her biography of Care, Lois Schwoerer ascribes the change to 'fear, desire to assist dissenters, and commitment to religious liberty', though the changing political climate and fall in influence of Whig rhetoric no doubt played its part.²⁵

'Addressing himself particularly to Dissenters who were reluctant to join the Catholic king,' Schwoerer writes, 'Care offered a richly textured argument to justify James's policy of toleration for Catholics and Dissenters.'²⁶ He had been invited to join the court due to the 'failure' of the king's initial tactics: 'for the first eighteen months or so of his reign James followed a complicated and "naïve" strategy that reveals how seriously he misread his subjects' political and religious convictions.'²⁷ Seemingly underestimating the deeply ingrained nature of anti-Catholic sentiment (or overestimating the extent of his own power to placate any objections that might arise as a result of his toleration), prerogative powers were used to suspend laws against Catholic subjects – and as a consequence, the king had little subsequent success 'winning over Anglicans and Tories':

Anti-popery prejudice and fear of losing property, place and status in a Catholic State overwhelmed their long-term commitment to the throne and to the principle of nonresistance.²⁸

Care, Schwoerer suggests, had previously been identified with Whigs and Dissenters – as such, he was an 'individual whose arguments could be expected to carry weight with that community.'²⁹ Whether because of intimidation, for the chance to advance the cause of

²³ Sommerville, *The News Revolution*, 95; Lois G. Schwoerer, 'Care, Henry (1646/7–1688)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004 [<http://0-www.oxforddnb.com.unicat.bangor.ac.uk/view/article/4621>, accessed 22 August, 2012] The *Weekly Pacquet* is examined in chapter 3.

²⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁵ *Ibid.* Schwoerer provides a comprehensive account of the gradual demise of the *Weekly Pacquet* in the face of government intimidation through the early-1680s, in addition to the necessities behind Care's 'defection', in *The Ingenious Mr. Henry Care*, 201-218.

²⁶ Schwoerer, *The Ingenious Mr. Henry Care*, 219.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 220. Also: Miller, *Popery and Politics*, 201.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 221.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 224.

religious liberty, or for profit, Care accepted the task. What emerged, Sutherland observes, was a 'true government newspaper.'³⁰

The first issue of the *Publick Occurrences Truly Stated* opened with the suggestion that a reader 'must wink hard, that does not see to what disadvantages the Government is daily Exposed by false Reports'.³¹ 'Everything liable to Misconstruction,' Care wrote, is 'Trumpetted through the Kingdom, and dressed up in all the ill Colours that Malice, or Misemploy'd Witt, can invent ... whilst what tends to its Honour, and giving a right notion of our Superiours proceedings, is industriously stifled'.³² The author's complaint was clear: unofficial news circulating through the public (inherently unreliable, Care implies) was damaging the 'true' dissemination of information. Sommerville has succinctly summarised Care's ironic perspective: 'in short, he was complaining that a public without a free press had found means of "stifling" an authoritarian government's efforts to express its position!'³³ Once again, we see print being used by supporters of the government to argue, paradoxically, for the suppression of the press. Though one might consider Care's publication as indicative of new and emerging print news, its content in fact points to a deceptively traditional perception of press control, and not the move towards a modern press we might initially assume. It was, it seems, only by necessity that Care entered into the dissemination of print news. Nevertheless, his criticism of 'false Reports' was one evidently shared by the government: despite their success in suppressing an independent press, 'the unofficial institutions of public opinion seemed to the government to have the field to themselves.'³⁴

This is hardly a surprising observation. Manuscript and oral news continued to thrive, and rumour was as rife as it ever had been. As the editors of the *Gazette* rarely included anything alongside continental news other than inconsequential and irregular reports from around the country, unofficial news sources remained the best possible place to look for up-to-date domestic news. Care's periodical sought to challenge this. Consequently, the first issue reports a 'Commission granted by His Majesty for Inquiring what has been taken away from Dissenters', the continuation of the King's enforcement of the '*Equal Liberty of Conscience*; being that Great and Noble End he had proposed and resolved to make this Kingdom happy by', and a series of reports regarding criminal prosecutions, amongst other

³⁰ Sutherland, *The Restoration Newspaper*, 22.

³¹ *Publick Occurrences Truly Stated*, no. 1, February 21st 1688.

³² *Ibid.*

³³ Sommerville, *The News Revolution*, 95.

³⁴ *Ibid.*

domestic news stories.³⁵ The structure – a double-columned broadside, printed both sides, with an approximate word length of 1,800 – is reminiscent of the *Gazette*, so that it is not difficult to imagine the two papers working intertextually to create a relatively complete narrative of recent events, both at home and abroad.³⁶ There are a few small stylistic differences; *Publick Occurrences* numbers stories to indicate new reports rather than including a location prefix as the *Gazette* does, in addition to largely avoiding specific dating to indicate the time of an incident reported, instead using 'lately', 'last week', or through references to previous events.³⁷ This may be designed to allow a greater freedom of selection with regard to reports chosen for inclusion. Supplying the date of an event ultimately affects its relevance; should the story be less recent than other reports – due to the length of time taken to acquire a coherent narrative, for example, or the prioritisation of reports and space available in a given issue – it may bear little significance to the reader by the time of its publication. By choosing not to include the date, Care can potentially select from a greater assortment of favourable news stories. Without a date, it would also be somewhat more difficult to ascertain the accuracy of the information the paper supplied.

Certainly, the content is carefully chosen. A brief survey of the first three issues of *Publick Occurrences* indicates a trend towards articles that clearly favour the king's religious policies: 'addressing Dissenters directly, Care argued that they had a moral responsibility to help the king to realise his policy of toleration.'³⁸ The first issue reports the appointment of a noble to government in the West of England, stating that his 'known Loyalty to the Crown, Oblige us to think that his Majesty may expect a good Regulation, in favour of the Liberty of Conscience he so much desires to Establish.'³⁹ In the second issue, an article comments on the appointment of a '*Protestant Dissenter*' to the king's Revenue of Excise: whose father had previously been 'so severely Prosecuted for Nonconformity by the [now defunct] Ecclesiastical Courts.'⁴⁰ In the third, there is included the transcript of a petition to address a local grievance going '*contrary to Your Majesty's most Christian Declaration for Liberty of Conscience*'.⁴¹ All three issues have a number of other stories that relate to James II's recent

³⁵ *Publick Occurrences Truly Stated*, no. 1, February 21st 1688.

³⁶ Issues 1 to 10 (from February 21st to April 24th, 1688) have an average word-count of 1,808.

³⁷ *Ibid.*

³⁸ Schwoerer, *The Ingenious Mr. Henry Care*, 251. By Schwoerer's estimation, Care's paper set out 'an exceedingly strong and comprehensive defense of James II and his policy of toleration, as set out in the king's Declaration of Indulgence' (252).

³⁹ *Publick Occurrences Truly Stated*, no 1, February 21st 1688.

⁴⁰ *Publick Occurrences Truly Stated*, no. 2, February 28th 1688.

⁴¹ *Publick Occurrences Truly Stated*, no. 3, March 6th 1688.

legislation. In each, there is evidently a noticeable drive to emphasise the benefits and enforcement of the indulgence.

Care's attempts to discredit the news of coffee-houses and other non-official sources of information are best seen perhaps in the opening to the issue dated March 6th, 1688:

I have set a Friend of mine to consult the *News-Letters*,
and haunt the considing Coffee-Houses, where the grave
Men puff out *Sedition* as freely as the *Smoak* of their
Tobacco. And behold! the Cargo ... Item. *The French
King is to furnish a certain Neighbour* (that has no
occasion for them) *with 15 Men of War and 10000
Soldiers* ... Item. *That if the [Penal] Laws and Tests be
abrogated, the Nation will infallibly be depopulated; for
all the Protestant Church-Folks will presently run their
Country [and] Troop into Holland.*⁴²

The list, consisting of stories based mostly on rumour or hearsay, is followed by Care's express judgement:

These and Forty such lewd Stories are vouch'd for
authentick ... though they are every one such
mischievous, and yet such ridiculous Fictions, that it is an
even Wager, Whether the *Malice* of the *Contrivers*, or the
Folly of the *Believers* be the greater.⁴³

Care points not only to the questionable accuracy of coffee-house news, but to a perceived lack of critical reception on the part of its audience. Despite his complaints however, gossip and rumour continued to have a considerable influence on the public throughout 1688. It has been suggested – and shall be examined later in this chapter – that the months leading up to the Glorious Revolution represent the 'most spectacular example' of influential rumour originating from the trading of 'unofficial' news.⁴⁴

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ Fox, *Oral and Literate Culture*, 380.

Though Care's paper had intended to support James II's policies in an attempt to reinforce political stability and public popularity, the pressing nature of the impending Dutch invasion likely weakened its chances at success. Sommerville has observed that as time went on, there was 'less news and more pleading' in both the *Publick Occurrences* and *London Gazette*.⁴⁵ Through 1688, the *Gazette* had, like Care's periodical, continued to print news in support of James's declaration. In contrast to the *Publick Occurrences*, however, the *Gazette* showed support mostly through the publication of addresses to the king expressing gratitude for 'liberty of conscience':

*We the Grand Inquest for the Body of the County of Middlesex, having a deep sense of Your Majesty's Grace and Favour, in giving us and all Your Subjects Security and Peace by Your most Gracious Declaration for Liberty of Conscience ... do, in all Humility, return our due and unfeigned Thanks to Your Majesty for the same, and for Your Royal and Pious Endeavours and Resolution to perpetuate the present Tranquility to Succeeding Generations.*⁴⁶

Nevertheless, by September 1688, the government's official periodical could no longer ignore the news from Holland. Through proclamation, the *Gazette* of September 27th acknowledged the prospect of invasion:

*We have received undoubted Advice, That a great and sudden Invasion from Holland, with an Armed force of Foreigners and Strangers, will speedily be made in a Hostile manner upon this Our Kingdom.*⁴⁷

Though there is no editorial comment to follow the article, the proclamation itself remarks upon the 'false Pretences' used to justify the assault, citing those relating to 'Liberty, Property, and Religion, contrived or worded with Art and Subtilty'.⁴⁸ The Prince of Orange's *Declaration of Reasons* – a manifesto detailing the rationale behind the invasion (to be

⁴⁵ Sommerville, *The News Revolution*, 96.

⁴⁶ *London Gazette*, no. 2362, July 5th 1688.

⁴⁷ *London Gazette*, no. 2386, September 27th 1688.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

examined in greater depth later in this chapter) – was circulating in the country around this time; the proclamation's criticisms no doubt relate to the articles described in the document.

At this point, the 'pleading' that Sommerville has observed in the *Gazette* becomes increasingly apparent. From October 1688, the content of the paper underwent a remarkable change. Whilst the news of the *Gazette* from 1676 was 0.6% domestic, and the *Gazette* of 1684 16% domestic, October-November 1688 saw domestic news content occupy an average of 41% of the paper.⁴⁹ In an attempt to secure last-minute support from authorities across the country, James II began to restore municipal charters taken away during his reign, and the news was conveyed in print. As it had done with the responses to the indulgence, the *Gazette* published addresses of gratitude emphasising promises of duty and loyalty:

*We Your Majesties Loyal and Dutiful Subjects, the Lord Mayor, Aldermen and Sheriffs, of Your City of London, humbly return our most hearty Thanks to Your Majesty for the great Grace and Favour shewn to the Citizens of this City ... we shall, with all Duty and Faithfulness, chearfully and readily, to the utmost hazard of our Lives and Fortunes, discharge the Trust reposed in us by Your Majesty, according to the avowed Principles of the Church of England, in Defence of Your Majesty and the Established Government.*⁵⁰

In the same issue, dated 4th-8th October 1688, two other similar addresses appear. The second, sent from the Lieutenancy of London, thanks the king for his '*Acts of Bounty and Mercy*', offering their '*Lives and Fortunes ... against all Your Majesties Enemies, who shall disturb Your Peace upon any Pretence whatsoever.*'⁵¹ The third is addressed from 'The Lords of His Majesties most Honorable Privy Council', promising to '*expose our Lives and Fortunes in the Defence of Your Sacred Person*'.⁵² Alongside a variety of other domestic reports (see below), addresses to the king changed the balance of news coverage in the *Gazette*. Even during the Exclusion Crisis, news from the home-country had rarely received such attention.

⁴⁹ See: Appendix, figs. 2.1, 2.2., and 2.3.

⁵⁰ *London Gazette*, no. 2388, October 4th 1688.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*

⁵² *Ibid.*

Evidently, the official news of the government was being utilised to accentuate the notions of loyalty and stability. In subsequent issues throughout October, similar messages of support continue to appear. In the *Gazette* of October 8th, for example, an address to the king from the Justices of the Peace for Cumberland is printed, stating '*we highly think it our Duty, chiefly at this Juncture, to offer our Lives and Fortunes to Your Majesties Service*'.⁵³

The *Gazette*'s propensity to be used as a vehicle for government propaganda during this time has been viewed as highly significant to the public reception of William's *Declaration of Reasons*. Through September 1688, the Prince of Orange had drafted major criticisms of James II's government: 'at the core of the *Declaration* was an insistence that the English constitution was under threat.'⁵⁴ Shortly, the document began to circulate throughout the country.⁵⁵

Whilst the *Declaration* has been extensively analysed as propaganda, it has been examined to a far lesser extent as news. Though used primarily to critically analyse and reflect on the condition of the crown and contemporary England, the *Declaration* also reported and informed on recent English events. Large portions of the document offered news remarkably similar in terms of content and style to the pamphletary publications appearing in the crisis years of 1679-1681. Its tone was revelatory – that of a 'breaking' news report, uncovering the abuses and underhandedness of the English government, though never going quite so far as to actually blame James II himself. In addition to providing a certain amount of traditional news information (that is, 'reports'), the *Declaration* served several other important news functions, reminding its readers of old information newly-relevant, and restructuring information already known. Each complaint the document claimed to expose described the government's prolonged misconduct, a new wrongdoing, or a carefully-disguised violation of long-established law. Amongst its controversial news pieces, the *Declaration* revealed a suspicion that the 'pretended Prince of *Wales* was not born by the *Queen*', but in fact part of a plot for the king's 'Evil *Counsellors*' to maintain their 'ill designs': 'it is notoriously known to all the world, that many both doubted of the *Queen*'s *Bigness*, & of the Birth of the Child, and yet there was not any *one thing* done to *satisfy* them, or to *put an end to their Doubts*.'⁵⁶

⁵³ *London Gazette*, no. 2389, October 8th 1688.

⁵⁴ Claydon, T., 'William III's *Declaration of Reasons* and the Glorious Revolution', *The Historical Journal*, 39:1 (1996), p. 89.

⁵⁵ Schwoerer, L., 'Propaganda in the Revolution of 1688-89', *The American Historical Review*, 82:4 (1977), pp. 854-855.

⁵⁶ *The First Declaration of His Highness William Henry* (1688), p. 12.

