Publics and Participation in the Three Kingdoms: Was There Such a Thing as "British Public Opinion" in the Seventeenth Century?

Tim Harris

Abstract This article explores where the people fit in to British history and whether there was such a thing as British public opinion in the seventeenth century. It argues that given the nature of the Stuart multiple monarchy, and the way the power structures of that monarchy impinged upon Ireland, Scotland, and England, the Stuarts' political authority was at times publicly negotiated on a Britannic level. People across Britain were engaged with British affairs: there was public opinion about British politics, in other words, albeit not British public opinion, since the people were bitterly divided at this time. However, because the crisis that brought down Charles I had been a three-kingdoms crisis, which in turn had helped spark the growth of a more sophisticated British news culture, the Restoration monarchy became increasingly sensitive to the need to try to keep public opinion across the Britannic archipelago on its side. In response to the challenge of the Whigs during the Exclusion Crisis, Charles II and his Tory allies sought to rally public support across England, Scotland, and Ireland and thus to represent "British public opinion" as being in favor of the hereditary succession. It was a representation, however, that remained contested.

The rise of the so-called New British History in the late 1980s and early 1990s proved to be a fertile stimulus to scholarship. Yet it was also controversial. Some scholars condemned it as too Anglocentric, others as not Anglocentric enough.[1] To many it seemed to mark a return to an elite-centered, top-down approach to Britain's century of revolutions, since surely only a few individuals—the Stuart kings themselves, or men like the Earl of Antrim—could have been genuinely British political animals.[2] The study of popular politics required

[1] Nicholas P. Canny, "Writing Early Modern History: Ireland, Britain, and the Wider World," *Historical Journal* 46, no. 3 (September 2003): 723–47, at 723; Glenn Burgess, ed., *The New British History: Founding a Modern State, 1603–1715* (London, 1999); David Scott, preface to *Leviathan: The Rise of Britain as a World Power* (London, 2013).

[2] The late David Underdown once expressed this point to me at a meeting of the North American Conference on British Studies. Cf. Peter Lake, "Review Article," *Huntington Library Quarterly* 57, no. 2 (Spring 1994): 167–97, at 194.

731

close attention to the local, to "the immediate context of local social, economic and political structures and relationships," as John Walter has put it.[3] What space could a three-kingdoms approach leave for a consideration of the role of ordinary men and women in the political upheavals of the seventeenth century?

It was ironic that the New British History should have started off as so elite-centered. After all, the original rationale for pursuing a three-kingdoms approach to the troubles that afflicted the early Stuart polity was the fact that the English civil war had been triggered by prior mass revolts in Scotland and Ireland.[4] The elite bias was due in part to the intellectual predilections of the New British History's early practitioners. Yet it also reflected the uneven nature of the historiography. In their seminal 2006 article on rethinking the public sphere, Peter Lake and Steven Pincus opted against trying to tell "a British story" because no suitable narratives for Scotland and Ireland existed to juxtapose with the one that they were offering for England. They nevertheless suggested that it would be worth exploring whether there was such a story to tell.[5] Given the recent advances in our understanding of popular politics, public protest, print culture, and the nature of the public sphere in early modern Scotland and Ireland, we are perhaps now in a position to take up the challenge laid down by Lake and Pincus over a decade ago.

The aim of this article, then, is to examine how the people fit into British history. It seeks to investigate the processes of politicization, public political engagement, and the nature of political opinion "out of doors"—that is, outside the formal institutions of government—in the three kingdoms across the seventeenth century. Because this is an immense topic, I focus on public politics that might be deemed in some way British. My subtitle, however, is deliberately provocative. A straightforward answer to the question, "Was there such a thing as British public opinion in the seventeenth century?" would have to be "no." Yet it is a qualified "no" that depends on what we mean by "British public opinion," and it is in these qualifications and in the parsing of the question that interesting insights emerge.

Let me start with some clarifications. This is not an article about British identity. I am not endeavoring to document the publicly expressed opinions of those inhabitants of England, Wales, Scotland, and Ireland who might have come to regard themselves as British. As Linda Colley taught us years ago, the emergence of a British identity was a later development.[6] For this reason I refer to the Atlantic archipelago off the coast of northwest Europe that comprised the kingdoms of England, Scotland, and Ireland as "the Britannic archipelago," in order to avoid any imputation of Britishness before it existed.[7] Nor do I wish to downplay the importance of the

---

[3] John Walter, *Crowds and Popular Politics in Early Modern England* (Manchester, 2006), 8, 9.

[4] Conrad Russell, *The Causes of the English Civil War* (Oxford, 1990).

[5] Peter Lake and Steve Pincus, "Rethinking the Public Sphere in Early Modern England," *Journal of British Studies* 45, no. 2 (April 2006): 270–92, at 286n64.

[6] Linda Colley, *Britons: The Forging of the Nation, 1707–1837* (New Haven, 1992).

[7] "Atlantic archipelago" was John Pocock's term. J. G. A. Pocock, "British History: A Plea for a New Subject," *Journal of Modern History* 47, no. 4 (December 1975): 601–25. There were, of course, other archipelagoes in the Atlantic—the Azores and Cape Verde, for instance—which is why I prefer "Britannic archipelago" when referring to Britain and Ireland. I would argue, however, that it is still appropriate to talk about "British history" and "the British archipelago" for the seventeenth century. The island of Great Britain comprised England, Wales, and Scotland, while Ireland was ruled by a dynasty that hailed from Scotland and that ruled England in the interest of Britain and the Protestant British (English, Welsh, and Scottish) who lived in Ireland—a dynasty that often pursued a British (pan-Britannic) agenda for

local. Any consideration of popular politics must pay attention to the specific national, regional, or local social and cultural contexts in which people became politicized, and the specific sites and locales where they were able to give public expression to their political concerns and outlooks. Furthermore, I find the notion of "public opinion" for Stuart Britain to be problematic. This is not because our modern concept of public opinion was a later invention. In fact, the *Oxford English Dictionary* cites usages from 1615 and 1631, in the sense of an opinion that was publicly held or most public. Besides, the phenomenon can predate the term.[8] In the seventeenth century, contemporaries spoke of the voice of the people (*vox populi*), of England (*Vox Angliae*), and of the country (*Vox Patriae*), and also of "the minds of the multitude"—concepts that are surely close to our idea of public opinion.[9] Rather, the notion is problematic because the public was divided. There were competing public voices. When partisans in the political and religious disputes of the time claimed to be representing the voice of the people, they were making a propaganda point, not offering a detached sociological analysis, and such claims were invariably contested by partisans on the other side.[10] Real people did have real opinions about politics. But public opinion in the sense of the reputed voice of the entire public, as David Zaret has observed, is "a discursive fiction," something that exists "only when instantiated in discourse."[11]

Nevertheless, there did exist in the seventeenth century the idea of "the public" as an imagined totality. Both Parliament in its *Nineteen Propositions* of June 1642 and Charles I in his answer to them, for instance, invoked the notion of the public in this sense, with Charles equating "the Publick" with "Our People"—that is, all his subjects.[12] It was a commonplace of the age that kings were supposed to rule *pro bono publico*—for the

---

its multiple-kingdom inheritance. See Tim Harris, *Restoration: Charles II and His Kingdoms, 1660–1685* (London, 2005), xvii–xviii; and Glenn Burgess, "Introduction: The New British History," in Burgess, *New British History*, 1–29, at 2–3.

[8] As one contemporary observed in late 1639, discussing the troubles in Scotland, just as medical doctors took time to arrive at a name for a new disease, so too did doctors of state to describe new political developments: MS Add. 22, fol. 105, Cambridge University Library (hereafter CUL).

[9] *Vox Populi. In Plaine English* [London, 1642] (although there are numerous pamphlets with *vox populi* in the title); *Vox Angliae: Or, The Voice of the Kingdom* (London, 1682); *Vox Patriae; Or, The Resentments and Indignation of the Free-born Subjects of England, against Popery* (London, 1681); Nicholas Tyacke, "Introduction: Locating the 'English Revolution,'" in *The English Revolution, c. 1590–1720: Politics, Religion and Communities*, ed. Nicholas Tyacke (Manchester, 2007), 1–26, at 18; Geoff Baldwin, "The 'Public' as a Rhetorical Community in Early Modern England," in *Communities in Early Modern England: Networks, Place, Rhetoric*, ed. Alexandra Shepard and Phil Withington (Manchester, 2000), 199–216; Tim Harris, "Charles I and Public Opinion on the Eve of the English Civil War," in *The Nature of the English Revolution Revisited*, ed. Grant Tapsell and Stephen Taylor (Woodbridge, 2013), 1–25, at 4; David Coast, "Rumor and 'Common Fame': The Impeachment of the Duke of Buckingham and Public Opinion in Early Stuart England," *Journal of British Studies* 55, no. 2 (April 2016): 241–67, at 264.

[10] Tim Harris, "Perceptions of the Crowd in Later-Stuart London," in *Imagining Early Modern London: Perceptions and Portrayals of the City from Stow to Strype, 1598–1720*, ed. J. F. Merritt (Cambridge, 2001), 250–72; Mark Knights, *Representation and Misrepresentation in Later Stuart Britain: Partisanship and Political Culture* (Oxford, 2005), 65.

[11] David Zaret, *Origins of Democratic Culture: Printing, Petitions, and the Public Sphere in Early-Modern England* (Princeton, 2000), 8.

