

The
INVENTION
of NEWS

HOW THE WORLD CAME TO
KNOW ABOUT ITSELF

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Introduction

All the News that's Fit to Tell

IN 1704 the English writer Daniel Defoe embarked on the publication of a political journal: the *Weekly Review of the Affairs of France*.¹ This was not yet the Defoe made famous by his great novel *Robinson Crusoe*; he would discover his vocation as a novelist only late in life. Up to this point Defoe had tried his hand at many things, and often failed. The *Review* (as it soon became) was the latest of many attempts to find a way to make money. This time it worked. Within a few months Defoe's publication had found its new form, as a serial issued two or three times a week, consisting largely of a single essay on an item of topical interest.

Defoe was lucky. He had launched the *Review* at a time when the reading public was expanding rapidly, along with a market for current affairs. Naturally Defoe made the most of it. When, in an essay in 1712, he turned his mind to this buoyant market for news publishing, he did not hold back. The present times, wrote Defoe, had seen a media explosion. He recalled a time, even in his own lifetime, when there had been no such torrent of newspapers, state papers and political writing. The rage for news was transforming society, and Defoe was happy to be in the thick of it.²

Defoe was not the only one to remark the current passion for news, and the rancorous tone of political debate that seemed to come with it. But if he truly thought this was new he was very much mistaken. The conflicts of the English Civil War over sixty years previously had stimulated a torrent of pamphlets, news reports and abusive political treatises. The first continental newspapers were established forty years before that. Long before Defoe, and even before the creation of the newspapers, the appetite for news was proverbial. 'How now, what news?' was a common English greeting, frequently evoked on the London stage.³ Travellers could buy phrase books that offered the necessary vocabulary, so they too could join the conversation: 'What news have you? How goeth all in this city? What news have they in Spain?'⁴

If there was a time when news first became a commercial commodity, it occurred not in Defoe's London, or even with the invention of the newspaper, but much earlier: in the eighty years between 1450 and 1530 following the invention of printing. During this period of technological innovation, publishers began to experiment with new types of books, far shorter and cheaper than the theological and scholarly texts that had dominated the market in manuscripts. These pamphlets and broadsheets created the opportunity to turn the existing appetite for news into a mass market. News could become, for the first time, a part of popular culture.

This book, which traces the development of the European news market in the four centuries between about 1400 and 1800, is the story of that transformation. It follows the development of a commercial news market from the medieval period – when news was the prerogative of political elites – to a point four hundred years later when news was beginning to play a decisive role in popular politics. By the time of the French and American revolutions at the end of the eighteenth century, news publications were not only providing a day by day account of unfolding events, they could be seen to play an influential role in shaping them. The age of a mass media lay at hand.

Trusting the Messenger

Of course the desire to be informed, to be in the know, is in one respect as old as human society itself. People would go to some lengths to find out the news. In the eleventh century two monasteries in rural Wales, one hundred miles apart across rugged terrain, would every third year exchange messengers who would live in the other house for a week, to share the news.⁵

This tale, related in a Tudor chronicle, points up one other important aspect of the information culture of that earlier period. Our medieval ancestors had a profound suspicion of information that came to them in written form. They were by no means certain that something written was more trustworthy than the spoken word. Rather the contrary: a news report gained credibility from the reputation of the person who delivered it. So a news report delivered verbally by a trusted friend or messenger was far more likely to be believed than an anonymous written report. This old tradition, where the trust given to a report depended on the credit of the teller, had an enduring influence over attitudes to news reporting. But this early news world is not easy to reconstruct. Verbal reports in the nature of things leave little trace for the historian: studying the early history of news is a matter of combing through scraps and fragments.

Bernard of Clairvaux, architect of the Cistercian order, sat at the centre of one of medieval Europe's greatest news networks. Those who visited Clairvaux in eastern France would bring him news of their travels; sometimes they would carry his letters away with them when they departed. We are unusually well informed about Bernard's news network, because over five hundred of his letters survive.⁶ But in some respects Bernard is utterly characteristic of the news world of the medieval period. At this time regular access to news was the prerogative of those in circles of power. Only they could afford it; only they had the means to gather it. But even for these privileged individuals at the apex of society, news gathering was not unproblematic. They were fully aware that those who brought them news were likely to be interested parties. The travelling cleric who brought Bernard news of a distant episcopal election might be supporting one candidate; the ambassador writing home from abroad might be seeking to influence policy; merchants hoped to gain from a fluctuating market. Merchants, in particular, had a keen awareness of the value of information, and the dangers of acting on a false rumour. For the first two centuries of the period covered by this book merchants were both the principal consumers of news and its most reliable suppliers.⁷

Even as news became more plentiful in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the problem of establishing the veracity of news reports remained acute. The news market – and by the sixteenth century it was a real market – was humming with conflicting reports, some incredible, some all too plausible: lives, fortunes, even the fate of kingdoms could depend on acting on the right information. The great events of history that pepper these pages were often initially mis-reported. In 1588 it was originally thought throughout much of continental Europe that the Spanish Armada had inflicted a crushing defeat on the English fleet; as in this case, the first definitive news was frequently outrun by rumour or wishful thinking, spreading panic or misjudged celebration. It was important to be first with the news, but only if it was true.

This troubling paradox initiated a second phase in the history of news analysis: the search for corroboration. As we will see, by the sixteenth century professional news men had become quite sophisticated in their handling of sensitive information. The first intimation of tumultuous events was reported, but with the cautious reflection 'this report is not yet confirmed'.⁸ Europe's rulers would pay richly for the earliest report of a crucial event, but they often waited for the second or third report before acting upon it. But this was not a luxury all could afford: for the French Protestants hearing news of the St Bartholomew's Day Massacre in August 1572, only immediate action might save them from becoming one of the next victims. In these troubled times news could be a matter of life and death.

News, Rumour and Gossip

Not all news concerned events of such momentous or immediate relevance. Even before the publication of the first weekly newspapers in the seventeenth century, enormous quantities of news were available for those prepared to pay for it, or even just to follow the talk in the market square. To Defoe this abundance was a great miracle of modern society. To others it was deeply troubling. From this great mass of swirling information how could one extract what was truly significant? How could one tell the signal from the noise?⁹

Those who followed the news had to devise their own methods of making their way through the mass of rumour, exaggeration and breathlessly shared confidences to construct a reasonable version of the truth. First they tended to exclude the purely personal and parochial. Our ancestors certainly delighted in the tales of the ambitions, schemes and misfortunes of their families, neighbours and friends: who was to marry whom, which merchants and tradesmen faced ruin, whose reputation had been compromised by a liaison with a servant or apprentice. When in 1561 a citizen of Memmlingen in southern Germany rather unwisely decided to get to the bottom of who had spread a rumour that his daughter had fled town to conceal an unwanted pregnancy, fifty citizens could offer precise recollections of how they first heard this delicious gossip.¹⁰ But however eagerly consumed and passed on, this sort of scuttlebutt was not generally what people thought of as news. When men and women asked friends, business partners or neighbours, 'What news?', they meant news of great events: of developments at court, wars, battles, pestilence or the fall of the great. This was the news that they shared in correspondence and conversation, and this was the news that fuelled the first commercial market in current affairs.

Very occasionally, through a diary or family chronicle, we have a window into the process by which early news readers weighed and evaluated these news reports. One such was Herman Weinsberg, who lived in the great German city of Cologne in the later sixteenth century. Weinsberg, it must be said, was a very odd man. It was only after his death that his appalled family discovered that he had memorialised all their doings in an expansive chronicle of their lives and times.¹¹ Weinsberg, who lived a comfortable existence on the rents from inherited property, took a close interest in contemporary events. Living outside the circles of the city elite, he was forced to rely on what he picked up from friends, or read in purchased pamphlets. Happily a news hub like Cologne was drenched in information, but not all sources could be relied upon. Weinsberg's technique was to weigh conflicting reports to discern the 'general opinion' or consensus. In this he unconsciously imitated precisely the process followed by the city's magistrates, or at Europe's princely courts. But sometimes it was simply impossible to discern the true state of affairs. When

in 1585 the nearby town of Neuss was surprisingly captured by forces of the Protestant Archbishop Gerhard von Truchsess, Weinsberg heard no fewer than twelve different accounts of how the archbishop's soldiers had slipped into the town undetected. He interviewed eyewitnesses who told their own story. The city council sent messenger after messenger to find out what had happened, but they were prevented from entering the town. Weinsberg had eventually to conclude that the true facts might never be known: 'Each person cannot truly say and know more than what he had seen and heard at the place where he was at that hour. But if he heard about it from others, the story may be faulty; he cannot truly know it.'¹²

The exponential growth of news reporting did not necessarily make things easier; many believed it made things worse. In fact, for those traditionally in the know, the industrialisation of news, the creation of a news industry where news was traded for profit, threatened to undermine the whole process by which news had traditionally been verified – where the credit of the report was closely linked to the reputation of the teller. In the burgeoning mass market this vital link – the personal integrity of those who passed on the news – was broken.

The Commercialisation of News

In the first stages of our narrative almost no one made money from supplying news. On the contrary, the provision of news was so expensive that only the elites of medieval Europe could afford it. You either had to pay large sums to build up a network of messengers – a fixed cost that proved beyond the means even of some of Europe's wealthiest rulers – or rely on those under a social obligation to provide news for free: feudal dependants, aspirants for favour, or, in the case of the Church, fellow clerics. Even Europe's most mighty princes frequently cut costs by handing their despatches to friendly merchants, who would carry them for free.