'Commissioners', the document stated, 'have suspended the Bishop of *London*' for refusing to obey an order 'sent to him to suspend a Worthy *Divine*, without so much as Citing him before him, to make his own Defence, or observing the common Forms of Process.'⁵⁷ Other sections of the *Declaration* revealed similar misdeeds, with the forced removal of municipal charters appearing as a particular bone of contention:

They have also invaded the Priviledges, and seised the *Charters* of most of those Towns that have a *right* to be *represented* by their *Burgesses* in Parliament; and have procured *Surrenders* to be made of them, by which the Magistrates in them have deliver'd up all the Rights and Priviledges to be disposed of ...⁵⁸

Much as the Whig pamphlets had during the Exclusion Crisis, the *Declaration* then drew on the English reader's traditional fear of Catholicism to underline the significance of the news it reported: 'those Evil *Counsellors*, who have thereupon placed *new* Magistrates in those Towns such as *they* can most entirely confide in ... in *many* of them have put *popish* Magistrates';⁵⁹ those who would not 'pre-engage themselves' in Parliamentary elections (i.e. declare how they would vote regarding government propositions) were 'turned out of all Employments, and others who entred into those engagements put in their places, many of them being Papists.'⁶⁰ Once more, the connection framed news in that particular, highly-negative, context – no doubt in an attempt to stimulate the same sorts of widespread anxieties and arguments that had circulated during the crisis years – that is, of a wider Catholic conspiracy, slowly emerging from within.

Here again was news being used and recognised for its political potential – its ability as a medium to influence and persuade. The *Declaration* represents a carefully selected variety of implicational news stories, followed by an explicit authorial explanation and evaluation. Its subsequent effect on the public has been a topic of recent debate, with historians such as Lois Schwoerer suggesting that its influence was of the utmost importance to the success of the revolution.⁶¹ The *Declaration*, Schwoerer observes, presented the Prince

⁵⁷ Ibid, 4.

⁵⁸ Ibid, 6.

⁵⁹ Ibid, 6.

⁶⁰ Ibid, 10-11.

⁶¹ Schwoerer, 'Propaganda in the Revolution of 1688-9', 843.

of Orange as the 'Dutch Deliverer', whose aim was to 'rescue the Protestant religion and the Anglican Church and to restore the laws and liberties of the English nation.'⁶² Particular grievances set out by the *Declaration* included the 'unlawful' prosecution of the seven bishops that had opposed James II's indulgence earlier in the year, the repeal of the Test Act imposing civil disabilities on Catholics, the *quo warranto* proceedings affecting municipal charters, and 'the elevation of Papists to high posts in all areas of the government.'⁶³ This, Schwoerer's argument suggests, coupled with the high level of dissemination of the *Declaration* throughout Britain, made the document a significant force for influence, and one of the defining reasons for the revolution's success. That the king quickly sought to address some of the issues raised by the document – municipal charters, for example – may indicate the extent of its influence.

More recently, Tony Claydon has argued that 'close examination of the complex politics of 1688-1689 must lead to serious questions about the importance of William's manifesto in his success', suggesting instead that 'there is good evidence that the *Declaration* failed to achieve anything like the hegemony that has been claimed'.⁶⁴ Certainly, the role of government-sponsored news in refuting and discrediting the claims of the *Declaration* has been undervalued.

When the Prince of Orange landed at Torbay in November 1688, the *Gazette* began to be published three times weekly, and was used by the government to a far greater extent: the periodical 'highlighted stories favourable to the king; played down William's successes; and devoted the first columns of each issue to royal statements.'⁶⁵ Thus we see in the *Gazette* of 17th November, 1688, a first page entirely consisting of addresses to James II from 'his most Dutiful and Loyal Subjects', promising further obedience and devotion.⁶⁶ Earlier in the month, the paper had similarly been used to print the king's counter-declaration; a document refuting the claims of William's, and suggesting the 'real' political motivations behind the invasion:

*It is but too evident by a late Declaration Published by
[the Prince of Orange], That notwithstanding the many
specious and plausible Pretences it carries, his Designs ...*

⁶² Ibid, 853.

⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁴ Claydon, 'William III's *Declaration*', 88.

⁶⁵ Ibid, 91.

⁶⁶ *London Gazette*, no. 2401, November 17th 1688.

*do tend to nothing less than an Absolute Usurping of Our
Crown and Royal Authority.*⁶⁷

As a tool for propaganda, the traditional print news sheet offered an effective way of communicating to the reading public en masse. Where William's claims could be seen to be justified by a domestic audience, the king sought to address them, and then publicise the favourable change. Consequently, there is repeated throughout October the publication of notices of gratitude for the restoration of municipal charters (as indicated in the addresses quoted above), which William's *Declaration* had specifically named as a matter of contention. The purpose for their inclusion was evident: it was a clear attempt to publicly render the Prince of Orange's complaints redundant. As Claydon has suggested, James II sought to embarrass the Williamites by removing 'all the carefully listed grievances of their manifesto'. 'Still aware of public opinion,' he continues, 'the king used his control of the press to advertise these concessions'.⁶⁸

Through October and November of 1688, the *Gazette* was used to draw attention to the positive change. Proclamations, public notices, and addresses to the crown, again became a common feature of the periodical news sheet, with six of the nine issues published in October featuring either a lengthy proclamation, or 'humble Address' to the king.⁶⁹ While the 'humble address' signified the restoration of city rights – undermining at least one of the *Declaration*'s major arguments – the proclamations were used for a variety of other purposes. Whereas the proclamation from the issue ending October 1st informed readers of '*a great and Sudden Invasion from Holland*' under '*some false pretences of Liberty, Poperay, and Religion*', the proclamations appearing in the issues from October 15th and 18th respectively concerned a resolution to '*Restore and put all our Cities, Towns and Boroughs in England and Wales ... into the Same State and Condition they were*', and a notice to all public officials for '*the Coasts to be carefully watched*' in advance of the coming invasion.⁷⁰ The proclamation from the issue dated October 25th-29th warned against the 'spreading of false news':

⁶⁷ *London Gazette*, n. 2397, November 5th 1688.

⁶⁸ Claydon, 'William III's *Declaration*', 95.

⁶⁹ Proclamations appear in the following issues: 2386, 2391, 2392, 2394. Addresses appear in the following issues: 2388, 2390.

⁷⁰ *London Gazette*, no. 2386, September 27th 1688; *London Gazette*, no. 2391, October 15th 1688; *London Gazette*, no. 2392, October 18th 1688.

Divers evil despised Persons ... do, notwithstanding, make it their Business by Writing, Printing, or Speaking, to Defame Our Government with False and Seditious News and Reports, thereby intending to amuse Our Loving Subjects, and, as far as they are able, to create in them an universal Jealousie and Discontent, especially in this time of publick Danger, threatned by the intended Invasion ... to alienate the Hearts of such Our Loving Subjects from Us.⁷¹

These proclamations were, in effect, part-public notice, part-legislative order, and part-government propaganda. With such a large portion of the news sheet regularly dedicated to their printing through the months leading up to the invasion, we might observe not only an active and sustained response to the claims of the *Declaration*, but an attempt to gather support before the conflict, and to mollify the grievances of domestic critics of government. Certainly, if we compare this period to 1676, we see a significant difference in terms of the news sheet public address – they are much more frequent, and much more direct in terms of intention and content. Even the proclamations of later 1678, though numerous in response to the Popish Plot, largely avoided providing information about the event itself. Here, we see more direct reference to the invasion – and thus, reason behind every proclamation. Periodical news offered the means to address the public wide-scale, through effective methods of dissemination already long established. Though traditionally stoic in its response to domestic events, by October of 1688 the *Gazette* seems to have become the main facilitator of the government's voice, supporting the authority of the monarch whilst discrediting the assertions of the invading prince.

In terms of news coverage, many of the stories that appeared in the *Gazette* covered events that were either favourable to the king, or that directly contradicted the allegations of William's *Declaration*. While the *Declaration* had claimed that the heir to the throne was illegitimate (see above), for example, the *Gazette* dated October 25th reported that

By His Majesties Desire and Appointment, the Queen Dowager, and such of the Peers of this Kingdom, both Spiritual and Temporal as were in Town, as also the Lord

⁷¹ *London Gazette*, no. 2394, October 25th 1688.

Mayor and Aldermen of *London* ... that were present at the Queen's Labor, did appear there, and declare upon Oath what they knew of the Birth of His Royal Highness the Prince of *Wales*.⁷²

The story was surely enough to undermine the claim. Reports regarding the restoration of rights and privileges often began those issues without official proclamations. Before an address to the king expressing the gratitude of the Lord Mayor, the *Gazette* of October 4th reported from London: 'His Majesty having been pleased Graciously to restore to this City all their ancient Franchises and Priviledges, as Fully as they enjoyed them before the late Judgment upon the *Quo Warranto*'.⁷³ The same issue offered assurances regarding national religion through an account emphasising the king's commitment to the preservation of the established church:

His Majesty was this day Graciously pleased to declare in Council, That, in pursuance of His Resolution and Intentions to protect the Church of *England*, and that all Suspicions and Jealousies to the contrary may be removed, He had thought fit to dissolve the Commission for Causes Ecclesiastical, &c.⁷⁴

The news from Whitehall in the *Gazette* of October 11th offered similar reports: 'The king having declared His Resolution to Preserve the Church of *England* in all its Rights and Immunities, His Majesty, as an Evidence of it, has signified His Pleasure to the Right Reverend Father in God the Lord Bishop of *Winchester*'.⁷⁵ Though patently pro-royalist, the *Gazette* had never felt the need to actively promote these sorts of stories before. If William's *Declaration* had identified these issues as justification for invasion, then periodical news was used to systematically provide reports that either illustrated the rectification of a specific complaint, or refuted it altogether. As a consequence, domestic content was increasingly included – four of the five issues from November 5th-November 17th actually contain a larger

⁷² *London Gazette*, no. 2393, October 22nd 1688.

⁷³ *London Gazette*, no. 2388, October 4th 1688.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*

⁷⁵ *London Gazette*, no. 2390, October 11th 1688.

portion of domestic news than foreign.⁷⁶ Reports from the continent – the traditional majority of the *Gazette's* coverage – continued to make up a large portion of the periodical's news stories, but to a less consistent degree over time.

And yet – following later November 1688, however – the *Gazette* suddenly went quiet with regard to public notices and domestic content, instead reverting to its traditional level of coverage. The *Gazette* of November 26th contains just 100 words of domestic news – that the king had returned 'in perfect Health' from Salisbury, that a lieutenant had been appointed to the Tower of London, and that a parliament was to meet.⁷⁷ Changes in content coincided with the king's weakening political authority. With his military position destabilised, James II was forced to abandon 'most of Southern England' to the Prince of Orange.⁷⁸ As William's march into the capital drew nearer, the *Gazette* seems to have discontinued its attempts at accruing royalist support. Domestic news – never represented better in the *Gazette* than in the preceding weeks, where it had appeared at an average of 828 words per issue – was reduced considerably, with reports of continental events taking the forefront of editorial focus once more.⁷⁹

It is difficult to know precisely who was responsible for controlling the content of the *Gazette* during this period: the gap between the regimes. After two decades of 'official' news, Henry Muddiman was, no doubt, too closely associated with the outward-bound royal power. Given the sudden change of focus, we can assume that the paper had most likely fallen out of loyalist hands, or that the notices and resolutions of regional support for the king it had enthusiastically reported through the previous month had all but dried up. Care's pro-royal *Publick Occurrences* might have offered a continuing loyalist news-narrative, but had died with the author only a few months previously.

By December of 1688, the *Gazette* was reporting Parliament's resolve to '*apply Our Selves to His Highness the Prince of Orange*', with a proclamation appearing on the 10th:

We doubt not but the World believes that, in this Great and Dangerous Conjunction, We are heartily and zealously concerned for the Protestant Religion, the Laws of the Land, and the Liberties and Properties of the Subject ... And if there be anything more to be performed

⁷⁶ See: Appendix, fig. 2.3.

⁷⁷ *London Gazette*, no. 2405, November 26th 1688.

⁷⁸ Claydon, 'William III's Declaration', 97.

⁷⁹ See: Appendix, fig. 2.3.

*by Us; for promoting his Highness's Generous Intentions,
for the Publick Good, We shall be ready to do it as
occasion shall Require.*⁸⁰

Though it also reported the highly significant news that James had abandoned the throne – ‘*withdrawn Himself ... in order to His Departure out of this Kingdom*’ – and though proclamations normally appeared as the first piece reported of an issue, Parliament’s notice appeared on the second side of the paper, preceded and followed by the usual array of international reports. The arrangement again seems indicative of a change in editors – sandwiched between the conventional printed news, the proclamation seems to have been placed where the impact of the news it offered might be reduced to some extent. If the intention was to maintain a relatively smooth or understated transition between the two royals with the minimum of public alarm, then framing the news in this manner seems a shrewd decision. In the issues that followed, the *Gazette* largely returned to its foreign focus, with short parliamentary proclamations occasionally appearing alongside some favourable Williamite domestic news.⁸¹

Unofficial News: Pamphlets and Declarations

Though the *Gazette* had grown and diminished quickly as a tool for pro-royal periodical propaganda, the influential news of the unofficial press continued to arise.⁸² Though critical attention has largely examined the effectiveness of William’s propaganda however, James II’s use of the press is deserving of further analysis. ‘For the first five weeks of William’s time in England,’ Claydon has written, ‘the king still exercised the plenitude of royal authority, including control of the official press.’⁸³ To no small extent, pamphletary news again became a significant method of generating support on both sides of the political conflict, or of focussing to a greater depth on a single event or article than either the space available in the *Gazette* or newsletters allowed.

⁸⁰ *London Gazette*, no. 2409, December 10th 1688.

⁸¹ See, for example: *London Gazette*, no. 2412, December 20th 1688. The issue includes a proclamation issued by Parliament, and a short report from London describing the city’s aldermen congratulating the prince on his ‘Happy Arrival’ at St. James’s.

⁸² Recent criticism has indicated how Dutch interests were represented in unofficial news sources even before 1660. See: Helmers, H., *The Royalist Republic* – in particular relation to pamphlets: 43-47.

⁸³ Claydon, ‘William III’s *Declaration*’, 91.

Through the autumn of 1688, James made full use of his advantage, ordering his printers to produce 'a string of denunciations of William's conduct.'⁸⁴ Thus we see through October 1688 a number of pamphlets published discussing, amongst other recurring motifs, the Prince of Orange's *Declaration*. The pamphlet titled *Some Reflections upon his Highness the Prince of Orange's Declaration* is a prime example. *Some Reflections* begins by suggesting that William's manifesto was intended entirely to 'excuse the Prince's coming' and that, rather than to rid James of his '*Evil Counsellors*', 'his Design is to be King'.⁸⁵ It then begins a systematic point-by-point response to the 'news' of the *Declaration*, discrediting the claims of the earlier document. Pamphlets such as this could be used effectively to lessen considerably the impact of opposing polemic. By printing it alongside William's *Declaration*, as *Some Reflections* was, royalist pamphleteers 'ensured that many people would only see William's arguments in a safely neutralized form'.⁸⁶ A number of emerging response-pamphlets – such as *An Answer to a paper intituled, Reflections on the Prince of Orange's declaration* (1688), and *A Review of the reflections on the Prince of Orange's declaration* (1688), amongst others – suggest that *Some Reflections* had a wide circulation at the time of its production, and enough of an influence to necessitate the opposition's reply.