[12] *Nineteen Propositions Made by both Houses of Parliament to the Kings Majestie* (London, 1642), 2; Charles I, *His Majesties Answer to the Nineteen Propositions of both Houses of Parliament* (Cambridge, 1642), 8.

public good. As divinely ordained, absolute sovereigns, the early Stuart kings were not accountable to their people. Nor were they obliged to explain themselves to their subjects. Yet, in fact, they frequently did. As Charles I put it in the declaration that he issued in June 1626 following his decision to dissolve parliament, although he was "not bound to give an account to any, but to God only," he was supposed to order "the great and publike Actions of State concerning the weale of His people, as may justifie themselves, not onely to His owne Conscience, and to His owne people, but to the whole world," and therefore he was offering this public explanation so that "the doubts and feares of His owne good Subjects" might "bee satisfied."[13]

The belief that kings had to rule for the public good—and to be seen to be ruling for the public good—opened up a space for public politics in early modern Britain and Ireland. It was because kings were supposed to rule for the good of their subjects that subjects had the right to petition the crown for the redress of their grievances (although the Stuarts did try to restrict the right to petition over the course of the seventeenth century, which was not finally secured until 1689). Furthermore, it was the assumption that a good king, if made aware that his subjects were suffering, would do his best to alleviate their plight, which provided the rationale for collective agitation out of doors: if the people took to the streets to demonstrate their concerns, a just king would come to their relief. People had to proceed according to certain conventions if they were to receive a sympathetic response: their actions should be peaceful and not aimed directly at challenging those in authority. Often, those engaged in protest sought to appeal to what Walter (following J. C. Scott) has called the "public transcript" of the appropriate relationship between dominant and subordinate groups as a way of legitimating their action. If convincing, they might even receive a sympathetic hearing from those in authority. When collective agitation got out of hand, however, it could provoke savage repression from the government.[14]

If those in authority proved unsympathetic to the concerns of the people, then the people potentially might either withhold their allegiance (and refuse to comply with government directives) or withdraw it (and engage in acts of resistance or rebellion). At times, critics of the government, whether at court, in parliament, or in the localities, sought to encourage those out of doors to make public their disaffection in order to bring pressure to bear on the authorities for change. This was one reason why rulers who were under no obligation to explain themselves to their people nevertheless on occasion deemed it wise to do so: in order to keep their subjects onside, stop the spread of disaffection, and defuse situations that threatened to get out of hand. It was, of course, preferable if those in authority could prevent the people from developing critical opinions of what they were doing in the first place, which is why all regimes during this time period sought to control the types of ideas that people were exposed to—by suppressing dissident views and preaching the virtues of obedience. But should such efforts fall short, governments often found it necessary

---

[13] Charles I, *Declaration of the True Causes which moved … Him to Dissolve the Two last Meetings in Parliament* (London, 1626), 2–3. Cf. idem, *His Majesties Declaration of all His Loving Subjects, Of the Causes which Moved Him to Dissolve the Last Parliament* (London, 1628[/9]), 9–10.

[14] Walter, *Crowds and Popular Politics*, 9–10, 196–222; Michael J. Braddick and John Walter, "Introduction: Grids of Power; Order, Hierarchy and Subordination in Early Modern Society," in *Negotiating Power in Early Modern Society: Order, Hierarchy and Subordination in Britain and Ireland*, ed. Michael J. Braddick and John Walter (Cambridge, 2001), 1–42, at 5–10, 14–16.

to engage in public debate to win back the sympathies of its people, especially given that the state's repressive powers in the early modern period were quite weak. Thus, political authority was, in this sense, publicly negotiated, and continuously so, although the mechanisms by which it was negotiated might involve varying strategies for either opening up or closing down public debate.[15]

Given the nature of the Stuart multiple monarchy and the way that the power structures (both secular and ecclesiastical) of that multiple monarchy impinged upon the local across Ireland, Scotland, and England, the Stuarts' political authority was at times publicly negotiated on a Britannic level.[16] People did, on occasion, intervene publicly in politics to make statements about British affairs. In other words, we see opinion, made public, about matters relating to British policy: public opinion about Britain, one might suggest, albeit not British public opinion. However, there were important changes over time. The politicization that occurred as a result of the upheavals of the 1640s and 1650s led to a growing demand for British news (that is, news relating to affairs across the Britannic archipelago) and a heightened awareness about how developments in any one kingdom might potentially affect another. Furthermore, the Restoration authorities were acutely sensitive to the need to try to keep opinion out of doors, in all three kingdoms, onside, in part because they were well aware that the English civil war had been preceded by prior mass revolts in Ireland and Scotland. Charles II and his supporters came to feel that one of the reasons why the monarchy had collapsed in the wake of the rebellions that had broken out in all three kingdoms between 1638 and 1642 was that Charles I had not done a good enough job in courting public opinion. As part of their strategy for defeating the challenge of the Whigs and the Exclusionists from 1679 onward, Charles II and his Tory allies sought to mobilize public support for the hereditary succession in England, Scotland, and (more hesitantly) Ireland, and thus to *represent* the voice of the people across the three kingdoms as being opposed to Exclusion. This was, in a sense, a representation of British public opinion, albeit mainly conformist Protestant opinion within Britain, and a representation that remained contested.

POLITICIZATION

Earlier explanatory frameworks tended to link mass politicization with the rise of print, and particularly with the rise of the periodical news press. Such an approach encouraged a top-down, center-out view of how the people became politicized, with politicization limited by the extent to which ordinary people were able to access the world of print culture. This way of thinking made it difficult to believe

[15] The framework outlined here, readers will recognize, conforms closely to what Lake and Pincus designated "the post-Reformation public sphere." Medievalists might point out that many of the features of this style of public negotiation of political authority predated the Reformation: what clearly transforms the situation post-Reformation is the rise of religious contention and also the dramatic expansion of print culture.

[16] My focus is on Ireland, Scotland, and England, in part because I am interested in the dynamics of the interactions between what were in theory separate kingdoms and in part because the complex case of Wales is addressed in this volume by Lloyd Bowen. Lloyd Bowen, "Structuring Particularist Publics: Logistics, Language and Early Modern Wales," *Journal of British Studies* 56, no. 4 (October 2017): 754–72. See also idem, "Information, Language and Political Culture in Early Modern Wales," *Past and Present* 228 (August 2015): 125–58.

that ordinary people in the English provinces could have been that well informed about English politics. It would seem to suggest severe limits to how aware the various peoples scattered across the Britannic archipelago could have been about British affairs.

The press, however, is not the right place to start. People were politicized in the first place as a result of being subject to government.[17] They had opinions about what those in authority were doing if they were being taxed or forced to pay government levies, compelled to worship in new ways, prevented from practicing their faith, made to serve in the militia, subjected to new laws and regulations (or being held more strictly accountable to existing laws)—even if they were simply struggling to get by, given the widespread belief that it was the sovereign's duty to promote the welfare of his subjects. Certainly exposure to "news" would have further informed and refined people's political outlooks, but there was a variety of media whereby news might be disseminated besides print: royal proclamations and declarations (read aloud at the market cross or in the parish church), sermons (delivered from the pulpit), manuscript newsletters, political ballads and poetry (to be sung or recited), plays and graphic satire (which would be viewed), and also word of mouth and rumor.[18]

Yet we should not underestimate the significance of print. It cost less to buy a political pamphlet or a printed newssheet than to subscribe to a manuscript newsletter service, and thus cheap print opened up the prospect of a much larger number of people being able to access the news and to develop a shared awareness about events that were relevant to the entire political nation.[19] Contemporaries were convinced of the importance of print as an agent of politicization. Supporters of the crown not only repeatedly blamed the press for leading the people astray but also saw its proper utilization as the best way to "undeceive the people."[20]

What the people thought mattered because of the participatory nature of the English political system. It is true that the parliamentary franchise was limited, general elections infrequent, and parliamentary elections often not contested.[21]

---

[17] Tim Harris, "Understanding Popular Politics in Restoration Britain," in *A Nation Transformed: England after the Restoration*, ed. Alan Houston and Steven C. A. Pincus (Cambridge, 2001), 125–53.

[18] The relevant literature is now vast. I first addressed these issues in Tim Harris, *London Crowds in the Reign of Charles II: Propaganda and Politics from the Restoration until the Exclusion Crisis* (Cambridge, 1987). For a recent comprehensive overview of how the Tudor and Stuart monarchy sought to use the media to represent its authority to the people, see the trilogy by Kevin Sharpe: Kevin Sharpe, *Selling the Tudor Monarchy: Authority and Image in Sixteenth-Century England* (London, 2009); idem, *Image Wars: Promoting Kings and Commonwealths in England, 1603–1660* (London, 2010); and idem, *Rebranding Rule: Images of Restoration and Revolution Monarchy, 1660–1714* (London, 2013). For the impact of manuscript pamphlets on early Stuart political culture in England, see Noah Millstone, *Manuscript Circulation and the Invention of Politics in Early Stuart England* (Cambridge, 2016).

[19] Jason Peacey, *Print and Public Politics in the English Revolution* (Cambridge, 2013), 21, 81.

[20] S. F. Jones, ed., *Mercurius Civicus: London's Intelligencer* (n.p., 2013), 4–11 May 1643; Roger L'Estrange, *The Observator in Dialogue* (1684–1687), I, no. 1 (13 April 1681). Cf. Sabrina Baron, "The Guises of Dissemination in Early Seventeenth-Century England: News in Manuscript and Print," in *The Politics of Information in Early Modern Europe*, ed. Brendan Dooley and Sabrina Baron (London, 2001), 45–56, at 42.

