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# From Grub Street to Fleet Street: The Development of the Early English Newspaper Transcript

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OUR KING AND COUNTRY



## PIERCE EGAN'S LIFE IN LONDON, AND SPORTING GUIDE,

CONNECTED WITH THE EVENTS OF THE TURF, THE CHASE, AND THE RING.

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No. 165.] SUNDAY, MARCH 25th, 1827, [Eightpence Halfpenny.]

<p><b>COBURG THEATRE.</b>  <b>WEDNESDAY, March 28, and Friday the 30th, 1827.</b>      To commence with a Grand Miscellaneous PANTADISACORIA, under the Title of  <b>LENTEN LUCUBRATIONS.</b>      First Part of which will consist of a Musical, Comical, Recitatory, Anecdotic, and      Imitative Entertainments, to be Delivered by  <b>MR. W. H. WILLIAMS</b>      and 'lect  <b>WHIMS AND ODDITIES!</b>  <b>OR, ROAD-SIDE STORIES.</b>      a Merry Tour through LIFE'S SEVEN STAGES. In which the following Songs are      introduced:  <b>THE CHRISTENING</b>—Composed by J. Blewit, Esq. <b>RAIN! RAIN! GO</b>  <b>Y!</b>—Composed by J. Blewit, Esq. <b>WEDDINGS ALL OVER THE WORLD.</b>  <b>TRY CANDIDATES.</b> <b>BILL'S BIRTH-DAY</b>—Written by J. Beuler, Esq. <b>PAWN-</b>  <b>ER'S SHOP ON SATURDAY NIGHT</b>—Written by T. Hudson. <b>LOVE SICK</b>  <b>Y</b>—Written by Mr. Edwin. <b>WERRY PEKOOLIAH</b>, Written by J. Beuler, and      sung by J. Blewit, Esq.—And Finale.      which will be added a Grand PHANTASMAGORIA Under the Denomination of <b>The</b>  <b>WORLD OF MAGIC!</b>      The following beautiful and entirely Novel Effect will be produced by means of      the most recent improvements never before attempted in this Species of Machinery, being the      Invention and under the sole Direction of Mr. Huggins.      A grand and terrific Representation of Death on the Pale Horse; after the celebrated Pictur      of the late President of the Royal Academy. <b>FOREST BY MOONLIGHT</b>, with Moving      Figures, on an entirely Novel Plan, representing the Meeting of Raymond and the Blood-</p>	<div style="text-align: center;">  </div> <p><b>SUPERFINE BEAVER HATS 31s.</b> Warranted better for      the Money than any in the Trade, in a variety of modern Shapes.  <b>SILK HATS</b> made on Beaver Bodies, 10s. to 15s. <b>PATENT DOUBLE-EDGED SILK</b>  <b>HATS</b> exceedingly Light and Durable, 17s.      An extensive Assortment of Gentlemen's TRAVELLING CASES, 'Yaughts' and 'Soy's'  <b>HATS</b>, of every description from 5s. 6d.  <b>Observe, 415, Strand, Two Doors West of the Adelphi</b>  <b>Theatre, and at Hammersmith.</b></p> <div style="text-align: center;">  </div> <p style="text-align: center;">TO NOBLEMEN AND GENTLEMEN.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>SECOND EDITION.</b></p> <p>Just Published in 8vo. price 2s. 6d. with a PORTRAIT of his      late ROYAL HIGHNESS: also an inferior edition without the      Portrait, 1s. 6d.  <b>THE last ILLNESS AND DECEASE</b> of his late ROYAL      HIGHNESS the DUKE OF YORK; being a Journal of Occurrences which took place be-      tween the 5th June, 1815, and the 31st January, 1827. By Lieut.-Gen. SIR HERBERT      TAYLOR, G.C.H.      Printed for Wm. SAMS, Bookseller, to his late Royal Highness the Duke of York, and to      the Royal Family, No. 1, St. James's-street, opposite the Palace.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">In post 8vo. Price 4s. 6d.—Third Edition.</p> <p><b>LETTERS FROM COCKNEY LANDS:</b> Containing      a Detection of the AUTHOR OF "ALMACK'S," "London HELLS," &amp;c. &amp;c.      Printed for Wm. SAMS, Royal Library, opposite St. James's Palace.      The IDENTIFICATION of the Author of "ALMACK'S," may be had separate, price 6d.</p> <p><b>NAVAL AND MILITARY MAGAZINE.</b> The Second      Edition of No. 1. will be ready for delivery to-morrow; and may be had of all      Booksellers.      T. C. Smith, Publisher, 30, St. James's Street.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Just published,      By CLERC SMITH, 36, St. James's-street, London.      THE VETERINARY SURGEON'S MARY MOON</p>
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3 June 2013

**From Grub Street to Fleet Street:  
The Development of the Early English Newspaper**

Bob Clarke

Grub Street was both a geographical location and a metaphor. Grub Street, the place, ran just north of here from Chiswell Street to Fore Street. It was renamed Milton Street in the 1830s. Only a couple of hundred yards have survived. The rest lies buried under the Barbican.

Grub Street was outside the City walls. It was in an area of poverty and vice, teeming with disreputable tenements, mean courts, low alehouses and dark alleys.

Samuel Johnson said Grub Street was much inhabited by writers of small histories, dictionaries, and temporary poems.