The news of *Some Reflections* follows the standard pamphletary method, reintroducing previously reported news events with a polemical twist, and shedding new light on old information. Interestingly, the first report it offers concerns the absence of certain news expected from the Prince of Orange's *Declaration*, and its implications. 'The first thing I looked for,' the author writes, 'was the exposing of our *Clandestine League with France*, so much talk'd of, to excuse the *Dutch Preparations and Invasion*.' The pamphlet continues:

But I find after all, not one word said of *France*, or of any such secret League, the main thing pretended and expected; Ay, that hateful and dreaded thing, which was to introduce a *French Army* to destroy us Protestants, and set up *Popery*: The only fear, that could excuse the Prince's coming, or make the thoughts of it any thing tolerable to an *English Man*, tho' a Protestant. This deep silence ...

⁸⁴ Claydon, 'William III's *Declaration*', 90.

⁸⁵ *Some reflections upon His Highness the Prince of Orange's Declaration* (1688).

⁸⁶ Claydon, 'William III's *Declaration*', 93.

shews evidently, we have been abused with feigned dangers and false fears.⁸⁷

Thus, the first news the pamphlet provides to its reader is of the false political justification for the Dutch invasion.

A similar pamphlet, *Animadversions upon the declaration of his highness the prince of Orange* (1688), responds in a similar manner to the arguments of the *Declaration*, first printing it in full. The author's comments follow:

We cast about to discover what unsufferable Provocation [the prince] had receiv'd ... what just cause of War there could be. And we impatiently waited for the Declaration of his Highness, in which we expected to find all this. Now it is come, we are more at a loss than before ...⁸⁸

As before, the pamphleteer draws attention first to the lack of sufficient cause for invasion: 'We perceive nothing in all the World to justifie all this'.⁸⁹ Using the same method as *Some Reasons*, a lengthy counter to each of the points made in the *Declaration* follows.

Animadversions upon the declaration reports on the Prince of Orange's subversive recent political tactics, describing the 'Two Letters' sent to English land and sea forces, carrying 'the Name of his Highness':

In which they are first Cajolled with the Title of *Friends*, as if they were Men to be Cajolled into a Friendship, with the Enemies of their Prince and Country, and then endeavoured to be debauched into his Service, by motives the most unsuitable to English Natures that were ever found out.⁹⁰

⁸⁷ *Some reflections upon His Highness the Prince of Orange's Declaration* (1688).

⁸⁸ *Animadversions upon the declaration of his highness the prince of Orange* (1688), p. 19. Incidentally, the final sentence quoted here is perhaps important to our understanding of the effect of conflicting news on readers during this period. With the flow of information substantially increased, but often contradictory in terms of reported content from publication to publication, we must question whether pamphletary news in particular actually offered valuable, usable insight into the developing conflict. See below.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 31.

The news it reports is clearly intended to emphasise the Prince's apparent duplicity – his alleged attempt to 'cajole' loyal English forces into joining his political takeover. For those loyal to James, news of this nature surely had an effect. England, as we have seen, already harboured a traditional fear of external interference. Polemical pamphletary news of this type intentionally alluded to the idea, offering 'proof' in the form of such news in the process.

Indeed, James's propaganda was beginning to have an effect. It has been suggested that 'there is evidence that James was attracting popular support in 1688-1689, and that the arguments he promoted were reasons for this'.⁹¹ With the government maintaining their control of the official press, the king was able to make use of an established system of dissemination to ensure his message was heard throughout the country. Governmental proclamations not only appeared in the *Gazette*, but were printed as single sheets (like many pamphlets), reproduced significantly, and sent throughout the kingdom via the postal system. Officials in each town and city were then required by writ to distribute the news in their specific jurisdiction, in addition to ensuring that proclamations and official notices were placed in public locations for all to see.⁹² In doing so, James made certain his political news reached as large an audience as possible.

Nevertheless, when the pamphlets began reporting the progression of William's army through England, they began to take on a Williamite tone, though not necessarily by design. William's army advanced with relatively little opposition, meaning that the reported narrative was one of steady advancement and success. Therefore, the news of the pamphlets implicitly supported the invading troops – at the least, they proved that William's forces were moving forward, whilst staking a claim for impartiality. All the same, these were occasional pamphlets – closely spaced, but independent from one another, carrying none of the same consistency that came with periodical reporting. If they were indeed part of the Williamite response, then they were fragmentary at best, offering sporadic, largely-unconnected news reports. During the latter months of 1688, they circulated widely through the country, particularly focussing on the march from Torbay to London. When the invading troops met resistance in the form of Irish Catholic soldiers at Reading, a number of pamphlets reported on the short conflict: *An Account of Last Sundays Engagement* (1688) described the combat between 'His Majesty's, and the Prince of *Orange's* Forces, in the Road between *Reading* and

⁹¹ Claydon, 'William III's *Declaration*', 96.

⁹² *Ibid*, 92.

Maidenhead.⁹³ *True News from Reading* (December, 1688) similarly strived to provide 'an Exact Relation of the Prince of *Oranges* Victory over the Kings Forces', and observed that since its occurrence, 'no Printed Paper hath given a Tollerable Account of the Memorable Engagement'.⁹⁴ The author of *True News* sought to address the omission, and emphasised the authenticity of his relation, particularly in contrast to the periodicals: 'all I have seen are False and Foolish, I suppose none Printed True, or of any worth: Take this as the most Exact, my self being near the Spot, and knowing the whole from Eye Witness'.⁹⁵ As it had been a decade earlier during the Popish Plot and Exclusion Crisis, establishing legitimacy by defining a report against the news of its competitors clearly remained an important part of creating the news story.

William's arrival at Whitehall provoked comparable accounts. *News from White-hall* (December, 1688) reported 'the Entrance of his Highness the Prince of *Orange* into *London*', and with it, 'the Deliverance of this Nation from the Bond of *Popery*'.⁹⁶ To lesser or greater degrees, the majority of pamphlets held similar Williamite political bias; attempts at authorial neutrality were mostly reserved for the editors of the news sheets and letters.

Sommerville has written that William's revolution 'needed the acceptance of a wider public', and made full use of pamphletary propaganda to acquire it.⁹⁷ In the months prior to and during the invasion, news pamphlets supporting the Prince of Orange's undertaking and emphasising the suppression of Protestants in England under James II repeatedly surfaced. *An Account of the Pretended Prince of Wales*, for example, drew attention to the 'harassment' and 'oppression' of Protestants by Papists, listing grievances performed against them, and stating that 'Numerous were the Illegalities imposed ... Contrary to their Consciences'.⁹⁸ *An Account of the Reasons for the Nobility and Gentry's invitation of His Highness the Prince of Orange into England* made similar claims. The lengthy pamphlet printed in full the address to the Prince, which detailed extensively the supposed grievances of the nation.⁹⁹ Repeatedly,

⁹³ *An Account of last Sundays engagement between His Majesty's and the Prince of Orange's forces, in the road between Reading and Maidenhead, amongst which, its said, a blue-garter fell* (1688).

⁹⁴ *True news from Reading: or, an exact relation of the Prince of Oranges victory over the Kings forces there, on the nineth of this instant December, 1688* (1688).

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*

⁹⁶ *News from White-Hall, being an account of the arrival of the high and mighty Prince William Henry of Orange and Naffaw, at St. James's. With the King's retirement down the river* (1688)

⁹⁷ Sommerville, *The News Revolution*, 96.

⁹⁸ *An Account of the pretended Prince of Wales, and other grievanses that occasioned the nobilities inviting, and the Prince of Orange's coming into England* (1688), p. 1.

⁹⁹ *An Account of the reasons of the nobility and gentry's invitation of His Highness the Prince of Orange into England* (1688), p. 2.

pamphlets detailing defections to William's camp appeared.¹⁰⁰ Reports of open and well-publicised withdrawals of support for the king by regional authorities likely had a considerable effect on the public. It is understandable, perhaps, why historians have tended to focus primarily on William's pamphletary news when considering the development of the revolution.

The opposition must have perceived growing popularity for James's publicised political changes, as an '*Additional Declaration*' produced by William's camp surfaced in later October 1688. The *Additional Declaration* acknowledged the news that James's government had 'begun to retract some of the Arbitrary and Despotick powers', but attributed the change to an attempt to 'quiet the People, and to divert them from demanding a Secure Reestablishment of their Religion and Lawes under the shelter of our Armes.'¹⁰¹ It sought to address some of the issues raised by the king's counter-declaration, as well as the pamphlets that questioned the true motives of the invasion. Thus, the *Additional Declaration* suggests 'that no person can have such hard thought of us, as to Imagine that wee have any other Designe in this Undertaking'.¹⁰² This later document, Claydon has observed, was essentially an attempt 'to head off a premature settlement between the king and political nation.'¹⁰³

In terms of news, the *Additional Declaration* sought to report the insincerity of James's political changes. It exposed the king's retractions as nothing more than a result of the 'sense of their Guilt, and the distrust of their force', causing the government to 'offer to the City of London some seeming releese from their Great Oppressions.'¹⁰⁴ William's *Additional Declaration*, however, lacks in any real detail – with the additional document appearing in October of 1688, the claim his news makes seems insubstantial in the face of the *Gazette*'s notices describing the re-establishment of local municipal charters, and the apparently favourable response from the various regional authorities around England.¹⁰⁵

Perhaps as a consequence, other Williamite pamphlets focussed primarily on news that might further justify the invasion. Given that much of the king's response to the Prince of Orange's initial *Declaration* was to repeal or amend unpopular policies or perceived

¹⁰⁰ For example: *The association* (1688), which described a number of English nobles joining with the Prince of Orange 'for the Defence of the Protestant Religion', and *A Catalogue of the nobility and principal gentry (said to be) in arms with the Prince of Orange, and in several other parts of England* (1688), listing over forty names allegedly allied with William's forces.

¹⁰¹ *The declaration of His Highnes William Henry, by the grace of God Prince of Orange, &c.* (1688), p. 4. The *Additional Declaration* appeared alongside a summarised reprint of William's original *Declaration*.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*

¹⁰³ Claydon, 'William III's *Declaration*', 96.

¹⁰⁴ *The declaration of His Highnes William Henry*, 3.

¹⁰⁵ See above.

transgressions – in essence, the reasons given for the invasion in the first place – new items of complaint, or news reports focussing on either the inauthentic nature of James II's revisions or the legitimacy of William's presence in England, had to be found. *An Enquiry into the Present State of Affairs* – printed as James's power was failing in England with the approach of the Prince of Orange's forces from the South – reported both on James's attempts at establishing Catholicism ('few will dispute the matter of Fact') and 'deserting his People' with 'no just cause visible' to do so.¹⁰⁶ William, the pamphlet reported, made proposals that 'came to the King the night before he left *Whitehall*', 'that the Settlement of the Nation was refer'd to a Parliament (which was that which the King seemed to desire, by his publick Declaration).'¹⁰⁷ The news was characteristically pamphletary, carrying an appearance of impartiality that thinly concealed a politically-motivated argument. James's reported desire to call a Parliament, for example, was soon followed by the caveat: 'tho he shew'd his Averseness by destroying the Writs.'¹⁰⁸

In print, there existed at least two ongoing news narratives – the first of an unlawful invasion aimed at usurping the true royal authority of England, as espoused by the *Gazette* and official notices of the government, and the second of a moral intervention into the country for the protection and preservation of its people and religion, as claimed by the Prince of Orange. As to which was more successful: if we consider print alone, then it may well appear that James's narrative was the more developed and effective. As we have already seen, James had built a sophisticated news-management machine, and had deployed it effectively in the autumn of 1688. In response, the Williamites had only been able to produce occasional pamphlets, which were often merely responding to the actions of the English government. This being the case, they were frequently forced to deny the reality or importance of the latest news events, such as James's amendments and rectifications, rather than pushing their own specific news agenda.

Furthermore, as the flow of information had increased (though not in terms of periodical numbers, as it had at the beginning of the decade), so too had the level of contradiction and opposition in the news reports emerging from either side. These opposing news accounts – which regularly provided different interpretations regarding the motivations behind the same recent political decisions – obscure a single, 'true' narrative of the invasion. The ideological debate between domestic and invading forces was well expounded in the

¹⁰⁶ *An enquiry into the present state of affairs, and in particular, whether we owe allegiance to the King in these circumstances* (1688) p. 4, 5, 6.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid*, 6.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid*, 6.

publications of the period (as evidenced by the circulation of pamphlets, declarations, proclamations, notices, and news sheets), but reports regarding its real-world development were far fewer, and considerably less certain. Though we might expect the chronicles of Narcissus Luttrell to provide us with the same level of detail as his account of the Popish Plot, he makes little note of the Dutch fleet's progress towards England – what recorded relevant news there is tends to be vague and speculative. Of the suspected location of its landing in England, Luttrell notes the lack of specific detail: 'some think in the north, about Bridlington Bay; others, at Yarmouth; and some, in Scotland'.¹⁰⁹

Print, therefore, cannot be the whole story. Given the lack of widespread opposition to the invasion, and even some support for the Williamite troops as they marched through England, more information on the condition of the opposing sides must have been available than print news offered at the time. Lending support to the Dutch forces, or even simply remaining neutral, was a risk – what might have happened had James won? Evidently, the likelihood of the invading forces' success was being reported on to a greater extent than an examination of the highly politically-biased news of the pamphlets alone would suggest. Once again, we must consider the role of manuscript news in the era. When the Dutch fleet landed on November 5th, it seems that the majority of Luttrell's information indeed came from scribal news sources, rather than print. Most of the entries recorded by the author during the month identify newsletters as their point of origin: 'Letters from Yorkshire' reported that 'the militia there are very uneasy, and will not serve under the duke of Newcastle'; 'Letters from Exeter' that the Prince of Orange 'was marching towards that city'; 'Letters from Gloucestershire' that the lord Lovelace 'was stop'd at the town of Cirencester by the militia there.' Letters arrived 'from Cheshire', 'from the west', 'from the North'.¹¹⁰

As we shall see, manuscript news, though often scant in detail itself, seems to have offered the most comprehensive available news account of the invasion, both before and during its enactment.

