

# Centres and Peripheries



Centres and Peripheries:  
Metropolitan and Non-Metropolitan  
Journalism in the Twenty-First Century

Edited by

David Hutchison and Hugh O'Donnell

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P U B L I S H I N G

Centres and Peripheries:  
Metropolitan and Non-Metropolitan Journalism in the Twenty-First Century,  
Edited by David Hutchison and Hugh O'Donnell

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## INTRODUCTION

DAVID HUTCHISON AND HUGH O'DONNELL

This collection of essays had its origin in a conference held at Glasgow Caledonian University in the spring of 2009. The conference attracted speakers from continental Europe and North America as well as the British Isles; most of these were academics but a significant number were journalists or former journalists. Subsequent to the conference, when the decision to publish was made, we sought additional contributions in order to broaden the scope of the book. We do not claim for a minute to have covered the globe, but, in addition to chapters concerned with the United Kingdom and Ireland, there are several which address the situations in Spain, Germany, France, and part of Portugal. There are also chapters on the United States, and the former British dominions are represented by Canada and New Zealand.

The centres/peripheries relationship has been explored in a number of contexts.<sup>1</sup> Most obvious is the political one where the development, for example, of the European empires can be viewed in that light, the colonial powers seeking to centralise decision-making in, say, London, Paris, Lisbon or Madrid, with Ceylon, Algeria, Brazil, Peru and other possessions in subservient positions. Closely allied in the history of empires is the centre/periphery economic interaction, where the central power sought to use the wealth of its colonies to maximise benefit to itself, whether through the exploitation of a colony's natural resources, the development of markets for industrial goods produced at home, or the imposition of tariff regimes designed to ensure that the colonial power remained a net beneficiary, even when economic development in the colony started to accelerate. And within former colonies, a similar analytical framework can be used to account for the way in which, for example, the fur trade in North America produced a centre/periphery

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<sup>1</sup> Johan Galtung's 1971 essay is often cited in discussions of centre/periphery relationships. He distinguishes five types of imperialism "depending on the type of exchange between Center and Periphery nations"—economic, political, military, communication and cultural.

relationship not only between France—later Britain—and Lower Canada but also between the trading centres of Lower Canada and the fur trapping parts of the country.<sup>2</sup>

In many countries today the argument continues about the relative power of the economic centre(s) and the more peripheral regions which, to take a couple of examples, can manifest itself in discussion about whether the south east of England is successful at the expense of the north east and north west, and whether the relative backwardness of the former East Germany continues because of the excessive economic power of the former West Germany.

Our concern here is with the cultural aspect of the centre/periphery relationship but, while empires may have disappeared in the political sense, the economic strength and reach of powerful countries continue to constrain the behaviour of other countries in many spheres including the cultural. Within that domain we are concerned with the media, and within the media we have chosen to focus on journalism. In a liberal democracy it is largely through the work of journalists that as citizens we are enabled to understand what is going on in our societies, to participate in public debate in an informed fashion and ultimately to make political choices. This is perhaps to describe an ideal situation which can sometimes be more of an aspiration than a fact, and journalism can often be concerned to entertain and divert as well as inform us. Nonetheless, for a great deal of the time much journalism does exactly what it is supposed to do in democratic societies: informs, asks awkward questions and promotes public debate.

Centre/periphery relationships in journalism are about power and perspective. Do the metropolitan newspapers and broadcasters in any particular country dominate in terms of circulation and viewing figures, to the exclusion or weakening of the media in peripheral areas? How do peripheries sustain their own identities and perspectives? Do metropolitan media construct views of their societies and the world which are very geographically centred, even parochial? How do the different regions of a country, or the distinct nations within a particular state, know and understand each other? Because we are Scottish-based academics we hear these questions being asked constantly and we sometimes ask them ourselves. But similar questions are raised in many other parts of the world, as will be clear from the essays which follow.

An important topic to emerge in a number of the contributions is that peripheries are not only constituted in the ways mentioned earlier: they are

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<sup>2</sup> The classic study in this area was published by Harold Innis in 1930. Innis went on to write *The Bias of Communication*, one of the “founding texts” in the communication studies field.

also constituted in and through discourse. The existence of such a discursive dimension carries with it the inevitable potential for contestation, a refusal to accept the status of periphery assigned by others, even for attempts to bring about a reversal of established centre-periphery discursive positions. A number of the chapters discuss such “self-centring” or “recentring” strategies, themselves invariably part of larger power struggles.