We know that some of the more destitute writers and printers lived in the area around Grub Street. Journalists too: Defoe was born just round the corner in Fore Street. He died in Ropemakers Alley, one of the many dark passages that fed into Grub Street. At least one Civil War newsbook was published from Grub Street.

In the 1640s and 1650s with the explosion of newsbooks and other unlicensed publications, the warrens surrounding Grub Street were the hiding places of fugitive printers lugging their moonshine presses from one garret to the next, trying to keep one step ahead of the authorities.

The term, Grub Street, was first recorded in its non-geographical sense in 1630. It became more prevalent during the Civil War when both sides paid the authors of newsbooks to fight a paper war on their behalf. With the formation of political parties after the Restoration, the term became established to describe journalists, political pamphleteers and other writers of ephemeral publications who, with neither a private income nor a wealthy patron, had to write for money in order to survive.

Grub Street is a metaphor for the hack writer.

The word 'hack' derives from Hackney, originally meaning a horse for hire and later a prostitute, a woman for hire. Finally, it was applied to a writer for hire. Paid by the line, scratching a precarious living from the lower reaches of literature, including journalism, the Grub Street hack received no public acclaim. Instead he received the sneers and jibes of his more successful contemporaries who, by a mixture of ability and flattery, had found the security of a patron. His life was pictured by Hogarth in the *Distressed Poet*. His condition was described by Ned Ward as,

"very much like that of a Strumpet ... and if the reason be requir'd, why we betake our selves to be so Scandalous a Profession as Whoring or Pamphleteering, the same excusive Answer will serve us both, viz. that the unhappy circumstances of a Narrow Fortune, hath forced us to do that for our Subsistence."

In the eyes of the establishment, journalists were a semi-criminal class. Their uncertain way of life, with its irregular payment and vulnerability to the law, compelled them to live in the lower quarters of the city, such as the Grub Street area. They could only make their living in a hackney kind of way by prostituting their pens to the highest bidder: Tories one day, Whigs the next, and all the time suffering harassment from authority.

Although maligned, venal and brimful of human failings, the men and women of Grub Street are the heroes of my book. Risking prison, the pillory and even death to publish the events of the day, they entertained and informed their readers. They enraged the Establishment by having the audacity to criticise the powerful, and by having the audacity to behave as if the conduct of government was any of their business. The pioneers of Grub Street laid the foundations of Fleet Street and the modern newspaper.

Almost from the time that Caxton first introduced printing to England in 1476, the State regarded the printing press as a dangerous weapon. The printing of news was doubly dangerous: it would lead the people to question the authority of the State.

In 1538 Henry the Eighth decreed that all printed matter had to be approved by the Privy Council or its deputies before publication. Even "spoken news or rumour" was prohibited by Edward the Sixth's proclamations of 1547 and 1549. By 1581 the publication of seditious material had become a capital offence.

The only form of printed news that was permitted was either government propaganda, such as the first recorded newsbook, *Hereafter ensue the trewe encounter or Batayle lately don between Englade and Scotlande*, a contemporary account of the Battle of Flodden in 1513; or broadsides of "wonderful and strange news" of witchcraft, murders and strange monsters. Titles like, *Hevy newes of an horrible earthquake; or A straunge and terrible wonder wrought in the parish church of Bungay* ("...in a great tempest of violente raine, lightening and thunder ... a horrible shaped thing was sensibly perceived of the people then and there assembled, which in the twinkling of an eye, mortally wrung the necks of several worshippers").

When the Thirty Years War started in 1618 it was of intense interest to the London merchants who had dealings in Europe. Recognising this market for news, printers in Holland started producing English language newsbooks that were smuggled into this country. Fearful of losing control, the government licensed the first of a series of regular and numbered English newsbooks in 1622. These were known as corantos and were translations of continental newsbooks. But, due to Star Chamber censorship, they were forbidden to print English news.

The abolition of the Star Chamber, the collapse of Crown authority and the breakdown of censorship on the onset of the English Civil War marked the true beginnings of English journalism.

The first weekly newsbook of the newly freed press was started in November 1641 by Samuel Pecke. Pecke can therefore be described as the father of English journalism. He was described as "a bald-headed buzzard, constant in nothing but wenching, lying and drinking."

During the 1640s and 1650s, over 300 different titles came into existence. Some were short-lived, for one or two issues only, while others continued for several years. They mixed eye-witness reports of skirmishes and battles with conjecture and propaganda, each claiming victory for battles they had lost.

Unlike the news in the corantos, which were of direct importance to a very restricted group, the events recorded in the Civil War newsbooks affected everybody. At a penny or twopence a copy, they were read by a wide class of reader, especially in London where male literacy in the 1640s was between 70 and 80 per cent.

The importance of the Civil War newsbooks cannot be overstated. Newsbooks of all sides demonised the other with stories of atrocities. By recording the divisions between King and Parliament, Independent and Presbyterian, Army and Parliament, Grandees and Levellers, no one, however detached, who read the newsbooks could imagine that England was a nation at peace with itself. The reader was compelled to take sides. And the reader had developed a thirst for news.

Not everyone was in favour of this new found freedom of the press, however. One pamphleteer described journalists as:

This filthy Aviary, this moth-eaten crew of News-mongers, Every Jack-sprat that hath but a pen in his ink-horn is ready to gather up the Excrements of the Kingdom.

