Literature and News in the Renaissance

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https://doi.org/10.1093/acrefore/9780190201098.013.1319
Published online: 24 February 2022

Summary

The news culture of early modern England was complex and shifting: news moved via printed and manuscript texts, sometimes over wide distances and across national and confessional borders. "News" might cover a range of topics, from "high politics" and reports of military action, to grisly "true crime," prodigies, and natural disasters—and even to the scandalous doings of one's neighbors. News was (and is) difficult to delineate as a genre, slipping into gossip, rumor, propaganda, and history. England's news market—especially its printed news market—changed markedly in the years before the Wars of the Three Kingdoms, and this was reflected in literary texts. Authors drew on topical events; they mocked and satirized figures associated with news dissemination and consumption, and they drew on the processes by which newsreaders acquired and evaluated information.

Keywords: news, information, manuscript, print, ballads, pamphlets, networks, early modern drama, satire, London

Subjects: British and Irish Literatures, Middle Ages and Renaissance (500-1600), Enlightenment and Early Modern (1600-1800)

What (Is) News?

"What news" is a commonplace greeting in early modern literature and culture, so common that it is joked about. As a "letter from Aleppo" in William Biddulph's *The Travels of Certaine Englishmen* (1609) has it, "the nature of man is desirous of newes, and (as it is said) the first question of an Englishman, *What newes?*."[1] The question turns up in foreign language dictionaries and in sample dialogues in language learning guides: one of the first questions in Gotthard Arthus's *Dialogues in the English and Malaiane Languages* (1614) is "What newes? have you heard nothing of the comming of any ship?," with the reply, "I heard the thundering of Ordnance, which is a signe of ships comming."[2] Richard Perceval's *A Spanish Grammar* (1599) contains the following exchange, rendered in English and in Spanish:

> F. Heere comes little Guzman, let us see what newes hee brings. Hoe Guzman what newes?
>
> G. Many things, the Turke (as they say) is become a Moore or infidell, Venice swims in water, & Italie is full of people, and that in France there are more then a hundred thousand men of armes, and also they say in secret, that the Earle of Flaunders hath lien with the Queene of Spaine.
>
> F. Is there all this newes?
>
> G. These newes came now with this poste.
>
> F. Farre fetched lies come from farre.
>
> G. That which I have told you is as true as it is now day light.[3]

Perceval's dialogue reflects several crucial things about attitudes to news in early modern England: that it was desired by people, that it was passed between people, that it might travel long distances by messenger or postal service, that it might carry information (albeit, in this case, rather pointless news: Venice was, of course, well known to "swim in water") about far-flung places, and that it might well be untrue.[4]

"Newes" in early modern English was multiple—"news reports"—and took multiple interconnected forms. News might travel through oral report, through personal letters (sociable, scholarly, diplomatic, or mercantile) or professionally produced manuscript gazettes, or through printed texts (such as prose broadsheets, ballads, or quarto pamphlets). It was unfixed and mutable, often moving between these forms.[5] Drawing on continental models, English newsmongers produced composite news texts in print and in manuscript, made up of multiple letters or paragraphs of news obtained from different sources, which had been translated, reframed, and recombined as they traveled. News cropped up, sometimes controversially, in sermons and devotional literature. It might even be conveyed wordlessly, through the sound of church bells or the use of alarums in a play.

What sort of information qualified as news—what was *newsworthy*—is just as tricky to pin down. "News" was and is a slippery, amorphous concept, and the word does not always mean the same thing to different people or even across the same text. "At an ideational level," Jenni Hyde writes, "news is itself a construct, being simply what someone chooses to tell another person."[6] Hyde's working definition of news is helpfully broad:

> Sixteenth-century news might [. . .] be defined as the broadcast or reporting of interesting events and information considered to be novel, relevant to contemporary society and/or worthy of discussion, in whatever way it was transmitted. Consumers may have believed information to be noteworthy because it could affect them in some way, or simply because they had an interest in gossip and rumour. Perhaps it just became newsworthy by the act of being passed by one person to another.[7]

Topics of early modern news ranged from salacious tales of "true crime" to accounts of natural disasters, miracles, monsters, and portents: to reports of battles, dynastic marriages, religious disputes, and political machinations. News reports and texts might themselves *become* news by being notably scandalous, entertaining, or challenging to authority; they might implicate those who wrote, retailed, circulated, or consumed them in topical events. What was news and what was "gossip" or "rumor" was not easily delineated: news might be defined by being particularly credible or serious, but the term itself is wide enough to encompass topics ranging from "high politics" to local scandal and untruths as well as certainties.

News is, by definition, novel. In the early modern period, old news was often derided as "stale," tasteless, and worthless. Novelty is contingent, however. It depends on what those receiving it know already and on their expectations of the networks they had access to. International news in particular might take considerable time to travel to London and from there to move out via domestic networks to individual consumers. News from outside of Europe might take months or even years to reach England. For example, the trial and execution of twenty-one English merchants by officials of the Dutch East India Company (VOC) in Amboyna (Ambon) in Indonesia took place in February 1623, but news of it didn't reach the Netherlands and England until May 1624.[8] The delays built into news networks—and their potential fragility, for example, in times of plague—might bring with them anxieties: what might have happened since the news was dispatched? What might be happening now? Serialized news appealed to these anxieties with promises that the next publication would clarify confusions and that consumers could access a continuing narrative through which news would reach them eventually. However, knowledge of "current" events (in the strictest sense of the term) remained frustratingly out of reach, perpetually deferred to an unreachable future moment.[9]

News is novel, but news is, of course, *past*, and so the boundaries between news and history are porous ones, especially when it comes to events from preceding decades and events whose effects could still be felt and/or which might be seen to have contemporary relevance. The boundary between news and history is a movable, porous one. Another genre with which news intersects is propaganda: news might be circulated in order to persuade its consumers to particular points of view—its political import might well be a major factor in its interest to consumers—and might include commentary interpreting it according to specific political positions.

In other words, news as a concept gets muddier the closer you get to it. Should information only be counted as news when it is the first time an individual has encountered it, or does news include communication that clarifies, restates, reframes, repeats, offers opinion, propagandizes, insults, entertains? For example, does a play or a ballad performance that deals with a topical event count as news when it functions primarily as entertainment rather than a means by which its audience learns topical information? What if this information is not true and not presented as truth—what if it is fictionalized and "personated" upon a stage? What if it is used to attack one's enemies? And how might we account for the varieties of audience, reader, and interlocutor experience, for different levels of knowledge, different expectations, and different attitudes to news?

News in a fairly broad sense might be said to interact with "literature"—also in a rather broad sense—in four overlapping ways. The first is in terms of "news texts" themselves, the letters, pamphlets, performances, printed ballads that carried the news and conveyed it to readers and

auditors. While these might not always be considered "literary" works, they are certainly subject to literary analysis, and the language and forms of address and staging they use are both notable in themselves and influential for other forms of writing and performance. Secondly, news entered literary texts in terms of topical reference: most strikingly, in plays that represented topical foreign and domestic news. Thirdly, some early modern writers—most famously Ben Jonson—turned to the developing culture of news (and the places and people associated with it) in order to satirize fashionable newsgathering as idle, deceptive, and perhaps even politically suspect. Lastly, and most subtly, literary texts might draw on or represent the processes of news circulation and consumption, in particular awareness (and judgment) of international and domestic news networks and methods of evaluating (and misevaluating) the credibility of the news one received.