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Readers might be struck by the fact that, although there are a couple of chapters in the book concerned with Gaelic and Highland Scotland, there is no extended discussion of the Scottish situation overall. That is largely because the Scottish media have been fairly thoroughly analysed in print recently; however it might be worth briefly summarising here the position in the country, since it was the starting point for our conference and ultimately this volume.<sup>3</sup>

As is the case in other parts of the British Isles, indigenous Scottish newspapers compete with English ones, many of these editionised with content aimed exclusively at the Scottish market—in local parlance “north of the border”. In the last twenty-odd years the editionising has increased, as has the number of homegrown titles. Currently five Scottish dailies and four Sundays compete for readers with London titles, some of which like *The Sun* and the *Daily Mail* editionise heavily, while others such as the *Daily Express* and *The Guardian* do less so, or scarcely at all. The establishment in 1999 of a devolved parliament in Edinburgh notwithstanding, Scottish produced papers now account for 43% of daily sales and 56% of Sundays; in the mid seventies they had well over 60% of both markets.<sup>4</sup> These losses in market share have combined with the overall slide in sales, which has afflicted the press throughout the Western world, to significantly lower revenue and journalistic resources.

BBC Scotland and STV (formerly Scottish Television) are both major news providers, but the latter, in common with other ITV companies, has indicated that the provision of a regional news service is no longer financially viable—an issue which is discussed in relation to Britain as a whole in two chapters in the book. So the likelihood is that in the future it is to the BBC, on air and online, that Scottish viewers and listeners will

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<sup>3</sup> See for example Blain and Hutchison (2008) for several essays on the historical and contemporary situations.

<sup>4</sup> These figures are derived from circulation data available from the Audit Bureau of Circulation ([www.abc.org.uk](http://www.abc.org.uk)).

look for a comprehensive news service, since the commercial radio stations offer only limited provision and the service provided by the digital Gaelic television channel, BBC Alba, which began broadcasting in 2008, is targeted principally at speakers of that language, currently less than two per cent of the population. The output of Radio Scotland, a stand-alone service comparable to similar services in Wales and Northern Ireland, has a high journalism content, the opt-out television programming (roughly five per cent of what is seen onscreen on BBC1 and BBC2 north of the border) a smaller one. Arguments about the allocation of resources to BBC Scotland are long running and focus on the cash available for programming intended for Scottish consumption and the commissioning of programming destined for the national networks. The Nationalist government which took power in Edinburgh in 2007 established a Scottish Broadcasting Commission, which in 2008 recommended that a publicly financed digital channel should be established, and that it should have at its heart a news service, in order to ensure that there would be an alternative to the BBC if the commercial channel opted out of that kind of provision (Scottish Broadcasting Commission 2008). At the same time as the Commission was established, the BBC, under pressure from other parts of the United Kingdom as well as from Scotland, committed itself to greatly increasing the shares of production generated outside of London: currently the Corporation intends that the Scottish share of network production should by 2016 reach nine per cent, which is almost triple the present figure.

The BBC has become very sensitive to accusations of metropolitan bias in the allocation of resources and in the way in which the nations which make up the United Kingdom are represented in news output originating in London. In 2007 the BBC Trust, the quasi-independent body which oversees the Corporation's operations, commissioned an academic report on the matter (BBC Trust 2008). What is at issue in Wales, Northern Ireland and Scotland is the extent to which, post-devolution, these nations have fallen off the radar of the metropolitan media (newspapers as well as broadcasting), a question which is explored in one of the following chapters. Similar arguments take place elsewhere in the world, as will be seen from several other chapters. How we come to know and understand each other within particular countries, never mind how we relate to other countries, is an extremely important issue.

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Conference organisers anticipate that a call for papers will elicit proposals which cover areas of interest which the theme inevitably suggests

but also that there will be “outliers” at a slight angle to the theme, but fascinating nonetheless. Both kinds are represented here.

The book begins with a general overview of the challenges facing journalism in the digital age which is provided by the current managing editor of one of the leading Scottish publishers, who draws on his previous experience as managing editor of Reuters. There follow chapters which explore aspects of journalism in Wales, Ireland, the English regions and the Scottish Highlands, which take account of both historical context and contemporary practice.

The focus then shifts to Europe and thereafter to North America—Canada as well as the United States—and finally to a country which sometimes thinks of itself as being on the periphery of a periphery, New Zealand.

Themes distinctive to different geographical locales emerge but so do others which are common across oceans and continents. We shall discuss some of these further in our Afterword. Perhaps it might seem as if the structure we have chosen creates its own centre/periphery relationship but that is certainly not the intention and of course readers can navigate whatever journeys they please through the book.

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# THE CHANGING WORLD OF NEWS

TOM THOMSON

The news media industry is at a crossroads, struggling to make sense of a world where there are no longer any certainties. Newspapers are folding, or going web only, or making big staffing and spending cuts. At least 12,500 jobs have gone in print journalism in the United States in the past two years and hundreds in the British regional press.

We are facing a revolution, when the old order collapses and something new and unthinkable takes over. Many of us want reassurance that old systems won't really break before a new, orderly world is in place, that career paths we have assumed since we began in the business are not going to just vanish. The whole business or profession or trade of journalism is facing pressures and stresses almost unthinkable a decade ago. Part of the change is certainly cyclical, caused by the global recession, but a large measure is structural as the internet and connectivity change the very way we live.