The leading journalist during the Civil War and Interregnum was Marchamont Nedham. Contemporaries said he had "a publique brothel in his mouth." Despite changing sides twice, he wound up as Cromwell's chief spin doctor, editing the two official newspapers of the Protectorate.

After the Restoration of Charles the Second, censorship was reimposed. The 1662 Printing Act restricted the number of presses and re-introduced pre-publication licensing. A particularly obnoxious character called Roger L'Estrange persuaded the King that he was the best person to enforce the Act. He caused John Twyn to be hung, drawn and quartered for publishing unlicensed material.

All other papers were suppressed except the *London Gazette*, which was published by the Government – the 17<sup>th</sup> century English equivalent of *Pravda*. From 1665 it enjoyed a monopoly of printed news. The late Stuart regime used the *London Gazette* to help maintain social and political order. The *Gazette* largely avoided domestic news, apart from Royal Proclamations. It projected the image of a nation at peace with itself again after the upheavals of the Civil War and the uncertainties of the Interregnum.

Unlike its predecessors, that were pamphlets of eight or sixteen pages that needed turning, the *London Gazette* was printed in double columns on both sides of a single sheet of paper. This enabled the busy merchant to see at a glance the events in Europe on which his business depended, and could be held in one hand by the man about town in the coffee houses that were springing up all over London. It gave rise to the word, "newspaper", which was first recorded in 1670.

After William of Orange became King, his continental campaigns created such a hunger for news that the existing controls became increasingly untenable. There was an attempt to redraft the Printing Act in 1695. However, they ran out of Parliamentary time and the Act simply failed to be renewed.

The importance of 1695, meant that anyone could set up a printing press and issue publications without permission. News would no longer be restricted to the information in the *London Gazette* that the state decided the public could be allowed to know. It would embrace a much wider selection of material – material that journalists thought the public should have the right to know, and material that journalists thought the public would also enjoy reading.

The demand for newspapers in the 18<sup>th</sup> century was stimulated by the political, social and economic conditions of the times: an expanding middle class; an increasingly literate artisan class; a developing party political system that needed an active press to further the battles between Whigs and Tories; and a thriving club and coffee-house culture whose participants prided themselves on being well-informed.

In 1712 the government introduced the Stamp Act, one of the first taxes on knowledge, which taxed each sheet of paper used to make up the existing two- or four-page newspapers. The tax meant governments were now dependent on newspapers as a source of revenue. So the fears receded that pre-publication licensing would be re-introduced. Opposition papers included the *Craftsman*, *Common Sense*, and *Mist's Weekly Journal*, which continued as *Fog's Weekly Journal* after Nathaniel Mist fled to France after a particularly foolhardy attack on the government in 1728. Those involved with the opposition press led a fairly precarious existence thanks to the law of seditious libel and the general warrant.

The law of seditious libel taken to its logical conclusion would have prevented any political comment in the press. Sedition was defined as anything that was likely to incite disaffection against the King, his heirs, the government, the Houses of Parliament and the administration of justice, even when the comments were based on the truth. The responsibility for determining whether an article was seditious lay entirely with the judge. The jury's function was limited to deciding whether the accused bore some responsibility for the article's publication.

The general warrant was the main weapon used to intimidate the press. They were called general warrants because they specified the offence and not the offender. They were used to hold in custody large numbers of people who had only the remotest connection with the publication in question. The warrants were enforced by the King's Messengers, a gang of hired thugs, who had the power to arrest anyone they wanted, to seize property and destroy printing equipment. Many journalists and printers faced heavy fines and imprisonment, some dying in jail.

However, because the anti-Ministerial papers trod dangerously and were generally more fun, they enjoyed higher sales than those papers that were simply dull apologists for the government, reacting to the agenda set by the opposition press.

The influence of the opposition press was such that Robert Walpole spent over £50,000 bribing journalists to support the government. The newspapers entertained their readers with a glorious display of Grub Street abuse, hack versus hack, in the columns of the Ministerial and anti-Ministerial papers.

However, in the space of eight years, from 1763 to 1771, three important victories for the freedom of the press were won:

General warrants were declared illegal;

It became up to the jury to decide whether a publication was a libel, and not an establishment judge as hitherto;

Newspapers won the right to publish the proceedings of parliament.

The story of these battles for the freedom of the press are well documented. John Wilkes was involved in most of those battles. And, as the theme of this series of lectures is oratory, it is worth quoting John Wilkes' declaration in the first issue his paper, the *North Briton*:

The Liberty of the Press is the birthright of a Briton, and is justly esteemed the firmest bulwark of the liberties of this country. It has been the terror of all bad Ministers; for their dark and dangerous designs, or their weakness, inability, and duplicity, have thus been detected.

Of all the non-political weekly journals of the 18th century, the *Grub-street Journal*, 'Sold at the Pegasus (vulgarly called the Flying-Horse) in Grub-street', was the most notorious for its propensity for starting quarrels with other writers and generally stirring up trouble.

It is thought that the *Grub-street Journal* was founded as a vehicle for Alexander Pope to attack his many enemies - a continuation of the *Dunciad* by other means. We don't know the full extent of Pope's involvement with the Journal. He contributed numerous verses to the

early issues, and the paper went out of its way to pick a fight with anyone he did not like.