[21] Although Derek Hirst argued that perhaps between 27 percent and 40 percent of the adult male population had the right to vote in parliamentary elections on the eve of the civil war, general elections were rather infrequent over the course of the century as a whole, and elections were not always contested

But local elections (in towns and parishes) were more frequent and tended to be more open (although this varied from place to place). Furthermore, with no professional police force or standing army, the English state was heavily dependent upon unpaid local men who served in a variety of local offices—as churchwardens, vestrymen, constables, tithingmen, beadles, jurors, and so forth—to get its measures enforced. Perhaps as many as one in twenty adult males held annually some form of local office, and since offices rotated, in theory, over a ten-year period half of the adult male population could hold some form of local office.[22]

What, then, of the social depth of politics in Ireland and Scotland? As with the English, the views of the Scots and the Irish about what those in authority were doing were shaped in the first place by their being subject to government. And in this era of state building, the tentacles of central government under a monarch based in London came to stretch far across the Britannic archipelago.[23] With the defeat of Tyrone's rebellion in 1603, the English state finally secured control over the whole of Ireland and embarked upon a policy of Anglicization: dividing the newly conquered territories into English-style counties, replacing Brehon law with English common law, promoting English farming practices, trying to promote Protestantism and to police Catholic recusancy, and extending the policy of plantation (dispossessing local inhabitants or forcibly relocating them to other parts of the country).[24] Although Scotland was an independent kingdom that simply shared the same king with England following the union of the crowns in 1603, the Scots had to deal with an absentee king based in England, ruling Scotland by pen and endeavoring to bring the Scottish Kirk into greater congruence with that in England by reviving full-fledged diocesan episcopacy and introducing English-style ceremonies and religious observances.[25] It is conceivable that, in the early seventeenth century, the English might not have given much thought to the implications that their king's policies had for the other two kingdoms within the Britannic

(although contests became more frequent as the century progressed). Derek Hirst, *The Representative of the People? Voters and Voting in England under the Early Stuarts* (Cambridge, 1975), 105. See also Mark A. Kishlansky, *Parliamentary Selection: Social and Political Choice in Early Modern England* (Cambridge, 1986).

[22] Mark Goldie, "The Unacknowledged Republic: Office-Holding in Early Modern England," in *The Politics of the Excluded, c. 1500–1850*, ed. Tim Harris (Basingstoke, 2001), 153–94 (esp. 161). Goldie's essay should be read in conjunction with Steve Hindle's, which emphasizes that popular political participation was "nonetheless circumscribed" and that the "chief inhabitants" of the parish were "particularly aware of their own status." Steve Hindle, "The Political Culture of the Middling Sort in English Rural Communities, c. 1550–1700," in Harris, ed., *Politics of the Excluded*, 125–52, at 145, 147.

[23] John Morrill, "The Fashioning of Britain," in *Conquest and Union: Fashioning a British State, 1485–1725*, ed. Steven G. Ellis and Sarah Barber (Harlow, 1995), 8–39; Allan I. Macinnes, *The British Revolution, 1629–1660* (Basingstoke, 2004); Nicholas P. Canny, *Making Ireland British, 1580–1650* (Oxford, 2001); Raymond Gillespie, "Negotiating Order in Early Seventeenth-Century Ireland," in Braddick and Walter, eds., *Negotiating Power*, 188–205, at 192. Gillespie discusses the part that print played in this process in Ireland. Raymond Gillespie, *Reading Ireland: Print, Reading and Social Change in Early Modern Ireland* (Manchester, 2012), 101–30; and idem, "Print Culture, 1550–1700," in *The Oxford History of the Irish Book*, vol. 3, *The Irish Book in English, 1550–1800*, ed. Raymond Gillespie and Andrew Hadfield (Oxford, 2006), 17–33.

[24] Canny, *Making Ireland British*; Harris, *Rebellion*, 141–85.

[25] Alan R. MacDonald, *The Jacobean Kirk, 1567–1625: Sovereignty, Polity and Liturgy* (Aldershot, 1998); Harris, *Rebellion*, 168–83.

archipelago. Edward Hyde, first Earl of Clarendon, at least, believed that, prior to the outbreak of the Scottish prayer book rebellion in July 1637, there was "little curiosity" in England, "either in the Court, or the country, to know any thing of Scotland, or what was done there."[26] Yet the power dynamic in this multiple monarchy made it impossible for people in Scotland and Ireland to be similarly oblivious to developments in England. To the extent that various publics in Scotland and Ireland might have become politically engaged in response to policies pursued by their Stuart king, such engagement was likely, by definition, to have a British dimension.

With regard to the institutions of central government, the Irish and Scottish political systems had quite narrow social bases. In both countries, the parliamentary franchise was extremely limited—and in Ireland parliaments met very infrequently—although there could occasionally be disputed elections that might animate local populations.[27] We know less about local office holding in Scotland and Ireland than we do for England. In Scotland, the nobility dominated the administration of rural communities through their barony and regality courts, while the government of the royal burghs, once fairly open, was becoming more oligarchic by the later sixteenth century. Yet there were participatory and representative elements within the Presbyterian Kirk, most notably at the level of the kirk sessions (the lowest of the ecclesiastical courts of Scotland), whose elected officials played a central role in shaping crucial areas of local government, from education to poor relief to a variety of family issues. As a result, to quote Keith Brown, "large numbers of ordinary people engaged in elections at the parish level that affected broad areas of their lives."[28] In Ireland there were differences between English (Old and New)

---

[26] Edward Hyde, Earl of Clarendon, *The History of the Rebellion and the Civil Wars in England*, ed. W. Dunn Macray (Oxford, 1888), 2:145–46. One suspects that there was more interest in England in Irish affairs, given Ireland's status as a dependency of the English crown and the long history of Irish rebellions against English rule. Much political commentary about Ireland and the Irish was published in the English press in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, and the Irish were also represented on the Jacobean stage.

[27] T. W. Moody, "The Irish Parliament under Elizabeth and James I: A General Survey," *Proceedings of the Royal Irish Academy* 45 (1939/40): 41–81, at 44, 53–54; Aidan Clarke, "Pacification, Plantation, and the Catholic Question, 1603–23," in *A New History of Ireland*, vol. 3, *Early Modern Ireland, 1534–1691*, ed. T. W. Moody, F. X. Martin, and F. J. Byrne (Oxford, 1987), 187–232, at 213; Stephen Carroll, "The Dublin Parliamentary Elections, 1613," in *Riotous Assemblies: Rebels, Riots and Revolts in Ireland*, ed. William Sheehan and Maura Cronin (Cork, 2011), 50–63; Eveline Cruickshanks, Stuart Handley, and D. W. Hayton, eds., *The House of Commons, 1690–1715*, 5 vols. (Cambridge, 2002), 1:141–45; Robert S. Rait, *The Parliaments of Scotland* (Glasgow, 1924), 6–7, 11–15, 165–66, 210–13, 232–33, 265–68, 272, 275; William Ferguson, "The Electoral System in the Scottish Counties before 1832," in *Miscellany II*, Stair Society no. 35, ed. David Sellar (Edinburgh, 1984), 261–94; Alan MacDonald, "Scottish Shire Elections: Preliminary Findings in the Sheriff Court Books," *Parliamentary History* 34, no. 3 (October 2015): 279–94; Keith Mark Brown, "Toward Political Participation and Capacity: Elections, Voting, and Representation in Early Modern Scotland," *Journal of Modern History* 88, no. 1 (March 2016): 1–33, at 8; Gillian H. MacIntosh, *The Scottish Parliament under Charles II, 1660–1685* (Edinburgh, 2007).

[28] Michael Lynch, ed., *The Early Modern Town in Scotland* (London, 1987); Laura A. M. Stewart, *Urban Politics and the British Civil Wars: Edinburgh, 1617–53* (Leiden, 2006); eadem, "Politics and Government in the Scottish Burghs, 1603–1638," in *Sixteenth-Century Scotland: Essays in Honour of Michael Lynch*, ed. Julian Goodare and Alasdair MacDonald (Leiden, 2008), 427–50; Brown, "Toward Political Participation," 16–26, at 26; Margo Todd, *The Culture of Protestantism in Early Modern Scotland* (New Haven, 2002), 8–13, 362–74; Laura A. M. Stewart, "Authority, Agency and the Reception of the Scottish National Covenant of 1638," in *Insular Christianity: Alternative Models of the Church in Britain and Ireland, c. 1570–c. 1700*, ed. Robert Armstrong and Tadhg Ó hAnnracháin (Manchester, 2013), 88–106, at 91–93.

and Gaelic areas, and Ireland was a more militarized society than England, with a standing army and networks of provosts marshal. However, the English essentially tried to import the English system of local government into Ireland, so how government worked at county and parish level was similar to England. Thus we see the same phenomenon in Ireland of ordinary people responsible for policing the local community through service as parish constables, night watchmen, or trial or presentment jurors and through participation in the hue and cry. And although there was a tendency to keep power in the hands of the Protestant planter population where possible, there are examples in the early Stuart period of native Irish serving as jurors, local officeholders, and even JPs.[29]

Participation in local government not only served as a means of politicization; it could also afford opportunities to exploit one's participatory role to challenge, or endorse, government policy. From Ireland, we can find sympathetic grand jurors or trial jurors refusing to present or convict Catholic recusants or Protestant nonconformists, as well as hostile juries being all too willing to proceed against such types according to the full rigor of the law.[30] Given that in Ireland, as in England, sheriffs were responsible for impaneling trial juries, when James II appointed Catholic sheriffs in Ireland in 1686–1687, Protestants were quick to complain that this now made it impossible for them to get fair trials.[31]

Both Ireland and Scotland had less well-developed news cultures than England. By 1650, London had 35 separate printing houses and perhaps as many as 200 bookshops and bookstalls. By contrast, until the 1640s Ireland had just one press—in Dublin—producing fewer than 5 books per year; the first dedicated bookshop was not opened until 1630. In the 1640s, the Catholic Confederates set up presses in Waterford and Kilkenny, while a Protestant press opened up in Cork. Even so, between 1640 and 1660 Irish presses produced just 259 works, compared to some 37,000 published in London during those two decades, and only Cork remained as a center of provincial printing in the Restoration until a printing press was established in Belfast in the 1690s.[32] Nevertheless, printed items were imported into Ireland from England, Scotland, and the continent, including works addressing Irish affairs as well as those focusing on developments in Britain and Europe—distributed across the country by traveling peddlers and chapmen. Indeed, Irish

---

[29] Sir George Rawdon, order for the enforcement of the laws against robbery, 7 January 1668/9, HA 15655 (for the hue and cry in Ireland), and Sir George Rawdon, warrant to the constables, 22 December 1673 (for the night watch), HA 15662, Huntington Library, San Marino (hereafter HEH); Gillespie, "Negotiating Order," 196, 200.