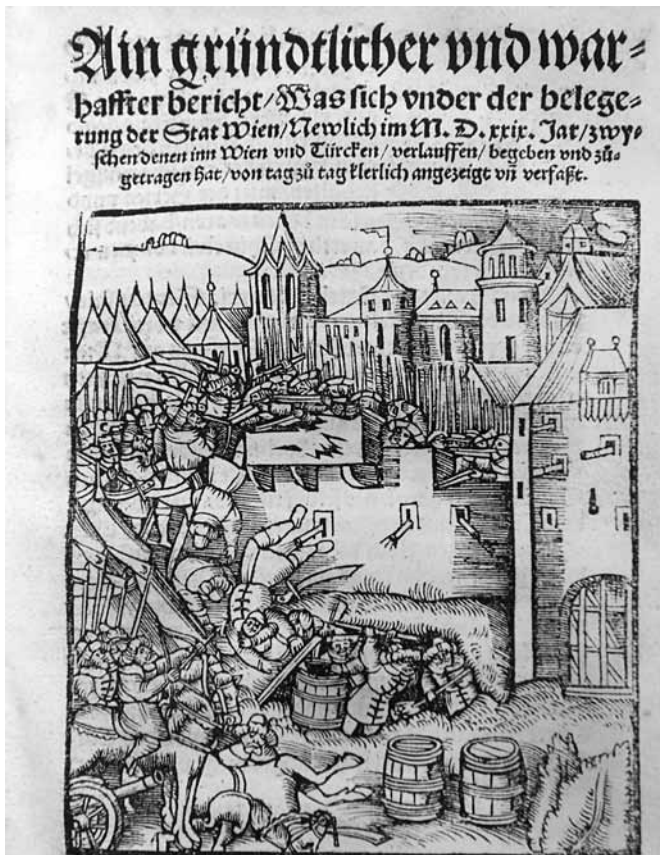
It is only in the sixteenth century that we will encounter the systematic commercialisation of these services. The first to make money from selling news were a group of discreet and worldly men who plied their trade in the cities of Italy. Here in Europe's most sophisticated news market they offered their clients, themselves powerful men, a weekly handwritten briefing. The most successful ran a shop full of scribes turning out several dozen copies a week. These *avvisi* were succinct, wide ranging and remarkably well informed. They are one of the great untold stories of the early news market.¹³

This was an expensive service, yet such was the thirst for information that many of Europe's rulers and their advisers subscribed to several of them. But

such facilities only met the needs of those for whom access to the best sources of information was a political necessity. The vast majority of the population made do with what news they could come by for free: in the tavern or market-place, in official announcements proclaimed on the town hall steps. These too played an important role in shaping the climate of opinion, and would remain an essential part of the news market throughout the period covered in this book. Europe's more humble residents sought out news where they could find it: in conversation, correspondence, from travellers and friends.

The real transformation of the news market would come from the development of a news market in print. This would occur only haltingly after the first invention of printing in the mid-fifteenth century. For half a century or more thereafter printers would follow a very conservative strategy, concentrating on publishing editions of the books most familiar from the medieval manuscript tradition.¹⁴ But in the sixteenth century they would also begin to open up new markets – and one of these was a market for news. News fitted ideally into the expanding market for cheap print, and it swiftly became an important commodity. This burgeoning wave of news reporting was of an entirely different order. It took its tone from the new genre of pamphlets that had preceded it: the passionate advocacy that had accompanied the Reformation. So this sort of news reporting was very different from the discreet, dispassionate services of the manuscript news men. News pamphlets were often committed and engaged, intended to persuade as well as inform. News also became, for the first time, part of the entertainment industry. What could be more entertaining than the tale of some catastrophe in a far-off place, or a grisly murder?

This was not unproblematic, particularly for the traditional leaders of society who were used to news being part of a confidential service, provided by trusted agents. Naturally the elites sought to control this new commercial market, to ensure that the messages delivered by these news books would show them in a good light. Printers who wanted their shops to remain open were careful to report only the local prince's victories and triumphs, not the battlefield reverses that undermined his reputation and authority. Those printers who co-operated willingly could rely on help in securing access to the right texts. Court poets and writers, often quite distinguished literary figures, found that they were obliged to undertake new and unfamiliar tasks, penning texts lauding their prince's military prowess and excoriating his enemies.¹⁵ Many of these writings made their way into print. For all that this period is often presented as one of autocratic and unrepresentative government, we will discover that from remarkably early in the age of the first printed books Europe's rulers invested considerable effort in putting their point of view, and



0.1 Good news from the front. The inspiring tale of the defeat of the Turkish attack on Vienna in a contemporary news pamphlet.

explaining their policies, to their citizens. This too is an important part of the story of news.

The patriotic optimism of the news pamphlets served Europe's rulers well in their first precocious efforts at the management of public opinion. But it posed difficulties for those whose decisions relied on an accurate flow of information. Merchants ready to consign their goods to the road had to have a more measured view of what they would find – news pamphlets that obscured the true state of affairs were no good to them if what was important was that their cargoes should safely reach their destination. The divisions within Europe brought about by the Reformation were a further complicating factor: the news vendors of Protestant and Catholic nations would increasingly reproduce only news that came from their side of the confessional divide. News therefore took on an increasingly sectarian

character. All this led to distortions tending to obscure the true course of events. This might be good for morale, but for those in positions of influence who needed to have access to more dispassionate reporting the growth of this mass market in news print was largely a distraction. For this reason the rash of news pamphlets that flooded the market in the sixteenth century did not drive out the more exclusive manuscript services. The *avvisi* continued to find a market among those with the money to pay; in many parts of Europe confidential manuscript news services continued to prosper well into the second half of the eighteenth century.

Lisez en particulier cette section -> **The Birth of the Newspaper**

The printed news pamphlets of the sixteenth century were a milestone in the development of the news market, but they further complicated issues of truth and veracity. Competing for limited disposable cash among a less wealthy class of reader, the purveyors of the news pamphlets had a clear incentive to make these accounts as lively as possible. This raised real questions as to their reliability. How could a news report possibly be trusted if the author exaggerated to increase its commercial appeal?

The emergence of the newspaper in the early seventeenth century represents an attempt to square this circle. As the apparatus of government grew in Europe's new nation states, the number of those who needed to keep abreast of the news also increased exponentially. In 1605 one enterprising German stationer thought he could meet this demand by mechanising his existing manuscript newsletter service. This was the birth of the newspaper: but its style – the sober, detached recitation of news reports inherited from the manuscript newsletter – had little in common with that of the more engaged and discursive news pamphlets.

The newspaper, as it turned out, would have a difficult birth. Although it spread quickly, with newspapers founded in over twenty German towns in the next thirty years, other parts of Europe proved more resistant – Italy for instance was late to adopt this form of news publication. Many of the first newspapers struggled to make money, and swiftly closed.

The trouble with the newspapers was that they were not very enjoyable. Although it might be important to be seen to be a subscriber, and thus to have the social kudos of one who followed the world's affairs, the early newspapers were not much fun to read. The desiccated sequence of bare, undecorated facts made them difficult to follow – sometimes, plainly baffling. What did it mean to be told that the Duke of Sessa had arrived in Florence, without knowing who he was or why he was there? Was this a good thing or a bad thing? For

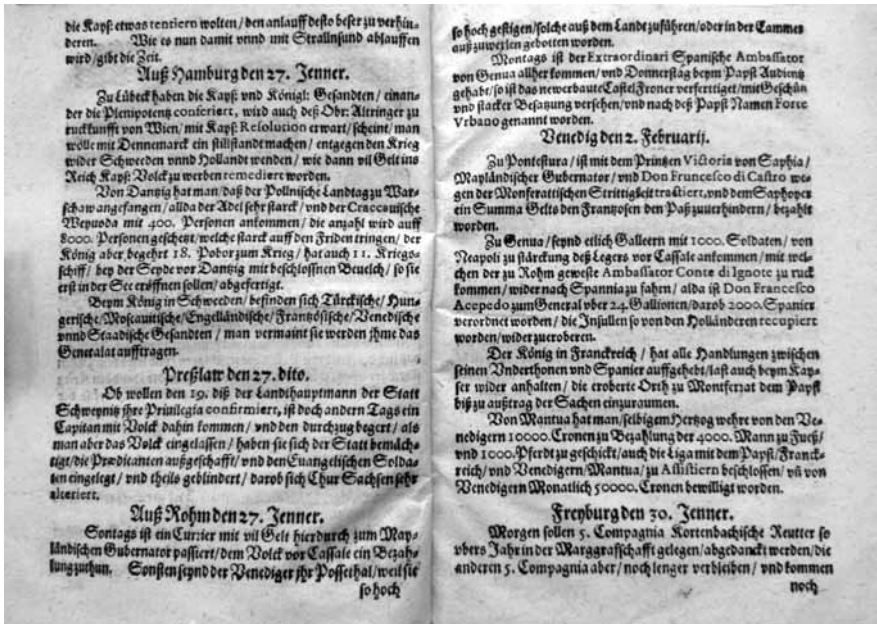
inexperienced news readers this was tough going. People who were used to the familiar ordered narrative of a news pamphlet found the style alienating.

News pamphlets offered a very different presentation of news, and one far better adapted to contemporary narrative conventions. Pamphlets concentrated on the most exciting events, battles, crimes and sensations; and they were generally published at the close of the events they described. They had a beginning, a middle and an end. Most of all, news pamphlets attempted an explanation of causes and consequences. By and large, this being a religious age, news pamphlets of this sort also drew a moral: that the king was mighty; that malefactors got their just deserts; that the unfortunate victims of natural catastrophe were being punished for their sins.