Gradually Pope's influence, or interest, in the paper began to decline and the paper began to develop its own character, expanding the range of its satire beyond the confines of Pope's literary squabbles to cover a much wider range of material, including medicine, theology, the theatre, the administration of justice and other social issues. It attracted a large number of correspondents who used the paper to carry out their squabbles in public while the editors sat back and enjoyed the spectacle, prodding the antagonists into action where necessary. Whenever one controversy looked like running out of steam, the *Journal* would invent a new one to keep up the excitement.

Journalism was one of its main targets. The preface to the collected essays of the *Grub-street Journal* explained:

To furnish materials for the Daily Papers, Collectors are sent all over the City, suburbs and surrounding villages, to pick up articles of News; who being payed according to the length and number of them, it is no wonder that so few of them are true ... All News-papers ... may be justly looked upon as the productions of Grub-street ...

The *Grub-street Journal* printed contradictory accounts of the same event taken from the preceding week's newspapers, with sarcastic remarks on their discrepancies and inaccuracies. The frequent premature reports of deaths prompted this comment:

There is no privilege in which the authors of our daily and weekly papers may more justly glory than that of the power of life and death. Whom they will they send to the grave, and whom that they will they restore to life again ... The Archbishop of Canterbury, who, God be thanked, is still living, has often with pleasure and surprise read in these papers the account of his own death.

'We writers of diurnals are nearer in our styles to that of common talk than any other writers', wrote Richard Steele in the *Tatler* in 1710. And those common talkers were providing the social backcloth to their times. In compiling their hastily produced paragraphs of news, the news writers were unknowingly writing for posterity. Those few newspapers that have survived from two or three hundred years ago can tell us more about what was important to their readers, and the pleasures and dangers of the life of their times, than any other source. If Hogarth painted the picture of 18th century life, the newspaper supplied the text.

It is reckoned that each copy of a newspaper was seen by up to 40 persons, many hearing the news read aloud in alehouses or on street corners. Yet the type of news in the papers of the early 18<sup>th</sup> century (foreign news and politics) was only of interest to a small elite. Recognising the wider market, the printers began a gradual shift towards home news. At a time when there was no effective police force and crime was fuelled by a plentiful supply of cheap gin, newspapers from the 1720s onwards were full of stories of highwaymen, housebreakers and footpads; smugglers, prostitutes and pirates; their trials, and their eventual fate on the gallows.

Daniel Defoe was one of the first crime reporters, writing for *Mist's* and *Applebee's Weekly Journals*. He knew many of the underworld characters, including Jonathan Wild and Moll King. He interviewed Jack Sheppard in the condemned cell, and he was said to have "stood at the scaffold to collect the dying words of convicts".

The newspapers spared no details to illustrate the cruelty of judicial punishments. Here is a report from *Read's Weekly Journal* of the execution of Catherine Hayes, who was burned at the stake in 1726 for murdering her husband:

The Fuel being placed round her, and lighted with a Torch, she begg'd for the Sake of Jesus, to be strangled first; whereupon the Executioner drew tight the Halter, but the Flame coming to his Hand in the Space of a Second, he let it go, when she gave three dreadful Shrieks; but the Flames taking her on both Sides, she was heard no more; and the Executioner throwing a Piece of Timber into the Fire, it broke her Skull, when her Brains came plentifully out; and in about an Hour more she was entirely reduced to Ashes.

On a lighter note, the newspaper readers probably enjoyed the report of the woman in Glasgow who was indecently assaulted and robbed of six shillings and a bottle of whiskey. When asked in court why she didn't mention the assault, she said that she was so concerned about the shillings and the whiskey, that she clean forgot the rape.

Reports of deaths were a staple fare of the 18<sup>th</sup> century press. I like the moralising at the end of this report:

Lately died at Dunston Green, Oxon, after twelve days painful illness, Mr. C. Langford, formerly an eminent farmer and grazier of that place. His death was occasioned by eating a large quantity of cherries, and very imprudently swallowing the stones, which produced an obstruction in his bowels terminating in a mortification. Thus fell a hearty, hale constitution, a woeful sacrifice to the incautious use of fruit.

Inserting a moral at the end of a news item was a common device in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. Following the report of an explosion and fire in 1769, the *Northampton Mercury* felt it was necessary to advise its readers,

"This ought to be a caution not to keep Gunpowder near a Forge."

Here's a contender from 1779 for the title of the World's Most Inefficient Suicide:

Yesterday Morning Capt. Bruce, of Cavendish-square, (as is supposed in a Fit of Insanity) drew a Pair of Pistols from his Pocket, and shot himself in the Head, but finding that he did not immediately expire, he drew his Sword and fell upon it, which struck against a Bone and broke. His Groans alarmed his Footman, who in vain attempted to force open the Door of the Room, but was obliged to get in at the Window and alarm the House: a Surgeon who lived next Door was sent for, who drew the Part of the broken Sword from the Wound, dressed him, and put him to Bed ... But as soon as he found himself alone, he took a large Knife and stabbed himself, and, strange as it appears, the Blade of the Knife broke; the Surgeon again dressed those Wounds, and after a Time he was left as before. He then got to his Pocket, took out a Penknife, cut his Throat, laid the Knife by his Side, and laid himself down and died.