The business model which has sustained journalism for decades is no longer valid—being able to generate audiences in a way that no one else could and then selling these audiences to advertisers, while giving readers what we thought they should get. We must now fight and innovate to survive, not sink, as is so easy in an industry in crisis, into a managing decline mentality. There is a continued and critical role for journalism to play in safeguarding democracy and public debate, however that ends up being delivered and funded. We all saw the internet coming and for a while we thought we had the answers. We could charge for content in walled gardens like AOL, we could rely on the copyright laws, micropayments were the way forward or we would be saved by advertising on the Web. But it all went horribly wrong. Gardens were forced open by users keen to experience the whole World Wide Web, copyright was largely swept away, micropayments nobody liked and web ads make little money. And to compound our problems, almost a quarter of internet users in the US say they stopped their subscription to a printed newspaper because they could access the same content online for free.

## The Background

The background to these developments is well known:

- Newspaper circulation in most of the developed world (with a few special exceptions like the *Financial Times*) is in long-term, potentially irrevocable decline. There appears to be no way to turn that around using conventional thinking and tweaking content at the edges.

The Scottish indigenous press for its part faces unusual challenges in competing with what are essentially very large national UK competitors in the print market, the so-called “tartanised” editions of the London-based titles which can cut cover prices and provide a richness of columnists, business and foreign coverage with which it is very difficult to compete.

- Print advertising revenue has fallen at an astonishing rate. The recession hit the industry hard as car and house sales stalled and recruitment was affected by the economy. But the decline is also structural since advertising spend is moving to channels which are cheaper or free or have better targeting or functionality.

The threat of slabs of public sector advertising moving online is merely one example. This is heady stuff with pessimists predicting that the cyclical recovery, when it comes, will be offset by the structural decline and we may never again reach pre-recession levels.

- Web audiences are growing but in an environment where it is accepted that general information and news is free, not least with the dominating presence of the BBC and its great digital ambitions fuelled by a £500 million news budget.

In a search-dominated Web, readers also prefer to read selected parts of the news agenda. This leads to the commodification of the Web and increasingly fragmented audiences, so with diminishing audiences advertisers want to pay less. The growing Web advertising revenue thus goes largely into paid search controlled by the likes of Google. Again there are exceptions, like *The Wall Street Journal*, where content is protected and must be bought but this is only proven of real money-making value in niche areas.

- Web advertising is low yield and diluted across so many outlets with everything from social networking sites and blogs competing with newspapers for advertiser spend.

New threats are emerging—Google for example announced recently it would put ads on *Google News*. It can do this with a degree of targeting regional news firms will never achieve, using its

sophisticated monitoring of users, and thus it is reasonable to expect they will appeal to local advertisers seeking a very finely filtered audience. Local authorities are moving recruitment to their own websites. *Craigslist* has devastated the American newspaper industry's classified advertising sector. Britain has not been gripped by free ad sites to the same extent but that may come.

Some people in the industry are giving up. Some, like the *Seattle Post-Intelligencer* are going Web only (and watching page impressions fall).

## The way forward

It all comes down to this. How do we quickly get growth in our digital revenue to outpace the downturn in our print revenue?

Engagement, involving readers in the digital world, is certainly a key part of it. Our readers want to do stuff with the content we produce whether to share it, Tweet it or blog it. Serious news sites must establish a more personal relationship with their readers. We've had letters to the editor since the late 19th century but journalism's relationship with readers has been one-sided. We need to create a feeling that they are missing something if they are not part of our sites.

There is hope emerging in our industry and the tide may be turning. Rupert Murdoch, the doyen of newspaper publishers, has decided that his British newspaper titles—*The Sun*, *Times* and *Sunday Times*—will charge for their content online and must do so to survive. Murdoch used *The New York Times* as an example of an online paper that, he believes, has a great website but is not covering its costs with online ad revenue only.

He has advocated a change in publishers' relationships with Google and other aggregators: "Should we be allowing Google to steal all our copyrights? Not just Google. I think if you've got a brand like *The New York Times* or *The Wall Street Journal* you don't have to do that" (interview on SkyNews Australia 6 November 2009).

Mathias Döpfner, chief executive of Axel Springer, believes it is time for new copyright laws in Europe to prevent all of the value of content being extracted by the aggregators, who make money by displaying search advertising around news material (*Financial Times*, 13 April 2009). Axel Springer publishes *Bild*, by far Germany's highest-selling paper and the highest-circulation tabloid in mainland Europe with daily sales of more than three million. Döpfner wants a proposition where Google contributes to Axel Springer's costs if it is going to use its content.