Scribal Newsletters

The newsletters sent to Mostyn through October of 1688 draw attention specifically to the threat of the coming invasion, and to James II's hasty political changes. Much like Luttrell's account, they suffer somewhat from a lack of information prior to the Prince's landing at Torbay, but still offer a level of detail regarding the Dutch and domestic

¹⁰⁹ Luttrell, *A Brief Relation of State Affairs*, 465.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid*, 472-480.

preparations not found in the print news of the period. Though a decade earlier the newsletter authors that had revealed the story of the Popish Plot had written of the 'horrid and unheard of practice of the Jesuits', the scribal news from October 1688 demonstrates much less of a discernible authorial reaction to the news.¹¹¹ It is possible this indicates an attempt to provide a greater impartiality in the relation of news to the reader, though it may also suggest a certain level of support for the impending external political intervention. Either way, it is clear that in contrast to the Popish Plot and Exclusion Crisis, where details developed rapidly in the newsletters, less information was publicly available relating to the expected arrival of the Prince of Orange. The issue was, nevertheless, repeatedly brought to the forefront of the reader's attention throughout the newsletters of later 1688. The letter of October 2nd, for example, states that 'Yesterday an Express arrived from Holland, *the* particulars not yet publickly known more then *that* their preparations for England goe vigorously forward'.¹¹²

Similar sentiments acknowledging the lack of informative detail are expressed throughout the month: on October 9th, it is reported there is information of a letter from Holland bringing 'little news [and] being of an old date', but reporting that '*the* prince of Orange had sent most of his forces on board ... all in readinesse to set saile for England with *the* first wind'.¹¹³ The 16th saw 'contrary winds hinder the coming of foreigne mayles so that we continue in the darke, and bear nothing of a late date of the Duch preparations.'¹¹⁴ On the 18th, only 'uncertain reports of *the* movement of *the* Dutch ffleete' are available to the author.¹¹⁵ Even by the 30th, six days before William's fleet landed in England, there was little authenticated information: 'We have no certaine Advices of *the* Dutch ffleete. Some have reported *that* they are sailed Northward & others *that* they are still upon their Coasts'.¹¹⁶ Reports were vague, but necessary – the foreign content of the newsletters is highest in the weeks leading up to the invasion.¹¹⁷ With the *Gazette's* traditional disregard for controversial news, an interested reader in the capital or provinces would have had to get by on the relatively scant amount of information newsletters such as these provided.

In contrast, domestically the newsletters provide a far greater amount of detail – at an average of 553 words per letter, with a domestic news content of 81%, the Mostyn newsletters of October-November 1688 offer more information during this period than at any other time

¹¹¹ Bangor University, Bangor Archives, MS Mostyn 9089, fol. 118r, October 26th 1678.

¹¹² BU MS Mostyn 9094, fol. 66r, October 2nd 1688.

¹¹³ BU MS Mostyn 9094, fol. 69r, October 9th 1688.

¹¹⁴ BU MS Mostyn 9094, fol. 70r, October 11th 1688.

¹¹⁵ BU MS Mostyn 9094, fol. 74r, October 18th 1688.

¹¹⁶ BU MS Mostyn 9094, fol. 76v, October 30th 1688.

¹¹⁷ See: Appendix, fig. 1.4.

considered in this thesis.¹¹⁸ They provide, for example, regular news regarding the mobilisation of the king's troops.¹¹⁹ Across the newsletters, the reader is informed that 'His Majesties Land & Sea preparations is now in great forwardness'; that there are soldiers 'sent with Armour to severall Regiments in [country] quarters', and that 'his Majesties Army is now in soe good readinesse & the minds of *the* people soe well united *that* they doe not feare any forraign attempt'.¹²⁰ Throughout, there is a developed sense of preparation, 'daily carried on to withstand an Invasion.'¹²¹ Alongside reported pledges of allegiance to the king (no doubt acquired from the news of the *Gazette*), the newsletters to Mostyn go some way in portraying the image of a united state in readiness for the coming conflict.

It seems likely that the public actioning of the king's political changes had an influence on the representation of such news. James II's attempts at rectifying perceived problems appear significantly in the newsletters through October, much as they had in the *Gazette*. Stories regarding the restoration of municipal charters, in particular, appear repeatedly throughout the periodicals. On October 2nd, it is reported that 'this night his majestie restored to [London] their old Charter, with all their Priviledges.'¹²² Similar stories, relating respectively to the capital, Oxford, and to 'all Corporations', appear in the newsletters that follow from the 4th, 9th, and 18th. As has been suggested above, there is evidence to indicate that James II sought to publicly address some of the claims made by the Prince of Orange's *Declaration*; an effort that, though uncommented on, did not go unnoticed by the newsletters.

Despite these governmental attempts to alleviate concerns, however, the newsletters to Mostyn do give an indication of some popular reaction to the circulation of William's *Declaration*. Several times across October, anti-Catholic public unrest is reported. The letter of the 9th, for example, states that:

On Sunday a Company of rude boys gott together in the
Citty & went to *the* Romish Chapple ... & began to
breake upon the doors, upon *which* some persons
within drew their swords *which* rather increased then
disposed the Rabble & obliged the priest for his own

¹¹⁸ See: Appendix, fig. 1.4.

¹¹⁹ Mentioned in the letters from the 2nd, 9th, and 16th.

¹²⁰ BU MS Mostyn 9094, fol. 66r, October 2nd 1688; fol. 69v, October 9th 1688.

¹²¹ BU MS Mostyn 9094, fol. 73v, October 16th 1688.

¹²² BU MS Mostyn 9094, fol. 66v, October 2nd 1688.

safety to retire thro a back doore ... the Tumult
continued till *the* Lord Mayor with Constables came &
disposed them.¹²³

In the same newsletter, there appeared the story that 'another disturbance had like to have happened att *the* Romish Chapple in Bucklesbury'.¹²⁴ Developments are reported in the letter from the 30th: 'At night *the* Rabble got together & in a rude manner assaulted *the* Romish Chappell in Buckles Berry, a great part of *which* they pull'd down & burnt'.¹²⁵ News of the coming invasion – which sought, the *Declaration* had claimed, to defend the Protestant religion – was responsible for stimulating bouts of anti-Catholic disorder in England as the crisis intensified, it seems.

Though consistently providing a greater amount of detail than the *Gazette* – where domestic news often appeared in the form of 'addresses to the king' – the difference between manuscript and print news becomes ever more evident when examining the letters written after William's arrival in England. While the *Gazette*'s coverage of the invasion became increasingly sporadic (eventually dwindling to nothing), content in the newsletters steadily grew in terms of detail, though still suffered periodically as information channels were disrupted. After November 5th, when Williamite forces had begun to approach key areas in southern England, the newsletters to Mostyn provide a consistent level of developing news information, far beyond the coverage of other forms. A side-by-side comparison of the *Gazette* and newsletters emphasises the distinction.

While the *Gazette* dated November 8th reported only two short stories relating to the Dutch invasion at the close of the news sheet (with the majority of the issue given over to a lengthy address to the king, and to a variety of internationally-focused news reports), the newsletter to Mostyn dated the 8th made considerable account of the preparations underway on both sides of the conflict. James II's army, the author reported, was to have 'two peices of Cannon' per regiment, '36 waggons of Ammunicon', and were 'already sent forwards ... to attend *the* Train of Artillery, with Powder, Bullets, & other warlike provisions.'¹²⁶ The King had dispatched 'Horse and Foot' to Bristol to prevent it from 'falling in to *the* enemys Hands'.¹²⁷ Letters, the manuscript described, told that the Prince of Orange had 'come on

¹²³ BU MS Mostyn 9094, fol. 69r, October 9th 1688.

¹²⁴ Ibid.

¹²⁵ BU MS Mostyn 9094, fol. 76, October 30th 1688.

¹²⁶ BU MS Mostyn 9094, fol. 79r, November 8th 1688.

¹²⁷ Ibid.

shore in Persons with 2000', but not that '*the Enemy*' had yet approached Exeter, 'as was reported yesterday.'¹²⁸ The fleet had landed 'about 12 of *the Clock*' on the coast 'between Dartmouth & Torbay', whereupon the king had 'sent for *the Lord Mayor & Aldermen ... & ordered them to take care of the City*'.¹²⁹

Thus the news continued through the month, with the *Gazette* reporting only what few stories might appear favourable to the king, while the letters formed a far fuller picture of contemporary events. The *Gazette* that followed on the 12th reported another two short stories – the first, an encouraging report from Exeter that only 'the Rabble' had joined the Dutch forces ('none of the Gentry of this country go near the Prince of *Orange*'), and the second regarding the Militia's success in the seizing of 'Lord *Lovelace*' – a defector to the enemy.¹³⁰ The newsletter of the 13th provided a substantial amount more detail regarding the current situation at home, reporting, amongst other stories, a 'Dutch Mayle by which we learne that ... *the Prince* of Orange having made a League with some other Prince to protect as they call it *the Protestant Religion ... have delivered a Manifesto or Declaration to each of the* fforraigne Ministers of state except England & ffrance containing *the reasons that* induced them to undertake this invasion'.¹³¹ The letter reported that two Dutch men of war had been spotted near the Isle of Wight, that the Queen had taken the Prince of Wales to Whitehall, and that the progress of the Lord Dartmouth's fleet had been hindered by '*the wind shifting westward*'.¹³²

With the Prince's army in England, information seems to have become considerably easier to acquire. By November, the news of the letters to Mostyn almost entirely refer to the invasion. Foreign news stories diminish after November 1st, with domestic information providing the vast majority of news content – in several issues from the 6th, foreign reports make up less than 10% of the newsletter.¹³³ Stories of defeat and defection were included, regardless, it seems, of their effect on the perception of royal authority. The news from November 24th, for example, reported that:

Letters from Nottingham tell us *that the* twenty first instant the Lord Delameer and Lord Chomley arrived there with between 5 or 6 hundred men well appointed

¹²⁸ Ibid.

¹²⁹ Ibid.

¹³⁰ *London Gazette*, no. 2399, November 12th 1688.

¹³¹ BU MS Mostyn 9094, fol. 80r, November 13th 1688.

¹³² Ibid.

¹³³ See: Appendix, fig. 1.4.

and mounted ... and *that* they declared for the Prince of Orange and a free Parliamt and dismount and disarme all papist whatsoever where they meet them.¹³⁴

A subsequent story described that '*the Prince of Oranges army is advanced to win eanton*', and that '*the Lord Mordant Lord Luttrell & Mr Seymour were made governours of Excester & the later sworne a Privy counsiller to the Prince*'.¹³⁵ In the *Gazettes* of the same time, such information was, unsurprisingly, absent.

Much as it had before, the manuscript news of the period again provides the clearest domestic narrative of the Glorious Revolution. Though details regarding the Prince of Orange's preparations were relatively slight throughout, they offer a comparatively fuller account of news relating to the invasion both at home and abroad than the major printed periodical of the time, and to a level of consistency unattainable through the pamphletary mode. Certainly, they remained one of the few places a reader could acquire regular, relevant, developing news reports through the period of political and social turmoil.

All the same, in a time of quickly-developing, politically-unstable events, the types of news we have so far considered may in fact have been less important than the spread of information via word-of-mouth. The oral transmission of news fed back into written sources, such as newsletters, meaning that (in addition to legitimate news) false information or rumours from certain localities could be spread from one part of the kingdom to another in quick succession. In the newsletters, orally-transmitted rumour is most evident by the method in which news stories are introduced – typically with a prefix such as 'they say', or 'we hear'; the standard method of introducing more tentative news reports.¹³⁶ Stories of dubious accuracy, such as the sudden influx and growth of Irish armies in preparation for the Prince's arrival in England, often begin in such a manner: 'Wee heare *that* some of ye Irish forces are landed att Cheshire & more are coming over'.¹³⁷ Other reports seem to comment on the talk of the town: 'Its talked this Evening, as if some of the prisoners of the Kings March, have made their escape.'¹³⁸ In the letter to Mostyn dated November 15th, most of the closing reports appear to have their origins in the oral transmission of news: 'Its said *that* a Proclamation will be suddenly published *against* tumultuous Meetings and Ryots of the Rabble here who of late

¹³⁴ BU MS Mostyn 9094, fol. 85r, November 24th 1688.

¹³⁵ Ibid.

¹³⁶ Shapiro, *A Culture of Fact*, 93.

¹³⁷ BU MS Mostyn 9094, fol. 69v, October 9th 1688.

¹³⁸ BU MS Mostyn 9094, fol. 77v, November 1st 1688.

have Committed many disorders'; 'we hear *that* his Majesty is pleased to give directions *that* all Romish Chappells about *the* Town shall Cease except his own Queen Dowagers & Ambassadors.'¹³⁹

Evidently, news editors still relied on the gathering of oral information. With much of it seeming to add to the material of the news, manuscript letters had the potential to be one of the most effective methods of disseminating unconfirmed reports, facilitating the spread of previously oral information. Letters were unlicensed, could be sent anonymously, and could rely on subsequent distribution from person to person in a given location. Indeed, 'most of the wild rumours of the later seventeenth century,' Fox has written, 'can be traced back in origin to some newsletter.'¹⁴⁰ Towards December 1688, the notion that a 'massive army of papists, aided by thousands of marauding Irish troops disbanded from the army of James II, [and who] would descend to massacre all Protestants who stood in their way' began to spread throughout England.¹⁴¹ The rumour, no doubt aided by reports such as the one concerning the Irish forces in Cheshire described above, took hold in Kent, Surrey, Derbyshire and Leicestershire, and quickly spread north to Chester, Warrington, and Newcastle, amongst other locations in England.¹⁴² Newsletters from region to region spoke of horrors such as the '5,000-6,000 Irish' that had burned Bedford to the ground, and the '4,000 or more Irish and Scotch' that had 'committed a massacre in Birmingham' on their march towards the North.¹⁴³ Pamphlets such as *A letter from the Jesuits in the Savoy to the Jesuits at S. Omers* (1688), picked up on the rumour, reporting that 'an *Irish* army' had come 'to purge the *English* army', emphasising significantly the gradually-increasing threat of the Catholics.¹⁴⁴ An Irish army of papists was expected at any time to rampage their way through England to the capital.¹⁴⁵ Fox has attributed the origin of the false news to the scribal letters written by opponents of the Protestant cause:

[Hugh] Speke claimed that during the Popish Plot in 1678 he had the opportunity to acquaint himself quite purposefully with prominent Whig sympathisers around

¹³⁹ BU MS Mostyn 9094, fol. 84v, November 22nd 1688.

¹⁴⁰ Fox, *Oral and Literate Culture*, 380.

¹⁴¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁴² *Ibid.*, 381.

¹⁴³ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁴ *A letter from the Jesuits in the Savoy to the Jesuits at S. Omers, giving an account of the affairs of England, taken from the priests in the Dover coach, together with 200 guineas* (1688).