The news reporting of the newspapers was very different, and utterly unfamiliar to those who had not previously been subscribers to the manuscript service. Each report was no more than a couple of sentences long. It offered no explanation, comment or commentary. Unlike a news pamphlet the reader did not know where this fitted in the narrative – or even whether what was reported would turn out to be important. This made for a very particular and quite demanding sort of news. The format offered inexperienced readers very little help. The most important story was seldom placed first; there were no headlines, and no illustrations. And because newspapers were offered on a subscription basis, readers were expected to follow events from issue to issue; this was time-consuming, expensive and rather wearing.

This was not at all how most citizens of European society in these years experienced news. For them, great events might only be of interest when they impacted their lives directly. Even for the more curious, it was easy to dip in and out, to buy a pamphlet when it interested them, and, when not, to save the money for some other pursuit. This made far more sense in terms of the way events unfolded – sometimes momentous, sometimes frankly rather humdrum. The news pamphlets reflected this reality: that sometimes news was important, and provoked a flurry of activity on the presses, and sometimes it was not.

So it was by no means easy to persuade the inhabitants of seventeenth-century Europe that the purchase of news publications should be a regular commitment. It is not difficult to see why newspapers were so slow to catch on. Consumers had to be taught to want a regular fix of news, and they had to acquire the tools to understand it. This took time; the circle of those with an understanding of the world outside their own town or village expanded only slowly. For all of these reasons it would be well over a hundred years from the foundation of the first newspaper before it became an everyday part of life – and only at the end of the eighteenth century would the newspaper become a major agent of opinion-forming.



0.2 *Wochentliche Ordinari Zeitung*, Anno 1629. An early issue of a German newspaper. Crammed with information, but hard-going for the uninitiated.

The birth of the newspaper did not immediately transform the news market. Indeed, for at least a hundred years newspapers struggled to find a place in what remained a multi-media business. The dawn of print did not suppress earlier forms of news transmission. Most people continued to receive much of their news by word of mouth. The transmission of news offered a profound demonstration of the vitality of these raucous, intimate, neighbourly societies. News was passed from person to person in the market square, in and outside church, in family groups. Enterprising citizens celebrated exciting occurrences in song; this too became a major conduit of news, and one quite lucrative to travelling singers who otherwise would have struggled to make a living.¹⁶ Singing was also potentially very subversive – magistrates found it much more difficult to identify the composer of a seditious song than to close a print-shop.¹⁷ The more sophisticated and knowing could enjoy contemporary references at the theatre. Playgoing, with its repertoire of in-jokes and topical references, was an important arena of news in the larger cities.¹⁸ All these different locations played their part in a multi-media news world that coexisted with the new world of print.

These long-established habits of information exchange set a demanding standard for the new print media. We need to keep constantly in mind that in these centuries the communication of public business took place almost exclusively in communal settings. Citizens gathered to witness civic events, such as the arrival of notable visitors or the execution of notorious criminals. They heard official orders proclaimed by municipal or royal officials; they gathered around the church door to read ordinances or libels; they swapped rumours and sung topical songs. It is significant that in this age to 'publish' meant to voice abroad, verbally: books were merely 'printed'.¹⁹ Printed news had both to encourage new habits of consumption – the private reading that had previously been an elite preserve – and to adopt the cadences and stylistic forms of these older oral traditions. Reading early news pamphlets, we can often hear the music of the streets, with all their hubbub and exuberant variety. Readers of early newspapers, in contrast, were offered the cloistered hush of the chancery. They were not to everybody's taste.

News Men

The complexities of this trade called for agility on the part of those who hoped to make money from news. Many who tried were disappointed. Pamphlet publishing was highly competitive, and only those whose connections gave them access to reliable sources of information could expect to flourish. Many of the first newspapers were remarkably short-lived. Those that survived often did so with a discrete subsidy from the local prince – hardly a guarantee of editorial independence. For much of Defoe's time writing the *Review* he was paid a secret retainer by one or other of England's leading politicians to promote their policies.²⁰ Sir Robert Walpole coped with a critical press by buying the newspapers and making them his mouthpiece. He went on to become England's longest-serving eighteenth-century prime minister.

For most of this period there was not much money to be made from publishing news, and most of it went to those at the top of the trade. If some did grow rich, they were the proprietors: in the sixteenth century the publishers of the bespoke manuscript services, later the publishers of newspapers. A manuscript news-service was by and large the business of a single well-informed individual. As his reputation grew he might have found it necessary to employ an increasing number of scribes to make up the hand-written copies; but his was the sole editorial voice.

The first newspapers were put together in much the same way. The publisher was exclusively responsible for their content. His task was essentially editorial: gathering reports; bundling them up; passing them on. In

many cases the publisher was the only person professionally involved in this stage of the production process. He employed no staff and no journalists in the modern sense. Much of the information that made up the copy of the first newspapers was provided free: information passing through the rapidly expanding European postal service or sent by correspondence. Some of the newspapers were quasi-official publications with close connections to local court officials, who provided access to reliable information from state papers. Publishers found other ways to augment the meagre pickings from cover-price sales and subscriptions. For many, advertising became the mainstay of the business model; for others, obliging politicians with their gifts, pensions or promises of office paved the way to a better life.

The nature of the newspapers and the means of their compilation left little scope for what we might regard as journalism. The reports were not long enough to leave room for much in the way of comment or commentary. As the newspapers became more established in the eighteenth century some publishers employed a few stringers, men who would hang around the law courts or stock exchange hoping to pick up snippets of publishable material.²¹ But such men seldom leave much of a mark in the records. Although we will meet some colourful characters in these pages, this was not yet the age of the professional journalist. The information they provided was hardly ever valuable enough to command the exclusive service of one particular paper. Most sold their stories to whomever would have them. It is only with the great events at the end of the eighteenth century – the struggle for press freedom in England and the French and American revolutions – that newspapers found a strong editorial voice, and at that point a career in journalism became a real possibility. But it was always hazardous. As many of the celebrity politician writers of the French Revolution found, a career could be cut short (quite literally) by a turn in political fortunes. At least these men lived and died in a blaze of publicity. For others, the drones of the trade, snuffing up rumour for scraps, penury was a more mundane danger.

The Sinews of Power

The more sophisticated news market that emerged during this period depended on the construction of a network of communications. Between the fourteenth and eighteenth centuries this too was steadily improved. The European postal networks became more intricate and more reliable. News reports became more frequent. It became easier to verify what one had heard from a second or third independent source. That this was possible was largely the result of the creation of far more efficient means of exchanging written

communication over long distances. At the beginning of the fourteenth century only the rich and powerful could afford the cost of maintaining a network of couriers; as a result, those in positions of power largely determined what information should be shared with other citizens. By the eighteenth century relatively ordinary citizens could travel, send and receive mail, or purchase news reports. The process of information exchange had been put on a rational commercial basis. Millions of communications now flowed along the arterial routes of European trade every year. News was abundant: now everyone could have an opinion, and many chose to express it.

In many respects the four prime considerations that governed the business of news – its speed, reliability, the control of content and entertainment value – were remarkably unchanging in these centuries. At different times one or other of these priorities would matter more to consumers of news than others; sometimes they would be in direct conflict. The truth was seldom as entertaining as tall stories; news men were often tempted to pass off the one as the other. But whatever the place and whatever the news medium, these four principles, speed, reliability, control and entertainment, express fairly succinctly the main concerns of those who gathered, sold and consumed the news.

The centuries with which this book is concerned witnessed a vast widening of horizons for Europe's citizens. The discovery of the Americas and the creation of new trade routes to Asia brought a fresh relationship with distant continents. But while these new discoveries have done much to shape our perceptions of those periods, just as important at the time was the quiet incremental revolution that brought citizens in touch with the neighbouring city, the capital and other countries in Europe. Sitting down to their weekly digest of news in any of a dozen European countries in 1750, men and women could experience the fascination of faraway events. They could obtain, through regular perusal, a sense of the leading personalities of European society, and the disposition of its powers. Four centuries previously such knowledge would have been far less widely shared. In this earlier period for the vast majority of citizens news of life outside the village, or the city walls, depended on chance encounters with strangers. Many such citizens would have little knowledge of the world beyond, unless directly affected by the local consequences of high politics or warfare. This was a very different time for news. What we do detect, however, even at this earlier date, is a hunger for information, even if it could only be satisfied for those in the highest reaches of politics and commerce. This was the same hunger that in the centuries that followed would set European society on the road towards a modern culture of communication.