News Texts in Early Modern England

Placing boundaries around what might be considered a news text in early modern England is a difficult task. News might be delivered by oral report or performance, by personal or professional letters, by professional manuscript newsletter, or by a slew of printed texts—ballad sheets, prose broadsheets, quarto pamphlets—that were marked as generically news. Beyond these, there is, of course, a wide and varied hinterland of early modern texts that deal with the news: from printed sermons and devotional texts that touch on and wrangle over topical matters (and it is worth noting that sermons as delivered might well include more topical matter than the version that was printed), to poems that celebrate and mourn topical events, to polemical texts that call for peace or war, persecution, or tolerance. In this section, I focus on texts that claim to deliver news and outline how they developed in late 16th- and early 17th-century England and the effects these developments had on contemporary news culture.

International News Networks

News is "essentially connective and dynamic," linking those who read or heard it to other places and people, sometimes over great geographical and temporal distances.[10] It is this connectivity that, for Joad Raymond, constitutes news: individual news publications "exist at the end of a network" and should be considered "epiphenomena" rather than "the thing itself"; news is a process (or, rather, multiple interrelated processes) of informational mobility.[11] Chiara Palazzo notes the ways in which this connectivity might shape awareness of and feelings of connection to the wider world: "the circulation of news implies contacts, awareness of different realities, geographical and cultural reference points, the development of the collective imagination."[12] The relationships news formed and reflected might be multiple and (as the work of numerous scholars demonstrates) they might cross significant distances.[13] International news traveled between cities via various networks: primarily along postal routes, but also via the movements of merchants, scholars, diplomats, and other travelers.[14] It moved in reports and/or paragraphs, which were translated, reformed, and recombined along the way. Early modern England—prior to the Wars of the Three Kingdoms, at least—consumed far more news than it produced; relatively little English news flowed back over the sea to mainland Europe.[15]

News gathered in entrepôts: well-connected cities such as Venice, Vienna, Rome, Paris, Frankfurt, Amsterdam, and Antwerp in which textual and professional networks converged. News entrepôts were home to communities of those who processed the news: scribes, printers, translators, postal workers, ballad singers, and varied and nebulous crowds of people who shared and discussed spoken news. They were where news consumers might look for news, not just of the entrepôt and its surrounding area, but of places beyond it. Venice, for example, was where news from the Ottoman and Safavid empires entered Europe and also a source (via its connections to communities of Venetian merchants in places like Damascus and Aleppo) for news from Africa. English readers interested in news from the battlefields of Germany during the Thirty Years' War looked toward the news entrepôts of the Netherlands and through them to Frankfurt and Vienna. Manuscript and printed paragraphs of foreign news carried with them traces of some of the entrepôts they passed through, often in headings listing where the news was sourced from and the date of the communication(s) that carried it.[16] Such "metadata" contributed to "the development of the collective imagination," in Palazzo's terms: to the sense of interacting with international textual and informational networks and of being connected to far-flung people and events.[17] Those who consumed news might even get a sense of the "news topography" of cities they had never visited: "What news on the Rialto?," several characters ask in William Shakespeare's *The Merchant of Venice*, testifying to awareness that the city's famous covered bridge was (along with St Mark's Square) a key area for the exchange of mercantile and political news.[18]

The media by which news moved were varied and interconnected and developed in key ways through the 16th and 17th centuries.[19] Professional anonymous manuscript newsletters, known as *avvisi* or gazettes, developed in the 16th century.[20] Printed news serials—including the semiannual Latin *Mercurius Gallobelgicus*—developed in Germany, the Netherlands, Italy, and Spain in the 1600s and 1610s.[21] Meanwhile, there was a long-standing European tradition of news ballads, often performed by singers in urban settings. These too often moved into print, in forms that supplemented but (for many, at least) did not replace oral performances.[22]

News Publication in England

The early modern period saw marked changes in the way news was published and marketed in England, especially in print. Prior to the Wars of the Three Kingdoms, the majority of printed political news in England—in particular, printed pamphlets—dealt with foreign news. The lack of printed domestic news from the period has led to the perception that this was prohibited, but no evidence of a ban survives, and some revisionist historians of news and censorship have argued from this that the lack in fact reflects not a prohibition but an absence of interest on the part of consumers. However, in his discussion of the historiography of early modern print censorship, Joad Raymond points out that the existing archival record cannot be taken to represent "a full and sufficient account of what happened" and that a ban on printing domestic news might have been recorded in the "Red Book" containing the Stationers' Company's 1562 Ordinances, now lost.[23] Raymond argues for "a more complex history" of print censorship, "one constrained by a

mixture of laws, social norms, and anxiety" in which petitions to print foreign news should be understood as evidence of an implicit prohibition, if not necessarily an explicit one, on printing news about domestic politics.[24]

At any rate, prior to the 1640s, most printed English news dealt with events (in particular, military ones) outside of the kingdom. The 1580s and 1590s saw increasing numbers of printed news publications—both broadsheet ballads and quarto pamphlets—dealing with foreign news, especially regarding the wars in France and the Low Countries.[25] One especially notable development came in the early 1620s in response to conflict in the Holy Roman Empire (the early years of what would become known as the Thirty Years' War). Dutch publishers began to export serialized broadsheets of international military and political news in English—known as "corantos"—to London booksellers.[26] These were soon joined by English-printed serialized news texts, first in broadsheet and later in quarto pamphlet form, sold on a somewhat erratic but more or less weekly schedule (I use the term "news pamphlets" to distinguish these publications from broadsheet corantos, but "corantos" was used for both forms by many contemporary readers).[27] The most prominent of these were produced by a shifting "syndicate" (in Folke Dahl's term) of booksellers, including (in various combinations) Nicholas Bourne, Nathaniel Butter, Thomas Archer, Bartholomew Downes, William Sheffard, and Nathaniel Newbery. Butter became especially associated with the retail of serialized news.[28] These publications were controversial: several stationers were punished for their early experiments in them, and printed newsbooks were prohibited by a Privy Council decree in 1632. This prohibition continued until 1638, after which Butter published news sporadically and unprofitably, with Bourne and then on his own, until 1642.[29]

While pre-1640s printed news texts rarely carried domestic political news, this did circulate both orally and in manuscript (both in personal and professional letters and in manuscript "separates" conveying, for example, proceedings in Parliament or trial reports). Alexander Bellany has traced the circulation of news and comment about the 1613 murder of Sir Thomas Overbury through oral report, letters, and manuscript separates.[30] Other domestic news did make it into print as pamphlets and ballads which dealt with grisly crimes, disasters and portents, and remarkable natural or supernatural events; events might be reported in both ballad and pamphlet form. These texts indicated their genre in their titles, not always—and, at least after the 1620s, not usually—with the word "news," but with an array of terms stressing the movement of information (many of which drew on terms used elsewhere in European news networks): "occurrences, transactions, proceedings, passages, affairs, relations, intelligence, informations, and, of course, mercury and gazette."[31]