¹⁴⁵ Fox, *Oral and Literate Culture*, 357.

the country. He had then set about a detailed study of the postal network ... By mid-December 1688 he was ready to send letters to selected gentlemen and merchants across England which were timed to arrive at exactly the same moment.¹⁴⁶

The letters told of the discovery of a plot concerning a Catholic attempt to seize control; they were 'contrived in such a manner that everyone believed the danger at his own door'.¹⁴⁷ Though it seems improbable that Speke was the sole instigator for the widespread rumour, it does appear that this was very largely 'rumour by post'.¹⁴⁸ Circulating newsletters clearly played a major part in the spread of unverified news during the revolution.

John Miller has put forward a less politically-contrived argument for the origin of the rumours. In early December, after James II's army had begun to disband, Irish troops returning home stimulated 'nationwide panic reminiscent of that of 1678.'¹⁴⁹ He writes,

The rumours spread North and West ... It followed the route, from London towards Chester, which the Irish would have followed on their way home. However, ripples of the Irish panic spread further afield and lasted considerably longer.¹⁵⁰

Like Fox, Miller acknowledges the effect of the rumour in various locations in England, naming Norfolk in the east, Cornwall and Pembrokeshire in the west, and Berwick in the North, for example.¹⁵¹ Though Speke claimed to have initiated the panic, Miller suggests that the fears were 'too widespread and corresponded too closely to earlier patterns' to have been produced solely through the writings of a single individual.¹⁵² Whatever the original cause for the rumour, it is evident that newsletters – no doubt due to their focus on domestic news – were the foremost method of its dissemination as it spread from town to town.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid.

¹⁴⁷ Fox, quoting Speke: *Oral and Literate Culture*, 381.

¹⁴⁸ Ibid, 382.

¹⁴⁹ Miller, *Popery and Politics*, 259.

¹⁵⁰ Ibid, 260.

¹⁵¹ Ibid.

¹⁵² Ibid, 261.

To conclude, it is clear that the events of later 1688 had a significant effect on the development of news, particularly with regard to how print news forms were used by authorities as facilitators of propaganda. Despite Andrew Pettegree's assertion that the revolution of 1688 'was not a newspaper event', the evidence suggests otherwise.¹⁵³ In the months leading up to the invasion, the *Gazette* was substantially altered by political intervention, reporting primarily on articles emphasising the favourable actions of the monarch, and the continued need for loyalty and stability. After William had gained the throne in early 1689, he again recognised the power of the press. In the previous year, the *Gazette* in particular had begun to legitimate his political control: as Somerville has observed, the paper's 'carefully fostered authority made [the *Gazette*] a good vehicle for announcements and for registering the orderly transfer of power'.¹⁵⁴ In the issue for the 20th December 1688, William's first order was published.¹⁵⁵ By the next instalment, the *Gazette* had returned to its traditional coverage; once more, it focussed primarily on the news from the continent, which is what the public 'had come to expect under a secure regime.'¹⁵⁶ The official documents and declarations of the revolution soon followed. On December 27th, the *Gazette* reported an announcement from the House of Lords:

We the Lords Spiritual and Temporal Assembled in the
Conjecture, Do Desire Your Highness to take upon You
the Administration of Publick Affairs, both Civil and
Military, and the disposal of the Publick Revenue, for the
Preservation of our Religion, Rights, Laws, Liberties and
Properties, and of the Peace of the Nation.¹⁵⁷

On January 3rd, a proclamation issued by the prince appeared, 'for the better Collecting the publick Revenue.'¹⁵⁸ Subsequent issues reported a 'Declaration for the better Quartering of the Forces', and the announcement that February 6th, the day that James II came to the throne, 'shall Not be observed in this Kingdom'.¹⁵⁹ With readers quite accustomed to receiving

¹⁵³ Pettegree, *The Invention of News*, 244.

¹⁵⁴ Somerville, *The News Revolution*, 97.

¹⁵⁵ *London Gazette*, no. 2412, December 20th 1688.

¹⁵⁶ Somerville, *The News Revolution*, 97.

¹⁵⁷ *London Gazette*, no. 2414, December 27th 1688.

¹⁵⁸ *London Gazette*, no. 2416, January 3rd 1689.

¹⁵⁹ *London Gazette*, no. 2418, January 10th 1689; *London Gazette*, no. 2424, January 31st 1689. Thereafter, the *Gazette* continues as before – foreign news remains the staple of the periodical.

governmental notices through the *Gazette*, it seems it was William's intention to continue using the periodical news sheet to publicly legitimise and effect the political change.

It is clear also that news had an equally significant effect on the development of the revolution as it happened. For the first time, to a mass extent, conflicting sides of an international conflict focussing on the balance of power in England appealed primarily to the masses. Public opinion became an issue of the utmost importance – it has, in fact, been perceived as one of the major reasons for the smooth progress of the Dutch invasion: 'the tone of the licensed and unlicensed papers of the winter of 1688-89,' which laid public prospective arguments relating to the requirement for political intervention in England, 'helped to make the revolution bloodless', though our argument has demonstrated that the news of James II's government should not be understated – and in fact may have been used to a more effective extent than its Dutch counterpart.¹⁶⁰

Older forms of political news, like pamphlets, again saw a resurgence. Like those that had emerged during the Popish Plot and Exclusion Crisis, pamphlets took news of current events and wrapped them in polemic, drawing shrewd critical attention to the hidden machinations behind recent development. Their effect on opinion was significant: so much so, in fact, that Raymond has suggested that by 1689 they were the 'pre-eminent model of speaking in print, the foundation stone of any project to sway public opinion'.¹⁶¹

Another older form of news – the scribal periodical – shared a substantial role in the development of the revolution. To a greater extent than any of the other news types, the Mostyn manuscripts maintained a level of modernity through impartiality and coverage – it is in these newsletters that the fullest account of the progression of the revolution can be observed.¹⁶² Preparations and movements on both sides of the conflict are documented in a manner unparalleled elsewhere. As the decade moved forward into the 1690s, manuscript news remained, for the moment, one of the least restricted of the news forms: though William had made full use of the print news industry in the attempt to secure his crown, limitations were soon imposed once more: 'revolution is one thing and the government is another ... William took immediate steps to stop the presses before they could turn on him.'¹⁶³

¹⁶⁰ Sommerville, *The News Revolution*, 96.

¹⁶¹ Raymond, *Pamphlets and Pamphleteering*, 381.

¹⁶² Unlike the majority of the printed news forms, newsletters largely avoided the significant political bias of the periodicals and pamphlets. As considered above, however, the narrative of the revolution largely demonstrated a rush of events in William's favour as 1688 progressed, meaning that even a neutral reportage could appear 'Williamite' – see above.

¹⁶³ Sommerville, *The News Revolution*, 96.

Conclusion

With little further development, the news industry of the later-1680s became the news of the 1690s. 1688, though revolutionary in more than one sense of the word (that is, in terms of attitudes towards print, politics, and the public, as well as for the secular authority), did not usher in a new liberty of press for periodical news.¹ Though valuable to both sides of the conflict in the months leading up to and during the invasion, print news eventually found itself relegated to its long-established position, with its customary level of output.

In the initial confused period following the escape of James II and directly preceding the coronation of William III, print periodical numbers in fact rose. By February of 1689, the *English Currant* (December 12th, 1688), *Harlem Currant* (February 14th, 1689), and *London Courant* (January 5th, 1689), all appeared alongside the *Orange Gazette* (December 31st, 1688), *Universal Intelligence* (December 11th, 1688), *London Intelligence* (January 15th, 1689), and *London Mercury* (December 15th, 1688). Much in the same way as the emerging papers of the Exclusion Crisis had, the majority of these new papers adopted the structure that the *London Gazette* had made standard for print news.

In terms of content, the periodicals offered a surprising variety. The *London Mercury* and *English Currant* were mostly domestically-focussed, whilst a reader could be forgiven for mistaking the *London Intelligence* for the *London Gazette*. The *Universal Intelligence*, on the other hand, attempted to offer an equal balance between English and international news, even going so far as to separate reports under different sub-headings: 'Forain' and 'Domestick'.

Those papers with a domestic coverage covered all manner of events from (or important to) the home-country. Between late December 1688 and early January 1689, reports regarding parliamentary developments, military movements and demobilisation, local elections, Irish current events, and the Prince of Orange, amongst a whole variety of other mostly-domestic news stories, characterised the content of the new periodicals.

And yet, in a manner typical to the years we have considered during this thesis, the brief stage of intense periodical productivity was soon followed by a period of suppressions and state-imposed controls. As early as January 7th, the *Gazette* had indicated the new regime's attitude towards unregulated news:

¹ Sommerville, *The News Revolution*, 98. For more information regarding the truly 'revolutionary' nature of the Glorious Revolution, see: Pincus, *1688: The First Modern Revolution*.

Conclusion

Whereas there are divers False, Scandalous, and Seditious Books, Papers of News, and Pamphlets, daily Printed and Dispersed, containing idle and mistaken Relations of what passes, with malicious Reflections upon Persons, to the Disturbance of the Publick Peace, which are published without any Authority, contrary to the Laws in that Case provided, His Highness the Prince of Orange has thought fit to Order and Require the Master and Wardens of the Company of Stationers ... to make diligent search in all Printing-houses, and other Places, and to apprehend all such Authors, Printers, Booksellers, Hawkers, and others, as shall be found to Print, Sell, or Disperse the same.²

By the summer of 1689, only *The New Observer* (more a broad commentary on the current state of affairs than a news sheet itself) and the *London Gazette* remained. Aside from a proclamation or official notice here and there, domestic news again became the stuff of ‘page two’ – in terms of content organisation, the *Gazette* of the early-1690s was practically indistinguishable from the *Gazette* of the 1670s. Whatever small development we might have perceived in the periodical press news industry through the previous decade again found itself represented only through the infrequent and brief asides of the closing parts of the *Gazette*.

The reasons behind the new government’s actions are, at least, fairly self-evident. Though most of the news coming out of the periodicals was supportive, news had already shown itself to be a powerful tool in the shaping and manipulation of public opinion. Even uncontroversial, everyday domestic news invited a certain amount of participation – an engagement with current society, and with the day-to-day activities of the ruling authorities. Seemingly mundane news stories could still be picked apart and talked about in the taverns and coffee-houses of the capital, or in the gathering places of Whitehall and Westminster. Off in the provinces, the same was undoubtedly true – any interpretation of a story with a political implication was surely not all that far away from a discussion of contemporary politics in general. Regardless of its support of William’s coronation, Parliament had no desire to encourage such public participation through the press. Furthermore, they were aware

² *London Gazette*, no. 2417, January 7th 1689.

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that the situation might indeed change: 'It is in the nature of the news to take sides, and an authoritarian regime was not interested in a press that might change sides.'³ The government under William, therefore, maintained a process of news control that his predecessors in Britain and elsewhere had long established as the political norm.

Much as it had been with licensing in place prior to 1679, only the examination of a variety of sources, printed and manuscript, could offer a comprehensive account of recent events. The *Gazette*, ever stalwart, continued to provide a reasonably full coverage of foreign affairs, while domestic news slipped away from the realm of the print periodical altogether. Pamphlets continued to provide some news, though very rarely offered a general account of current events as domestically-focussed periodicals had attempted, focussing instead on a single item more often than not. Finding the news in the pamphlets was another matter. Between histories, prayer instructions, poems, scriptural interpretations, theological debates, essays, eulogies, and elegies, amongst all manner of other informations, advices, and directions, actual 'news' was few and far between. Moreover, with the beginning of the Nine Years' War, what little news appeared in the pamphlets tended to be internationally-focussed, and often less concerned with addressing the most recent foreign reports than it was repeating the lengthy history of the French monarchy for political effect. The few domestically-focussed pamphlets published were similarly limited in terms of actual news. William's constitutional changes brought an analysis of constitutional history to the forefront of the pamphlet, but little in the way of current information. It was, essentially, 'old' news.

Licensed monthly news publications found considerably more success. From 1690, *The Present State of Europe, or, the Historical and Political Monthly* was published, discussing the newsworthy international developments of the month. Two years later, *Memoirs of the Present State of Europe, or the Monthly Account* appeared with a similar focus. In a time of restricted domestic content, it is interesting to note that the government allowed both publications to provide a small amount of English news. Sommerville suggests an explanation: 'The fact that the government licensed two monthlies at a time when it did not permit weeklies suggests that it thought monthly publications could not inflame opinion.'⁴ Perhaps they considered monthly news 'old news'. Domestic news developments would inevitably trickle through society eventually – by the time it came to print the monthly report, there was no impact to the information. The potential for widespread public disorder

³ Sommerville, *The News Revolution*, 99. Rachel Weil has recently discussed the threats to the new regime and the Williamite response in: *A Plague of Informers: Conspiracy and Political Trust in William III's England* (New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press, 2014).

⁴ Sommerville, *The News Revolution*, 100.

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existed only when news provided a sudden provocation over a large region at the same time. With the monthly periodicals covering dated events at least heard in part by many – and not particularly controversial events, at that – there was no real risk to the government. Thus, there is an argument to make for monthly reports appearing more as ‘history’ than ‘news’ in terms of reader-reception. As we have observed elsewhere in this thesis, a delayed reception of news has a significant effect on interpretation.

The market success of these monthly reports (*The Present State of Europe*, for example, lasted into the eighteenth century) suggests that commercial news continued to be met with enthusiastic interest. Until 1695, however, readers in Britain had to make do with whatever news they could acquire from such sources.

1695 perhaps represents the ‘turning point’ for the continued development of news. The picture we have built thus far of the forerunner to the modern newspaper has been one of staggered development, setbacks, and complications. Each small progression we have considered for the print periodical has come with the caveat that the change was temporary – that restrictive controls would soon reverse the growth in the industry and return news to its former position, as though, on the face of it, the development had never occurred in the first place. Thus, as before, the lapse of licensing in 1695 did not free news from governmental control – but it did make it impossible to prosecute publications for violations of the licensing law. ‘In theory,’ Philip Hamburger writes, ‘censorship before publication was the chief advantage of licensing laws. In practice, censorship had always been difficult to impose, and such difficulties had increased in the seventeenth century.’⁵

Much attention has been paid to the lapse of licensing in 1695, and the subsequent lasting growth in the news press. In his article on the renewal and subsequent lapse of press regulation at the close of the seventeenth century, Raymond Astbury has written that there is ‘no evidence’ to suggest that the government supported a relaxation in press control following the revolution of 1688.⁶ Indeed, on September 15th, 1692, the *Gazette* again published a proclamation for the ‘better Discovery of Seditious Libellers’, stating ‘*divers Evil Disposed Persons ... since our Accession to the Crown, do make it their Business as well to Write as Print sundry False, Infamous, and Scandalous Libels*’.⁷ The lapse in licensing a few years later thus seems somewhat contradictory to the context.

⁵ Hamburger, ‘The Development of the Law of Seditious Libel’, 715.

⁶ Astbury, R., ‘The Renewal of the Licensing Act in 1693 and Its Lapse in 1695’, *Library* 5:33 (December 1978), 298.

⁷ *London Gazette*, no. 2802, September 15th 1692.