This report from 1767 combines both death and marriage:

*Cambridge, Sept. 18.*

Last week died the wife of one Goodwin, a labouring man, at Little Shelford in this County. The sorrowful widower, unable to bear the thoughts of a single state, set off the next morning, and was married to a woman at Linton. At their return in the evening to Shelford, the dead wife was removed from his bed into a coffin, to give way for the new-married couple to celebrate their nuptials. The coffin continued in the room all night.

And in the last two months of 1726 the newspapers were full of the story of Mary Tofts, the woman who gave birth to rabbits.

*Mist's Weekly Journal* reported on November 19, 1726.

From Guildford comes a strange, but well attested piece of News. That a poor Woman who lives at Godalmin, near that Town, was, about a Month past, delivered by Mr John Howard, an eminent Surgeon and Man-midwife, of a Creature resembling a Rabbit ... About 14 Days

since, she was delivered by the same Person of a perfect Rabbit; and, in a few days after of 4 more; and on Friday, Saturday and Sunday, the 4<sup>th</sup>, 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> instant, of one in each Day; in all nine.

John Howard moved Mary from Godalming to Guildford and sent letters to various eminent medical men, inviting them to Guildford to see for themselves. Nathaniel St Andre, surgeon and anatomist to George II, and Cyriacus Ahlers, another royal surgeon, both came down and delivered rabbits on separate occasions. St Andre went back to London and published a 40-page pamphlet, *A Short Narrative of an Extraordinary Delivery of Rabbits*, while John Howard lectured to the Royal Society. Soon the King and the government began to take notice.

We hear that a very strict Enquiry is going to be made into the Story of the Woman's being delivered of 17 Rabbits at Godalmin in Surry by Order of the Government.

*The Post-Boy*, November 26 to November 29, 1726

(Despite the clumsy construction of the sentence, it seems unlikely that the government would have ordered Mary to have given birth to rabbits.)

On 29 November, Mary was brought to London where, according to the *London Journal* of December 3, 1726, "great Numbers of the Nobility have been to see her and many Physicians have attended her, in order to make a strict Search into the Affair".

It was only when a porter admitted smuggling a rabbit into Mary's chamber, and Mary was threatened with having a very painful operation to get to the truth of the matter, that Mary confessed to having manually inserted rabbits into her vagina and then allowed them to be removed as if giving birth. Mary was prosecuted under the statute of Edward III as a vile cheat and imposter. She was detained in Tothill Fields Bridewell where vast crowds flocked to see her. In the end, as the *Weekly Journal* for April 15, 1727 reported:

Mary Toft, the Godalmin Rabbit Woman, was last Saturday discharg'd from her Recognizance at the Quarter Sessions, Westminster, there being no Prosecution.

By and large, the public and the newspapers were satisfied by this outcome. Mary had entertained the public, provided the newspapers with several weeks' of sensational material. She had given rise to a host of pamphlets, cartoons, rude songs and poems on the subject, including one about sending a chimney-sweeper's boy up her fallopian tube, And she made the medical profession look a bunch of incompetent fools.

The second half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century saw the dominance of the daily paper. There were daily newspapers in the first half of the century, starting with the *Daily Courant* in 1702, but their circulation was mainly restricted to London. By the middle of the century investment by booksellers and other shareholders provided the capital to print newspapers on a continuous basis. The introduction of daily posts in the 1740s and the growing appetite for news, stimulated by the weekly and tri-weekly papers, encouraged the growth of the daily press.

The newspapers derived their income from a combination of sales, Treasury bribes, monies paid by theatrical agents in return for favourable reviews, suppression fees (advising the subject that a damaging paragraph was in type, but could be taken out if a certain fee was paid), and contradiction fees (when the subject had responded too late and the paragraph had been printed, a fee could be paid to have the paragraph contradicted in the next day's paper).

Edward Topham, the editor of the daily paper, the *World*, turned his paper into a vehicle for blackmail. His most famous exploit was to threaten to expose the Prince of Wales's marriage to Mrs. Fitzherbert. The Prince offered to buy the paper outright for a down payment of £4,000 plus an annuity for Topham of £400. Topham refused, but accepted a subsidy from the Prince instead. This was on top of a Treasury bribe of £600 a year. It was said that, by 1780, there was scarcely a paragraph in the *Morning Post* that had not been paid by someone.

However, in most cases, the greatest contribution to the newspaper's income came from the sale of advertising space. Newspapers were the dominant vehicle for advertisements. No other medium could offer such wide circulation and regular appearance. And no other medium could offer extensive distribution all over the country.

The quack medicine advertisements must have kept whole armies of Grub Street copywriters occupied. My guess is that they were composed in taverns with the whole company laughing at the next excesses they managed to dream up.

Advertisers often inserted testimonials from satisfied customers, real or imagined. During the 1750's, readers of the *General Evening Post* were entertained by advertisements for Doctor Henry's Nervous Medicine. Each week Doctor Henry would publish a testimonial from a customer who had suffered from wind they couldn't expel, including one from the woman with "a windy convulsive Disorder in her Bowels [who was] obliged to sit up in Bed to discharge the Wind."

In 1774 one sufferer testified to the *Reading Mercury* that Speediman's Stomach Pills, 'by the blessing of God dispersed the wind in a very surprising manner'.

In the newspapers of the first half of the 18th century, there was almost a symmetry of cause and effect with the sellers of aphrodisiacs, like the Cordial Quintessence of Vipers, plying their wares next to cures for venereal disease "without Hindrance of Business, or the Knowledge of a Bedfellow". Their copy mainly consisted of long lists of symptoms, including, "scaly Pustules, old Gleet, Buboes, Shankers, Tumify'd Testicles, Ulcers on the privates".