[30] Clodagh Tait, "Riots, Rescues and 'Grene Bowes': Catholic Popular Protestant in Ireland, 1570–1640," in Armstrong and Ó hAnnracháin, eds., *Insular Christianity*, 66–87, at 81; George Wild, Bishop of Derry, to John Bramhall, Archbishop of Armagh, 10 January [1661/2], HA 15999, HEH; Wild to Bramhall, Derry, 7 March 1661[/2], HA 16003, HEH.

[31] Tim Harris, *Revolution: The Great Crisis of the British Monarchy, 1685–1720* (London, 2006), 128.

[32] Jason McElligott, "The Book Trade, Licensing, and Censorship," in *The Oxford Handbook of Literature and the English Revolution*, ed. Laura Lunger Knoppers (Oxford, 2012), 135–52, at 137; Gillespie, "Circulation of Print," 37; Colm Lennon, "The Print Trade, 1550–1700," in Gillespie and Hadfield, eds., *Oxford History*, 3:61–73, at 66, 68; Jane H. Ohlmeyer, "Ireland," in *The Oxford History of Popular Print Culture*, vol. 1, *Cheap Print in Britain and Ireland to 1660*, ed. Joad Raymond (Oxford, 2011), 39–49, at 41; William Sessions, *The First Printers in Waterford: Cork and Kilkenny Pre-1700* (York, 1990); Gillespie, "Print Culture, 1550–1700," 24; Robert Munter, *The History of the Irish Newspaper, 1685–1760* (Cambridge, 1967), 5.

writers who wanted to reach a wider audience usually opted to publish in England, knowing such publications would be circulated in Ireland. Moreover, the circulation of print in Ireland expanded dramatically as the century progressed. By the later seventeenth century, bookbinders and booksellers were operating not only in the major port towns, where the books were imported, but also in inland areas. Raymond Gillespie has written of "the seemingly irresistible rise of print in the service of government" over the course of the seventeenth century. Anti-government works also found their way into Ireland (either for sale or to be scattered about the streets in major urban centers or nailed to church doors), while news and libels relating to three-kingdoms affairs continued to circulate in manuscript, and ballad singers might convey political messages to a broader audience in song.[33]

The Scottish press was more developed than that of Ireland, although less so than that of England, and it is probably fair to say that in early seventeenth-century Scotland there was less of an appetite for either print or news than in England. However, newsbooks were already being printed in Edinburgh by 1619, the output of the Scottish press increased in the 1630s and 1640s, and, despite a temporary setback due to the recession of the early 1650s, that output continued to rise following the Restoration. Nor was printing confined to Edinburgh, since there were presses in St. Andrews and Stirling already in the sixteenth century, and in Aberdeen and Glasgow by the 1620s and 1630s. Meanwhile, works published in England and the Low Countries also made their way into Scotland. As with England and Ireland, news in addition traveled by manuscript and personal communication, while other media—such as sermons and proclamations—served as important instruments of politicization.[34]

Scholars have shown that literacy rates in Scotland were similar to those in England—and quite high in urban areas—although there were marked regional, class, ethnic, and gender variations.[35] Literacy was also more widespread in Ireland than we might imagine. On the Earl of Antrim's estates in Ulster in the 1630s some 75 percent of the Protestant settlers and 40 percent of those with Irish surnames could sign their names, although these reflected the more well-to-do tenants. The depositions taken from the victims of the Irish Rebellion of 1641 show that, whereas those of higher or middling status (both male and female) usually did sign their names, the majority of deponents left a mark. Yet more

[33] Gillespie, "Circulation of Print," 31, 41, 42–44; idem, *Reading Ireland*, 105–6, 111–15; idem, "Print Culture," 27; idem, "Irish Printing in the Early Seventeenth Century," *Irish Economic and Social History* 15 (1988): 81–88.

[34] Hamish Mathison, "Scotland," in Raymond, ed., *Oxford History*, 1:30–38, at 36–37; Alastair J. Mann, *The Scottish Book Trade, 1500–1700: Print Commerce and Print Control in Early Modern Scotland* (East Linton, 2000); Jane Stevenson, "Reading, Writing and Gender in Early Modern Scotland," *Seventeenth Century* 27, no. 3 (Autumn 2012): 335–74, at 342; Harris, *Restoration*, 17; Laura A. M. Stewart, *Rethinking the Scottish Revolution: Covenanted Scotland, 1637–1651* (Oxford, 2016), 33–37, 70–76.

[35] Rab Houston, "The Literacy Myth? Illiteracy in Scotland, 1630–1760," *Past and Present* 96 (August 1982): 81–102; R. A. Houston, *Scottish Literacy and the Scottish Identity: Illiteracy and Society in Scotland and Northern England, 1600–1800* (Cambridge, 1985); Stevenson, "Reading, Writing and Gender"; David Cressy, *Literacy and the Social Order: Reading and Writing in Tudor and Stuart England* (Cambridge, 1980); Jonathan Barry, "Literacy and Literature in Popular Culture," in *Popular Culture in England, c. 1500–1850*, ed. Tim Harris (Basingstoke, 1995), 69–94; Eleanor Hubbard, "Reading, Writing, and Initialing: Female Literacy in Early Modern London," *Journal of British Studies* 54, no. 3 (July 2015): 553–77.

people could read than sign their names, and literacy rates increased as the century progressed. On the Herbert estate in Castleisland, County Kerry, between 1653 and 1687 over 83 percent of Protestant settlers signed their leases, as did some 67 percent of the native Irish. In Dublin, the proportion of those who could sign their names, to judge from a study of debt cases, increased from about two-thirds in mid-century to four-fifths by the 1690s.[36]

Distance from the center may have meant that outlying areas were less well informed. In his recent study of early Stuart news, David Coast has shown that "the accuracy as well as the volume of political news decreased the further one was from London." Even Suffolk was news-starved, and news got sketchier still the further one went north.[37] Wales was another area that was relatively deprived of news.[38] Linguistic difference was an additional barrier to an integrated news culture across the Britannic archipelago. At the beginning of the Stuart period, very few of the Gaelic Irish or the Scottish Highlanders would have understood English, although this changed over the course of the century as bilingualism became increasingly common.[39] In Wales some 90 percent of the population were Welsh-speaking monoglots in the early Stuart period.[40]

What this means, however, is not necessarily that that there were populations that were indifferent to politics in more remote or news-starved areas. Rather, it simply means that the social and cultural contexts that structured how people had their opinions about politics shaped differed. Those who inhabited remoter parts would have had different degrees of access to political information compared to those who lived in areas with relatively dense and sophisticated news cultures. In some places, access to news might have been filtered by elite mediators or brokers, such as local landowners or clergy or (within Gaeldom) clan chiefs. The influence available to brokers or mediators would be even greater where there was a language barrier. Bowen has shown how the political, religious, and social conservatism of the Welsh bilingual gentry and clergy led them to inculcate conservative values and loyalty to the Stuarts among their social subordinates.[41] In Ireland, by contrast, the alienation of the Gaelic ruling elite and of the Catholic clergy (and, increasingly also, of the Catholic Anglo-Irish elite) meant that such mediators tended to encourage their social subordinates towards an anti-government stance.

In short, there were multiple technologies for spreading the news and different densities of news cultures in different parts of the Britannic archipelago across the

---

[36] Marie-Louise Coolahan, "'And This Deponent Further Sayeth': Orality, Print and the 1641 Depositions," in *Oral and Print Cultures in Ireland, 1600–1900*, ed. Marc Caball and Andrew Carpenter (Dublin, 2010), 69–84, at 72–73; Gillespie, *Reading Ireland*, 40–41, 43; Gillespie, "Circulation of Print," 32–33; Gillespie, "Print Culture," 26; Toby Barnard, "Learning, the Learned and Literacy in Ireland, c. 1660–1760," in *"A Miracle of Learning": Studies in Manuscript and Irish Learning: Essays in Honour of William O'Sullivan*, ed. Toby Barnard, Dáibhí Ó Cróinín, and Katharine Simms (Aldershot, 1998), 209–35, at 220–21.

[37] David Coast, *News and Rumour in Jacobean England: Information, Court Politics and Diplomacy, 1618–25* (Manchester, 2014), 86. This was still the case in the late 1640s. Henry Reece, *The Army in Cromwellian England, 1649–1660* (Oxford, 2013), 61.

[38] Bowen, "Information."

[39] Gillespie, *Reading Ireland*, 55–74; Ohlmeyer, "Ireland," 42.

[40] Bowen, "Information," 129.

[41] Ibid.

seventeenth century, with the balance between the various technologies varying from place to place and also shifting as the century progressed. It was not just that the balance between manuscript and printed news changed over time. There was also a shifting balance between the availability of different types of printed news. The early news periodicals, the courantos of the 1620s, focused on foreign news. The first domestic news periodicals did not appear until November 1641—significantly, they emerged as a result of the political crisis provoked by the outbreak of the Irish Rebellion in late October 1641.[42] Manuscript newsletters continued to be an important source of news even after the opening up of the press, although their nature changed somewhat because of the emergence of printed newsbooks; indeed, in the Restoration, newsletters became cheaper and were more widely distributed, as they helped fuel the nation's growing appetite for news.[43] Access to news would have increased as literacy rose and bilingualism spread, but people would still have relied upon earlier technologies even after printed news became readily available.

Throughout the century, the clergy remained important brokers of news. This was true even in England at times when the press was very active. The parliamentary commissions set up during the first civil war to investigate scandalous and malignant ministers, for instance, were particularly concerned with the influence that such ministers had in shaping parish opinion and with the way that they manipulated the news (by reading royalist prints and refusing to read parliamentarian ones, or by putting negative glosses on parliamentary ordinances).[44] The clergy's role was often vital where there was a less-active news press or a language barrier to transcend. For example, when in February 1618 the Dublin authorities launched an investigation into a "flying report" that the archbishop of Canterbury had been committed to the Tower of London for opposing the Spanish match, they immediately came to focus their inquiries on the role of the clergy in spreading the rumor, pressing those whom they examined to reveal "what newes or reports" the priests had spread touching this or any other "matter of state."[45] Although the rumor was false, the examinations reveal that the laity were in the habit of asking the clergy for "news" and that the authorities knew that the clergy were at the center of local

---

[42] Joad Raymond, *The Invention of the Newspaper: English Newsbooks, 1641–1649* (Oxford, 1996), 80–126; Jayne E. E. Boys, *London's News Press and the Thirty Years War* (Woodbridge, 2011); David A. O'Hara, "English Newsbooks and the Outbreak of the Irish Rebellion of 1641," *Media History* 9, no. 3 (2003): 179–93, at 181, 185; David A. O'Hara, *English Newsbooks and the Irish Rebellion of 1641–1649* (Dublin, 2006).