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Lois Schwoerer suggests an explanation that considers the early years of Charles II's reign, when press regulation was reinstated in England in 1662 following the restoration. Of the earlier Licensing Act, she writes: '[it] confirmed the printing monopolies granted by royal warrant, thereby reigniting long standing criticism against monopolies, criticism that figured in the decision in 1695 to allow the controls to lapse.'⁸ Printers and publishers argued for greater independence, praising the 'advantages of a free press, revenue for the government, and competition to the prosperous press in the Netherlands.'⁹ Given that licensing was expensive, difficult to administrate, and of questionable effectiveness, the lapse may be explained through a combination of these factors.

G. C. Gibbs, writing of the press and public opinion into the eighteenth century, considers the interactions between the houses in Parliament to explain the lapse. Recognising the failings of the 1662 act, the Commons at first contemplated introducing replacement legislation for the regulation of the press. The new proposal would require the registration of presses to appointed authorities, with a lack of conformity punishable by hefty fines and publishing bans. The producer of any publication concerning potentially seditious subjects – law, religion, English history – would need to deliver the texts 'sheet by sheet' to the specified authority as they were printed.¹⁰ Publications were to bear the name of their publisher – those who printed books or pamphlets deemed contrary to English law would forfeit their press as penalty. On suspicion of possessing unlicensed publications, even the homes of Peers and Commoners were to be subject to searches.

'It is difficult,' Gibbs writes, 'to imagine a bill more calculated to offend vested interests.'¹¹ With the proposed bill effectively ending London's publishing monopoly by allowing presses to be established in any city, the 'unnatural and damaging' control of the Stationers Company (of which membership was necessary in order to establish a new press), the possibility of sudden invasive searches, and the vagueness of what actually constituted an 'offensive' publication, it is perhaps unsurprising that other means for effective press regulation were sought after 1695.¹²

⁸ Schwoerer, L., 'Liberty of the Press', *Liberty Secured? Britain before and after 1688*, ed. J. R. Jones (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1992), p. 203.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 230.

¹⁰ Gibbs, G. C., 'Press and Public Opinion: Prospective', *Liberty Secured? Britain before and after 1688*, ed. J. R. Jones (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1992), p. 235. Of course, partisan conflict between the Whig or Tory 'authority' and their respective political opponents would also create further complications, no doubt.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 236.

¹² *Ibid.*, 236-237.

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Indeed, it should be stressed that the end of licensing did not mean the end of control. Instead, the government turned to laws considering ‘treason’ to regulate the press – subversive words were to be prosecuted with force. Though more extreme anti-government publications might fall under the description of ‘treasonous’ materials however, this hardly included newspapers. An act of the following year further hampered press manipulation through this method by affording additional rights to the accused – thereby making it considerably harder to acquire a conviction for ‘treason’. Next came an attempt to adapt the law for ‘seditious libel’ – though this found considerably more success (115 informations and indictments for seditious libels were filed between 1702 and 1760), newspapers were able to continue in print provided they steered clear of information that could ‘bring scandal upon the government’ – anything that might defame or otherwise criticise authority was to be punishable by law.¹³

Therefore, whatever the reason for it, it is at least clear that the lapse in licensing had very little to do with the establishment of press freedom, or with the end of governmental control – there was, after all, no tradition of press liberty in England. Indeed, the lapse in 1695 seems to have had considerably more to do with recognising the problems of licensing, and with searching for a more effective means of controlling the press.

Regardless of the intentions however, newspapers flourished, much as they had following 1679. For news, this meant a sudden and lasting increase in regular periodicals, in addition to other print news forms. ‘The period’, Claydon writes, ‘was marked by an expansion in the number of titles that lasted more than a few issues ... frequency, regularity, and density of reporting increased considerably and permanently.’¹⁴

By as early as January 1696, the *Flying Post* (May 7th, 1695), *Post Boy* (June 1st, 1695), and *Post Man* (October 22nd, 1695), were printed three times weekly, on Tuesdays, Thursdays, and Saturdays. All three, at first glance, could easily be mistaken for the *Gazette*, such was their structural and paratextual similarity. Discussing the most recent news of the time – domestic and foreign – the new periodicals continued well into the eighteenth century, and were joined briefly by the *Protestant Mercury Occurrences* from January 1698 and the *London Post* from February 1699. From March 11th, 1702, the first daily-published newspaper emerged – the *Daily Courant*. Initially providing translated news from the international press, the *Daily Courant* soon included a section on domestic events too.

¹³ Hamburger, ‘The Development of the Law of the Seditious Libel’, 724-725, 735.

¹⁴ Claydon, ‘Daily News and the Construction of Time’, 57-58.

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Increased availability of regular news naturally followed the rise in the number of periodicals. Claydon, considering English-language news publications appearing at least once a week, has shown an increase from seventeen newspaper issues during the month of March 1692, to fifty-nine issues in March 1696, to seventy-seven issues by March 1700.¹⁵ With large numbers of print issues being steadily produced over an uninterrupted period, there existed a much livelier, competitive print news-market by the beginning of the eighteenth century. Though later events, such as the Stamp Act of 1712, would restrict press output, nothing quite brought it to a halt as effectively as the restrictions and prosecutions of the previous decades had before. Print news variety had become a permanent feature, and not just of the capital. By the mid-1720s, twenty-six newspapers were regularly produced in the provinces.¹⁶ If we are to consider a Whiggish perception of news development, it is perhaps from the turn of the eighteenth century that we might begin to perceive the legitimate justification for such an argument.

News Development, Post-1676: Content and Credibility

At various stages throughout this thesis, our analysis of print and scribal news forms through the later seventeenth century has considered a number of factors significant to the perception of modernity – that is, how ‘modern’ we might consider the new emerging news forms in comparison to ‘traditional’ news. Typically, this has taken place through a consideration of periodical print news (which most obviously resembles our modern newspaper) in comparison to oral, handwritten, and pamphletary sources.¹⁷ Amongst other factors, we have considered structure, coverage, accuracy of content, reader-reception, and the perception of the ‘present’. It is through these ideas (and related ideas, such as regularity of publication and consistency of content) by which we have sought to address the question of ‘modernity’.

If one were to consider print news alone, surveying a selection of publications from the beginning and end of our period, one might indeed perceive a clear progression toward current print news. In comparison to 1676, periodical numbers are increased, content diversified, and domestic coverage considerably extended by 1702. By the beginning of the eighteenth century, there clearly existed a more recognisably ‘modern’ print news industry.

¹⁵ *Ibid*, 60.

¹⁶ Gibbs, ‘Press and Public Opinion’, 263.

¹⁷ In addition to other forms of print news, such as notices and proclamations, etc.

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It has never been our intention to debate this. Rather, this thesis has sought to show that its progression was staggered and intermittent; that print news development was by no means constant or inevitable; and that ‘traditional’ news – particularly manuscript – often offered a level of consistency and coverage exceeding the majority of print news forms for much of the period.

Many of the advances recognised in print news, such as the regular inclusion of domestic content, were already a stable feature of scribal news. The Mostyn newsletters, examined during this thesis from 1676, contained a mixture of British and international reports throughout the period. As the archetype of print periodical news from 1665, the *London Gazette* reluctantly addressed domestic current events only when it became necessary to do so (in the months leading up to the Glorious Revolution, for example), or when such news was of an inconsequential or trivial nature. Those other periodicals that emerged discussing domestic news were hampered to no small extent by harsh prosecutions, competition, and public criticism, or brought to a close entirely with the reintroduction of licensing, so that the *Gazette* continued alone. Even during times of domestic crisis, where periodical numbers increased alongside domestic content, scribal publications continued to offer a more responsive reaction to the news.

A number of such instances have been considered during the course of our examination. Between later 1678 and 1679, with the unfolding of the events surrounding the supposed ‘Popish Plot’, manuscript news offered its fullest account. While the *Gazette* strove to ignore the alleged conspiracy (under the assumption, it seemed, that reporting on it would either stimulate public discussion, or offer credibility to the emerging news), commenting on the plot only by proxy through the proclamations it was forced to publish, the newsletters to North Wales spoke of the ‘horrid designe’ of the papists, ‘the damnable and execrable Plott’, and the murder of Sir Edmundberry Godfrey: ‘strangled & dead before he was toucht with a sworde.’¹⁸ In the months that followed, scribal news gradually developed and amended the story, progressively building towards a comparatively complete picture of the plot, from start to finish.

In the events leading up to later-1688, the manuscript periodical again offered a level of detail and consistency not found elsewhere. Though the Dutch invasion stimulated a rise in all manner of print publications, eventually even provoking the *Gazette* to address the issue as the circumstances became increasingly pressing, handwritten news responded to the

¹⁸ BU MS Mostyn 9089, fol. 118, October 26th 1678; fol. 120, November 14th 1678.

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revolution with as much information as was available throughout. When the Prince of Orange's army had landed at Torbay to begin making its way across England, and the *Gazette* had become conspicuously quiet, newsletters represented a source of consistent detail in a way that the individual pamphlet or publication could not rival, as we observed during the previous chapter.

Though periods of print news productivity, such as following the lapse in licensing in 1679, or the Glorious Revolution in 1688, give the impression of development, particularly with regard to content, manuscript news outlived their short-term appearance, continuing to offer domestic content to its audience even as print struggled to reliably maintain a smaller quantity. Rather than in terms of coverage then, these sudden bursts of print production were significant in other ways.

What we perceive as 'modern' news was partially characterised in those times. Brief, but productive, periods of news publication helped solidify the expectations of print news – the double-columned structure, typeface, and tone – as well as clearly demonstrating its continued demand. When print news variety re-emerged following the changes in laws regulating the press in 1695, it seems likely that the adopted structure and tone was influenced not just by the more traditional *Gazette*, but by the domestically-focussed papers that had emerged from 1679 and after 1688.

Nevertheless, as we have seen at various stages during our discussion, the perception of accuracy remained a problem for both print and scribal news. When the new print periodicals appeared in the midst of the Exclusion Crisis, the increase in news coverage actually amplified concerns regarding the accuracy of news information, rather than subduing them as one might expect. In the months that followed, the periodical press was beleaguered by its competitive, open-arena reception in a way that more traditional news forms were not

Domestically focussed print periodicals addressed rumour, subsequently resulting in fairly frequent apologies and amendments in later issues. Competition between news sheets, often characterised by the derisive comments of papers when examining the news of their competitors' latest reports, accentuated the problems of news accuracy in the post-Popish Plot press. Circumstances were purposefully exacerbated when authors such as Sir Roger L'Estrange drew widespread attention to the questionable accuracy of the new periodicals, regularly emphasising the inconsistencies and anachronisms of contemporary reporting.¹⁹

¹⁹ See comments regarding the *Observer* during chapter 5.

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James Sutherland has suggested that print news content was also more likely to be superseded by newer information emerging too late to make the necessary change. ‘What was already set would normally have to be left standing,’ he writes. In contrast:

Handwritten news-letters were better able to deal with the problem of arranging the news, and to cope with any late news that came in. ... When an important piece of late news came in, it could be inserted without difficulty in the appropriate section of home or foreign (and even at the most appropriate point in either section) in all subsequent copies. If it was important enough, it could be added at the end of a letter already copied.²⁰

Such flexibility, Sutherland writes, ‘was not available to the printed newspaper.’²¹

Nevertheless, it seems clear that this was primarily a factor affecting the new print news of the later 1670s – such a perception, for example, did not extend to the *London Gazette*. Frequently through the period, manuscript newsletters refer to the *Gazette* for their news: ‘The Proclamation for reforming to all Corporations their old Charters and franchises being at large in *the* Gazet, I pass it over’; ‘The Gazette sayes that an Halfe moon at maestricht was wone by the valour of 200 English.’²² Roger Morrice and Narcissus Luttrell both seem to note the news of the *London Gazette*, or appropriate parts of its content, without the same indicators of uncertainty that occasionally characterise their recordings.²³ Thus, it was not that ‘print news’ was deemed inaccurate in general, but that a certain type of periodical paper emerging in a specific time (particularly in the early 1680s with the emerging ‘Whigs’ and ‘Tories’) met with the problem of presenting contentious partisan news to an increasingly politicised audience – the critical response, from competitors and officials alike, drew much attention to perceived inaccuracies in an attempt to discredit the political ideologies thinly concealed behind the news of opponents.

Though suffering from its own problems relating to accuracy (particularly with regard to the verification of reports), manuscript news was affected by this to a lesser extent than these new print periodicals. Scribal newsletters carried a greater impression of reliability for a

²⁰ Sutherland, *The Restoration Newspaper*, 226.

²¹ *Ibid.*

²² BU MS Mostyn 9094, fol. 74v, October 18th 1688; BU MS Mostyn 9089, fol. 28r, August 1st 1676.

²³ See chapter 4.

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significant reason – though it was a long-established mode of news dissemination and the tradition contributed to its credibility, it was the manner in which manuscript news was disseminated that most influenced its perception. Scribal news was transmitted directly from author to reader – it was addressed to a single individual, a more personal and private method of information transmission, and as a consequence, acquired a more substantial sense of truthfulness; of accurate information passed to its reader. Again due to the nature of its circulation, public competition between newsletters was essentially non-existent – the issues that would affect the development of the print periodical therefore never took place.

All the same, though this explains why the newsletter was seen as generally more reliable, it clouds the notion of modernity somewhat. Though the perception of accuracy is significant to how ‘modern’ we might consider a seventeenth century news piece, the mode of manuscript news dissemination is not particularly modern. A more personal relationship between author and reader contributes to the perception of reliability in this period, but is emphatically not what modern news seeks to foster. The print periodical, with its non-specific audience and large dissemination over a growing geographical area, in fact provides a more current representation of ‘news’, where reports are objectively imparted for the reception of all.²⁴ The issue, therefore, perhaps lies in reader-reception – that is, the modernity of the audience.

News and the Reader

The development of the news-reader has been important to our discussion of news through the later seventeenth century. How news information was acquired, authenticated, and interpreted, is of significance to our understanding of its development, as well as to our examination of the impact of contemporary news. Furthermore, the effect of news on the reader and public has been important to our consideration of its societal influence.

Nevertheless, during the course of this research project, it has become clear that an examination of the seventeenth century reader’s response to news represents a complex challenge to historians of the genre. Substantial evidence of news reception in the period is difficult to acquire – highly-fragmented between numerous texts, or simply unobservable in a meaningful way. Readers rarely left signs of reaction – marginalia in manuscript is sparse; recordings few and far between. Where such evidence exists – for example, in the recordings of Roger Morrice and Narcissus Luttrell – we often find re-use rather than reaction, from

²⁴ Supposedly.

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which we can interpret response. Extrapolating information about readers in general offers further insight, but presents obvious problems of its own. We must instead consider what can be reasonably established, and what seems most likely, based on the evidence.