In 1734 one advertisement boasted that in 19 years his medicine had "cured 673 Gonorrhoeas or Claps," and promised to cure "all the dismal attendants of impure embraces ... nay, even if you piss thro' a Dozen Holes."

The most successful morning paper for most of the 19<sup>th</sup> century was the *Times*. It outsold its competitors thanks to John Walter the Second's investment in printing technology, which meant that late news, which other papers had to leave till the following day, could be printed shortly before the *Times* was due to hit the streets. His refusal to take government or opposition bribes meant the *Times* was valued for its independence. His investment in foreign correspondents, notably Crabb Robinson who reported the death of Sir John Moore at Corruna and William Howard Russell during the Crimean War, gave the *Times* an authority no other paper had. Russell's descriptions of the mismanagement of the Crimean War brought down the government. This is an extract from the *Times*'s leading article on December 23, 1854:

*The noblest army ever sent from these shores has been sacrificed to the greatest mismanagement.*

*Incompetency, lethargy, aristocratic hauteur, official indifference, favour, routine, perverseness, and stupidity reign, revel and riot in the camp before Sebastopol, in the harbour of Balaklava, in the hospital of Scutari, and how much nearer home we dare not venture to say.*



The Times's success was also due to the appointment of William Barnes as editor from 1817 to 1841 and his successor, John Delane. Barnes instructed his local correspondents to keep him in touch with middle class opinion and Barnes used this to determine the paper's policy on the issues of the day. It was during Barnes's campaigns in favour of the Reform Bill that the *Times* acquired its nickname, "The Thunderer".

Under Delane, the Times articulated the concept of the newspaper as the Fourth Estate. Instead of simply being the mouthpiece of ministerial and opposition groups, as the London press was in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, the press, and the *Times* in particular, was now perceived as an independent and powerful channel between public opinion and the governing institutions. Since non-electors were more numerous than electors, the press considered itself to be more representative of the people than Parliament. The duty of the journalist was to disclose to the people what those in power wanted to keep secret.

Stamp Duty was abolished in 1855. This, combined with rapid advances in printing technology, the introduction of cheap wood pulp paper, the new electric telegraph and news agencies such as Reuters that enabled foreign news to be gathered cheaply, helped to bring down unit costs and usher in the age of the penny newspaper.

The penny newspaper, increased literacy, the rise of the lower middle class - thousands upon thousands of Mr Pooters in the expanding London suburbs - the development of railways as a fast means of distributing newspapers across the nation, all these factors should have resulted in a massive increase in sales.

However, this did not happen because the daily papers were targeted squarely at the upper and middle classes who had the leisure to plough through acres of unrelieved newsprint reporting turgid political speeches. The only form of entertainment was provided by reports from the divorce courts, where the Victorian newspapers treated their readers to the salacious details of juicy divorce cases.

These included the Crawford v. Crawford case in 1886 where Sir Charles Dilke, who was tipped to become Foreign Secretary in the next Gladstone administration, was accused of having three-in-a-bed sex with Mrs Crawford and a girl named Fanny; and, in the same year, the Campbell v. Campbell case where Lord Colin Campbell was accused of adultery, cruelty and giving Lady Campbell venereal disease, while he accused her of adultery with a duke, a doctor, a general, and the Chief of the London Fire Brigade.

The reports of the Campbell case, described by the *Pall Mall Gazette* as "the filthiest divorce case on record", took up 74 columns of the *Daily Chronicle*, 46 columns of the *Standard*, 44 columns of the *Daily News*, 43 columns of the *Daily Telegraph* and 26 columns of the *Times*. The *Pall Mall Gazette* pointed out that the *Daily Chronicle* had devoted about 180,000 words to the Campbell case, which it compared to the 181,258 words in the New Testament.

A case in 1863 where a man named Kane claimed his wife had committed adultery with Lord Palmerston, then in his 78<sup>th</sup> year, inspired the joke, "She was Kane, but was he able?"

The only newspapers that appealed directly to the working class were the Sunday papers, with their diet of sex, sport, sensationalism - and 'orrible murders.

Sunday was the only day when the working man had the leisure to read a paper, or, if he could not read, the only day where he could listen to one being read out loud in alehouses and barber shops. Thanks to the taxes on knowledge, newspapers cost sevenpence or more in the 1820s and 1830s. For the working classes even one newspaper a week was a luxury, so people used to club together to buy a newspaper on a Sunday.

The first Sunday newspaper was the royalist newsbook, *Mercurius Aulicus* in the 1640s. It was published on Sundays to annoy the puritans. Apart from that, the first Sunday paper was *E. Johnson's British Gazette and Sunday Monitor*. It was founded by Mrs Elizabeth Johnson in 1779. Apart from a column of religious instruction on the front page, its character was entirely that of a daily paper that just happened to appear once a week on a Sunday.

Mrs Johnson's paper inspired a number of competitors, the most famous of which was the *Observer*, which still continues to this day. When it began in 1791 it was a reactionary Tory paper. A leading article in 1792 defending the slave trade, said:

"Let not false pity abolish a trade, upon which the great leading interests of this commercial country, its wealth, and its security, so immediately and essentially depend --- A continuation of which trade, POLICY DEMANDS, and HUMANITY JUSTIFIES."