[43] Harold Love, *Scribal Publication in Seventeenth-Century England* (Oxford, 1993); Ian Atherton, "The Itch Grown a Disease: The Manuscript Transmission of News in the Seventeenth Century," in *News, Newspapers, and Society in Early Modern Britain*, ed. Joad Raymond (London, 1999), 39–65, at 52–56; Rachael Scarborough King, "The Manuscript Newsletter and the Rise of the Newspaper, 1665–1715," *Huntington Library Quarterly* 79, no. 3 (Autumn 2016): 411–437.

[44] Add. MSS. 15672, British Library (hereafter BL); Add. MSS 22084, BL; Mm. I, ff. 243–64, CUL; Clive Holmes, ed., *The Suffolk Committees for Scandalous Ministers, 1644–1646* (Ipswich, 1970). See also Fiona McCall, *Baal's Priests: The Loyalist Clergy and the English Revolution* (Farnham, 2013), 117–18, 129; and Lloyd Bowen, "Royalism, Print and the Clergy in Britain, 1639–1640 and 1642," *Historical Journal* 56, no. 2 (June 2013): 297–319.

[45] Lord Deputy Grandison, 26 February 1617/18, interrogatories ministered to Richard Dillon, of Prowdston, County Meath, HA 15016, HEH.

news networks.[46] When, following the restoration of the monarchy in 1660, the authorities wanted to close down public debate about politics, contemporaries saw the press and the pulpit as part and parcel of the same problem. Thus, in May 1662, George Wild, Bishop of Derry, rejoiced that the English Parliament had moved to "Cutt off one of the schismatiques and Rebells beste Propp[s] and Engine[s], the Presse, by securing and fencing it from bold impudent Penns," and hoped that they would soon "secure the Pulpitt too" (alluding to the impending Act of Uniformity).[47]

BRITISH PUBLICS

Given that the inhabitants of the Stuart realms were deeply divided, politically and religiously, it would clearly be wrong to generalize about Irish, Scottish, or English public opinion, let alone British public opinion. We see numerous discrete, politically engaged publics mobilizing at different times in all three kingdoms of the Stuart multiple monarchy—whether confessional (Catholic, Protestant), intra-denominational (Anglican, Puritan, separatist), or political (royalist, parliamentarian; Whig, Tory). However, on occasion these publics showed themselves engaged with British politics and thus made public their opinions about British affairs. Let me illustrate by looking briefly at Ireland and Scotland.

In Ireland, there were various publics—or "interests," as contemporaries styled them—reflecting the country's ethnic, national, and religious divisions. The largest group, numerically, were the Gaelic Irish, the original conquered people of Ireland, who were staunchly Catholic in religious outlook. These had been the most likely to rebel against English rule in the sixteenth century, and they were the first to rebel against the English plantation system in 1641. Under Elizabeth and the early Stuarts, the Gaelic Irish did seek to use "the media" to try to create a "public" that would back their position, and in that sense they sought to appeal to "public opinion"—and public opinion about Anglo-Irish affairs. Yet in fact they tended to appeal to a series of discrete publics, using Irish-language texts and bardic poetry to cement Gaelic Irish support, English-language texts to appeal to English opinion (whether Catholic Old English opinion in Ireland or Protestant opinion in England), and Latin works to appeal to Catholic opinion across Christendom. During the Nine Years' War (1594–1603), Hugh O'Neill, Earl of Tyrone, sought to advance a "faith and fatherland" ideology in an effort to unite the Catholics of Ireland against English rule. Yet in doing so he was specifically targeting the Old English and the Pope: we find the ideology in O'Neill's English letters and proclamations, and in Latin writings aimed at the papacy, but it does not appear in an Irish-language text until quite some time after O'Neill's death in 1616. Moreover, the strategy was largely unsuccessful: most Old English remained loyal to the

---

[46] Examination of Richard Dillon, 27 February 1617/18, HA 15017, HEH; Richard Dillon, of Prowdston, County Meath, esquire, answer to interrogatories, [26?] February 1617/18, HA 14634, HEH; Examination of Nicholas Hollywood the younger, 3 March 1617/18, HA 14976, HEH.

[47] George Wild, Bishop of Derry, to John Bramhall, Archbishop of Armagh, 13 May 1662, HA 16008, HEH. Cf. George Morley, Bishop of Winchester, to Bramhall, London, 14 May [1662], HA 15382, HEH.

crown in the face of this rebellion of the Gaelic Irish.[48] Thus, O'Neill's faith and fatherland ideology was a play for support, one that fell short of its objectives; it was not Irish Catholic public opinion nor really the opinion of the Gaelic Irish who backed O'Neill.

Another sizeable interest group were the Old English recusants, the descendants of the original Anglo-Norman conquerors of Ireland who had remained Catholic at the Reformation (although their identity was confused by intermarriage with the Gaelic Irish over the generations). They were increasingly becoming an oppositionist voice in the early seventeenth century. Upon hearing the news of the death of Queen Elizabeth in 1603, recusant communities in towns across Munster and Leinster rose to take possession of the churches, driving out the Protestant ministers and restoring the old Catholic images and the mass: they claimed to have received "intelligence" that, if James VI of Scotland were to succeed Elizabeth, "he would permit to Irishmen a free exercise of the Catholicke Religion." In several towns, Catholic citizens refused to proclaim James, whom they saw as a foreigner (because Scottish and not English), until the mass had been restored and the pope had confirmed him. This was not simply a religious revolt, however. Catholics were also concerned about broader political and economic issues stemming from the Nine Years' War, including the continued imposition of taxes to pay for garrisons and fortifications, the debasement of the currency, restraints on trade with Spain, and the violation of town charters. And the revolt took on specific local colorations in different corporations. Yet it was also intrinsically a British episode. Catholics, mostly of Old English extraction, in colonized Ireland, were responding to the death of an English monarch who was to be succeeded to the thrones of England and Ireland by the reigning king of Scotland. It was an episode intimately tied up with the power structures of the English state and its reach in Ireland.[49]

In the early years of James's reign, the Dublin administration aggressively targeted the Old English recusant community, issuing mandates for Catholics to come to Church under pain of heavy fines or imprisonment and ordering Catholic priests to leave the country. Government policy produced a public reaction as the recusant community in Ireland devised various strategies to challenge the government agenda and to protect themselves in the face of persecution. In other words, government policy called a "public" into being, albeit a very specific type of public. At the

---

[48] Hiram Morgan, *Tyrone's Rebellion: The Outbreak of the Nine Years War in Tudor Ireland* (Woodbridge, 1993), 4; Hiram Morgan, "Faith and Fatherland in Sixteenth-Century Ireland," *History Ireland* 3, no. 2 (Summer 1995): 13–20; Mícheál Mac Craith, "The Gaelic Reaction to the Reformation," in *Conquest and Union. Fashioning a British State, 1485–1725*, ed. S. G. Ellis and Sarah Barber (London, 1995), 139–61, at 144–48; Alan Ford, "'Firm Catholics' or 'Loyal Subjects'? Religious and Political Allegiance in Early Seventeenth-Century Ireland," in *Political Discourse in Seventeenth- and Eighteenth-Century Ireland*, ed. David Boyce, Robert Eccleshall, and Vincent Geoghegan (Basingstoke, 2001), 1–31, at 5–6; S. J. Connolly, *Contested Island: Ireland, 1460–1630* (Oxford, 2007), 246–48; Ohlmeyer, "Ireland," 43–44; Hiram Morgan, "Hugh O'Neill and the Nine Years' War in Tudor Ireland," *Historical Journal* 36, no. 1 (March 1993): 21–37.

[49] [Patrick Comerford], *The Inquisition of a Sermon Preached in the Cathedrall Church of the City of Waterford* (Waterford, 1644), 18, 28, 29 (quote on 28); *Calendar of the Carew Manuscripts Preserved in the Archiepiscopal Library at Lambeth*, ed. J. S. Brewer and William Bullen (London, 1867–1873), 7–12, at 10; MS 12,813/1, fols. 13–16, at 15, National Library of Ireland (hereafter NLI); Anthony Sheehan, "The Recusancy Revolt of 1603: A Reinterpretation," *Archivium Hibernicum* 38 (1983): 3–13; Tait, "Riots, Rescues," 74–75; Harris, *Rebellion*, 145–46.

same time, both the government and the recusant community were competing to get a broader public's opinion on its side.[50] The Catholic gentry and nobility of the Pale mobilized to petition the king in London to suspend the mandates policy, and eventually the crown urged Dublin to back down. Until the reprieve came, Catholics adopted a variety of survival strategies. At New Ross, County Wexford, on Christmas Day 1605 and Easter Sunday 1606, some 200 Catholics, led by the town sovereign, stormed the parish church, prevented the minister from preaching or celebrating communion, and held a Catholic mass instead.[51] More typically, Catholics engaged in various forms of passive resistance. At Cashel in County Tipperary in November 1606, the chief magistrate and citizens refused to publish a government proclamation banishing priests. When the Protestant archbishop of Cashel tried to publish it himself, he found the market place deserted, the townspeople having opted to stay at home, closing their doors and windows, so they could deny having heard it read. When he posted the proclamation on the market cross, the boys and girls of the town "besmeared" it "with cowdung" so that it could not be read.[52] Catholic leaders did their best to keep poorer Catholics from yielding to the pressure of repeated fines: the clergy took oaths from the people not to go to the Protestant churches, while some landlords threatened their tenants with eviction if they went to Protestant services.[53]