Notes

Introduction: All the News that's Fit to Tell

1. *Weekly Review of the Affairs of France* (17 February 1704). A magnificent new edition, edited by John McVeagh, is *Defoe's Review* (London: Pickering & Chatto, 2003–11). An atmospheric selection is available in William L. Payne, *The Best of Defoe's Review: An Anthology* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1951).
2. *Review* (fasc. edn, New York, 1938), viii, 708, book 21. Quoted Harold Love, *The Culture and Commerce of Texts* (Amherst, MA: University of Massachusetts Press, 1998), p. 3. See now also Dror Wahrman, *Mr. Collier's Letter Rack: A Tale of Art and Illusion at the Threshold of the Modern Information Age* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), pp. 19–29.
3. Instances can be found, for example, in at least ten of Shakespeare's plays: *King Henry VI, Part 2*, Act IV, scene 4; *King Henry VI, Part 3*, Act II, scene 1; *King Richard III*, Act IV, scenes 2 and 4; *The Taming of the Shrew*, Act V, scene 2; *The Merchant of Venice*, Act 1, scene 2; *Twelfth Night*, Act 1, scene 1; *Hamlet*, Act IV, scene 7; *Timon of Athens*, Act 1, scene 2; *King Lear*, Act 1, scene 2; *Macbeth*, Act 1, scene 7. Instances supplied by Paul Arblaster.
4. Claude Holyband, *The French Littelton* (London: Richard Field, 1593). Below, Chapter 6.
5. This regular exchange, between Aberconwy and Strat Florida, is reported in *The historie of Cambria, now called Wales* (1584), sig. vr. I am grateful to my colleague Alex Woolf for this reference.
6. Jürg Zulliger, "Ohne Kommunikation würde Chaos herrschen". Zur Bedeutung von Informationsaustausch, Briefverkehr und Boten bei Bernhard von Clairvaux', *Archiv für Kulturgeschichte*, 78 (1996), pp. 251–76. Below, Chapter 1.
7. Below, Chapter 2.
8. Below, Chapter 7.
9. Nate Silver, *The Signal and the Noise: Why So Many Predictions Fail but Some Don't* (New York: Penguin, 2012).
10. Ulinka Rublack, *The Crimes of Women in Early Modern Germany* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), pp. 16–19.
11. Matthew Lundin, *Paper Memory: A Sixteenth-Century Townsman Writes his World* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2012).
12. *Ibid.*, p. 243.
13. Below, Chapter 5.
14. Andrew Pettegree, *The Book in the Renaissance* (New Haven, CT, and London: Yale University Press, 2010).
15. Below, Chapter 4.
16. Below, Chapter 7.
17. Allyson Creasman, *Censorship and Civic Order in Reformation Germany, 1517–1648* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2012).

18. Jan Bloemendal, Peter G. F. Eversmann and Else Strietman (eds), *Drama, Performance and Debate: Theatre and Public Opinion in the Early Modern Period* (Leiden: Brill, 2013); and see the remarks about competition between the London theatre and newspapers below, Chapter 12.
19. As in the French *publier*. See Kate van Orden, 'Cheap Print and Street Song Following the Saint Bartholomew's Massacres of 1572', in van Orden (ed.), *Music and the Cultures of Print* (New York: Garland Publishing, 2000), pp. 271–323.
20. Maximilian Novak, *Daniel Defoe, Master of Fictions: His Life and Ideas* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001).
21. Below, Chapter 15.

Chapter 1 Power and Imagination

1. Larry Silver, *Marketing Maximilian: The Visual Ideology of a Holy Roman Emperor* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2008).
2. Wolfgang Behringer, *Thurn und Taxis: Die Geschichte ihrer Post und ihrer Unternehmen* (Munich: Piper, 1990); idem, *Im Zeichendes Merkur: Reichspost und Kommunikationsrevolution in der Frühen Neuzeit* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2003).
3. A. M. Ramsay, 'A Roman Postal Service under the Republic', *Journal of Roman Studies*, 10 (1920), pp. 79–86.
4. Alan K. Bowman, *Life and Letters on the Roman Frontier: Vindolanda and its People*, 2nd edn (London: British Museum, 2003); Anthony Birley, *Garrison Life at Vindolanda* (Stroud: History Press, 2007).
5. Alan K. Bowman and Greg Woolf, *Literacy and Power in the Ancient World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994); Greg Woolf, 'Monumental Writing and the Expansion of Roman Society in the Early Empire', *Journal of Roman Studies*, 86 (1996), pp. 22–39.
6. M. T. Clanchy, *From Memory to Written Record: England 1066–1307* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1979).
7. Ibid., p. 261.
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9. Chris Given-Wilson, *Chronicles: The Writing of History in Medieval England* (London: Hambledon, 2004), p. 21.
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13. Lorraine Daston and Katharine Park, *Wonders and the Order of Nature, 1150–1750* (New York: Zone, 2001).
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18. Debra Birch, *Pilgrimage to Rome in the Middle Ages* (Woodbridge: Boydell, 1998).
19. It is illustrated in Peter Spufford, *Power and Profit: The Merchant in Medieval Europe* (London: Thames and Hudson, 2002), p. 23.
20. Ambassadorial correspondence is discussed below, Chapter 5.
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22. Renouard, 'Les papes d'Avignon', pp. 20–3.

The First Newspapers

IN the year 1605 a young book dealer named Johann Carolus appeared before the Strasbourg city council with an unusual request. Besides his bookselling Carolus had recently also developed a lucrative sideline, producing a weekly manuscript newsletter. By this date, as we have seen, the manuscript newsletter had become the cornerstone of the information market for Europe's elites. From its early days in Rome and Venice, the production of manuscript newsletters had now spread across Germany, and from Augsburg and Nuremberg to Brussels and Antwerp in the Low Countries. Strasbourg, situated close to the crucial Rhine crossing serving the imperial post service at Rheinhausen, was extremely well placed for such a venture. Carolus could be sure of a steady supply of news from the imperial postmaster and the constant passage of commercial traffic. And in a busy city like Strasbourg he would not have been short of customers.

His enterprise clearly prospered; by 1605 Carolus was in the position to diversify further by buying a print shop. He now conceived a plan to mechanise his existing trade in manuscript newsletters by producing a printed version. In a neat echo of Gutenberg and the invention of print one hundred and fifty years before, this was a logical response to a situation where increasing demand was straining the capacity of existing technology to deliver adequate quantities. But the investment costs, not least in buying his printing press, had stretched Carolus's resources, so now he turned to the city council for help. He told them that he had already produced twelve issues of his printed newsletter. But he obviously feared that if it proved successful others would try to copy him and wipe out his profits. So he asked the council to grant him a privilege – that is, a monopoly – on the sale of printed newsletters.¹ This was not unreasonable. Any entrepreneur who believed he had pioneered a new industrial or manufacturing process would seek protection

against interlopers copying his innovation, and such privileges were common in the book world.² Carolus had good reason to hope that members of the Strasbourg city council, who made up a large part of his client base, would be sympathetic.

For an event of such momentous consequences Carolus's intentions were surprisingly modest. He merely sought a way to simplify a process that currently involved writing by hand an increasing number of copies, and thus to speed production. The output itself would not be essentially different: still the same sequence of bald news items familiar from his manuscript news service. But from this modest, rather tentative transaction emerged a new form of communication that would in due course transform the European news market: Carolus had invented the newspaper.

The Rise of the North

If Carolus did begin publishing his newspaper, the Strasbourg *Relation*, in 1605, the earliest issues are unfortunately all lost: the first surviving copies date from 1609.³ For this reason many older histories of the newspaper will time its beginnings from this later date; it is only relatively recently that the full significance of the discovery in the Strasbourg archive of Carolus's petition to the city council has been appreciated.⁴ That four complete years of the earliest issues have simply disappeared is not at all surprising. It is very rare to find a complete run of the earliest newspapers, and many are known only from a handful of stray copies: sometimes only a single issue survives to attest to a newspaper's existence.⁵

We can nevertheless be reasonably certain that Carolus did begin production in 1605. His petition to the council after all speaks of twelve issues already published. When we look at the first surviving copies from 1609, we see that these are certainly faithful to his stated intention that the newsprint would simply be a mechanised version of the handwritten newspaper. Individual issues have no title-heading: the title is given only in the printed title-page supplied to subscribers so that they could bind together the year's weekly issues. Instead the news begins, rather like the *avvisi*, at the top of the first page. In every respect the familiar pattern of the *avvisi* is retained: a sequence of news reports gathered by their place of origin and dated according to their date of despatch: 'From Rome, 27 December'; 'From Vienna, 31 December & 2 January'; 'From Venice, 2 January'. The order reflects the sequence in which the posts from these various stations arrived in Strasbourg. The contents were almost exclusively the same dry political, military and diplomatic reports that had dominated the *avvisi*.

In this respect the Strasbourg *Relation* set the tone for all the earliest German newspapers. Sticking closely to the model of the manuscript newsletter, the news-sheets adopted none of the features that made news pamphlets attractive to potential purchasers. There were no headlines and no illustrations. There was little exposition or explanation and none of the passionate advocacy or debate that characterised news pamphlets; indeed, there was little editorial comment of any sort. The newspapers also adopted none of the typographical features that helped pamphlet readers find their way through the text. There were no marginalia: in fact the only concession to legibility was an occasional line-break between reports. Although the news-sheets were soon being produced in very considerable numbers – a weekly edition of several hundred was not unusual – they made no allowances for the fact that new readers might not be so well versed in international political affairs as the narrow circle of courtiers and officials who had read the manuscript newsletters.⁶ If readers did not know who the Cardinal Pontini recently arrived in Ravenna was (or even the whereabouts of Ravenna), the newsletters made no effort to explain.

For all that the new genre proved exceptionally popular. The Strasbourg *Relation* was joined in 1609 by a second German weekly, the Wolfenbüttel *Aviso*. This did introduce one notable innovation, a title-page, bearing a fine woodcut with a winged Mercury soaring over a landscape populated by busy news-bearers. This gave the Wolfenbüttel paper more of the appearance of a news pamphlet, but greatly reduced the space for news. Since the back of the title-page would also be blank, this left only six pages of an eight-page pamphlet for text. In the Wolfenbüttel case this was probably not crucial, since publication was almost certainly subsidised by the Duke of Wolfenbüttel-Braunschweig, a notable news addict. But this was less suitable for purely commercial ventures, which mostly followed the Strasbourg model of beginning the text immediately below the title-heading. All retained the quarto form familiar from the German news pamphlets and indeed the manuscript newsletters.