News and London

England was fairly peripheral to international news networks in the early modern period. However, London might still be considered a news entrepôt, at least for news moving within the British archipelago. The capital's centrality to governance, trade, banking, and legal education—and, crucially, to the production of both printed and manuscript texts—meant that, for most people throughout England and Wales, London was where one looked for news. News moved out

through the archipelago in various interconnected forms: through sociable letters, paid-for manuscript news services, printed news texts purchased from regional booksellers or chapmen, or forwarded from London booksellers, and oral news received from travelers arriving from London.[32]

Within London, as within Venice, particular areas and landmarks became associated with news. In Ben Jonson's *The Staple of News* (first performed in 1626), the newsmonger Cymbal assigns a newsgatherer to each of the "four cardinal quarters" for the exchange of news in and around London: the Royal Exchange and St. Paul's Cathedral in the City, and the court and Westminster Hall in neighboring Westminster.[33] Cymbal's "Staple" is a clearinghouse in which the city's news is collected and "vent[ed] as occasion serves," and his staffing choices reflect a keen understanding of the city's news topography.[34] The forms of news that could be obtained from these places were various and overlapped with one another. Court news and news about English politics could be sourced from Westminster and more "public" (or, at least, more publishable) news from the City. The Royal Exchange was—like similar locations such as Amsterdam's Bourse—a gathering place for merchants and those involved in international finance, and thus a good place to gather news that arrived through mercantile networks. The middle aisle of St. Paul's was well-known as a place where men of various ranks and occupations "walked" together in the late morning and afternoon, sharing news and seeking employment. Fittingly, Cymbal's newsgatherer in St. Paul's is "Master Ambler, [. . .] A fine-paced gentleman as you shall see walk| The middle aisle."[35] The neighboring churchyard was the center of the city's print trade, and became especially associated with news through the activities of Nathaniel Butter, whose shop (the Pied Bull) stood in the southeast corner of St. Paul's churchyard, near St. Austin's Gate. The early 1620s "syndicate" of news publishers, and the collaboration between Butter and Nicholas Bourne that continued through the decade, can be seen to offer a similar form of "coverage" to Cymbal's Staple (and, indeed, Jonson's play satirizes Butter in particular, although Cymbal's news is "vented" in manuscript). Aside from Butter and Bartholomew Downes (whose shop was to the west, near Fleet Bridge), most of the syndicate had shops near the Royal Exchange; Bourne's stood at the main (south) entrance of the Exchange, on Cornhill.[36] The syndicate thus covered two of the "cardinall quarters," exploiting both the fact that news could be obtained from the crowds that gathered there and the fact that news could be sold to them, too. Early modern London's news topography was exploited by those who sought and sold news, and by those who brought news onto the stage and into satire.

News and Literature

Topical Fictions

Topicality was as key to the early modern textual marketplace, and to public discourse, as it is to the 21st-century one. In particular, we can think of it as essential to early modern England's multiple, overlapping "performance cultures." An early modern person might encounter news through the use of topical reference in a sermon, or through hearing a ballad singer, or by attending a play that dealt with recent history, or even ongoing events.[37]

The boundary between news and history is an extremely permeable one; this is especially evident in literary and historical texts that deal with the early modern period's many lengthy conflicts. The 1572 Saint Bartholomew's Day Massacre was fictionalized in Anne Dowriche's 1589 poem *The French Historie* and Christopher Marlowe's play *The Massacre at Paris* (1593); in both cases, an event from years ago was mobilized to speak to an ongoing conflict and to contemporary domestic religious and political concerns. George Chapman's series of plays on French politics—*Bussy D'Ambois* (1607), the two parts of *Charles, Duke of Byron* (1608), *The Revenge of Bussy D'Ambois* (1613), and *The Tragedy of Chabot, Admiral of France* (*c.* after 1611; published 1639)—all dealt with events from relatively recent history; the two parts of *Byron*, in particular, drew on *A General Inventory of the History of France* (1607) by Chapman's cousin, Edward Grimeston, and represented the life and death of Charles de Gontaut, duc de Biron, executed in 1602. The relative topicality of Chapman's *Byron* plays prompted controversy: the French ambassador objected to the first part and attempted to have the play banned, and it was published with controversial scenes removed.[38]

John Fletcher and Philip Massinger's *The Tragedy of Sir John van Olden Barnavelt* was even more topical. It staged the trial and execution of the Dutch politician Johan van Oldenbarnevelt and was performed only three months after van Oldenbarnevelt's death. Fletcher and Massinger's play was censored—albeit in a fairly minor manner—by both the Master of the Revels and the Bishop of London.[39] More controversial was Thomas Middleton's *A Game at Chess* (first performed in August 1624), which satirized contemporary Anglo-Spanish politics and—as Lena Steveker has argued—engaged closely with the 1620s news market.[40] Middleton's play proved extremely popular: it was performed at the Globe for an unprecedented nine consecutive days before being suppressed by order of the Privy Council following a complaint by the Spanish Ambassador. Middleton went into hiding, his son was arrested, and it is likely that Middleton himself was imprisoned for a time in the Fleet. The play itself became international news: "[a]ccounts of it were dispatched to Brussels, The Hague, Madrid, Florence, Rome, and Venice."[41]

A close relationship between the news market and professional theater can also be seen in a number of plays that catered to English interest in overseas travel, trade, diplomacy, and crime—and, in particular, with the Islamic world. The battle of Alcácer Quibir in Morocco in 1578—particularly notable for English audiences for the death of Sebastian I of Portugal, which prompted the Spanish annexation of the entire Iberian peninsula—was represented in two plays, both centering on the English mercenary Thomas Stukeley: *The Battle of Alcazar*, ascribed to George Peele (*c.* 1588, first published 1594), and the anonymous *The Famous History of the Life and Death of Captain Thomas Stukeley* (*c.* 1596).[42] Robert Daborne's *A Christian Turn'd Turk* (1612) recounted the conversion of the English pirate John Ward (Yusuf Raïs) to Islam around 1608. Daborne's depiction of Ward was based on two 1609 pamphlets: Andrew Barker's *A True and Certaine Report of the Beginning, Proceedings, Overthrowes, and now Present Estate of Captaine Ward and Danseker, the Two Late Famous Pirates From Their First Setting Foorth to this Present Time*, and the anonymous *Newes From Sea, of Two Notorious Pyrats Ward the Englishman, and Danseker the Dutchman With a True Relation of All or the Most Piraces* [*sic*] *by Them Committed unto the Sixt of Aprill 1609*.[43] Both of these publications might be considered news texts: each flag their "newsworthiness" in their titles ("True and Certaine Report," "Newes from Sea," "True

Relation"), each stress their topicality (they cover Ward's exploits up until "this Present Time," or "the Sixt of Aprill 1609"), and *Newes from Sea* was printed for Nathaniel Butter, later to become the most prominent publisher of serialized news. Daborne reworked news texts that were a few years old; "stale" news became new again through being staged. *The Travels of the Three English Brothers* (1607), by John Day, William Rowley, and George Wilkins, staged adventures based on those of the travelers and diplomats Anthony, Thomas, and Robert Sherley. The play was commissioned by Thomas Sherley as part of (in Jonathan Burton's words) a 1607 "public relations campaign" that also included the publication of a pamphlet by Anthony Nixon, *The Three English Brothers*.[44] The staging of topical stories could be a way to influence (or, at least, to attempt to influence) popular opinion.