This was a battle for public opinion. The Dublin administration had conceived of it as such. It had started by taking on the Old English of Dublin, not because they were a security risk—the Dublin Old English had remained loyal to the crown during the rebellion of the 1590s—but because the Dublin privy council believed that "all the eyes of the kingdom were turned upon" Dublin and that, if the Dublin recusants could be made to comply, "the people of other parts" of Ireland would follow suit. Therefore, it was important for Dublin recusants not to comply and instead to try to keep "the people of other parts" loyal to the faith in order to prevent the Dublin administration from being able to claim that its policy was working.[54]

The Old English and the Gaelic Irish were seen—and saw themselves—as distinct interests. Nevertheless, there are signs in the early decades of the seventeenth century that they were beginning to draw closer together in the face of discrimination at the hands of the Anglo-Protestant state.[55] And although the Irish Rebellion of 1641

[50] For the mandates policy, see John McCavitt, "Lord Deputy Chichester and the English Government's 'Mandates Policy' in Ireland, 1605–7," *Recusant History* 20, no. 3 (May 1991): 320–35; Brendan Fitzpatrick, *Seventeenth-Century Ireland* (Dublin, 1998), 8–17; Canny, *Making Ireland British*, 172–75; Hans Pawlisch, *Sir John Davies and the Conquest of Ireland: A Study in Legal Imperialism* (Cambridge, 1985), 103–21; and Harris, *Rebellion*, 148–54.

[51] MS 852, fol. 96v, Trinity College, Dublin (hereafter TC); Jon G. Crawford, *A Star Chamber Court in Ireland: The Court of Castle Chamber, 1571–1641* (Dublin, 2005), 145–46, 150, 295, 300–1, 491–92; *Calendar of the State Papers Relating to Ireland, of the Reign of James I, 1603–25: Preserved in Her Majesty's Public Record Office, and Elsewhere*, ed. C. W. Russell and John P. Prendergast, 5 vols. (London, 1872–80) (hereafter *CSPIre*), *1606–8*, 15.

[52] Henry Fitzsimon, *Words of Comfort to Persecuted Catholics*, ed. Edmund Hogan (Dublin, 1881), 124, 125, 155.

[53] *CSPIre, 1603–6*, 544; Fitzsimon, *Words of Comfort*, 156.

[54] MS 672, fols. 22–23, TC; *CSPIre, 1603–6*, 348–49, 353–54, 355–58, 370.

[55] Gillespie, "Negotiating Order," 193; Bernadette Cunningham, "Seventeenth-Century Interpretations of the Past: The Case of Geoffrey Keating," *Irish Historical Studies* 25, no. 98 (November 1986): 116–28, at 122; Micheál Ó Siochrú, *Confederate Ireland, 1642–1649: A Constitutional and Political Analysis*

began as an uprising of the Gaelic Irish in Ulster, the Old English were soon to join with them, not least because the Dublin administration, in its immediate reaction to the rebellion, tended to lump all Irish Catholics together (Gaelic and Old English) when taking reprisals.[56]

The Protestants of Ireland comprised yet another distinct interest, although these came to be divided between different types of Protestant—conformist and nonconformist, English and Scottish. There were various times in the seventeenth century when discrete Protestant groups sought publicly to represent their views to the crown, either to apply pressure for reform or to demonstrate support for the crown at times of crisis. For example, Ulster Protestants (of both English and Scottish extraction) submitted a petition to the Long Parliament in July 1641 expressing support for the root and branch abolition of episcopacy.[57] By contrast, in the early 1680s, Protestants of the established Church of Ireland sent in loyal addresses pledging support for Charles II and his brother and heir, James Duke of York, against the challenge of the English Whigs. On both occasions, Protestants in Ireland were making a pan-archipelagic public statement: they were saying that they identified with opinion across the Irish Sea in England.[58]

Likewise in Scotland, we see competing publics and rival public voices on occasion seeking to stake a claim to represent a broader public opinion. In 1638, the Scottish Presbyterians mobilized mass subscriptions to their National Covenant, building upon networks and strategies of dissent that had developed at the parish level since the imposition of the Five Articles of Perth in 1618 and forged in opposition to a Stuart monarchy bent on bringing the Scottish Kirk into closer congruence with the established church in England.[59] Although the Covenanters were to go to war with England, in publications aimed at the English they represented themselves

(Dublin, 1999); Harris, *Rebellion*, 159, 167, 185; Joseph T. Leerssen, *Mere Irish and Fíor-Ghael: Studies in the Idea of Irish Nationality, Its Development and Literary Expression Prior to the Nineteenth Century* (Amsterdam, 1986), 295. The emergence of a sense of "a Catholic nation" of Ireland that transcended ethnic difference was a long process, still far from complete by the late seventeenth century. Colin Kidd, *British Identities before Nationalism: Ethnicity and Nationhood in the Atlantic World, 1600–1800* (Cambridge, 1999), 153; Anne Creighton, "The Remonstrance of December 1661 and Catholic Politics in Restoration Ireland," *Irish Historical Studies* 34, no. 133 (May 2004): 16–41, at 38.

[56] Canny, *Making Ireland British*, 461–550; Micheál Ó Siochrú, "Atrocity, Codes of Conduct and the Irish in the British Civil Wars, 1641–1653," *Past and Present* 195 (May 2007): 55–86, at 61; Micheál Ó Siochrú, *God's Executioner: Oliver Cromwell and the Conquest of Ireland* (London, 2008), 25–26; Harris, *Rebellion*, 159, 163–64, 215–16, 347, 357–60, 429, 433.

[57] *The Humble Petition of the Protestant Inhabitants of the Counties of Antrim, Downe, Tyrone, etc., Part of the Province of Ulster* (London, 1641); Robert Armstrong, "Ireland's Puritan Revolution? The Emergence of Ulster Presbyterianism Reconsidered," *English Historical Review* 121, no. 493 (September 2006): 1048–74, at 1051–53.

[58] Harris, *Restoration*, 390–95, 403–5.

[59] Allan I. Macinnes, *Charles I and the Making of the Covenanting Movement, 1625–1641* (Edinburgh, 2003), 155–82; David Stevenson, *The Scottish Revolution, 1637–1644: The Triumph of the Covenanters* (new ed., Edinburgh, 2003), 56–87; Stewart, *Rethinking the Scottish Revolution*, 29–121; Stewart, "Authority, Agency," 94–102; Laura A. M. Stewart, "The Political Repercussions of the Five Articles of Perth: A Reassessment of James VI and I's Religious Policies in Scotland," *Sixteenth Century Journal* 38, no. 4 (Winter 2007): 1013–36; Laura A. M. Stewart, "'Brothers in Treuth': Propaganda, Public Opinion and the Perth Articles Debate in Scotland," in *James VI and I: Ideas, Authority, and Government*, ed. Ralph Houlbrooke (Aldershot, 2006), 151–68.

as loyal subjects who were merely petitioning the king for "legall redresse," thereby seeking to legitimize their actions by appeal to a "British" (shared English and Scottish) public transcript of the responsibilities of the sovereign towards his people.[60] Theologians at Marischal College and King's College in Aberdeen—the Aberdeen doctors—orchestrated a counter-movement; while there is little evidence that their media campaign did much to dissuade fellow Scots from sympathizing with the Covenanters, their writings might have had some impact on English opinion. Certainly the dialogue between the Covenanters and apologists for Charles I helped to generate a public that was engaged with developments in England.[61] In the Restoration, we again see Scottish Presbyterians mobilizing publicly to articulate their grievances. Now a beleaguered group suffering persecution at the hands of the state, following Charles II's decision to revive episcopacy at the restoration, they were hardly any longer representative of the national interest, although they did claim to be more numerous than the episcopalians (and thus to be a majority of the nation) and to be the true kirk (and therefore representative of the national interest in a religious sense). The Presbyterians, however, were divided between moderates and extremists, with radical activists, such as the Cameronians, more likely to be publicly engaged in collective agitation but not necessarily representing the Presbyterian interest in Scotland as a whole.[62]

BRITISH PUBLIC OPINION?

Seeing how divided opinion was in all three kingdoms during the seventeenth century, in what ways could it possibly make sense to talk about British public opinion? The Catholics of Ireland, when articulating their grievances, were inevitably making a statement about English policy towards Ireland and thus offering opinions about British affairs. But theirs was obviously not British opinion, perhaps not even Irish Catholic opinion, although they might have been trying to appeal to a broader public in England. The Scottish Covenanters in the late 1630s set out to appeal to public opinion in England, casting themselves as fellow subjects under the Stuart multiple monarchy who faced a similar threat to their religion from Archbishop Laud as did their English neighbors and brethren. Certainly they projected their actions as intending to advance a British public good. There is perhaps a case for saying that a British critique of Laudianism emerged in the late 1630s and early 1640s, and that the widespread anti-Laudianism of this time was a type of British public opinion. We might suggest that this period saw the opening up of an Anglo-Scottish public sphere—although, given that the Scottish Covenanters also sought to appeal to their religious kin in the Dutch republic, this was more accurately an Anglo-Scoto-Dutch public sphere.[63] Yet the Scots and the English tended to represent themselves as facing similar, even overlapping, but nevertheless distinct threats

---

[60] *An Information to all Good Christians* (Edinburgh, 1639), 4–5.

[61] Barry Robertson, *Royalists at War in Scotland and Ireland, 1638–1650* (Farnham, 2014), 25–52; Stewart, *Rethinking the Scottish Revolution*, 76–86, 141–43.

[62] Harris, *Revolution*, 376–78, 389–90.