The Associated Press says it would take “all actions necessary” to pursue websites that use its members’ content without paying (AP press release, 4 June 2009). The aggregators say they promote material and bring traffic to websites but traffic per se is becoming a devalued commodity, with a sudden belief emerging in quality of readership and not volume. This is quite a turnaround after years of seeking large numbers of users and measuring digital success by traffic alone.

The new iPad and iPhone operating system allows media companies to charge for some or all content, Kindle users seem to accept that you get newspapers if you pay a monthly fee, and mobile device users do seem more amenable to paying for content. Payment mechanisms are becoming much more unobtrusive, which is a really simple but important element in customer acceptance of paying. The iPad may well have a transformational effect on readers in terms of their willingness to pay for content. Other manufacturers are poised to introduce low-cost tablets which could well transform this into a mass market for newspaper-formatted paid content. This is an area to watch very closely.

*Journalism Online* is an interesting new start-up company that is offering to work with news publishers to address the growing cry to make online readers available as newsreaders. It’s a company that is more an intention than an operation at this point, but it has an impressive pedigree for stating that intention.

Its progenitors, Gordon Crovitz, former publisher of *The Wall Street Journal*, and Steven Brill, a serial entrepreneur who founded both *Court TV* and *American Lawyer*, have been talking through various paid content models, the need for a flexible, modern news-centered e-commerce platform, and how such a system might work.

Their initial concept envisions four potential roles for the company:

- Creating a password-protected portal with one easy-to-use account through which consumers can buy annual or monthly subscriptions, day passes, and single articles from multiple publishers. The password-enabled payment system will be integrated into all of the member-publishers’ websites, and the publishers will have sole discretion over which content to charge for, how much to charge, and the manner of charging.
- Establishing all-inclusive annual or monthly subscriptions for those consumers who want to pay one fee to access all of the JO-member publishers’ content. A royalty pool would pay publishers based on usage.

- Negotiating wholesale licensing and royalty fees with intermediaries such as search engines and other websites that currently base much of their business models on referrals of readers to the original content on newspaper, magazine and online news websites.
- Providing reports to member publishers that identify the strategies and tactics that achieve the best results in building circulation revenue, while maintaining the traffic necessary to support advertising revenue.

Or it could be a paid and free model. *The Wall Street Journal*, for example, earns more than \$60 million a year from one million online subscribers. At the same time, its “freemium” offers pull in an additional nineteen million unique users. They get to *Journal* content through various entry points, and are monetised through advertising.

It may well be that acting as an agent for news publishers with the search engine aggregators may rise to the top of the list. It doesn’t require technology (though publishers adding intelligence to their content through better tagging and tracking is clearly a part of a successful future) so it could be acted on sooner rather than later.

## The role of Google

The time is overdue for a reckoning of the news industry suppliers’ relationship with Google. Here, too, though, *Journalism Online* faces an uphill battle, making the case that it is best positioned to be the lead negotiator. AP has made that case, and many news companies have preferred to go it alone in the past.

Google CEO Eric Schmidt is worth listening to. He’s keen on mobile which he sees as being a fundamental change in the way people get information. There will soon be something like one billion smart phones in use.

He thinks we’ll end up with a number of business models.

There are free television, over-the-air television, cable television and pay television. And they have smaller markets as you go from free to more highly paid. And that structure looks roughly the structure of all of these businesses. The reality is that in this new situation, most people will likely only deal with the free model. So we will be forced, whether we like it or not, to have a significant advertising component, as well as a micropayment and an additional payment system.

Schmidt proposed three layers of revenue for news content, similar to that of the TV business: a free model which would make up the bulk of a news website, a subscription model which would allow access to all

articles, and a micropayment system for specific articles, priced at a few cents.

We also need smarter publishing—so that a digital newspaper knows what is new to groups and individuals, for example. But the industry must move the thinking beyond “fair use”—is search engine and other usage “legal” or not? —to “fair share”. In basic business terms, the news industry is a supplier—and an important one—to Google and the other search engines. While a handful of key suppliers—Associated Press, Agence France Presse and others—have secured Google licenses and are getting paid for their content, individual newspaper publishers are not. They need to band together, testing here not just “fair use” but “anti-trust” (a concept that seems out of another newspaper age at this point)—and act like suppliers, demanding a fairer share of the pie.

## The response of the press

But what of newspapers? They have to change. They have to accept that in a far more profound way than radio or television ever brought about, most people now know what has happened long before they pick up a print newspaper.

We talk constantly in the industry about newspapers adding value—the question is how. We could do no better than consult a road map for how newspapers can live alongside new media that was drawn up more than 50 years ago by Bernard Kilgore. Kilgore had remarkable judgment early about the journalistic issue of our day: how readers use old media, new media and both. When Kilgore became managing editor of *The Wall Street Journal* in 1941, he inherited a business model that technology had undermined. Founded in 1889 to provide market news and stock prices to individual investors, the *Journal* lost half its circulation as this basic information became widely available.