Sensational domestic news also found its way onto the stage. The 1605 trial and execution of Walter Calverley for the murder of his children and attempted murder of his wife was reported in printed news texts. Nathaniel Butter published a pamphlet in June (while Calverley's trial was ongoing) and another after his execution in August, while Thomas Pavier published a ballad.[45] In succeeding years, the story formed the basis of two plays: George Wilkins' *Miseries of Enforced Marriage* (1607) and *The Yorkshire Tragedy* (anonymous, attributed on its title page to William Shakespeare but now thought to be by Thomas Middleton) of 1608, which addressed its chronological relationship to its source material in its subtitle, "not so new as lamentable and true."[46]

More newsworthy—in chronological terms—were two plays focusing on notorious trials for witchcraft. *The Witch of Edmonton*, by William Rowley, Thomas Dekker, and John Ford, was published in 1658, but first performed in 1621 (there is a record of a performance at court on December 29, but it was probably played at the Cockpit in London earlier in the year). It staged the story of Elizabeth Sawyer, a woman tried for witchcraft and executed on April 19, 1621. Soon after Sawyer's death, a pamphlet by the churchman Henry Goodcole was published, which recounted her trial and prison confession; the playwrights drew on this extensively.[47] *The Witches of Lancashire*, by Thomas Heywood and Richard Brome, was first staged by the King's Men at the Globe sometime between August 11 and August 13, 1634—as we know from an account of it by Nathaniel Tomkyns, dated August 16—and published as *The Late Lancashire Witches* later in the year. The title used for the printed text distinguishes *these* Lancashire witches from earlier ones, this being the second witchcraft scandal to center around the small Lancashire community of Pendle.[48] However, it also stresses the recency of the events it represents. The performances in the summer of 1634 took place while four of the women accused of witchcraft—Frances Dicconson, Jennet Hargreaves, Margaret Johnson, and Mary Spencer—were in London for examination by a medical team headed by William Harvey, the king's physician. The women were imprisoned at the Ship Tavern in Greenwich, only a few miles down the river from the theater where crowds gathered to see them represented.[49] Tomkyns judged the play "full of ribaldry and of things improbable and impossible," but wrote that it "passeth for a merry and excellent new play," both for its entertainment value and "in respect of the newness of the subject (the witches being still visible and in prison here)."[50] The play is bookended with references to its own topicality. The Prologue begins

> Corantoes failing, and no footpost late
> Possessing us with news of foreign state,
> No accidents abroad worthy relation
> Arriving here, we are forced from our own nation
> To ground the scene that's now in agitation,
> The project unto many here well known:
> Those witches the fat jailor brought to town.[51]

Heywood and Brome make reference to the lack of serialized foreign news pamphlets following the 1632 Privy Council decree banning their publication. Bereft of "news of foreign state" through lack of both printed news and news brought by messenger ("footpost"), the playwrights are (apparently) "forced" to turn to domestic events for topical content to stage. The fact that the women's case had not yet concluded is referenced in the Epilogue, where it is noted that "What their crime|May bring upon 'em, ripeness yet of time|Has not revealed," and that "What of their story further shall ensue,|We must refer to time, ourselves to you."[52] The women were, in fact, eventually acquitted by their London examiners and returned to Lancashire where, despite their acquittal, they remained in prison for several years. Herbert Berry (the discoverer of Tomkyns' account) has argued that Heywood and Brome's use of interrogation records may indicate that they were commissioned by the Privy Council to write a play making the case for the prosecution, a reading that Alison Findlay supports.[53] However, Helen Ostovich (the play's most recent editor) warns against discounting the importance of "scepticism" in the play and its "critiques of credulity," and Charlotte A. Coffin has explored the ambivalence with which governmental and judicial authority is treated within the play and the additions Heywood and Brome made to their sources.[54] Coffin stressed that "[t]he play does not just illustrate a contemporary case but incorporates its protagonists in a recognizable world of fiction and dramatic patterns," with the "unmistakable consequence [. . .] that it *fictionalizes* the supposedly real witches. Or perhaps more accurately, it reveals their fictive status."[55] Coffin's argument is a useful corrective to the temptation to see topical plays as in some way documentary. Topical plays incorporate news into their plots, and in doing so, can be seen to distort it, to bend it to fictive purposes, or, as Coffin argues, to raise questions about truth and representation, about power, and about legal and governmental fictions.

News and Satire

News also turns up in literary texts that mock and satirize both it and the people who engage in its circulation. The genre of the satirical "character sketch"—modeled on the satires of Theophrastus—became especially fashionable in the late 16th and early 17th centuries, and both "character books" and writers that drew on this genre often featured "characters" in part defined by their obsession with news.[56] The anecdote from Percevall with which I started sits in a tradition of mocking those who mis-consume news: both those who (like "little Guzman") take bland statements that are neither "new" nor interesting to be news, and those who gullibly

believe untruths. Perhaps the most famous example of a gullible newsreader in early modern literature is Sir Politic Would-Be in Ben Jonson's *Volpone*, whose interest in the news and desire to be seen as a statesman make him an easy mark for deception.[57]

Meanwhile—according to satirists, at least—unscrupulous newsmongers were only too happy to provide their customers with unreliable news. The anonymous *Horae Subsecivae* (1620) satirizes an "affected Statist" who "will translate the very *Gazzette*, the most ordinarie and uncertaine newes in the World, to send over by whole bundles into England."[58] Printed news in particular was stigmatized as untrue. In Ben Jonson's masque *News from the New World Discovered in the Moon* (performed at court on January 12, 1621), a "Printer" declares that he will "give anything for a good copy now, be't true or false, so't be news."[59] Jonson developed his satire of news in *The Staple of News* (1626), in which the newsmonger Cymbal founds a clearinghouse in which his "Emissaries" gather and process news from the various "news centers" of London. This news is, however, ludicrous: it includes reports of "an invisible eel" with which the Dutch plan to sink the Spanish fleet at Dunkirk.[60] Like the Printer in Jonson's earlier masque (and even though the news they retail is oral and in manuscript), these newsmongers don't care about whether their news is true, but about whether it will be attractive to customers. Punning on Nathaniel Butter's resonant name, Abraham Holland leveled an accusation of falsity at printed news sourced at Paul's: "behold the wals|Butter'd with weekely Newes compos'd in Pauls,|By some Decaied Captaine" (the "Captaine" being the editor of Butter's pamphlets, the ex-soldier Thomas Gainsford).[61] Jonson's Cymbal also references Butter, accusing "Mercurius Britannicus" (the name under which Butter and Bourne published their pamphlets from January 1625) of passing off old news as new by "buttering over again [. . .] His antiquated pamphlets."[62]