Though print periodical news was available throughout the period in one form or another, and manuscript, oral, and pamphletary present consistently, the full extent of the popularity and demand for news becomes evident only when we look at the periods where government control was less effective, allowing new news products to be published and sold in times where domestic controversy stimulated their production. Following the first lapse of licensing in 1679, for example, annual press output rose to over 3000 titles published, from below 1500 in the mid-1670s.²⁵ The sudden increase in titles suggests the commercial viability of the new published product. Readers were actively seeking news – the demand was clearly there.

For the majority of the years examined during this thesis, however, news output was carefully controlled and restricted – even when licensing lapsed, governments retained the means with which to check the growth of news. Thus, the way in which various news forms of the 1670s and 1680s compliment one another's content may provide some insight into later-seventeenth century news reception.

Through the period, 'news' was the combined product of available information – a composite of amalgamated periodicals, pamphlets, newsletters, proclamations, notices, and all manner of other sources and accounts of recent events. Naturally, consulting a number of different sources provided the best possible coverage – the popularity of the coffee-house, where newsletters could be found alongside copies of the most recent *Gazette*, suggests that for many the reception of news took place through the perusal of multiple textual sources.²⁶ When licensing was in place, a relatively complete picture of the news might be acquired through such a process, albeit less extensive in terms of domestic content. When licensing lapsed, forcing governments to make use of more unwieldy methods of censorship, one might acquire a fuller picture still. Sir Roger Morrice, considered in an earlier chapter alongside Narcissus Luttrell, offers a fitting example of this – as we have seen elsewhere, the account recorded in the *Entring Book* very much seems the product of a combination of news reports from various different origins. Morrice's main sources of information seem to have been oral,

²⁵ Raymond, *Pamphlets and Pamphleteering*, 164.

²⁶ 'Political participants,' Alex Barber states, 'looked to a variety of media in order to obtain the information that they wanted and required' – Barber, "'It is Not Easy What to Say of our Condition, Much Less to Write It'", 302.

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though there is much to suggest that his recordings were influenced by the *London Gazette* and other news forms.²⁷

This feature of news reception, though remarkable in that the public was involved to a greater extent than ever previously in building an understanding of current events, is not particularly surprising. The news industry was, after all, steadily geared towards the shared consumption of information, whether intended or not. Meeting places such as inns and coffee-houses were integral to the circulation of newsletters, pamphlets, and periodicals – the discussion of news in such places and its effect has, consequently, formed part of our argument regarding the significant influence of news on contemporary society and beyond.

Before the later seventeenth century, it is difficult to talk about ‘the public’ with any real accuracy. The notion of a large collective body of people aware of one another and connected under a shared national identity and culture is somewhat problematic when applied to our period. One of the major contributions of regular periodical news, however, lies in its part in the formation of such a community. Widely circulated and disseminated news reports allowed readers to experience the ‘simultaneous consumption’ of information for what was, essentially, the first time.²⁸ Benedict Anderson’s theory of the ‘imagined community’ – an abstract connection between readers aware of one another’s exposure to the same information at the same moment – suggests that news was important to its development, though it is necessary to bear in mind the specific context of the later seventeenth century.

Anderson has suggested that the widespread and concurrent interpretation of news information helped in the creation of a ‘community of the mind’. We might indeed perceive this during our period, where readers were connected by the immediate significance of, and shared reaction to, contemporary events. Nevertheless, though Anderson’s community is abstract – an imagined connection between readers conscious of each other’s presence – the news of the seventeenth century formed not just an ‘imagined’ community, or the beginnings of what we might consider a growing understanding of the public, but a physical community too. Individuals were connected not just by the private experience of news reception (the ‘silent privacy’ of Anderson’s reader), but through a physical network of news dissemination and interpretation.²⁹

Small communities connected to a larger context of news exposure and public response formed much of the reading populace of the later seventeenth century. News

²⁷ See chapter 3. Morrice, like the new periodicals themselves, was sensitive of the issues relating to credibility, and remarks upon it throughout his recordings.

²⁸ Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, 34. See chapter 3.

²⁹ Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, 35.

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reception throughout the 1670s and decades following was characterised in many ways by the context of communal participation, as typified by the oral transmission of news in the coffee-houses and meeting-places of the capital, or through the shared interpretation of the news texts on offer there. The exchange of news information and its subsequent discussion was an important part of reception. Thus, it is quite possible to discern the formation of an active ‘real’ community, in which news was traded, interpreted communally, and considered in a wider context.

Certainly, it is clear that news was recognised for its part in this. Within a short stretch of time, the government went from mostly ignoring periodical news (provided it kept away from anything deemed domestic or controversial) to using it regularly for political means, particularly in times of domestic crisis. In doing so, it acknowledged the ‘public’ in the process.

The suggestions of Jürgen Habermas have formed the basis for our examination of the effect of news on ‘public opinion’. Where periods of political intensity arose, such as during the Exclusion Crisis and Glorious Revolution, a means for addressing the public as a whole became something of a necessity – in this, news offered a pre-existing framework for mass communication. At any time, a growing amount of readers over a large geographical area could be approached quickly and efficiently, with the knowledge that the information would spread far beyond the physical limitations of the news sheet itself. There was, at the time, no other means as far-reaching, or as effective at transmitting a political message, as the established news press.

In using it for such a purpose (particularly from later 1678), the government had a hand in making that which they sought to avoid – a connected community of increasingly politically-informed readers. Proclamations printed in papers like the *Gazette* addressed the subjects of the king as a whole – in doing so, they helped shape it. The partisan papers that arose during the years that followed (the Whig/Tory publications of the Exclusion Crisis, for example) could subsequently exploit the increasingly-entrenched political aspect of print news, launching large-scale appeals to the newly-established collective forum – so much so, in fact, that Habermas has suggested that the addressees of the authorities’ announcements ‘genuinely became “the public” in the proper sense’.³⁰

An undoubtedly modern aspect of society, we can certainly see that news played its part in the formation of the ‘public’ across the period examined in this thesis. Through its

³⁰ Habermas, *The Public Sphere*, 21. See chapter 3.

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prolificacy, print periodical news was more likely to create a simultaneous consumption of information (à la Anderson's 'silent privacy') than either manuscript or pamphletary news was capable of producing – its use as a means for addressing the public en masse contributed further. Nevertheless, it is important not to undervalue the significance of the traditional news forms in this process. The 'public', as we have seen, came about not just through the development of the new print periodical, but through the communities established by the amalgamation of news sources, and the mutual interpretation of information via a corporeal, rather than simply 'imagined', community.

News and the Reader: the 'Present'

Another means through which we have considered modernity relates to the contribution of each of the news forms to the emerging sense of 'the present', as identified and described by Daniel Woolf and Tony Claydon.³¹ To briefly revisit the concept we considered: the 'present', as we think of it, had yet to fully emerge as a perception of time. Instead, seventeenth century readers envisioned the present as 'an instant', rather than 'a duration', recognising 'no "present" beyond that instant'.³² Periodical news – the transmission of serialised and continuing reports concerning developing issues – has been seen as having a hand in reforming that awareness. Reports that developed over days or weeks were important to the emerging perception of the present, and 'central to a progressive and fluidly developing sense of time'.³³

Nevertheless, at the beginning of our period, where the *Gazette* largely represented the sole source of constant periodical news, the sense of the present was not notably distinguishable. Though print news could be circulated and read arguably to a greater extent than manuscript, the content was primarily international – and therefore, likely to be of an older nature. Furthermore, with its origins overseas, updates to news stories were often sporadic, depending on shipping conditions and news acquisition abroad. Thus, the 'fluid sense of time' that Claydon has described was not particularly apparent.

When competing print periodicals began to appear following the lapse of licensing in 1679, print acquired a new role with regard to the perception of the present. A sudden focus on domestic reports provided a news-content consistently more timely than the form had yet to offer. Furthermore, its willingness to include reports of questionable credibility, such as

³¹ See chapter 3.

³² Woolf, 'News, History, and the Construction of the Present', 82.

³³ Claydon, 'Daily News and the Construction of Time', 61.

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rumoured news, engaged with the relative uncertainty of the present, where the readers' understanding of a current event was subject to sudden change as new information came to light. Their role in creating the sense of a contemporaneous present was, therefore, considerably more significant than that of the longer-established periodical.

However, it was the *Gazette* that continued after they were suppressed. Though the new media of the Popish Plot may have gone some way towards developing a perceived 'present', its brief period in print was surely too short to have had a lasting effect. Rather, more traditional forms of news should be examined when considering the emerging perception of time through the 1670s and 1680s.

Pamphlets appeared at an impressive rate of publication, particularly in periods of controversy. By their very nature, they often set to work changing established narratives and extending the life of a news-story, such as the Popish Plot – a factor that we have considered as contributory to the developing perception of the present. In many ways, however, this older news form also had the potential to destabilise its reader's understanding. Pamphlets, as we have seen, provided their news within specific frameworks, often using a vast historical background for context, and for the interpretation of meaning. Presenting the news of the plot against a backdrop of past Catholic transgressions, for example, was hardly conducive to the construction of the 'present'. Rather, it offered the news as a history, with the current event appearing almost as an inevitable development of enduring immorality and corruption, rather than as a recent incident with meaningful connection to previous events, but of value as 'news' in its own right.

With several pamphlets describing the same event simultaneously, the 'present' could be confused by differences between accounts. How might a reader acquire any real coherent sense of the present when pamphletary news offered sometimes significantly contrasting narratives? What pamphlet authors chose to emphasise or omit depended on their political purpose, creating a fragmented chronicle of events, with numerous versions of the present existing concurrently. Furthermore, it seems likely that audiences were aware of the political bias of the pamphlet form – response-pamphlets and 'answers' publicly discredited the content of earlier publications, often stimulating the production of further responses along the way. The process most probably led to a pamphlet news-reception atmosphere of heightened critical analysis. Readers were likely aware that the form was prone to significant partiality, which would undoubtedly affect the way that they accepted each version of the 'present' described.

Conclusion

Once again, the role of manuscript news may be of greater importance. In the time of the Popish Plot and after, even when print had returned to the largely static reporting-style of the *Gazette*, manuscript maintained a regularly updating news-narrative, with timely information received frequently, and in good supply. When the two highly controversial news events considered in this thesis emerged in 1678 and 1688, manuscript news reacted directly to the uncertain crisis, offering regular narrative developments, and coming far closer to the ‘construction of the present’ as described by Woolf and Claydon.³⁴ New details emerged periodically through the newsletters, prolonging each current event as a sustained news story – an incident that belonged neither to the past or future, but to the present. Its largely domestic focus helped sustain a contemporary content, more able to allow readers to experience events as they were unfolding.

For the majority of the years considered in this thesis, this situation remained largely the same. Though brief periods of unrestricted publication brought content comparable to the newsletters via the print periodical, effectively allowing print to help foster the perception of the ‘present’, manuscript was the only lasting news form that had a part in its construction. By the mid-1690s, however, this effectively changed. When licensing lapsed and an increasing variety of print periodicals once again came to the forefront of news production, print played a much larger role in the ongoing construction of the ‘present’. Though continuing to be regulated by laws focussing on prosecution rather than pre-publication censorship, print news could engage with current domestic affairs, whilst maintaining the level of periodicity necessary for the ‘progressive and fluidly developing’ sense of time to occur. Of course, it was manuscript that had established the ideological precedence for this.

With increased circulation, the advent of daily news in the early eighteenth-century, and the publication of regionally-printed papers, print’s part in constructing the present was progressively more significant. Receiving and digesting the news at the same time not only helped to foster a shared sense of the ‘public’, as described above, but also an understanding of a simultaneous and contemporary experience of the ‘present’. Print, with its increasing publishing numbers and widening dissemination, was much more capable of producing this by the early 1700s.

Summary

From the beginning of the eighteenth century, the selection, consistency, periodicity, and content of print news made the form more recognisably ‘modern’. The print news

³⁴ See chapter 3, ‘News of the Popish Plot’.

Conclusion

industry of the early 1700s continued through the ensuing decades and beyond, hampered still by government control and by the limited restrictions imposed by the Stamp Act of 1712 (which forced a higher tax on publishers, leading to price increases for the papers) and subsequent variations of the same – but never to the extent of censorship witnessed in the 1670s and 1680s. Given the condition and public reception of periodical news by the end of our period, it seems unlikely that full censorship could have been effectively reintroduced without much in the way of open dissatisfaction and protest. The print periodical had, essentially, become a permanent feature of British society.

Nevertheless, though print had effectively taken over after 1695 in terms of variety and dissemination, for the years considered in this thesis, more traditional forms of news remained comparatively more ‘modern’ in many significant ways.³⁵ Whether it be in terms of accepted accuracy of content or coverage, consistency or contemporaneity, scribal news maintained a level of modernity more advanced than we might initially assume, and certainly more so than it has been credited for. In comparison to print, ‘traditional’ news was often more detailed, more inclusive, and more responsive to change, making manuscript, pamphletary, and oral news, a major feature of the news industry, and a significant influence on seventeenth-century society.

As shown throughout this thesis, manuscript news offers invaluable insight and commentary into the political and societal development of seventeenth century Britain. The way that it reflected and affected contemporary society is clearly significant to an examination of the period. Its part in the construction of the present and the public, in addition to the role played by other ‘traditional’ news forms, is not insubstantial, and should be considered alongside other critically-appreciated contemporary sources. Print, whilst fundamentally changing the status-quo of the news industry following the alterations in press regulation in the 1690s, did not develop with the uninterrupted and inevitable progression that a Whiggish perception of news-development might suggest. Rather, it was subject to continued governmental resistance and censorship, emerging only in the brief periods of inadvertent lulls in restrictive legislation. Even in its short episodes of sudden activity, outspoken criticism (from competitors and governmental officials alike) clouded its potential for public effect, drawing attention to biases, inaccuracies, and the various shortfalls of the emerging press.

³⁵ Alex Barber has shown that manuscript news still played a significant role in the dissemination of news information after 1695: print and manuscript, he argues, ‘fulfilled different roles and were often bought and brought together’ – Barber, “‘It is Not Easy What to Say of our Condition, Much Less to Write It’”, 295.

Conclusion

All the same, the structure, form, and manner of print news, was decided in these times. With their increasing numbers and sales, the clear demand of the public for regular print news with domestic content was apparent. Much of what we consider ‘modern’, though already represented to some degree in more traditional forms, was established in these moments. It is likely that the papers of 1695 and beyond were influenced as much by the expectations created during the previous decade by the short-lived periodicals as they were the *Gazette* and other news.

In a more general sense, later-seventeenth century news as a whole had a remarkable and far-reaching effect on the development of British society and politics. With regular news came the ‘public’ in its first proper form – a population aware of one another, reacting simultaneously to the same stimulus. Communal participation and interpretation characterised the news experience, resulting in the formation of physical reading communities actively seeking an understanding of current events and their political implications. Consequently, ‘public opinion’ – the widespread response to the news, and the perspectives it promulgated – became increasingly significant to a party’s political agenda. A public sensitive and responsive to the news could be roused for the support of a political goal, manipulated against the enemies of the state, or addressed to legitimise change on a national level, all through the wide-reaching platform that news offered – the first of its kind. In addressing the public, the public was created, defined, and acknowledged. In appealing to it, such as during the months leading to the Glorious Revolution, its power was recognised. As time continued, partisan interests were represented heavily through the press to an increasingly-politicised population. By the end of the seventeenth-century, engaging with this newly-recognised public was a necessary part of maintaining effective authority.