[63] Helmer J. Helmers, *The Royalist Republic: Literature, Politics, and Religion in the Anglo-Dutch Public Sphere, 1639–1660* (Cambridge, 2015), 33.

from Laudianism. English anti-Laudian propaganda, if it did focus on the plight of the Scots, tended to argue that the English themselves were facing more serious threats.[64] However, much English anti-Laudian propaganda simply ignored what was going on in Scotland; the English had reasons of their own for being upset with Laud. What we see is transnational sympathy, not British opinion. Charles I also made an appeal at the pan-Britannic level, using both press and pulpit to try to turn the English, Welsh and episcopalian Scots—and even Ulster Scots—against the Covenanters. Ultimately, it proved to be of limited effectiveness, serving only to alienate Protestant opinion in Ulster and in Scotland even further rather than to rally public opinion behind the crown. Nevertheless, such efforts reinforce the point that the crisis of 1638–1640 provoked a battle for public opinion across the Britannic archipelago.[65]

Over the course of the seventeenth century, then, we see various discrete, politicized publics across the British realms, vying for broader public support and seeking to influence official policy. A consideration of politics and opinion out of doors is thus central to the study of British history. We might conclude, however, that these discrete publics—albeit engaged (in varying ways) with British issues and either claiming to represent broader opinion or fighting for broader public support—were nevertheless representing their own specific sectional or partisan interests. They might have thought that their particular kingdom, or the three kingdoms as a whole, would be better off if their voice were listened to, but they were not claiming that theirs was the voice of the three kingdoms.

There is much to be said for this view. However, we need to factor in change over time. As we have seen, the cultural context changed in crucial ways. Literacy grew, across the three kingdoms, over the course of the seventeenth century. Bilingualism was on the rise among those who were not native-English speakers: by the later seventeenth century, more people in Ireland, Scotland, and Wales could read the news in English. Print culture expanded, across the Britannic archipelago; the reintroduction of pre-publication licensing in 1662 proved to be only a limited and temporary setback (and the Licensing Act was allowed to lapse in 1679). Rapid population growth and economic expansion in Dublin after 1660, for instance, helped boost both publishing and book-buying dramatically in Ireland's capital: in the 1680s, the output of the Dublin presses increased by almost 80 percent, and the mechanisms for distributing printed works—whether domestically produced or imported from England or Scotland—across Ireland were becoming more sophisticated.[66] Demand for news increased as a result of the politicization generated by the mid-century revolutions; news was more widely consumed, with more and more people below the level of the political and social elite able to access political

---

[64] *The Beast is Wounded* [Amsterdam?, 1638].

[65] Sarah Waurechen, "Covenanter Propaganda and Conceptualizations of the Public during the Bishops' Wars, 1638–1640," *Historical Journal* 52, no. 1 (March 2009): 63–86; Harris, *Rebellion*, 379, 387–98; Harris, "Charles I," 8–13; Michael Perceval-Maxwell, "Strafford, the Ulster Scots and the Covenanters," *Irish Historical Studies* 18, no. 72 (September 1973): 524–51, at 536–43; John McCafferty, "When Reformations Collide," in *The Stuart Kingdoms in the Seventeenth Century*, ed. Allan I. Macinnes and Jane H. Ohlmeyer (Dublin, 2002), 186–203, at 189, 199, 202.

[66] Lennon, "Print Trade," 68–69, 73; Gillespie, "Print Culture," 24–25; John Kerrigan, *Archipelagic English: Literature, History, and Politics, 1603–1707* (Oxford, 2008), 76.

information; more sites for the discussion and exchange of news emerged, in part as a function of increasing urbanization and the rise of coffeehouses across England, Scotland, and Ireland; and the circulation of news was geographically more extensive, thanks not least to the rise of the postal service—by the 1680s most market towns were connected to the service, while packets were sent to Dublin and Edinburgh three times per week.[67] Lake and Pincus have written of the dramatic increase in "the intensity, speed, and sheer volume of popular and public political discussion" as a result of the English civil war: although the Restoration period did not always see the same "feverish levels of public discussion" as the 1640s and 1650s—"the public sphere continued to ebb and flow," they acknowledged, dependent upon political vicissitudes and the ability of the government to clamp down on public debate—"even at its lowest points, public discussion never returned to the relative quiescence of the mid-1630s."[68]

Furthermore, people were now more attuned to British affairs. Again, this was a consequence of the mid-century crisis, which had been a three-kingdoms crisis, triggered by revolts in Scotland and Ireland, and which had led to the overthrowing of the Stuart monarchy and the episcopalian church in all three kingdoms and to the ultimate incorporation of Scotland and Ireland into a British political union. The Restoration settlement, even though it involved undoing the Cromwellian union, had to be a three-kingdoms settlement. It was essentially a Cavalier-Anglican vision of settlement that won out after 1660, with the re-establishment of a Protestant episcopalian church in each of the three kingdoms and of a multiple monarchy that was absolute and irresistible, albeit one also obliged to uphold the rule of law. Those who worked to install this Restoration settlement, and those who later sought to uphold it against the challenge of the Whigs towards the end of Charles II's reign, were continuously thinking about how events in one kingdom might affect another.[69] Similarly, those who sought to subvert this settlement thought in terms of a pan-Britannic alliance of the disaffected to try to bring down the Restoration regime, although conspiratorial politics in this time period could not afford to be public.[70] Such developments stimulated a greater demand for British news across the

[67] Laura Lunger Knoppers, "Introduction: Critical Framework and Issues," in Knoppers, ed., *Oxford Handbook*, 1–17, at 12; Eamon Darcy, "Three Kingdoms," in Knoppers, ed., *Oxford Handbook*, 44–64, at 55; Steve Pincus, "'Coffee Politicians Does Make': Coffeehouses and Restoration Political Culture," *Journal of Modern History* 67, no. 4 (December 1995): 807–34; Gillespie, "Circulation of Print," 53; Gillespie, *Reading Ireland*, 106; Barnard, "Learning, the Learned and Literacy in Ireland," 218–19; Adam Fox, *Oral and Literate Culture in England, 1500–1700* (Oxford, 2000), 375; Joad Raymond, "The Newspaper, Public Opinion, and the Public Sphere in the Seventeenth Century," in Raymond, *News, Newspapers, and Society*, 109–40, at 117; Atherton, "Itch Grown a Disease," 53; Kerrigan, *Archipelagic English*, 71–72; W. G. Stitt Dibden, *The Post Office, 1635–1720* (Bath, 1960).

[68] Lake and Pincus, "Rethinking the Public Sphere," 279–81, 290 (quotes on 280, 281).

[69] Tim Harris, "The Restoration in Britain and Ireland," in *The Oxford Handbook of the English Revolution*, ed. Michael J. Braddick (Oxford, 2015), 204–19; idem, "The British Dimension, Religion, and the Shaping of Political Identities during the Reign of Charles II," in *Protestantism and National Identity: Britain and Ireland, c. 1650–c. 1850*, ed. Tony Claydon and Ian McBride (Cambridge, 1998), 131–56; idem, *Restoration*. The first Irish newspaper—*An Account of the Chief Occurrences of Ireland, Together with Some Particulars of England*—appeared in February–March 1660 as part of a campaign to build support in Ireland for the restoration of Charles II. Munter, *History*, 7.

[70] See the trilogy by Richard Greaves: Richard Greaves, *Deliver Us from Evil: The Radical Underground in Britain, 1660–1663* (Oxford, 1986); idem, *Enemies under His Feet: Radicals and Nonconformists in*

archipelago. Reports from the early 1660s show that Ulster Presbyterians were in receipt of "speedy intelligence" of what was done and said in Parliament in London.[71] Manuscript newsletters circulated in Scotland in the 1670s and 1680s bearing English news for Scottish audiences.[72] In England not only the newspaper press of the Exclusion Crisis but also manuscript journals and newsletters of the 1680s were filled with accounts of political developments in Scotland and Ireland.[73]

Arguments about change over time have to be handled with care. It is arguable that interest in British news waxed and waned, with peaks occurring at moments of British crisis, rather than steadily increased over time. However, I would suggest that the situation was different after 1660, at least compared to the period before 1637, as a result of the trauma of the mid-century revolution and the political and cultural transformations of the 1640s and 1650s. And whereas the inhabitants of Ireland and Scotland had long been forced to be alert to, and to engage with, developments in England, by the Restoration the English were much less likely to be as inattentive to affairs in the other kingdoms as Clarendon thought they had been during Charles I's personal rule.

The Britannic dimension to what Lake and Pincus have styled the "post-Revolutionary public sphere" can be illustrated by looking at the Exclusion Crisis of the late 1670s and early 1680s and the subsequent Tory Reaction. Exclusion was an English movement. It was a campaign by political activists in England to try to get the English parliament to exclude the Catholic Duke of York from the succession, a campaign that was fought not just in parliament but also out of doors, involving an explicit appeal to public opinion in England through the use of the media and an attempt to mobilize the masses in England to voice their support for exclusion via elections, petitions, and demonstrations. Yet excluding the heir to the throne in England would inevitably have implications for Scotland and Ireland, who shared the same king; and, although the Irish succession went with the English one, parliamentary legislation in England could not change the succession for Scotland. Moreover, the English Whigs made Exclusion a British issue: in their endeavors to mobilize mass support for changing the succession they highlighted the threat of popery and arbitrary government not just in England but also in Ireland and Scotland.[74]

Charles II and his supporters were desperately worried about losing the backing of the people across the three kingdoms. Rightly or wrongly, they had come to feel that

---

Britain, 1664–1677 (Stanford, 1990); and idem, *Secrets of the Kingdom: British Radicals from the Popish Plot to the Revolution of 1688–89* (Stanford, 1992).

[71] George Wild, Bishop of Derry, to John Bramhall, Archbishop of Armagh, Derry, 10 March 1662/3, HA 16017, HEH.

[72] Wodrow MSS, Quarto XXX, NLI; Laura A. M. Stewart, "Introduction: Publics and Participation in Early Modern Britain," *Journal of British History* 56, no. 4 (October 2017): 709–30.

[73] *The Entring Book of Roger Morrice, 1677–1691*, ed. Mark Goldie, 7 vols. (Woodbridge, 2007); *Newsletters of Richard Bulstrode: From the Harry Ransome Humanities Center at Austin, Texas* (Marlborough, 2002).