News-seeking was also satirized as idle and frivolous, a distraction from work and worship. Robert Burton mocks the idle gentry, aligning newsreading and news-seeking with other fashionable and unprofitable entertainment: "If they read on a book at any time, t'is an English Chronicle, *S^r Huon of Burdeaux*, *Amadis de Gaul &c*. a play-book, or some pamphlet of Newes, & that at such times only, when they cannot stir abroad, to drive away time, their sole discours is dogs, hawks and horses, and what newes?."[63] John Earle goes beyond accusations of idleness, and connects news-seeking to transgressive sexuality, describing Paul's Walk as "the eares Brothell, [which] satisfies their lust, and ytch."[64] A similar connection is made by the malcontented Malevole (the disguised Altofronto, deposed Duke of Genoa) in John Marston's *The Malcontent* (*c.* 1603), who replies to the question "what's the common news abroad?" (asked by his usurper, Pietro) with "Common news? Why, common words are 'God save ye,' 'Fare ye well'; common actions, flattery and cosenage; common things, women and cuckolds."[65] Malevole replies to the "wrong" part of Pietro's question, picking up "common" rather than "news" and listing things that are familiar—greetings, deception and flattery, and female sexual misbehavior. The reference to "women and cuckolds" also brings in another sense of "common." Women (in Malevole's misogynist terms) are "common" both in the sense that there are plenty of them about, and in the sense that they are sexually available to multiple men. As Ruth Mazo Karras has explained, "'common woman' in England expressed the [. . .] idea of a woman who moved into the communal realm, becoming sexually available."[66]

At the same time, "common" brings in a class dimension: news is shared among the common people as well as those with high social or political status, becoming matter of "common fame."[67] News might be exchanged in public, lower-class spaces like taverns and (in a stereotype that crossed Europe) barbershops. John Taylor mocks the exchange of news "[a]t Ordinaries, and at Barbers shopps," where (inaccurate) "tydings vented are, as thick as hopps."[68] Satirists dwelt on the idea that news, democratized in this fashion, might end up in the hands, ears, and speech of those who did not have the necessary knowledge or intelligence to deal with it. John Smith mocked news consumers who extrapolate from news reports to "proportion Kingdomes, Cities, and Lordships, that never durst adventure to see them"; these newsgatherers "can neither shift Sun nor Moone, nor say their Compasse," but they "will tell you of more than all the world, betwixt the *Exchange*, *Pauls* and *Westminster*: so it be newes, it matters not what, that will passe currant when truth must be stayed with an army of conceits."[69]

News Processes

The processes of acquiring and interpreting news meant that early modern people cultivated (to varying levels of detail and accuracy) knowledge of how it moved, of the places and languages it might pass through, and (as in relation to London) of the locations, forms, and even the people most associated with it.[70] This knowledge, and the methods by which one might acquire and practice it, is one of the more nuanced ways in which news appears in literary texts. For example, understanding of the centrality of Venice to European news networks is reflected in Shakespeare's two "Venetian" plays—*The Merchant of Venice* (*c.* 1596–1599) and *Othello* (*c.* 1603)—which are both deeply concerned with the movement and interpretation of information and misinformation. In *The Merchant of Venice*, characters ask each other for news on numerous occasions, and there are several prominent references to one of the city's most famous "news locations." Shylock describes his understanding of Antonio's mercantile ventures as something he has heard "upon the Rialto," the same public location where, we soon learn, Antonio has previously upbraided him for usury and subjected him to antisemitic abuse.[71] This space of public discourse, mercantilism, and conflict is also where news is shared: Solanio's "Now, what news on the Rialto?" at the start of act 3, scene 1 prompts Salerio to reveal to him—and to the audience—that Antonio's ship has been lost.[72]

Othello is especially concerned with interpreting the news: with the skills required to assess truth or falsity within news reports. David Randall has argued for the development during the early modern period of multiple methods of assessing credibility in news texts, which interact with each other and allow readers to judge the likelihood of the different kinds of report they receive. "Intensive" and "sociable" forms of newsreading establish credibility through interpreting details of accounts (such as claims to be eyewitness reports) and the reputations of named writers. "Extensive newsreading"—a later development—is the comparison of "numerous essentially partisan and flawed reports" by which "a newsreader could come up with his own judgement of the actual, credible truth out of his flawed sources."[73] Act 1, scene 2 of *Othello* stages an instance of this sort of comparative newsreading at a governmental level as the Venetian council of war receives first a report that the Turkish fleet is heading to Rhodes rather than to

attack Cyprus. The First Senator's assessment that this is "a pageant|To keep us in false gaze" is based on detailed knowledge of Turkish tactics and quickly proved correct when a report arrives describing how the fleet has joined with reinforcements there and now heads toward Cyprus.[74]

This measured, comparative treatment of information contrasts, of course, with Othello's treatment of Iago's falsehoods. Othello goes through some of the motions of responsible newsreading but does so poorly and inconsistently. He assesses Iago's reports according to the latter's reputation for honesty, applying the "sociable" standard of credibility, but neglects to apply the same standard to Desdemona. He interprets them not in the light of his own knowledge, but of his paranoia and misogyny. He corroborates them through external "proof," both aural and "ocular," but in both cases his interpretation is directed by Iago. Othello fails in what Noah Millstone calls "seeing like a statesman": he allows himself to be taken in by information that is "cooked: manufactured by actors specifically to make the truth more difficult to discern."[75] Millstone's model is specifically political—he argued for a prevalent early modern belief that information might be manipulated by political agents, and thus that early modern readers learned to interpret with "politic" skepticism—and so, judged according to it, Othello's failure is twofold: his failure to assess information correctly in the domestic realm is a damning indictment of his ability to operate in the political one. Reading Othello's informational failures in relation to early modern "news culture" is one example of how the skills and processes of early modern newsreading might be brought to bear on literary texts.

Discussion of the Literature

The development and processes of news in the early modern period and the movement of news texts over the wide distances of early modern Europe have been the focus of much influential work. This builds on a long history of scholarship on early modern English news, most notably the pioneering bibliographical work of Folke Dahl, undertaken from the 1930s to the 1950s. As the titles of Matthias A. Shaaber's *Some Forerunners of the Newspaper in England* (1929) and Joseph Frank's *The Beginnings of the English Newspaper* (1961) indicate, much 20th-century work on early modern English news took a fairly teleological approach, concentrating on how recognizably "modern" features of news media (in particular, serialization, regularity, and stable titles) emerged.

More work has addressed features of early modern news texts, with greater focus on how they function within their historical, social, professional, economic, material, and linguistic contexts, and has moved away from nation-focused histories of news media to stress the international formation and movements of news and its forms. Despite its title, Joad Raymond's *The Invention of the Newspaper* concentrates on how 1640s newsbooks developed within their print, political, economic, and literary contexts; Raymond's work on news, which includes *Pamphlets and Pamphleteering in Early Modern Britain* (2003), a number of influential edited collections, and a forthcoming monograph on news culture in Europe, has been very influential on the field—as has the work of Andrew Pettegree, most notably *The Invention of News: How the World Came to Know About Itself* (2014).