The staff of the *Observer* included Vincent Dowling. Dowling also acted as a government spy, reporting political meetings, passing copies of his shorthand notes to his masters in the Home Office, and roaming around the pubs taking notes of the conversations he had overheard, to keep the government informed of the "tone of the mobocracy." The *Observer* was the last known paper to receive secret service subsidies, which continued to 1840.

It's also worth mentioning that Rachel Beer, Siegfried Sassoon's aunt, who owned -- and edited -- the *Observer*, and its rival, the *Sunday Times*, simultaneously from 1893 to 1897.

The first Sunday paper that had any pretensions of being anything other than a one day a week daily paper was *Bell's Weekly Messenger* in 1796. Unlike the four-page *Observer* and *Sunday Monitor*, its eight pages of small print offered more than one day's reading and covered the events of the previous week, not just the previous day.

The *Weekly Dispatch*, founded in 1801, the forerunner of the *Sunday Dispatch* which died in 1961, became the first Sunday newspaper proper when it fell into the hands of an Irish barrister named Robert Bell in 1815. Robert Bell introduced the now familiar formula of sex, sport and sensationalism that owed much to the working class traditions of the chapbook and the broadside. The sports news was written by Pierce Egan in a style that made liberal use of the 'Flash' slang of the sporting underworld.

Pierce Egan started his own Sunday newspaper market in 1824 with *Pierce Egan's Life in London and Sporting Guide*. This specialised in lurid descriptions of bare-knuckle boxing matches, cock fighting, bull and badger baiting, and reports from the London police courts.

The Sunday papers took much of their material from the penny-a-liners, an anonymous tribe of semi-literate bohemians, the lineal descendants of the *Grub-street Journal's* news collectors. The penny-a-liners haunted the police courts for their low life material. They reported fires and minor casualties, and attended Coroner's Inquests. The Inquests must have been convivial affairs for the penny-a-liners as they were usually held in a pub.

Armed with what material they could find, and padded out with descriptive embellishments and exuberant verbosity -- the longer the piece, the greater the profit - the penny-a-liners hawked their stories from newspaper office to newspaper office, hoping to find a buyer.

One of the most enterprising of the tribe was 'Fire' Fowler who lodged with a fireman and became something of a mascot with the brigade. The firemen let him travel to the fires on their fire engine, so whenever there was a fire, Fowler was always first with the news.

Unlike the other penny-a-liners, his monopoly of London fires assured him a steady income.

Sunday newspapers had their opponents. The respectable press looked down their noses at them. Bulmer-Lytton described Sunday journalists as 'Broken-down sharpers, markers at gambling houses and the very worse description of uneducated blackguards'.

The greatest opposition to Sunday newspapers came from religious groups. This was partly because the papers were distributed on Sunday mornings by 'horn boys.' With trumpets and shrill voices they shouted their wares to the annoyance of churchgoers. But the opposition was mainly because the newspapers were seen as defiling the Sabbath with murders, low life and sporting stories.

As early as 1799 a Bill was introduced for 'the suppression of newspapers on the Lord's Day'. This was defeated on the grounds that to prevent the employment of people on Sundays, Monday papers would also have to be banned. Subsequent attempts to introduce laws to stop the sale of Sunday papers were made in 1820, 1833, 1834, 1835 and 1838. The 1820 attempt was made on the grounds that the increasing circulation of Sunday papers was most injurious to public morals, not only for the manner in which they employed the printers and the publishers on the Lord's Day, but for distracting people from attending Divine Service, encouraging drunkenness by driving them into the public houses where the Sunday papers were kept, and contaminating morals with their blasphemous and seditious contents. Towards the end of the century, one clergyman divided the working class into sheep and goats - those who went to church on a Sunday, and those who read *Lloyd's Weekly News*.

Within a period of less than ten years, three new titles were started which were to dominate the Sunday market for the rest of the century: *Lloyd's Weekly News* in 1842; the *News of the World* in 1843; and *Reynolds's Newspaper* in 1850. *Lloyd's Weekly News* was the most popular of the three. In 1896 when the *Daily Mail* boasted of its sales of 397,215 and the *Times* was only selling about 35,000 copies, *Lloyd's Weekly News* became the first newspaper to sell a million copies.

*Lloyd's* and the popular Sunday papers did not attract much advertising. Their readers did not have as much disposable income as the middle class readers of the respectable dailies. Advertising accounted for between 11 and 37 per cent of the content of the Sunday papers compared with around 60 per cent for the dailies. For the daily papers, advertising was more important than circulation as the cost of printing an advertisement remained constant irrespective of the number of papers produced, whereas the cost of materials and the cost of distribution increased with the size of the circulation.

To most advertisers, who were mainly private individuals, circulation also did not matter. A family seeking a servant or an auctioneer selling a country estate were interested in making a single transaction only. The class of reader was more important than the numbers of readers. This held true for 'public' advertisements. People who might be interested in buying shares in a new railway company or tendering for a government contract would be more likely to read the *Times* or the *Morning Post* than *Lloyd's Weekly*.