The new genre of news publication spread through the German lands very quickly. A weekly paper was established in Basel in 1610, and shortly thereafter in Frankfurt, Berlin and Hamburg. The outbreak of the Thirty Years War in 1618 stimulated a new wave of weekly papers, and a dozen new titles were published after the Swedish invasion of 1630. In the following decade a number of established papers, responding to the quickening of interest in public affairs, began to publish more than one issue in a weekly cycle. Generally these papers appeared two or three times a week, though in 1650 the Leipzig *Einkommende Zeitungen* ventured an issue every weekday. Print runs

also increased rapidly. In 1620 the *Frankfurter Postzeitung* was published in an edition of 450; the Hamburg *Wochentliche Zeitung* may have printed as many as 1,500 copies. This was exceptional; the average print run was probably in the region of 350 to 400.⁷ All told we can document the existence of around 200 titles published in Germany by the end of the seventeenth century: a total of some 70,000 surviving issues. Taking into account those that have been lost, this indicates a total output of around 70 million copies. With extraordinary rapidity a large proportion of the literate population of Germany would have had access to this new type of reading, particularly if we consider that these 200 newspapers were spread around eighty different places of publication. In the development of this new market the most significant steps were the establishment of newspapers in the two premier northern commercial centres of Frankfurt and Hamburg. The *Frankfurter Postzeitung*, founded in 1615, was the work of the remarkable Johann von den Birghden, the imperial postmaster.⁸ It was von den Birghden who had been responsible for extending the imperial post network into northern and eastern Germany, notably with the establishment of the crucial arterial route between Frankfurt and Hamburg. The newspaper was very much a by-product of this activity. Sadly von den Birghden did not bring to publishing the same conceptual genius and attention to detail that characterised his work with the post roads: his newspaper is as conventional and undistinguished as the other earliest papers. He was, however, the first to call attention to the close connection between the post and the news in the title of his paper. Its contemporary success and wide distribution can be attested by its survival in almost thirty separate libraries and archives.⁹

The situation in Hamburg was rather different. This great commercial city in northern Germany was rather remote from the principal news arteries running along the imperial post route from Italy to the Low Countries. Necessarily the city had relied on its own messenger services, established since the medieval period, and by the sixteenth century a regular network of courier services connected the Hanseatic port with trading partners in the Baltic, the Low Countries and England. The founder of the first Hamburg newspaper, Johann Meyer, was heavily involved in the long-distance freight trade. Drawing on the connections developed from this business, Meyer had created a manuscript news service; rather like Carolus in Strasbourg, the establishment of his *Wöchentliche Zeitung auss mehrerley örther* was an attempt to mechanise this existing business. The potential for growth was, however, far greater in Hamburg, a great regional centre of trade and news, and Meyer's venture was very successful. The profits to be made soon sparked controversy with others in the Hamburg book world. In 1630 a consortium of booksellers

but the emergence of a potentially serious challenge from a new imperial postmaster, Hans Jakob Kleinhaus. This was at the height of imperial military success in the Thirty Years War and in setting up his own paper, the *Postzeitung*, Kleinhaus seemed determined to put Meyer out of business.¹² The dispute rumbled on until Meyer's death in 1634 when his paper was inherited by his redoubtable widow, Ilsabe. Her determination to maintain her livelihood found a sympathetic hearing with the city magistrates. In 1637 the council brokered a settlement. The postmaster's insistent claim to a monopoly of the press in Hamburg was refuted, but his exclusive use of the title *Postzeitung* was upheld. Still, Ilsabe was not yet finished. In this era it was common (and thoroughly inconvenient for students of the press) for proprietors to refresh the name of their papers quite frequently. If they moved to twice-weekly publication they would also often give the mid-week edition a separate title.¹³ Ilsabe Meyer took to shadowing the changing title of the imperial paper to blur the distinction between them. When the postmaster renamed his paper the *Priviligierte Ordentliche Post Zeitung*, hers became the *Ordentliche Zeitung*.

Such commercial skulduggery reflected a perception at least that there was money to be made in newspapers. As Germany became for an extended period in the seventeenth century the fulcrum of European politics, the circles of those who felt they needed to keep abreast of the news grew ever wider. The urgency of events made for rich pickings in Germany's dispersed and disparate reading communities. It was far easier to start a new paper, repeating news passed along the postal routes, than it was to import papers published elsewhere. But the elastic market and easy profits also served to reinforce the conservatism of the genre. The German newspapers of the later seventeenth century were remarkably little different in content or design from the earliest ventures. It would be in other parts of Europe that the most significant experiments of design and composition were seen.

The explosion of news print was, for all that, highly significant for the development of the European news market. It marked a very significant reorientation of the European news world towards northern Europe. Up to this point the exchange of news had been dominated by the connection between the Mediterranean and the Low Countries, linked by the arterial route of the imperial post road. But the most important centres of newspaper production in Germany were far removed from the old imperial postal route: Augsburg, the German axis of the imperial postal network, spurned the newspaper revolution. Elsewhere in Europe, too, it was the northern powers that eagerly embraced the new invention. The centre of gravity of European information exchange had shifted decisively.

complaint from the Spanish ambassador, the government instructed Butter and Bourne to cease publishing. Butter, a newsman through and through, remained in the market with works of contemporary history that were thinly disguised hymns to the Protestant cause.⁴⁷ Bourne, more wisely, diversified into other ventures. When the prohibition was relaxed in 1638, the revived corantos were soon overtaken by news-books devoted to domestic politics. Bourne, the businessman, was in due course elected master of the Stationers' Company, and prospered. Butter, the frustrated newsman, died a pauper.

Two Machiavellian Statesmen

For twenty years England made a lively and potentially innovative contribution to the early history of the newspaper. By the time English production revived in the years before the Civil Wars a dense network of serial publications extended from London through the Low Countries and across the German-speaking lands to Danzig, Prague and Vienna. Elsewhere in Europe serial publication did not enjoy the same success. The early newspapers were a geographically circumscribed phenomenon. Spain was a latecomer to the market in serial news publications, and this was true also of two of the three largest markets for print, France and Italy. In the case of Italy this was all the more striking as the peninsula had been the fulcrum of the European news network since the Middle Ages. In France the suppression of a market for news was a conscious act of state on the part of the most potent statesman of the age, Cardinal Richelieu.

Richelieu had no reason to love the press. His had been a backstairs career; a steady rise to eminence through carefully cultivated royal favour. His political apprenticeship had coincided with the turbulent minority of Louis XIII, a brutal struggle for power between the Queen Mother and successive favourites. This feuding at court spilled out into the streets in a torrent of frantic pamphleteering that reached its peak in the years between the summons of the Estates General in 1614 (the last meeting of this national assembly before the French Revolution) and the assassination of the hated favourite Concini three years later. Over a thousand political pamphlets were published in these years, many boldly contemptuous of those who struggled for supremacy at court.⁴⁸ The passions unleashed were truly terrifying in a nation apparently teetering on the brink of the resumption of the civil war that had scarred the country in the sixteenth century. Richelieu's first years in power were dominated by the last great Huguenot rebellion, finally resolved when the Protestant citadel of La Rochelle was reduced to obedience (the campaign in which Buckingham's intervention had proved so ineffective).

Richelieu was a keen student of the press. In his early career he had followed the political campaigning that accompanied the Estates General, and he ensured that the triumph of La Rochelle was marked by an intense flurry of laudatory pamphlets celebrating the Catholic victory.⁴⁹ Thus when the first weekly newspapers appeared in 1631, Richelieu was quick to see the benefit of bringing them within his orbit. These were not strictly speaking the first weekly news-sheets to be published in French. As in the English case, the Amsterdam news men had tried their hand with a French translation of the Dutch *Courante*, but it had lasted only a few issues.⁵⁰ When this paper folded it would be ten years before another French-language newspaper was established, this time in Paris. The *Nouvelles ordinaires des divers endroits* was the work of three experienced Paris bookmen, who sensibly employed a German, Louis Epstin, to shape the new venture.⁵¹ It clearly found a ready audience, and this in turn encouraged competition. On 30 May 1631 there appeared the first edition of the Paris *Gazette*, the work of a man well known in Paris, though not in the printing fraternity: Théophraste Renaudot.

Renaudot was a rather unlikely newsman.⁵² Born into a Protestant family in 1586, he was a star student at the famous medical faculty at Montpellier, attaining his doctorate at the age of twenty. Returning to his home town Loudun, in 1611 he was introduced to the local bishop, Armand de Richelieu. Renaudot immediately gravitated into Richelieu's circle. Appointed a royal physician in 1612, he followed Richelieu to Paris, converted to Catholicism, and was appointed to manage and reform the provision of poor relief in the capital. Well connected among the Parisian intellectual community, Renaudot had little experience as a printer. But when he tried his hand at a weekly news-sheet, sparking outraged protests from the publishers of the *Nouvelles ordinaires*, Richelieu saw the opportunity to take the nascent newspapers under his control. On 11 November 1631, by Crown decree, it was confirmed that Renaudot should have the exclusive right to print, sell and distribute newspapers within the kingdom.⁵³

Renaudot moved quickly to press home his advantage. Epstin was induced to leave the Paris consortium to work for him; Renaudot even stole the title and published his own *Nouvelles ordinaires* as a supplement to the weekly *Gazette*. His competitors did not give up without a fight. They protested to the king that Renaudot's *Gazette* was little more than a translation of news gathered from foreign news-sheets. The *Gazette* may indeed have been professionally unadventurous, but at this point this was exactly what Richelieu wanted. In 1633 and 1635 Renaudot's exclusive privilege was confirmed, with ever harsher penalties for breach. The Paris consortium gave way.