The field has also been shaped by a number of edited volumes—many of them published as part of the Brill "Handpress World" series, with Pettegree as the General Editor. These have included *News, Newspapers and Society in Early Modern Britain* (1999) and *News Networks in Seventeenth-Century Britain and Europe* (2006), both edited by Joad Raymond; *The Politics of Information in Early Modern Europe* (2001) and *The Dissemination of News and the Emergence of Contemporaneity in Early Modern Europe* (2010), both edited by Brendan Dooley and Sabrina A. Baron; *Renaissance Cultural Crossroads: Translation, Print and Culture in Britain, 1473–1640* (2013), edited by S. K. Barker and Brenda M. Hosington; *News in Early Modern Europe: Currents and Connections* (2014), edited by Simon Davies and Puck Fletcher; and *News Networks in Early Modern Europe* (2016), edited by Joad Raymond and Noah Moxham, which provides a particularly useful guide to the contours of the field across Europe.

There are also a number of major projects which trace the movements of news across early modern Europe: for example, the Fuggerzeitungen project (in particular the digital mapping of news texts undertaken by Nikolaus Schobesberger), the work of Brendan Dooley and others to map the movements of translated news through texts held in a large number of European archives (as part of the project "Culture and Exchange: Recreating the Communication Networks of Early Modern Europe"), and "The Birth of News," a project to transcribe and research *avvisi* held at the Medici Archive in Florence, also directed by Dooley. Work on international and domestic epistolary networks, such as that undertaken on the letters of Samuel Hartlib and Jan Amos Comenius as part of the "Cultures of Knowledge" project at the University of Oxford, also adds to our understanding of how texts moved across wide distances.

Scholars have also examined the movement of news within particular communities, especially urban ones. David Coast's *News and Rumour in Jacobean England* (2014) focuses on news and court politics, while Filippo de Vivo (2007) and Rosa Salzberg (2014) have examined news in Venice, and Paul Arblaster (2014) has traced how news moved and was published in the Habsburg Netherlands. Jayne E. E. Boys (2011) has examined how London news publishers responded to the Thirty Years' War.

News ballads are an especially vibrant area of early 21st-century research by scholars attentive both to the movements of news and to nuances of performance and sound. Angela J. McShane's *Political Broadside Ballads of Seventeenth-Century England: A Critical Bibliography* (2011), Jenni Hyde's *Singing the News* (2018), and Una McIlvenna's forthcoming monograph on ballads that carry news of crime and execution all testify to a growing interest in news ballads as multiuse—and multivocal—texts.

Links to Digital Materials

Early Modern News Texts

UCSB English Broadside Ballad Archive *<https://ebba.english.ucsb.edu/>*

Broadside Ballads Online (University of Oxford) *<http://ballads.bodleian.ox.ac.uk/>*

Early English Books Online (Text Creation Partnership) *<https://quod.lib.umich.edu/e/eebogroup/>*

Early Modern Letters Online *<http://emlo-portal.bodleian.ox.ac.uk/collections/?page_id=907>*

Cultures of Knowledge: Networking the Republic of Letters *<http://www.culturesofknowledge.org/>*

George Thomason's Newsbooks (1649–61) *<https://www.dhi.ac.uk/newsbooks/nbcontext?about=resource>*

Richard Brome Online *<http://www.dhi.ac.uk/brome>*

European News Networks

Culture and Exchange: Recreating the Communication Networks of Early Modern Europe *<http://www.earlynewsnet.org/CULTURE_AND_EXCHANGE/index.htm>*

The Medici Archive Project *<https://www.medici.org/>*

The Fuggerzeitungen Project *<https://fuggerzeitungen.univie.ac.at/>*

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Notes

1. William Biddulph, *The Travels of Certaine Englishmen* (London, 1609), G1r. Biddulph's joke might reflect an English sense that their countrymen were notably nosy. William Rankins writes that "it may be thought that England [. . .] hath brought more awaie, and pondered better of their neighbours newes, then any corner of all Christendom, besides" (*The English Ape, the Italian Imitation, the Footesteppes of Fraunce* [London: 1588], B1v), and when Thomas Nashe's narrator meets the devilish "knight of the post" in *Pierce Penilesse* (1592), he questions his interlocutor about hell with "'an Englishmans appetite to enquire of news" (I3r).

2. Gotthard Arthus, *Dialogues in the English and Malaiane Languages* (London, 1614), A3r.

3. Richard Percevall, *A Spanish Grammar* (London, 1599), N3v-4r.

4. Percevall drives home the pointlessness of Guzman's "news" with a note in the margin: Venice "[s]tands built upon the sea, the sea compassing it round about" (N3v).

5. S. K. Barker, "'Newes Lately Come': European News Books in English Translation," in *Renaissance Cultural Crossroads: Translation, Print and Culture in Britain, 1473–1640*, ed. S. K. Barker and Brenda M. Hosington (Leiden, The Netherlands: Brill, 2013), 227–244; Joad Raymond, "News," in *The Oxford History of Popular Print Culture Vol. 1: Cheap Print in Britain and Ireland to 1660*, ed. Joad Raymond (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 377–397. There are a number of recent and current research projects tracing the movement of news: see Nikolaus Schobesberger, "Mapping the *Fuggerzeitungen*: The Geographical Issues of an Information Network," in *News Networks in Early Modern Europe*, ed. Joad Raymond and Noah Moxham (Leiden, The Netherlands: Brill, 2016; hereafter *NNEME*), 216–240; Brendan Dooley, "International News Flows in the Seventeenth Century: Problems and Prospects," in *NNEME*, 158–177.

6. Jenni Hyde, *Singing the News: Ballads in Mid-Tudor England* (Abingdon, UK: Routledge, 2018), 107.

7. Hyde, *Singing the News*, 108.

8. See Alison Games, *Inventing the English Massacre: Amboyna in History and Memory* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020), 77–78; Alison Games, "Violence on the Fringes: The Virginia (1622) and Amboyna (1623) Massacres," *History* 99, no. 3.336 (2014): 505–529.

9. See Kirsty Rolfe, “Probable Pasts and Possible Futures: Contemporaneity and the Consumption of News in the 1620s,” *Media History* 23, no. 2 (2017): 159–176; Brendan Dooley, “Preface,” in *The Dissemination of News and the Emergence of Contemporaneity in Early Modern Europe*, ed. Brendan Dooley and Sabrina A. Baron (Farnham, UK: Ashgate, 2010), xiii–xiv; Sara Barker, “Time in English Translations of Continental News,” in *NNEME*, 328–349.

10. Raymond and Moxham, *NNEME*, 3; see Yann Ciarán Ryan, “‘More Difficult from Dublin than from Dieppe’: Ireland and Britain in a European Network of Communication,” *Media History* 24, no. 3–4 (2018): 458–476.

11. Joad Raymond, “News Networks: Putting the ‘News’ and ‘Networks’ Back in,” in *NNEME*, 102–129 (110).

12. Chiara Palazzo, “The Venetian News Network in the Early Sixteenth Century: The Battle of Chaldiran,” in *NNEME*, 849–869 (850).