Kilgore observed that then new media such as radio meant market news was available in real time. Some cities had a dozen newspapers that had gained the *Journal's* once-valuable ability to report share prices. The *Journal* had to change. Technology increasingly meant readers would know the basic facts of news as it happened. He announced, “It doesn’t have to have happened yesterday to be news”, and said that people were more interested in what would happen tomorrow. He crafted the front page “What’s News “ column to summarise what had happened, but focused on explaining what the news meant.

On the morning after Pearl Harbor, other newspapers recounted the facts already known to all the day before through radio. The *Journal's*

page-one story instead began, “War with Japan means industrial revolution in the United States”. It outlined the implications for the economy, industry and commodity and financial markets.

Kilgore led the *Journal’s* circulation to one million by the 1960s from 33,000 in the 1940s by adapting the newspaper to a role reflecting how people used different media for news. His rallying cry was “The easiest thing in the world for a reader to do is to stop reading”.

Business and financial news is different from the general news focus of city newspapers, but in 1958 the owners of the *New York Herald Tribune* approached Kilgore for help. The *Herald Tribune*, he wrote, is “too much a newspaper that might be published in Philadelphia, Washington or Chicago just as readily as in metropolitan New York”. Kilgore urged the “compact model newspaper”. Readers valued their time, so the newspaper should have just one section, with larger editions on Sunday when people had more time to read.

His advice was clearly ahead of its time. The owners didn’t heed it, and the *Herald Tribune* went out of business in 1967. But his observations on what readers want from city newspapers may be even more true in today’s online world. Readers increasingly know yesterday what happened yesterday through websites, television and news alerts.

Indeed, at a time when print readership is declining, *The Economist*, with its weekly focus on interpretation, is gaining circulation. The *Journal* continues to focus on what readers need, growing the number of individuals paying for the newspaper and the website.

If readers would prefer more compact city newspapers, a less-is-more approach could help cut newsprint, printing, distribution and other costs that don’t add to the journalism. Newspaper editors could craft a new, forward-looking role for print, alongside the what’s-happening-right-now focus of digital news.

## **A role for government?**

Print media are very important for democracy. Whether holding politicians to account or reporting councils. Who’s going to do that?

The Web is just forty years old, public use twenty years, and using the internet as a normal way of life is less than half that. We’re still in the revolutionary stage and revolutions are messy and chaotic. What seem minor diversions at the time—it could be Facebook or Twitter—can later be revealed as fundamental turning points that change our lives.

Where will journalism take us? It’s likely to be an overlapping mesh of amateurs and professionals. There is a risk that cost-cutting and a focus on

packaging and processing will increase the reach and power of PR companies and those who can afford to disseminate a positive message and a weakening of the rightly cynical editorial filter.

Can government help? It may have to. The Labour administration which lost power in the UK in 2010 promoted the idea of Independently Funded News Consortia as a way to state-fund ITV regional news, which the Channel 3 companies argued was no longer financially viable, and generate the kind of reporting that a converged world will need. This could bring together the regional newspaper groups with broadcast news providers and output good quality video news, whether delivered by terrestrial broadcast or the internet to television receivers along with multimedia content on web sites viewed on televisions, PCs or mobile devices, along with print products. The Conservative Party, which formed a coalition with the Liberal Democrats after the 2010 election, rejected subsidies outright, preferring instead a network of city television stations that would rely heavily on volunteer staff but whose business model is unproven.

The new UK culture secretary, Jeremy Hunt, announced that he backed a combination of significant deregulation of the television advertising market to allow the private sector to generate more revenue, combined with either the abolition or drastic easing of local cross-media ownership restrictions to allow rationalisation and cost cuts.

The one certainty is that a new media landscape will emerge in Britain under the coalition government. How precisely that will look remains uncertain until the fine print is examined and the industry decides how to respond.

Everyone accepts, though, that the current model is broken.

The BBC's independence from government seems to be generally accepted—top-slicing the BBC's licence fee or providing other tax revenue to maintain a diversity of news in Britain does however seem an acceptable way of preserving a core of high-quality journalism, and a quoted figure of £100 million per year would go a long way to making broadcast consortia feasible.

Getting the future right, however, will not be easy.

It's a particular concern for a company such as the Herald & Times Group, whose heritage goes back to 1783. It has met the challenges of hot metal, web offset, colour and a host of other technical advances. Can it get it right in an internet world?

It won't be plain sailing but we, like the rest of the British media industry, work constantly to adapt. We do need to stick with our core values and our belief in quality journalism. But if we do, the new

distribution channels now opening up offer audiences larger and more globally distributed content than our greatest fans could have dreamed of even ten years ago.