The *Gazette* appeared every Saturday. Using three presses, Renaudot could publish an edition of 1,200 copies in a day, no mean feat since with the addition

of the *Nouvelles ordinaires* the *Gazette* ran to twelve or more quarto pages. Although foreign despatches remained a mainstay, Renaudot began to offer in addition increasingly detailed reports of the king's activities, from Paris, Versailles or St Germain. It was here that the *Gazette* deviated most profoundly from the European norm, for in contrast to the dry detail of the foreign despatches, the news from court adopted a tone of worshipful adulation. Renaudot's glorification of the king was unrestrained and unremitting: France was blessed with a ruler of rare gentility, talent, courage and humanity. This catalogue of all the virtues extended of course to artistic talents: he performed at ballet 'with the delight inseparable from all the activities to which His Majesty applied himself'.⁵⁴

The reality was that Louis XIII was never robust; the steady deterioration of his health in 1642, well known at court, was not touched upon in the *Gazette*. The same gushing deference was of course extended to Richelieu, to whom Renaudot exhibited unstinting loyalty. When Richelieu appeared before the



9.5 The Paris *Gazette*. Despite his previous lack of experience in the industry, Renaudot brought to the enterprise considerable flair and design sense. The *Nouvelles ordinaires* specialised in news from the Empire.

Parlement of Paris in 1634 to deal with the difficult issue of the king's brother's marriage, Renaudot was on hand to record his persuasive skills:

His Eminence's unequalled eloquence, and the perfect knowledge he had of this material made the discourse so easy for him, that he spoke for nearly an hour. During which time one had never seen such attention, with the eyes of the entire assembly steadily fixed upon him, their ears set upon every word, and their bodies immobile, these were certain signs: as their unanimous applause was so far from any suspicion of flattery, it was their state of rapture which made him so able to gain the hearts of the entire audience.⁵⁵

Beyond these oblations to power, and assured of the Cardinal's trust, Renaudot also found room in the *Gazette* for a wide variety of reports from abroad. After 1635 despatches from Germany took up increasing space, and Renaudot also kept his readers fully acquainted with the developing crisis in the English monarchy. The contrast with the stability of the French Crown was implicit, but helpful.

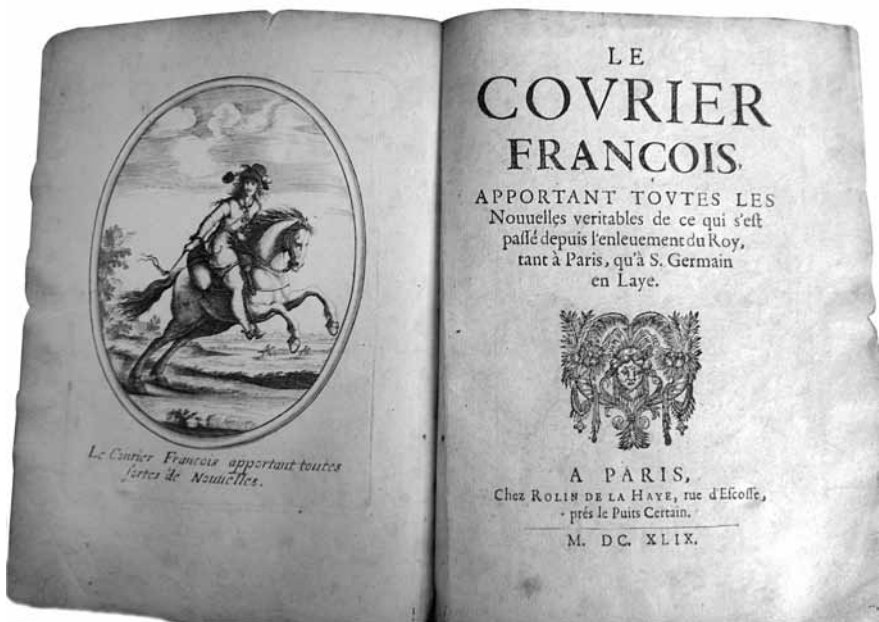
In such turbulent times the desire to be informed extended well beyond the metropolitan elite of Paris, and the *Gazette* was soon being pirated in provincial markets: in Rouen from 1631 and from 1633 in Aix-en-Provence. Rather than engage in costly litigation, or supply the market himself from Paris, Renaudot found a novel solution: he franchised the text of the *Gazette* to licensed provincial printers.⁵⁶ In return for a fee they published their own editions. Thus regional editions of the *Gazette* were established in Rouen, Lyon and Bordeaux. From these places copies could reach every corner of the kingdom. The accounts of a Grenoble bookseller, for instance, record him sending copies to clients in Die, Valence, Gap, Nîmes and Besançon. The voice of the court was heard throughout the kingdom.

This was shrewd as well as lucrative. By this system Renaudot ensured that none of the printers in the south of France, far removed from the close supervision possible in Paris, would be willing to chance their arm with their own newspapers. Thus it came to pass that a kingdom of close to 20 million inhabitants, with more than thirty established centres of printing, subsisted on a single weekly newspaper. So it would remain until the great rebellion of mid-century, the Fronde, temporarily suspended royal authority, and provoked a new storm of public debate.

The Fronde was, in essence, a shriek of pain by two groups who resented their exclusion from power during the minority of Louis XIV: the nobility and the Paris legal establishment. They focused their discontents on the minister who had smoothly adopted the mantle of Richelieu, Cardinal Mazarin. The

campaign against him was conducted very largely in print, in a deluge of pamphlets; as many as 5,000 in the three years of the conflict, including 3,000 in the year 1649 alone.⁵⁷ No wonder one of these titles offered ironic thanks to Mazarin for making so much work for printers: ‘Your life is an inexhaustible subject for authors, and indefatigable for printers. . . . Half of Paris is either printing or selling these books, the other half is writing them.’⁵⁸ These pamphlets had everything: wit, oratory, passion, even a talking horse.⁵⁹ Yet even while, in this moment of crisis, printers reached for the pamphlet, the traditional safety valve of major news events, they were still keen to appropriate for these works the new nomenclature of the periodical press. Thus there was a flurry of pamphlet *Couriers* and *Journals*, the odd *Mercury*, and even one optimistically titled *Disinterested Gazetteer*.⁶⁰ Small hope of that. Like all the rest, this title was an excoriating denunciation of Mazarin and all his works:

Aristotle tells us that some are good by nature, some by doctrine, and some by custom. Cardinal Mazarin demonstrates that he is of a fourth type, since he could only be good by a miracle.⁶¹



9.6 The *Courier françois*, which flourished briefly during Renaudot's exile from Paris.

Amongst this pamphlet fury there was one attempt to establish a genuine serial to replace the suspended *Gazette*. Renaudot, no doubt with some reluctance, had been forced to follow the king to St Germain, leaving an opportunity for some enterprising Parisian printer to fill this gap in the market. The result was the *Courier françois*, which went through twelve issues in 1649, and several reprints.⁶² It was once thought that this was the work of Renaudot's two sons, left behind in Paris by the gazetteer to continue his business. This seems unlikely. Even in the slippery world of news publishing it is improbable that a man who had benefited so freely from royal patronage would have attempted to serve both the king and his opponents simultaneously.⁶³ In any case as soon as Paris was restored to royal control Renaudot moved to suppress the new rival. This tussle also found its echo in the pamphlet literature, in a piquant booklet entitled *The commerce of news re-established, or the Courier suppressed by the Gazette*.⁶⁴ Not everyone in the Paris trade was pleased; but Renaudot retained the king's confidence, and that was decisive. The *Gazette* re-emerged, with its monopoly intact, to chronicle the foreign triumphs of France's armies in the reign of Louis XIV.⁶⁵

The logic of monopoly seems also to have attracted another powerful mind, Paolo Sarpi in Venice. In the early years of the seventeenth century Sarpi had built a reputation as a gifted writer, notably as a defender of the city against Cardinal Bellarmine in the Interdict Controversy of 1606–7.⁶⁶ Reflecting on these events a decade later, and aware of the growing market for printed news in other parts of Europe, Sarpi at first believed that Venice should grasp the nettle and make its own case to an informed public. The best strategy, he argued, was to create one's own narrative of events, and thus crowd out false or unhelpful intelligence. But this raised the danger that any information in the hands of the subject could lead them to develop their own opinions on political affairs. When the subject becomes politically informed,

He gradually begins to judge the prince's actions; he becomes so accustomed to this communication that he believes it is due him, and when it is not given, he sees a false significance or else perceives an affront and conceives hatred.⁶⁷

All in all, this was best avoided. 'Everyone confesses,' was Sarpi's reluctant conclusion, 'that the true way of ruling the subject is to keep him ignorant of and reverent towards public affairs.'⁶⁸

Sarpi was remarkably frank, but the sentiments he expresses here seem to have been the prevailing view in Italy's largest cities. Neither Rome nor Venice, the two great centres of European news publication, produced newspapers. The first experiments in serial publication were in much smaller

homeland. Perhaps, for those who cared, it disguised the unpalatable fact that real power had shifted to elsewhere in Europe.