13. See the essays collected in *NNEME*, in particular Nikolaus Schobesberger et al., “European Postal Networks,” 17–63; Dooley, “International News Flows,” Ruth Ahnert, “Maps Versus Networks,” 130–157; and Raymond, “News Networks”; see also Paul Arblaster, “Posts, Newsletters, Newspapers: England in a European System of Communications,” in *News Networks in Seventeenth-Century Britain and Europe*, ed. Joad Raymond (London: Routledge, 2006), 19–34; Paul Arblaster, *From Ghent to Aix: How They Brought the News in the Habsburg Netherlands, 1550–1700* (Leiden, The Netherlands: Brill, 2014); Carmen Espejo, “European Communication Networks in the Early Modern Age: A New Framework of Interpretation for the Birth of Journalism,” *Media History* 17, no. 2 (2011): 189–202; Andrew Pettegree, *The Invention of News: How the World Came to Know About Itself* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2014).

14. Raymond, “News Networks,” 110.

15. Joad Raymond and Noah Moxham, “News Networks in Early Modern Europe,” in *NNEME*, 1–16 (14–15); Arblaster, *From Ghent to Aix*, 140; Nikolaus Schobesberger et al., “European Postal Networks,” in *NNEME*, 17–63.

16. See Will Slauter, “The Paragraph as Information Technology: How News Traveled in the Eighteenth-Century Atlantic World,” *Annales: HSS* 67 (2012): 253–278.

17. See Joop W. Koopmans, “A Sense of Europe: The Making of this Continent in Early Modern Dutch News Media,” in *NNEME*, 597–615.

18. William Shakespeare, *The Merchant of Venice*, in *The Norton Shakespeare*, ed. Stephen Greenblatt et al., 3rd ed. (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2016), 1339–1393, 1.3.33 (1346) and 3.1.1 (1363); for the “news spaces” of early modern Venice, see Rosa Salzberg, *Ephemeral City: Cheap Print and Urban Culture in Renaissance Venice* (Manchester, UK: Manchester University Press, 2014); Filippo de Vivo, *Information and Communication in Venice: Rethinking Early Modern Politics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007).

19. For an account of developments in European news publication, see Pettegree, *The Invention of News*.

20. For more on the development and form of these texts, see Arblaster, “Posts, Newsletters, Newspapers”; Mario Infelise, “From Merchants’ Letters to Handwritten Political *Avvisi*: Notes on the Origins of Public Information,” in *Cultural Exchange in Early Modern Europe: Correspondence and Cultural Exchange in Europe 1400–1700*, vol. 3, ed. Francisco Bethencourt and Florike Egmond (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 33–52; Mario Infelise, “The History of a Word: Gazzetta/Gazette,” in *NNEME*, 241–260; Renate Pieper, “News from the New World: Spain’s Monopoly in the European Network of Handwritten Newsletters during the Sixteenth Century,” in *NNEME*, 493–511; de Vivo, *Information and Communication in Venice*, 80–85.

21. See Carmen Espejo, “The Invention of the Gazette: Design Standardization in Spanish Newspapers, 1600–1650,” *Media History* 22, no. 3–4 (2016): 296–316; Michiel van Groesen, “Reading Newspapers in the Dutch Golden Age,” *Media History* 22, no. 3–4 (2016): 334–352; Nina Lamal, “Promoting the Catholic Cause on the Italian Peninsula: Printed Avvisi

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22. For ballads as news texts, see Hyde, *Singing the News*; Una McIlvenna, "When the News was Sung: Ballads as News Media in Early Modern Europe," *Media History* 22, no. 3–4 (2016): 317–333; Angela J. McShane, *Political Broadside Ballads of Seventeenth-Century England: A Critical Bibliography* (London: Pickering & Chatto, 2011); Angela McShane, "Political Street Songs and Singers in Seventeenth-Century England," *Renaissance Studies* 33, no. 1 (2019): 94–118. I am very grateful to Dr. Hyde for tremendously helpful conversations and for sharing unpublished work.

23. Joad Raymond, "Censorship in Law and Practice in Seventeenth-Century England: Milton's *Areopagitica*," in *The Oxford Handbook of English Law and Literature, 1500–1700*, ed. Lorna Hutson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), 507–528 (515).

24. Raymond, "Censorship in Law and Practice," 515–516.

25. See Joad Raymond, *Pamphlets and Pamphleteering* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 98–108.

26. Folke Dahl, *A Bibliography of English Corantos and Periodical Newsbooks, 1620–1642* (London: The Bibliographical Society, 1952), 31–48.

27. Pettegree distinguishes between "news pamphlets," a term he uses to refer to quartos containing an account of a single news story, and serialized news sheets or quartos containing a variety of reports, which he terms "newspapers." Pettegree's distinction—based on the differing relationships these texts form with readers, as well as differences in content and tone—is an important one, but I have chosen to use "news pamphlets" for both to highlight the connections between these forms. See Pettegree, *The Invention of News*, 228–229, 365–367.

28. Alexandra Hill, *Lost Books and Printing in London, 1557–1640: An Analysis of the Stationers' Company Register* (Leiden, The Netherlands: Brill, 2018), 80.

29. Cyndia Susan Clegg, *Press Censorship in Caroline England* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 194; Dahl, *A Bibliography of English Corantos*, 133, 223–265; Joad Raymond, *The Invention of the Newspaper* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), 10; see Carolyn Nelson and Matthew Seccombe "The Creation of the Periodical Press 1620–1695," in *The Cambridge History of the Book in Britain, vol. 4: 1557–1695*, ed. John Barnard and D. F. McKenzie (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 533–550.

30. Alexander Bellany, *The Politics of Court Scandal in Early Modern England: News Culture and the Overbury Affair, 1603–1660* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2002).

31. Paul Arblaster et al., "The Lexicons of Early Modern News," in *NNEME*, 64–101.

32. See Adam Fox, *Oral and Literate Culture in England 1500–1700* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 335–405; F. J. Levy, "How Information Spread among the Gentry, 1550–1640," *Journal of British Studies* 21 (1982): 11–34; Richard Cust, "News and Politics in Early Seventeenth-Century England," *Past & Present* 112 (1986): 60–90.

33. Ben Jonson, *The Staple of News*, ed. Joseph Loewenstein, in *The Cambridge Edition of the Works of Ben Jonson*, ed. David Bevington, Martin Butler, and Ian Donaldson (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2012; hereafter referenced as *Works*), vol. 6, 1–157 (1.2.59–60, 29); for more on Jonson and news, see Mark Z. Muggli, "Ben Jonson and the Business of News," *Studies in English Literature, 1500–1900* 32, no. 2 (1992): 323–340; Marcus Nevitt, "Ben Jonson and the Serial Publication of News," *Media History* 11, no. 1–2 (2005), 53–68.

34. Jonson, *Staple*, 1.2.27 (28).

35. Jonson, *Staple*, 1.2.69–1.2.70 (30).

36. Both Archer and Sheffard operated out of Pope's Head Alley across the road from the Exchange (S. A. Baron, "Bourne, Nicholas <https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/68205>," *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* [2004; online ed. 2008]); see Dahl, *A Bibliography of English Corantos*, 60–79, for title pages giving Bourne's, Archer's, and Sheffard's locations; for Downes, see the title page of Thomas Roe, *A True and Faithfull Relation* (London, 1622). Newbery's shop was a short walk east along Cornhill, under St. Peter's Church, and he may also have had a shop in Pope's Head Alley; see, e.g., the title page of John Barlow, *The Joy of the Upright Man* (London, 1619).