News, in its increasing popularity and influence, shaped both contemporary society and that which came to follow. It is difficult to imagine an industry more capable of influencing the public to such a lasting and significant degree, and on a near-constant basis – an industry that, despite its ubiquitous presence and potential for public manipulation, remained only partly in the hands of the ruling authorities. During the period considered in this thesis, the fundamental characteristics of regular modern news were formed and reinforced, and they are still reflected – in the demand for accuracy, variety, and development – even today.

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(BU) Bangor University Archives, Bangor, North Wales.

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Appendix

1. Mostyn Newsletter Analysis

Salutations, business remarks (responses to book orders, etc.), and the place of the letter's origination and date have been excluded from the total word count. Some folio numbers are missing from the archival collection.

All percentages are rounded to the nearest whole.

'-' denotes no reported foreign/domestic news.

Fig 1.1: Mostyn Newsletters – June 13th-August 29th, 1676.

Newsletter (MS Mostyn 9089, fol.)	Total word count	Domestic news word count	Foreign news word count	Percentage (domestic/foreign)
15: June 13 th 1676	278	152	126	55/45
16: June 17 th 1676	122	107	15	88/12
17: June 20 th 1676	250	196	54	78/22
19: June 27 th 1676	285	269	16	94/6
21: July 1 st 1676	243	243	-	100/-
22: July 4 th 1676	337	291	46	86/14
24: July 18 th 1676	253	199	54	79/21
26: July 25 th 1676	251	176	75	70/30
28: August 1 st 1676	344	225	119	65/35
30: August 8 th 1676	292	208	84	71/29
32: August 15 th 1676	379	316	63	83/27
36: August 22 nd 1676*	239	136	103	57/43
38: August 29 th 1676	350	228	122	65/35

Average total word count	Average domestic news word count	Average foreign news word count	Average percentage (domestic/foreign)
279	211	68	76/24

* Ms. Mostyn 9089. 34-35 is also dated August 22nd, 1676, but is not included in this analysis. The newsletter, originating from 'Whitehall', does not appear to be from the same news office as the others considered.¹ At 583 words, with a foreign-focus (on the siege at Maastricht, in particular), this letter may have been included alongside another for its specific detail on a particular news story.

¹ It is, most likely, a newsletter from the office of Henry Muddiman: 'Muddiman's clerks can be recognised by his practice of dating [their newsletters] from "Whitehall"' – Sutherland, *The Restoration Newspaper*, 8.

Fig 1.2: Mostyn Newsletters – October 26th-December 18th, 1678.

Newsletter (MS Mostyn 9089, fol.)	Total word count	Domestic news word count	Foreign news word count	Percentage (domestic/foreign)
118: October 26 th 1678	930	930	-	100/-
120: November 14 th 1678	481	481	-	100/-
121: November 19 th 1678	384	384	-	100/-
122: November 25 th 1678*	421	421	-	100/-
123: November 26 th 1678	499	499	-	100/-
124: December 2 nd 1678	356	356	-	100/-
125: December 4 th 1678	693	693	-	100/-
126: December 11 th 1678	509	489	20	96/4
127: December 16 th 1678	236	236	-	100/-
128: December 18 th 1678	660	660	-	100/-

Average total word count	Average domestic news word count	Average foreign news word count	Average percentage (domestic/foreign)
517	515	2	99.6/0.4

* Though the King's speech reported in this letter makes brief mention of his army abroad, the speech itself is the news event reported, and the description of its content offers no real news information. Thus, it has not been included here as 'foreign' news.

Fig 1.3: Mostyn Newsletters – June 3rd-June 28th, 1684.

Newsletter (MS Mostyn 9092, fol.)	Total word count	Domestic news word count	Foreign news word count	Percentage (domestic/foreign)
18: June 3 rd 1684	480	342	138	71/29
19: June 7 th 1684	488	488	-	100/-
20: June 10 th 1684	499	246	253	49/51
21: June 14 th 1684	457	457	-	100/-
22: June 17 th 1684	517	353	164	68/32
23: June 21 st 1684	527	340	187	65/35
24: June 24 th 1684	547	258	289	47/53
25: June 28 th 1684	532	370	162	70/30

Average total word count	Average domestic news word count	Average foreign news word count	Average percentage (domestic/foreign)
506	357	149	71/29

Fig 1.4: Mostyn Newsletters – October 2nd-November 24th, 1688.

Newsletter (MS Mostyn 9094, fol.)	Total word count	Domestic news word count	Foreign news word count	Percentage (domestic/foreign)
66: October 2 nd 1688	642	548	94	85/15
68: October 4 th 1688	560	500	60	89/11
69: October 9 th 1688	561	470	91	84/16
70: October 11 th 1688	556	488	68	88/12
73: October 16 th 1688	513	360	153	70/30
74: October 18 th 1688	490	220	270	45/55
75: October 23 rd 1688	565	508	57	90/10
76: October 30 th 1688	546	292	254	53/47
77: November 1 st 1688	589	368	221	62/38
78: November 6 th 1688	549	549	-	100/-
79: November 8 th 1688	539	497	42	92/8
80: November 13 th 1688	588	484	104	82/18
82: November 15 th 1688	579	545	34	94/6
84: November 22 nd 1688	543	514	29	95/5
85: November 24 th 1688	473	425	48	90/10

Average total word count	Average domestic news word count	Average foreign news word count	Average percentage (domestic/foreign)
553	451	102	81/19

2. The London Gazette Analysis

Title, banner, and advertisements have been excluded from the total word count. Official notices and proclamations etc., are included in the domestic news word count.

All percentages are rounded to the nearest whole.

'-' denotes no reported foreign/domestic news.

Fig. 2.1: London Gazette – June 15th-August 14th, 1676.

Newspaper (<i>London Gazette</i>, no.)	Total word count	Domestic news word count	Foreign news word count	Percentage (domestic/foreign)
1104: June 15 th 1676	2310	-	2310	-/100
1105: June 19 th 1676	2350	-	2350	-/100
1106: June 22 nd 1676	2160	-	2160	-/100
1107: June 26 th 1676	2140	-	2140	-/100
1108: June 29 th 1676	2120	-	2120	-/100
1109: July 3 rd 1676	2150	-	2150	-/100
1110: July 6 th 1676	2530	-	2530	-/100
1111: July 10 th 1676	2510	-	2510	-/100
1112: July 13 th 1676	2400	60	2340	2/98
1113: July 17 th 1676	2540	-	2540	-/100
1114: July 20 th 1676	2120	110	2010	5/95
1115: July 24 th 1676	2210	-	2210	-/100
1116: July 27 th 1676	2280	-	2280	-/100
1117: July 31 st 1676	2460	-	2460	-/100
1118: August 3 rd 1676	2430	-	2430	-/100
1119: August 7 th 1676	2540	-	2540	-/100
1120: August 10 th 1676	2320	-	2320	-/100
1121: August 14 th 1676	2380	-	2380	-/100

Average total word count	Average domestic news word count	Average foreign news word count	Average percentage (domestic/foreign)
2330	9	2321	0.4/99.6

Fig. 2.2: London Gazette – June 2nd-June 30th, 1684.

Newspaper (<i>London Gazette</i>, no.)	Total word count	Domestic news word count	Foreign news word count	Percentage (domestic/foreign)
1935: June 2 nd 1684	2440	310	2130	13/87
1936: June 5 th 1684	2300	330	1970	14/86
1937: June 9 th 1684	2310	450	1860	19/81
1938: June 12 th 1684	2210	630	1580	29/71
1939: June 16 th 1684	1910	580	1330	30/70
1940: June 19 th 1684	2210	290	1920	13/87
1941: June 23 rd 1684	2130	-	2130	-/100
1942: June 26 th 1684	2190	510	1680	23/77
1943: June 30 th 1684	2220	160	2060	7/93

Average total word count	Average domestic news word count	Average foreign news word count	Average percentage (domestic/foreign)
2213	362	1851	16/84

Fig 2.3: London Gazette – October 4th-November 26th, 1688.

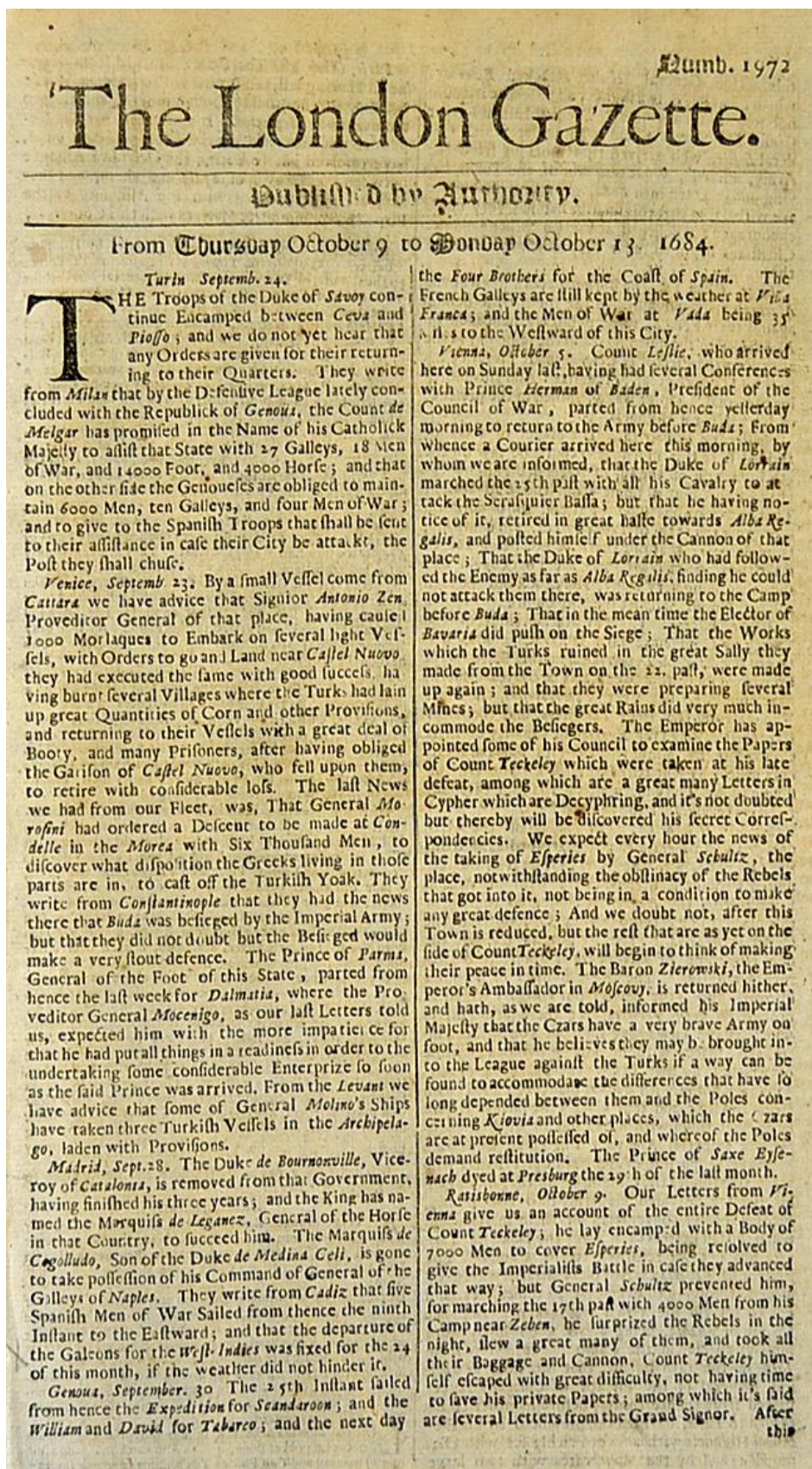
Newspaper (<i>London Gazette</i>, no.)	Total word count	Domestic news word count	Foreign news word count	Percentage (domestic/foreign)
2388: October 4 th 1688	1820	1280	540	70/30
2389: October 8 th 1688	2230	700	1530	31/69
2390: October 11 th 1688	1960	1000	960	51/49
2391: October 15 th 1688	2770	2130	640	77/23
2392: October 18 th 1688	2560	700	1860	27/73
2393: October 22 nd 1688	2400	280	2120	12/88
2394: October 25 th 1688	2530	740	1790	29/71
2396: November 1 st 1688*	2110	450	1660	21/79
2397: November 5 th 1688	1820	1180	640	65/35
2398: November 8 th 1688	2000	1160	840	58/42
2399: November 12 th 1688	2150	360	1790	17/83
2400: November 15 th 1688	1480	900	580	61/49
2401: November 17 th 1688	1970	1520	450	77/23
2402: November 19 th 1688	1920	600	1320	31/69
2403: November 22 nd 1688	1470	670	800	46/54
2404: November 24 th 1688	1350	310	1040	23/77
2405: November 26 th 1688	1560	100	1460	6/94

Average total word count	Average domestic news word count	Average foreign news word count	Average percentage (domestic/foreign)
2006	828	1178	41/59

* Issue 2395 (October 29th 1688) has not been included in this table, as no legible copy for an accurate domestic/foreign news divide was available to examine.

4. London Gazette

Fig 4.1: London Gazette, no. 1972, October 9th 1684.



5. Newdigate Newsletter

Fig. 5.1: Oxford University, Bodleian Library, MS Newdigate 294, Lc. 681, September 14th 1678.

Sept 14th 1678

Lc. 681
Their orders & countenance may be one very serious of depaure that so they may be more at ease
to strengthen their own safety at home.

Our last letters from Leghorne tell us of the sad condition of the people thereabout who are afflicted with ephary sickness & afflicted as they suppose from the hardships the people generally endured the last years for want of corn & that which adds more to their affliction is that this year there is a greater appearance of death then there was the last.

The sorrow of the French is so much for them that they let them lie within their ports who when they see a Genoa or whom else they have a mind to meddle with passing by, they properly send out after them & fetch them in as if it were their own home. No one offering to dispute it with them or so much as after them & reason.

Gott fraxleton his Majestys Governour for the Island of ~~St Christopher~~ St Christopher hath entered into a treaty with the French Governour for the said Island & they have sent it over hither & sent France for Ratification whereby they stand obliged to observe the said Neutrality whelsoever may happen for Europe.

Some ships lately arrived from New say there was a greater crop of Sugars there this year.

Its reported by a vessell lately arrived at Salmouth from Cadix that the Spanish King's Egoise a vessell under the French band to the Safeguard of Saugies & making up to her