The first age of the newspaper was a period of profound but constrained experimentation. The new invention flourished in a comparatively small part of the European land mass and, even here, the dry and rather routine reporting of faraway events does little to quicken the blood of a modern reader. We can find some interest in the different solutions to the design and practical problems of serial publication, but, this apart, what had been achieved by the first tentative steps in the creation of a regular printed news service? Here, examining the short, often rather grubby surviving issues, it is easy to be too dismissive. Contemporaries certainly valued them very highly. We should not belittle the English squire, or the citizen of Amsterdam or Dresden, poring over their paper, trying to make sense of the shifting kaleidoscope of faraway events. No doubt perusal of the weekly newspaper required frequent recourse to an atlas, another increasingly necessary adornment of a well-stocked library. Undoubtedly it was by no means easy to determine whether the clipped reports of campaigns and manoeuvres brought news that was good, bad, or even very interesting. But if much news was ill-digested, there is no doubt that by placing it in so many hands the newspapers of the seventeenth century achieved a double broadening of political consciousness: they increased the numbers of the politically aware, and they expanded their worldview. Newspapers also began to build in their readers a habit of news. Great events would still unleash a storm of pamphlets, full of engaged advocacy, but in quieter times readers came to value the steady miscellany of information that arrived with the newspaper. For many in the seventeenth century, and for the price of two pence a week, it was an affordable habit. In the years ahead, it would increasingly become an addiction.

15. Wolfgang Behringer, 'Fugger und Taxis. Der Anteil Augsburger Kaufleute an der Entstehung des europäischen Kommunikationssystems', in Johannes Burkhardt (ed.), *Augsburger Handelshäuser im Wandel des historischen Urteils* (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1996), pp. 24–48.
16. Hans and Marx Fugger stood godfather to Octavia von Taxis in 1572, and Hans Fugger acted as executor for the Augsburg postmaster Seraphin in 1582. Behringer, 'Fugger und Taxis', in Burkhardt (ed.), *Augsburger Handelshäuser*, pp. 241–8.
17. Von Sautter, 'Auffindung einer grossen Anzahl verschlossener Briefe aus dem Jahre 1585', *Archiv für Post und Telegraphie*, 4 (1909), pp. 97–115.
18. Von Sautter, 'Briefe aus dem Jahre 1585', pp. 107–9.
19. A. L. E. Verheyden, 'Une correspondance inédite adressée par des familles protestantes des Pays-Bas à leurs coreligionnaires d'Angleterre (11 novembre 1569–25 février 1570)', *Bulletin de la Commission Royale d'Histoire*, 120 (1955), pp. 95–257.
20. The letters are discussed in Andrew Pettegree, *Foreign Protestant Communities in Sixteenth-Century London* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986), pp. 221–5.
21. See Chapter 7 above.
22. M. A. H. Fitzler, *Die Entstehung der sogenannten Fuggerzeitungen in der Wiener Nationalbibliothek* (Vienna: Rohrer, 1937), p. 61.
23. Behringer, *Thurn und Taxis*, p. 52.
24. *Ibid.*, p. 56.
25. Behringer, *Im Zeichen des Merkur*, pp. 132–6.
26. Erich Kuhlmann, 'Aus Hamburgs älterer Postgeschichte', *Archiv für deutsche Postgeschichte, Sonderheft* (1984), pp. 36–68.
27. Behringer, *Thurn und Taxis*, p. 58.
28. Reproduced in *ibid.*, pp. 70–1.
29. Behringer, *Im Zeichen des Merkur*, pp. 177–88.
30. *Ibid.*, p. 178.
31. *Ibid.*, pp. 205–11.
32. Swedish involvement in the international diplomacy of these years was graphically demonstrated by the discovery in 1936 of the largest known surviving collection of seventeenth-century newspapers in the stacks of the Royal Library in Stockholm. See Folke Dahl, *The Birth of the European Press as Reflected in the Newspaper Collection of the Royal Library* (Stockholm: Rundqvists Boktryckeri, 1960).
33. See below, Chapter 10.
34. Klaus Beyrer, *Die Postkutschenreise* (Tübingen: Ludwig-Uhland-Institut, 1985); *idem*, 'The Mail-Coach Revolution: Landmarks in Travel in Germany between the Seventeenth and Nineteenth Centuries', *German History*, 24 (2006), pp. 375–86.

Chapter 9 The First Newspapers

1. Johannes Weber, 'Strassburg 1605: The Origins of the Newspaper in Europe', *German History*, 24 (2006), pp. 387–412.
2. Elizabeth Armstrong, *Before Copyright: The French Book-Privilege System, 1498–1526* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990).
3. The University of Heidelberg has an almost complete run for this year, which has now been digitised: <http://digi.ub.uni-heidelberg.de/diglit/relation1609>.
4. Johannes Weber, "'Unterthenige Supplication Johann Caroli, Buchtrucker.'" Der Beginn gedruckter politischer Wochenzeitungen im Jahre 1605', *Archiv für Geschichte des Buchwesens*, 38 (1992), pp. 257–65.
5. The standard directory of early German newspapers is Else Bogel and Elgar Blühm, *Die deutschen Zeitungen des 17. Jahrhunderts. Ein Bestandverzeichnis*, 2 vols (Bremen: Schünemann, 1971); *Nachtrag* (Munich: Saur, 1985). See also Holger Böning, *Deutsche Presse. Bibliographische Handbücher zur Geschichte der deutschsprachigen periodischen Presse von den Anfängen bis 1815*, 6 vols (Stuttgart-Bad Cannstatt: Frommann-Holzboog, 1996–2003).
6. Paul Ries, 'The Anatomy of a Seventeenth-Century Newspaper', *Daphnis*, 6 (1977), pp. 171–232; *idem*, 'Der Inhalt der Wochenzeitungen von 1609 im Computer', *Deutsche Presseforschung*, 26 (1987), pp. 113–25.
7. Weber, 'Strassburg 1605', p. 398.

8. Karl Heinz Kremer, *Johann von den Birghden, 1582–1645. Kaiserlicher und königlich-schwedischer Postmeister zu Frankfurt am Main* (Bremen: Lumière, 2005); idem, 'Johann von den Birghden, 1582–1645', *Archiv für deutsche Postgeschichte* (1984), pp. 7–43.
9. Listed in Bogel and Blühm, *Deutschen Zeitungen*, no. 5.
10. *Ibid.*, no. 15.
11. *Ibid.*, no. 16.
12. In this respect Meyer's decision to call his second weekly issue, started in 1630, also *Postzeitung*, was a definite and unnecessary provocation.
13. Thus, in the case of Meyer's *Wöchentliche Zeitung auss mehrerley örther*, the Tuesday edition was given the title *Prima*, and the Thursday edition, *Wöchentliche Zeitung*. See Bogel and Blühm, *Deutschen Zeitungen*, no. 15.
14. Folke Dahl, *Dutch Corantos, 1618–1650: A Bibliography* (The Hague: Koninklijke Bibliotheek, 1946); Folke Dahl, *The Birth of the European Press as Reflected in the Newspaper Collection of the Royal Library* (Stockholm: Rundqvists Boktryckeri, 1960).
15. Folke Dahl, 'Amsterdam, Earliest Newspaper Centre of Western Europe: New Contributions to the History of the first Dutch and French Corantos', *Het Boek*, XXV (1939), III, pp. 161–97, with a reproduction of this issue from the copy in Stockholm Royal Library. See also D. H. Couvée, 'The First Couranteers – The Flow of the News in the 1620s', *Gazette*, 8 (1962), pp. 22–36.
16. This means that in cases where copies of both printings survive, they are likely to exhibit small typographical differences. Dahl, *Dutch Corantos*, pp. 20–23, with reproductions of the copies in the Royal Library in Stockholm and the Mazarine Library in Paris.
17. Dahl, *Dutch Corantos*, pp. 23–6.
18. Dahl, 'Amsterdam, Earliest Newspaper Centre', pp. 190–91.
19. *Ibid.*, pp. 185–6.
20. On advertising see *ibid.*, pp. 161–98, and Chapter 14 below.
21. Michiel van Groesen, 'A Week to Remember: Dutch Publishers and the Competition for News from Brazil, 26 August–2 September 1624', *Quaerendo*, 40 (2010), pp. 26–49.
22. Paul Arblaster, 'Current Affairs Publishing in the Habsburg Netherlands, 1620–1660' (Oxford University DPhil dissertation, 1999); Leon Voet, 'Abraham Verhoeven en de Antwerpse pers', *De Gulden Passer*, 31 (1953), pp. 1–37. See also, most recently, Stéphane Brabant, *L'imprimeur Abraham Verhoeven (1575–1652) et les débuts de la presse 'belge'* (Paris: A.E.E.F, 2009).
23. See Christiaan Schuckman, *Hollstein's Dutch and Flemish Etchings, Engravings and Woodcuts, ca. 1450–1700*, vol. XXXV (Roosendaal: van Poll, 1990), pp. 217–26, nos 2–5.
24. The text of the privilege is given in Brabant, *Verhoeven*, p. 281.
25. Illustrated in Dahl, *The Birth of the European Press*, p. 18.
26. Augustus, 1621, 112. *Tijdinghe wt Weenen, ende hoe dat het doodt lichaem . . . van Bucquoy, binnen . . . Weenen op chrijschmaniere . . . is ghebrocht, ende in baren ghestelt, inde kercke vande minimen*. Copies in Antwerp, Heritage Library: B 17885: II, 112, and London, British Library: PP.3444 af (269).
27. Paul Arblaster, *Antwerp and the World: Richard Verstegen and the International Culture of Catholic Reformation* (Louvain: Louvain University Press, 2004).
28. As demonstrated in Andrew Pettegree, 'Tabloid Values: On the Trail of Europe's First News Hound', in Richard Kirwan and Sophie Mullins (eds), *Specialist Markets in the Early Modern Book World* (Leiden: Brill, 2014).
29. Quoted Paul Arblaster, 'Policy and Publishing in the Habsburg Netherlands, 1585–1690', in Brendan Dooley and Sabrina Baron (eds), *The Politics of Information in Early Modern Europe* (London: Routledge, 2001), p. 185.
30. Lisa Ferraro Parmelee, *Good News from Fraunce: French Anti-League Propaganda in Late Elizabethan England* (Rochester, NY: University of Rochester Press, 1996).
31. I. Atherton, 'The Itch Grown a Disease: Manuscript Transmission of News in the Seventeenth Century', in Joad Raymond, *News, Newspapers, and Society in Early Modern Britain* (London: Cass, 1999). For the career of one particular newsletter agent, see William S. Powell, *John Pory, 1572–1636: The Life and Letters of a Man of Many Parts* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1976).