[74] Harris, "British Dimension," 143–48; Tim Harris, "England's 'Little Sisters without Breasts': Shaftesbury and Scotland and Ireland," in *Anthony Ashley Cooper, The First Earl of Shaftesbury 1621–1683*, ed. John Spurr (Farnham, 2011), 183–205; John Gibney, *Ireland and the Popish Plot* (Basingstoke, 2009); Gillespie, *Reading Ireland*, 114.

one of the major causes of the outbreak of the civil war in 1642 was that Charles I had failed to manage opinion out of doors sufficiently well. They were determined not to make the same mistake themselves. Leading Tory journalist Roger L'Estrange believed that the reason why "the mobile" had been able to destroy monarchy and episcopacy in the 1640s was because "their Superiors" had not looked "better after 'em." "The Government" was "Answerable for the Distempers of the Multitude," L'Estrange insisted. If only "the King's Friends" would take but "Half the Pains, to set them Right, that his Enemies [did], to Mislead them," he proclaimed, "the Common People" would be "as well Dispos'd to Preserve the Government," as they might otherwise be "to Embroil it."[75]

L'Estrange and his fellow Tory polemicists undoubtedly were concerned about public opinion in England. Yet, in meeting the challenge of the English Whigs, the Tories also sought to play the British card. One of their key arguments was that, if an Exclusion bill were passed in England, the Scots would not accept it and war between the two kingdoms would result. To substantiate their claim, they needed to show that the Duke of York had public support in Scotland. Twice during the Exclusion Crisis, Charles II sent his brother to Scotland—first from late 1679 to early 1680 and then again from the autumn of 1680 until the spring of 1682. On both occasions, the pro-government press in London carried reports of the enthusiastic public receptions that York received north of the border: this at a time when the Whigs in England were busy orchestrating pope-burning rallies to try to show public hostility to the prospect of a Catholic king. In short, as part of its strategy for undermining support for the Whigs in England, the government tried to represent public opinion in Scotland as being against Exclusion.[76]

Some students and apprentices in Edinburgh took it upon themselves to challenge this representation of Scottish public opinion by staging their own pope-burning procession in the Scottish capital on Christmas Day 1680. (They had been inspired by seeing a Whig print of the London pope-burning of November 1680 on the wall of an Edinburgh tavern.) When government troops tried to suppress the demonstration, violent clashes broke out in the streets of the capital. Here we have a battle for British opinion (quite literally so), a battle that came out of an attempt by pro-government polemicists in England to play Scotland and England off against each other.[77]

Following the defeat of the parliamentary Exclusion movement, various groups and communities across England sought to make public their support for the crown and commitment to the hereditary succession by framing loyal addresses or staging anti-Whig demonstrations.[78] Not wishing to be left out, the "well affected" of Dublin and other corporations and counties across Ireland decided to promote their own loyal addresses. This was not a government-sponsored initiative. Initially Charles II and his advisors were taken aback, worried that public addresses of this

---

[75] Roger L'Estrange, *Observator* 3, nos. 151 (6 March 1685/6), 201 (18 August 1686), and 206 (4 September 1686).

[76] Harris, *Restoration*, 333–35, 338–41.

[77] Ibid., 187–88.

[78] Mark Knights, *Politics and Opinion in Crisis, 1678–81* (Cambridge, 1994), 329–45; Harris, *Restoration*, 263–92, 317–22; Ted Vallance, "'From the Hearts of the People': Loyalty, Addresses and the Public Sphere in the Exclusion Crisis," in *Religion, Culture and National Community in the 1670s*, ed. Tony Claydon and Thomas N. Corns (Cardiff, 2011), 127–47.

nature might prove contentious in Ireland and provoke trouble, although eventually they decided to receive them and forty-four came in. A further fifty-two loyal addresses from Ireland followed the revelations of the Rye House Plot in 1683. The loyal addresses of the early 1680s were a manifestation of a type of British public opinion: the political sentiment expressed in both those from Ireland and from England was virtually identical. More accurately, however, this was British "conformist Protestant" public opinion. The Irish addresses were from Protestants of the established church in Ireland, who comprised about 10 percent of the population of Ireland. The addresses certainly cannot be said to reflect Irish public opinion.[79]

So successful were Tory efforts in turning opinion against Exclusion that, when Charles II died in 1685 and James II succeeded, a total of 439 loyal addresses were presented pledging support for the Catholic king: 346 from England and Wales; 75 from Ireland (including 1 from the Roman Catholic clergy of Ireland); 4 from Scotland (Edinburgh, Glasgow, Aberdeen, and the royal burghs of Scotland) and 1 from the Scottish Corporation (a hospital in Westminster for Scots living in the English capital); and 13 from residents overseas or foreign dominions. All of them were reported in the *London Gazette*. In short, the government was claiming that public opinion across the Stuart dominions supported the accession of James II.[80] The government's success in building public support for the succession—and in being able to represent, through the media, the extent of that public support—was crucial to its efforts to defeat the challenge posed by the English Whigs, not least because of the participatory nature of the English political system: the government now found it easier, as a result, to induce local constables and jurors to bring the full weight of the law down upon Whig dissidents and Protestant nonconformists. Radical Whigs continued to contest this representation of public opinion, but when disaffected Scots and English launched their rebellions in 1685, they failed for lack of popular support.[81]

What we see during the final years of Charles II's reign, then, is a recognition by the crown and its allies of the tactical advantage of being able to represent, through the media, the voice of the people of England, Scotland, Ireland, and overseas crown dependencies as being opposed to Exclusion and in favor of the succession of the Duke of York. This was a self-conscious construction, and subsequent presentation, of British public opinion. It is more questionable whether this marked the beginnings of a permanent transformation of the public sphere, however, or a growing recognition by those in authority and at the centers of power that the appropriate adjudicating public to which they would have to appeal would be a British (pan-archipelagic)

---

[79] MS 11,960, pp. 85–223, NLI; *London Gazette*, nos. 1714 (20–24 April 1682), 1751 (28–31 August 1682), 1867 (8–11 October 1683); Historical Manuscripts Commission, *Calendar of the Manuscripts of the Marquess of Ormonde, K. P., Preserved at Kilkenny Castle*, New Series, ed. C. Litton Falkiner and F. Elrington Ball, 8 vols. (London, 1902–20), 6:57, 62; HMC, *Ormonde*, N.S. VII, 86–7, 110; *The Council Book of the Corporation of Youghall, from 1610 … to 1800*, ed. Richard Caulfield (Guildford, 1878), 361; [Earl of Conway] to Sir George Rawdon, 6 May 1682, HA 14570, HEH; Harris, *Restoration*, 390–95, 403–5.

[80] Harris, *Revolution*, 49–54; Steve Pincus, *1688: The First Modern Revolution* (New Haven, 2009), 97–99. For the address from the Catholic clergy of Ireland, see Lansdowne 1152A, fol. 404, BL.

[81] Harris, *Restoration*, 260–328; Harris, *Revolution*, 73–94; Robin Clifton, *The Last Popular Rebellion: The Western Rising of 1685* (London, 1984); Greaves, *Secrets of the Kingdom*, 253–89; Pincus, *1688*, 104–16.

one rather than a national one.[82] In fact, in the 1680s the crown's instinct was more to try to manage what could be interpreted as being representative of the voice of the people across the three kingdoms, a strategy that involved suppressing public debate. Hence the use of the law of seditious libel from 1682 to silence critical voices in the press in the final years of Charles II's reign. And hence James II's renewal of the Licensing Act in 1685, his 1686 directive ordering preachers to avoid points of controversy, and his attempts to suppress anti-Catholic literature while promoting works in support of his adopted faith.

Ultimately James II was to lose the support of those very people who had backed his succession in 1685. One could make a case that his regime collapsed—at least in England and Scotland—because he alienated British "conformist Protestant" public opinion. By the aftermath of the Battle of the Boyne of July 1690, he had managed to alienate considerable swaths of Catholic opinion in Ireland, too. In short, British public opinion wars are vitally important to understanding the Revolutions of 1688–1691 in the three kingdoms. However, once again we find the Protestant publics across the three kingdoms fighting for very different types of revolution settlements.

At the same time, the various Protestant publics across the three kingdoms pushing for their respective nation-specific revolution settlements did have an impact on British affairs. Take the crowd interventions in Scotland, for instance—the driving of episcopalian ministers from their manses over the winter of 1688–1689 and the intimidation used to prevent those who did not sympathize with the Scottish Whigs and Presbyterians from taking their seats in the Scottish Convention in the spring of 1689. Such partisan activity, intended to shape Scottish affairs, had broader British implications. By helping to ensure Scotland went Presbyterian in 1689–1690, it made the Anglican interest in England determined not to offer further concessions to Protestant nonconformists within England—a factor behind the failure of comprehension in England in 1689. In short, here we see Presbyterian publics in Scotland seeking to influence Scottish affairs and claiming to be giving voice to the general inclinations of the people in Scotland—although in reality representing only part of the people, since that representation was consistently challenged by Scottish episcopalians—nevertheless having a transnational impact.[83] This highlights why we need to include the people in British history and to consider carefully the role that a politically engaged and mobilized public could have in influencing British affairs. Just as "the people" counted in seventeenth-century English political history, so they also counted in seventeenth-century British history.

---

[82] What has been described here is no longer Lake and Pincus's post-Reformation public sphere. Yet it is not quite their postrevolutionary public sphere either, although Lake and Pincus themselves saw the Restoration as a transitional period, acknowledging that a full-fledged postrevolutionary public sphere did not emerge until after the Glorious Revolution. Lake and Pincus, "Rethinking the Public Sphere," 284. Alasdair Raffe, however, has questioned whether Lake and Pincus's postrevolutionary public sphere emerged in Scotland, preferring instead to talk in terms of a "culture of controversy." Alasdair Raffe, *The Culture of Controversy: Religious Arguments in Scotland, 1660–1714* (Woodbridge, 2012).

[83] Harris, *Revolution*, 376–78, 389–90, 419–20.