Unlike the dailies, which were only able to survive as a result of their advertising revenue, Sunday papers were able to make a profit from their sales alone. This was partly due to their cheapness. They were cheap to purchase - only once a week, after pay day - and cheap to produce. The expense of collecting material from the police courts was far less than that of maintaining a string of foreign correspondents in gentlemanly style in the capitals of Europe and beyond, and meeting the costs of telegraphing their reports. The Sundays could be printed at a leisurely pace in off-peak periods during the week, rather than in an expensive rush in the middle of the night, at premium rates, to meet the daily deadline of the early morning edition.

*Lloyd's*, *Reynolds's* and the *News of the World* maintained the mixture of crime, scandal and sensationalism which was a much more popular diet than that supplied by the middle class dailies. They were also written in a more accessible style, derived from the traditions of street literature and the popular radical and unstamped papers where many of the Sunday journalists, including Edward Lloyd and G W M Reynolds, had learned their craft.

One of Lloyd's managers explained the method of selecting material for inclusion in the paper:

We sometimes mistrust our own judgement and place the manuscript in the hands of an illiterate person -- a servant or machine boy, for instance. If they pronounce favourably upon it, we think it will do.

A contributing factor to the success of *Lloyd's* and its rivals was that their readers were encouraged to accept the papers as part of their lives. The papers would answer queries from correspondents on all matters of concern to their readers. Unlike the more patrician daily papers, they adopted the role as the people's friend. When Matilda Wood was searching for a stage name that would be remembered in the music halls, she chose the name Marie Lloyd because she knew the name Lloyd was well known and popular with her audiences.

It was not until the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century that the gap in the market for popular daily papers was filled, initially by the *Star*, a halfpenny evening paper, in 1888, which promised "to do away with verbose and prolix articles", and the *Daily Mail* in 1896, a halfpenny morning paper featuring clear headlines and short and easy to read paragraphs. The *Daily Mail* paved the way for the *Daily Express* in 1900 and the *Daily Mirror* in 1903.

Also by the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Fleet Street had become synonymous with the newspaper trade. By the 1880s, all the major national dailies and Sunday papers had their main offices in Fleet Street, or close by.

The papers of Grub Street evolved into the papers of Fleet Street, there were tremendous differences: up to the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century printing presses were only capable of printing 250 sides an hour. Yet by 1896 the *Daily Mail* could boast that its presses could produce 200,000 complete papers an hour, cut and folded; In 1815 news of the Battle of Waterloo took five days to reach the papers; in 1896, thanks to the electric telegraph, a telegram from the paper's Washington correspondent arrived at the *Times* in London within two minutes; Journalism in the Grub Street era was a mere appendage of printing. The printer's task, sometimes delegated to a paid editor, was simply to collect material from correspondents, arrange it in some coherent form, whether by themes or in date order, and possibly, to write an essay, or leading article, on the front page; By the time the paper arrived in Fleet Street, the craft of journalism extended to include parliamentary reporters, law reporters, city staff, foreign correspondents, book reviewers, theatrical and music critics, leader writers, as well as sub-editors and general reporters.

Fleet Street had also grown more powerful. The power of the press to influence public, and even parliamentary, opinion, which Tudor monarchs, Roger L'Estrange and even Whig reformers had feared, had come to fruition. The campaigning and pioneer investigative journalist, WT Stead, editor of the *Pall Mall Gazette*, may have been deluding himself, but only slightly, when he wrote in 1886:

I am but a comparatively young journalist, but I have seen Cabinets upset, Ministers driven into retirement, laws repealed, great social reforms initiated, Bills transformed, estimates remodelled, Acts passed, generals nominated, governors appointed, armies sent hither and thither, war proclaimed and war averted, by the agency of newspapers.

By 1900, 30 newspaper proprietors had seats in the House of Commons, and journalism was the largest occupational group in Parliament after law and the military.

When Edward Levy-Lawson of the *Daily Telegraph* became the first Baron Burnham in 1903, and Alfred Harmsworth and his brother Harold became Lords Northcliffe and Rothermere, the Age of the Press Baron had arrived.

Finally, why Fleet Street?

Almost since Caxton first introduced the craft of printing in this country, Fleet Street has been associated with the printing industry. In 1500 Wynkyn de Worde moved from Caxton's house in Westminster to set up his own press in Fleet Street opposite Shoe Lane. In the same year Richard Pynson, who later became the King's printer, opened his printing office at the corner of Fleet Street and Chancery Lane. Thereafter, Fleet Street and the Strand, and the alleys and lanes that ran off those streets, became home to an emergent printing industry that served the aristocratic, legal and ecclesiastical houses that were dotted like a string of pearls along the Thames from Somerset House to Whitefriars.

Fleet Street was also the ideal place for gathering and exchanging news. Situated in the no man's land between Westminster and the City, hard by the law courts, close to the red-light district of Drury Lane and Covent Garden; news of national politics, City politics, trade and finance, and crime and sex converged in Fleet Street. It was no coincidence that many of the first coffeehouses were started in Fleet Street. Coffeehouses were centres of news and gossip where, according to contemporary accounts, the common greeting was 'What news have you?'

However, I was amused the other day to come across this comment, "Its observable, that Fleet-street abounds ... with more Whores and Thieves than any other street in London." This was not written by a member of Hacked Off, but appeared in the *Ipswich Journal* for February 28, 1736.

Whether they are the newspapers of Grub Street or Fleet Street, the beauty of old newspapers is that they give more of an immediate sense of past experience in all its complexity, humour and humanity than almost any other kind of literature. To paraphrase the *News of the World*: All human life was there.

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