# **THE BRITISH ISLES**

# FROM THE PERIPHERY TO THE CORE: POST-COLONIALITY AND THE CELTIC TIGER

FARREL CORCORAN

That there is a catastrophic dimension to Irish history is not in dispute among historians today, despite the various revisionist currents that have run through Irish historiography since the Troubles erupted in the late sixties. One historian sums up the record of the past as “seared by successive waves of conquest and colonisation, by bloody wars and uprisings, by traumatic dislocations, by lethal racial antagonisms and indeed, by its own 19<sup>th</sup> century version of a holocaust” (Bradshaw, quoted in Gibbons 1996, 6). To give an adequate account of centre-periphery relationships in contemporary Irish culture, one must take into account the historical dimension of how the Irish aspiration to independence has been defined against British claims to rule in Ireland. For a very long time, the colonial structures controlling print maintained an uneasy relationship with the indigenous culture based in the Irish language, which retained its own separate identity quite apart from the dominant print culture, until the dawn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. In contemporary Irish society, the cultural position of the old colonial power has waned in inverse ratio to the quickening of the forces of cultural globalisation, shaping new trans-national information flows, including the increasing hegemony of neoliberalism. We follow Ashcroft et al. (1995) here in seeing the post-colonial aspect of contemporary societies as designating a historically situated set of cultural strategies that refer not only to the period after colonies becomes independent, but the totality of cultural practices that characterise post-colonial countries from the moment of colonisation to the present day.

## **News and Nation Building**

Print was first introduced as part of the Tudor project to extend the reach of the English Reformation, as the medium of religious conversion and colonial administration, making Ireland one of the very late adopters of print among European countries. Gaelic Ireland never developed its

own print infrastructure, as this ancient culture did not have what Braudel (1981) calls an “accelerator”, or what Winston (1998) terms a “supervening social necessity” to embrace the new technology. Its power was based on a network of traditional bardic families, whose scholars and poets were guardians of a vibrant oral culture, supported by collections of manuscripts in Irish and Latin. As an incipient appetite for news and a public sphere began to emerge a century later, the oppositional role of print was still clear. The first newspaper in Ireland, the *Irish Monthly Mercury*, was produced by the Cromwellian army and published in Cork in 1649, demonstrating the new awareness of contemporaneity that was driving the development of news in London and beyond. But news gathering and distribution depended on the entire apparatus of a reliable postal system—safe roads and sea lanes, horses, riders, inns, ports, supply lines—and Ireland did not have a reliable system until much later. So towards the end of that century, newspaper readers in the coffee houses of Dublin had quite a skewed informational map of the world. Reports from faraway European cities were frequent, but news from around Ireland was rare and unreliable, with little more credibility than rumour. Over the course of the next century, dozens of newspapers appeared in Dublin, some destined to last only a few months, many of them linked directly to the colonial administration in Dublin Castle (Morash 2010).

The first stirrings of resentment against domination from London came from an unlikely quarter: the descendants of the Anglo-Irish who had settled in Ireland during the preceding century. Nurtured in the saturated news culture of the Pale, they began to appropriate the idea of a “native” culture at the heart of a new “nation”, and to argue for greater Irish self-determination. Local newspapers began springing up at the end-point of major postal roads—Belfast, Limerick, Sligo, Galway, Cork, Waterford, Kilkenny—many of them to last into the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. This regional press reinforced local loyalties but also helped forge the basis for conceptualising a shared, all-island consciousness.

Benedict Anderson was one of the first scholars to theorise how the development of news in colonial situations began to transform the cultural relationship between periphery and core areas of the world. Central to his account is the ephemeral popularity of the newspaper, a “one-day bestseller, obsolete tomorrow, yet creating an extraordinary mass ceremony: the simultaneous consumption (‘imagining’) of the newspaper-as-fiction, performed in silent privacy” (Anderson 1983, 35). Something similar was happening in Ireland in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. Morash (2010, 51) notes a new sense not only of national culture in the Irish Volunteer newspapers that appeared in the 1780s, but also a new ability to imagine Ireland’s place in

an international informational order. Earlier Irish newspapers had carried news from North America under the heading “Plantation News”, but the press of the Volunteer movement, deeply influenced by the American Revolution, remapped the world to include America as a republic and a model for Ireland. Like the Volunteer movement, the United Irishmen also insisted on the centrality of the press to their political project in the 1790s. They had links to the United Scotsmen, who also aimed to end the relationship with England (Curtis 1994). Print was becoming the foundation of a new national culture, especially the flood of new populist political writing, often orally performed for those who could not read (Williams 1996). In the editorial stance of newspapers like the *Northern Star* and the *Press*, there was a deliberate attempt to create a cosmopolitan public sphere, with the boundaries extended to North America and Revolutionary France, where modern republicanism was being shaped. This new political press soon triggered a crackdown, as the colonial government struck back. Soldiers smashed the printing press of the *Northern Star* in Belfast in 1797, confiscating information on the movement’s organisers and circle of sympathisers. New legislation enacted in London made it more difficult to obtain a licence to set up a paper after this.