32. Folke Dahl, *A Bibliography of English Corantos and Periodical Newsbooks, 1620–1642* (London: Bibliographical Society, 1952), nos 1–16 (with illustrations). The printer was Joris Veseler, the same man who had printed the Dutch edition for van Hilten. Dahl, *Birth of the European Press*, p. 29. See STC 18507.1–17.
33. Dahl, *Birth of the European Press*; STC 18507.18–25 (Amsterdam: Jansz.; or London for Thomas Archer). STC 18507.29–35 (London: N. Butter).
34. STC 18507.35–81.
35. Dahl, *Bibliography*, nos 80 ff.
36. Illustrated Dahl, *Birth of the European Press*, p. 30.
37. Nicholas Brownlees, *Corantos and Newsbooks: Language and Discourse in the First English Newspapers (1620–1641)* (Pisa: Ets, 1999); Nicholas Brownlees, *The Language of Periodical News in Seventeenth-Century England* (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars, 2011).
38. C. John Sommerville, *The News Revolution in England: Cultural Dynamics of Daily Information* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), p. 26.
39. *Ibid.*
40. An example in Jason Peacey and Chris R. Kyle, *Breaking News: Renaissance Journalism and the Birth of the Newspaper* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2009), p. 55: ‘I send you here enclosed the Currantos that are come out since my last letter, which is in effect all our present foreign news.’
41. Michael Frearson, ‘The Distribution and Readership of London Corantos in the 1620s’, in Robin Myers and Michael Harris (eds), *Serials and their Readers, 1620–1914* (Winchester: St Paul’s Bibliographies, 1993), p. 17.
42. Thomas Cogswell, “‘Published by Authoritie’: Newsbooks and the Duke of Buckingham’s Expedition to the Ile de Ré’, *Huntington Library Quarterly*, 67 (2004), pp. 1–26, here p. 4.
43. In the original: ‘1. To settle a way when there shall be any revolt or back sliding in matters of religion or obedience (which commonly grows with rumours among the vulgar) to draw them in by the same lines that drew them out, by spreading among them such reports as may best make for that matter to which we would have they drawn. 2. To establish a speedy and ready way whereby to disperse in the veins of the whole body of a state such matter as may best temper it, and be most agreeable to the disposition of the head and principal members. 3. To devise means to raise the spirits of the people and to quicken their concepts. . . . It extends the sense by degrees to the concept of the right rules of reason, whereby they are wrought easily to obey those which by those rules shall command them.’ Powell, *Pory* (1976), p. 52.
44. See here the brilliant article by Thomas Cogswell, “‘Published by Authoritie’”.
45. *Ibid.*, p. 14.
46. Frearson, ‘London Corantos’, p. 3.
47. Jayne E. E. Boys, *London’s News Press and the Thirty Years War* (Woodbridge: Boydell, 2011).
48. Jeffrey K. Sawyer, *Printed Poison: Pamphlet Propaganda, Faction Politics, and the Public Sphere in Early Seventeenth-Century France* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1990).
49. Christian Jouhaud, ‘Printing the Event: From La Rochelle to Paris’, in Roger Chartier (ed.), *The Culture of Print: Power and Uses of Print in Early Modern Europe* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1989), pp. 290–333.
50. Dahl, *Birth of the European Press*, pp. 23–4.
51. See the article by Gilles Feyel in Jean Sgard, *Dictionnaire des Journaux 1600–1789* (Paris: Universitas, and Oxford: Voltaire Foundation, 1991), pp. 967–70.
52. Howard M. Solomon, *Public Welfare, Science, and Propaganda in Seventeenth-Century France: The Innovations of Théophraste Renaudot* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1972); Christian Bailly, *Théophraste Renaudot: un homme d’influence au temps de Louis XIII et de la Fronde* (Paris: Le Pré aux Clercs, 1987).
53. Gilles Feyel, *L’annonce et la nouvelle. La presse d’information en France sous l’ancien régime (1630–1788)* (Oxford: Voltaire Foundation, 2000), pp. 131–90.
54. Solomon, *Public Welfare*, p. 126.
55. *Ibid.*, p. 129; see also idem, ‘The Gazette and Antistatist Propaganda: The Medium of Print in the First Half of the Seventeenth Century’, *Canadian Journal of History*, 9 (1974), pp. 1–17.

56. Feyel, *L'annonce et la nouvelle*, pp. 476–503.
57. The standard work is C. Moreau, *Bibliographie des Mazarinades* (Paris: Société de l'histoire de France, 1850–51), though this makes only the most rudimentary attempt to distinguish between different editions of the same title.
58. *Remercement des imprimeurs a monseigneur le Cardinal Mazarin* (N. Boisset, 1649), p. 4; Moreau, *Mazarinades*, no. 3,280.
59. *Avis burlesque du cheval de Mazarin à son maître* (Paris: veuve Musnier, 1649); Moreau, *Mazarinades*, no. 494.
60. Moreau, *Mazarinades*, nos 811–835 (*Courier*), 1,466–1,472 (*Gazette*), 1,740–1,764 (*Journal*), 2,451–2,457 (*Mercury*).
61. *Le gazetier des-interressé* (Paris: Jean Brunet, 1649), sig. B2r; Moreau, *Mazarinades*, no. 1,466.
62. Moreau, *Mazarinades*, no. 830.
63. *Ibid.*, I, pp. 249–50, for the identification of Eusèbe and Isaac Renaudot as publishers of the *Courier*. See now H. Carrier, *La Presse de la Fronde (1648–1653): les Mazarinades* (Paris: Droz, 1989), I, 188–189 and note 605.
64. Moreau, *Mazarinades*, no. 718.
65. Below, Chapter 11; Stéphane Haffemayer, *L'information dans la France du XVIIe siècle: La Gazette de Renaudot de 1647 à 1663* (Paris: Champion, 2002).
66. Filippo de Vivo, *Information and Communication in Venice: Rethinking Early Modern Politics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007).
67. Quoted Brendan Dooley, *The Social History of Skepticism: Experience and Doubt in Early Modern Culture* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1999), p. 34.
68. *Ibid.*, Filippo de Vivo, 'Paolo Sarpi and the Uses of Information in Seventeenth-Century Venice', *Media History*, 11 (2005), pp. 37–51.
69. Dooley, *Skepticism*, p. 54.
70. Examples of profits from *ibid.*, p. 42.
71. *Ibid.*, p. 46.

Chapter 10 War and Rebellion

1. Johannes Weber, 'Der grosse Krieg und die frühe Zeitung. Gestalt und Entwicklung der deutschen Nachrichtenpresse in der ersten Hälfte des 17. Jahrhunderts', *Jahrbuch für Kommunikationsgeschichte*, 1 (1999), pp. 23–61, here p. 25.
2. Karl Heinz Kremer, *Johann von den Birghden, 1582–1645. Kaiserlicher und königlich-schwedischer Postmeister zu Frankfurt am Main* (Bremen: Lumière, 2005); *ibid.*, 'Johann von den Birghden, 1582–1645', *Archiv für deutsche Postgeschichte* (1984), pp. 7–43.
3. Esther-Beate Körber, 'Deutschsprachige Flugschriften des Dreissigjährigen Krieges 1618 bis 1629', *Jahrbuch für Kommunikationsgeschichte*, 3 (2001), pp. 1–37.
4. Weber, 'Der grosse Krieg und die frühe Zeitung', p. 25: the victims were described as Herr Slawata, Herr Schmozonsky, and Herr Philip P, Secretarius.
5. *Ibid.*, p. 29.
6. Else Bogel and Elgar Blühm, *Die deutschen Zeitungen des 17. Jahrhunderts. Ein Bestandverzeichnis*, 2 vols (Bremen: Schünemann, 1971); Else Bogel and Elgar Blühm, *Nachtrag* (Munich: Saur, 1985), vol. I, pp. 48–51; II, pp. 50–51.
7. Johannes Weber, 'Kontrollmechanismen im deutschen Zeitungswesen des 17. Jahrhunderts', *Jahrbuch für Kommunikationsgeschichte*, 6 (2004), pp. 56–73.
8. See for the following especially John Roger Paas, *The German Political Broadsheet, 1600–1700*, 11 vols (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1985–2012); Elmer A. Beller, *Propaganda during the Thirty Years War* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1940), offers a small selection of the broadsheets, but usefully also has an English translation of the accompanying texts.
9. Above, Chapter 4.
10. The classic study is Robert W. Scribner, *For the Sake of Simple Folk: Popular Propaganda for the German Reformation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981). For criticism of the implicit argument that the customers were generally from lower social classes than the buyers of pamphlets, see my *Reformation: The Culture of Persuasion* (Cambridge: Cambridge