37. See Fritz Levy, "Staging the News," in *Print, Manuscript, Performance: The Changing Relations of the Media in Early Modern England*, ed. Arthur F. Moretti and Michael D. Bristol (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 2000), 252–278.

38. Mark Thornton Burnett, "Chapman, George <https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/5118>," *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (2004; online ed. 2006).

39. See Levy, "Staging the News," 258–260.

40. Lena Steveker, "English News Plays of the Early 1620s: Thomas Middleton's *A Game at Chess* and Ben Jonson's *The Staple of News*," in *News in Early Modern Europe: Currents and Connections*, ed. Simon Davies and Puck Fletcher (Leiden, The Netherlands: Brill, 2014), 215–229.

41. Gary Taylor, "Middleton, Thomas <https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/18682>," *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (2004; online ed. 2008).

42. See *The Stukeley Plays*, ed. Charles Edelman (Manchester, UK: Manchester University Press, 2005).

43. Daniel Vitkus, *Turning Turk: English Theater and the Multicultural Mediterranean* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), 145–147; Andrew Barker, *A True and Certaine Report of the Beginning, Proceedings, Overthrowes, and now Present Estate of Captaine Ward and Danseker* (London, 1609); Anonymous, *Newes From Sea, of Two Notorious Pyrats Ward the Englishman, and Danseker the Dutchman* (London, 1609).

44. Jonathan Burton, "The Shah's Two Ambassadors: *The Travels of the Three English Brothers* and the Global Early Modern," in *Emissaries in Early Modern Literature and Culture: Mediation, Transmission, Traffic, 1550–1700*, ed. Gitanjali Shahani and Brinda Charry (London: Routledge, 2009), 23–40 (33).

45. J. Andreas Löwe, "Calverley, Walter <https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/4411>," *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (2004).

46. On the authorship of *The Yorkshire Tragedy* and its place within the Shakespearean canon, see Will Sharpe, "Authorship and Attribution," in *William Shakespeare and Others: Collaborative Plays*, ed. Jonathan Bate et al. (Basingstoke, UK: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), 643–747 (706–712); Peter Kirwan, *Shakespeare and the Idea of Apocrypha: Negotiating the Boundaries of the Dramatic Canon* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2015). I would like to thank Dr. Kirwan for sharing his work with me and pointing me in the direction of Sharpe's invaluable piece.

47. See Peter Corbin and Douglas Sedge, “Introduction,” in *Three Jacobean Witchcraft Plays*, ed. Peter Corbin and Douglas Sedge (Manchester, UK: Manchester University Press, 1986), 1–32 (20–28); Marion Gibson, “Sawyer, Elizabeth <https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/66792>,” *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (2004).

48. See Helen Ostovich, “Critical Introduction,” *The Late Lancashire Witches*, *Richard Brome Online* <http://www.dhi.ac.uk/brome>, 4–8; and the essays collected in *The Lancashire Witches: Histories and Stories*, ed. Robert Poole (Manchester, UK: Manchester University Press, 2003).

49. See Ostovich, “Critical Introduction,” 9–16; Alison Findlay, “Sexual and Spiritual Politics in the Events of 1633–34 and *The Late Lancashire Witches*,” in *The Lancashire Witches*, ed. Poole, 146–165.

50. Modern spelling transcription from Ostovich, “Critical Introduction,” 1; originally transcribed in Herbert Berry, “The Globe Bewitched and *El Hombre Fiel*,” *Medieval and Renaissance Drama in England* 1 (1984): 211–230 (215).

51. Thomas Heywood and Richard Brome, *The Late Lancashire Witches* (modern text), ed. Helen Ostovich, *Richard Brome Online* <http://www.dhi.ac.uk/brome>, 1.

52. Heywood and Brome, *The Late Lancashire Witches*, 1084.

53. Berry, “The Globe Bewitched”; Findlay, “Sexual and Spiritual Politics,” 150.

54. Ostovich, “Critical Introduction,” 15–16; Charlotte A. Coffin, “Theatre and/as Witchcraft: A Reading of *The Late Lancashire Witches* (1634),” *Early Theatre* 16, no. 2 (2013): 91–119.

55. Coffin, “Theatre and/as Witchcraft,” 100–101.

56. Ian Atherton, “The Itch Grown a Disease: Manuscript Transmission of News in the Seventeenth Century,” in *News, Newspapers, and Society in Early Modern Britain*, ed. Joad Raymond (London: Frank Cass, 1999), 39–65 (43); see Andrew McRae, *Literature, Satire and the Early Stuart State* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 131; Thomas Cogswell, *The Blessed Revolution* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 21–22.

57. See Muggli, “Ben Jonson and the Business of News,” 324–325.

58. William Cavendish[?], Duke of Newcastle (1620), *Horae Subsecivae* (London, 1620, STC.3957) D7r, D8r. The authorship of the *Horae Subsecivae* has been the subject of much critical discussion; authors that have been suggested include William Cavendish, Duke of Newcastle, Grey Brydges, 5th Baron Chandos, and Thomas Hobbes. For Cavendish’s probable authorship—and what “authorship” might mean in this context, especially related to Hobbes’s role as tutor—see Timothy Raylor, *Philosophy, Rhetoric, and Thomas Hobbes* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), 52–64.

59. Ben Jonson, *News from the New World Discovered in the Moon*, ed. James Knowles, in *Works*, vol. 5, 431–461 (ll.18–9, 432).

60. Jonson, *Staple*, 3.2.76 (85).

61. Abraham Holland, *A Continued Inquisition Against Paper-Persecutors*, appended to John Davies, *A Scourge for Paper-Persecutors* (London, 1625), A4r; Mark Eccles, “Thomas Gainsford, ‘Captain Pamphlet’,” *Huntington Library Quarterly* 45 (1982): 259–270.

62. Jonson, *Staple*, 1.5.23, 58–61 (41).

63. Robert Burton, *The Anatomy of Melancholy* (London, 1621), M4r.

64. John Earle, *Microcosmographie* (London, 1628), J11v.

65. John Marston, *The Malcontent*, ed. Bernard Harris, in *Elizabethan and Jacobean Comedies: A New Mermaid Anthology* (Tonbridge, UK: Ernest Benn, 1984), 481–585 (498, 1.3.16–1.3.20).

66. Ruth Mazo Karras, *Common Women: Prostitution and Sexuality in Medieval England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), 138.

67. Karras, *Common Women*, 138.

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70. See Andrew Mousley's discussion of the newsgathering activities of John Pory, John Rous, and Walter Yonge in "Self, State, and Seventeenth-Century News," *The Seventeenth Century* 6, no. 2 (1991): 149–168.

71. Shakespeare, *The Merchant of Venice*, 1.3.17 (1346), and 1.3.101 (1348).

72. Shakespeare, *The Merchant of Venice*, 3.1.1 (1363).

73. David Randall, *Credibility in Elizabethan and Early Stuart Military News* (London: Pickering & Chatto, 2008), 123.

74. William Shakespeare, *Othello*, ed. Michael Neill (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 1.3.19–1.3.21 (216).

75. Noah Millstone, "Seeing Like a Statesman in Early Stuart England," *Past & Present* 223, no. 1 (2014): 77–127 (82).

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