When a distinctive Catholic press finally emerged in Ireland in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, the agitation for Catholic Emancipation turned the courts into a kind of alternative parliament. Newspaper editors were increasingly prosecuted for sedition, and courts, immune from prosecution for libel, became platforms for public debates about justice, legislation and free speech, their records preserved and amplified in newspapers. Printing in Irish was still minimal, mostly confined to evangelical groups, until the Gaelic League initiated its major printing project in the 1890s. But periodicals in English proliferated, with up to 4,000 titles extant at several points in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. As the Great Famine loomed in the 1840s, the Young Irelanders, drawing their inspiration from revolutionary movements then sweeping Italy, Switzerland, France and Germany, called for complete independence from England, by force if necessary. Their newspaper *The Nation* had the largest circulation of any Irish newspaper of its time and claimed to be a truly national medium, though one driven by a cosmopolitan vision of a non-sectarian, bilingual country, in which native and settler would prosper (Curtis 1994). Ironically, the infrastructure of the imperial state to which *The Nation* was implacably opposed, was being used in a very deliberate way to create a unified, national informational territory and sustained the growing sense of a shared geographical space with a shared history.

## **Towards Independence**

In the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, as emigration to North America increased in the wake of the Great Famine, yet another geography of information was emerging, one that would later parallel, if not replace, the old core-periphery relationship with Britain. As early as the 1850s, the decade that saw the laying of the first trans-Atlantic telegraph cable, Ireland was becoming what one commentator called “the eastern shore of America” (Morash 2010, 84). The growth of electric communications, as the 19<sup>th</sup> century advanced, had the practical effect of diminishing space as a major factor in human affairs, of making geography irrelevant (Carey 1989). The more Ireland became part of the new information order, the more difficult it was to suppress the idea of nationality. Even news generated outside Ireland could be seen as a threat to the British imperial order. In 1868, for instance, the owners of a Dublin-based newspaper were charged with “seditious libel” for reporting Fenian meetings in the United States. The Irish diaspora, increasingly interwoven into the fabric of American culture, developed strong nationalist views in its enforced exile, providing Irish cultural nationalism with a dynamic that led eventually to the ultimate break with Britain in the War of Independence.

The relentless misery of the Great Famine, and the waves of emigration that followed, had a major impact on the Irish language, driving it into steep decline, and it was not until the full flowering of the Gaelic Revival at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century that material written in Irish began to be published with increasing frequency. With cultural nationalism now in the ascendant, the old culture of Gaelic civilisation ceased being peripheral, as it had been since the birth of print, and took a new direction, becoming the focus of an idealised Irishness, with traditional music as its purest form (O’Flynn 2009). The Gaelic League forged a close affinity between language and national identity as an essential value of the decolonisation project, elevating Irish language, music and games as potent emblems of a new Ireland. Its president, Douglas Hyde, in his famous essay *The Necessity for de-Anglicising Ireland*, argued for the need to be rid of the central Irish ambivalence of imitating England yet apparently hating it, resulting from the erosion of Irish over the course of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, an ambivalent attitude which left people “ceasing to be Irish without becoming English” (Browne 1985, 55). Echoes of the cultural politics of the Gaelic League can be felt in contemporary Ireland, as public opinion surveys regularly indicate that a large number of people place considerable value on the symbolic role of the language in national identity and support broadcasting in Irish (Corcoran 2004, 177-195).

## The Free State

An independent Ireland came into being at the same time as the new medium of radio arrived and one of the first tasks of the Free State government, as soon as the Civil War ended (May 1923), was to develop a national radio service. In the Treaty which had established the Free State, the British negotiators, keenly aware of Ireland's position in the scheme of imperial defence, had insisted on a clause restricting the right to broadcast outside the national territory without prior British agreement. The US already had hundreds of radio stations, all competing in an unregulated market, and while the BBC model of licence fee funding of a single service was attractive, there was a pragmatic recognition that Ireland's smaller, poorer population would have a radio station only if it was funded—and tightly controlled—by the Post-Master General (a title borrowed from the British administration).

In the decision to establish the national radio service 2RN, the major policy dynamic was both to emulate the BBC and to rival it. The cultural power of British broadcasting spilling over Irish borders had to be forestalled by developing an Irish station. As the Postmaster General put it in 1924, Ireland risked surrendering Irish broadcasting to "British music hall dope and British propaganda", to which a Unionist critic retorted that "if we are to have wireless broadcasting established on an exclusively Irish-Ireland basis, the result will be *Danny Boy* four times a week, with variations by way of camouflage" (quoted in Horgan 2001, 15-16). In fact a lot of Reithian discourse on public service permeated the final report of the Dáil Committee on radio and John Reith himself actually sat on the board to appoint the first Station Director for 2RN.

Similar policy constraints were in evidence decades later, when Ireland had become a nation very much secluded from the outside world. The long debate throughout the 1950s about setting up a television service was spurred by the opening of BBC Northern Ireland in 1953. The fact that television sets south of the Border could receive British television signals from Belfast created a dilemma for a Dublin government that still officially claimed jurisdiction over the six counties of Northern Ireland, the nation's lost "fourth green field" (Savage 1996, 24). As with radio, BBC television was both admired for its Reithian philosophy and feared as a potential source of renewed colonial influence on Ireland.

The early development of censorship in the Free State was also a post-colonial development. Major British newspapers still had substantial circulation in Dublin, but the new government was quick to seize newspapers arriving off the ferry from England if it did not like what was

being published in London about the Irish Free State. (Horgan 2001, 10). Moral as well as political censorship was in the air. A Catholic group, the Vigilance Association, was formed in 1911 to protect public morality from the incoming tide of newspapers, magazines and motion pictures, but had little success in lobbying the British administration. After the Civil War, their influence increased. Catholic activists saw the media primarily in patriotic-moral terms and railed against what they saw as the soul of the nation being steadily destroyed by smut coming in from England. Clerics in some parts of the country were busy confiscating and publicly burning British magazines. In 1923, legislation to censor films was passed. At the urging of Catholic bishops, a “Committee on Evil Literature” was set up to protect the population against “unhealthy” imported publications and its report laid the foundations of the Censorship of Publications Act (1929), a piece of draconian censorship that remained in place until the late 1960s. In its first decade alone, the Censorship of Publications Board banned 1200 books and 140 periodicals. This urge to censor—books, periodicals, films—assumed hegemonic proportions in Irish cultural life for the following half century and produced high levels of alienation from the state among a whole generation of Irish intellectuals and writers whose work was also often banned. The ground was well prepared for the political censorship in Irish broadcasting of the IRA and a range of other paramilitary groups that lasted through most of the Troubles (Corcoran and O’Brien 2005).

## **Towards Internationalism**

The conservative, Catholic political culture that became entrenched in Ireland soon after Independence set out to resist the evils of “internationalism” by utilising the power of the state to implement a strong set of strategies: censorship, raising tariffs against the importation of English newspapers (with their agendas of crime, sex, contraception and anti-Irish prejudice) and fostering alternative Irish media: radio, film and Irish-language printing. In contrast with Britain, however, American soft power, especially in cinema, was received more benignly. Because of emigration flows across the North Atlantic over the previous century, the US had become culturally closer than Britain, the focus of many dreams and longings in the Irish imaginary, therefore not so vehemently denounced for the alien values of its popular culture. When television arrived in 1961, the economics of programming dictated that while the BBC showed relatively little American content, US networks supplied approximately half of everything broadcast on Irish television throughout

the first decade. Heavy viewers in Ireland were in a sense far more Americanised than viewers in England or Northern Ireland.

This tentative opening to international culture took another stride in 1958, as a major change of economic direction took place which would later become part of the dominant narrative of the provenance of the Celtic Tiger, infused with the notion that the country's engagement with neoliberalism would be exceptional, that its embrace of globalisation would be cost-free. Under the leadership of Sean Lemass, economic policy was radically redrawn to emphasise international trade and inward investment (Horgan 1997). Major changes in the old core-periphery relationship with Britain were set in motion with the opening up of the economy to American investment and the setting in train of negotiations that would lead to Ireland joining the European Economic Community. It was clear that Ireland could no longer live within its own buttressed little media world, its insularity and prudery dominated by conservative Catholic forces. The change was foreshadowed as de Valera handed over power to Lemass. At the launch of *Teilifís Éireann* (later RTÉ) on New Year's Eve 1961, a gloomy de Valera confessed to the nation that "sometimes when I think of television and radio, and their immense power, I am somewhat afraid. Like atomic energy, it can be used for incalculable good, but it can also do irreparable harm ... it can lead through demoralisation to decadence and dissolution" (Savage 1996, xi). Sean Lemass, on the other hand, emphasised that:

Irish people are citizens of the world as well as Ireland ... The reasonable needs of the Irish people ... would not be satisfied by programmes of local origin ... Events in all parts of the world and new ideas and developments everywhere ... can be of direct and immediate interest to our own people (Morash 2010, 171).

While London had been the metropolitan centre throughout four centuries of Irish print culture, coloniality and peripherality were being fiercely rejected in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. But it now appeared that new centres were emerging in the global mediascape, exerting from a distance a slow, gravitational pull on the Irish public sphere, as a new geography of knowledge, first glimpsed in the debate in the 1980s about deregulating radio and television, began to take hold.

## **Cultural Globalisation**

Changes associated with globalisation reduced the lingering sense that, because of its colonial history and geography, Ireland had to remain