News-Reporting and Ideology in 17th-Century English Murder Pamphlets

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From Paratext to Text

By

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Cambridge Scholars Publishing

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To my mum, Caterina

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF FIGURES

LIST OF TABLES

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CHAPTER ONE

MURDER PAMPHLETS AND IDEOLOGY IN 17TH-CENTURY ENGLAND: AN INTRODUCTION

1.1 Preliminary considerations

A quick glance at a schedule of contemporary TV programmes will reveal a notable quantity and variety of police procedural and crime drama series broadcast each week. Even those who are not great fans of *Law and Order, NCIS* and *Criminal Minds* cannot ignore their enormous success among the contemporary TV audience. Fictions of crime and justice—often inspired by real murder cases reported in news headlines—sell very well in our societies and bring considerable profit to both the film and print industry. In July 2020, in the middle of the COVID pandemic, the influential British newspaper *The Guardian* reported an explosion in murder book consumption, with nearly 120,000 more crime and thriller books bought in comparison with the previous year. Murder is also the type of violent crime which, although relatively rare in comparison with others, receives a disproportionate share of coverage in news media, from newspapers and TV news to talk shows and documentaries on cold cases.

The centrality of homicide in popular culture, however, is not a peculiarity of our times. Murder-related stories and events have fascinated people throughout the ages, due to a morbid combination of curiosity and fear. From the first biblical murder committed by Cain upon his brother Abel to the spectacular killing of gladiators in Roman arenas and the Western story-cycles of medieval literature, the interest in murder has been transmitted from generation to generation—although with different meanings and interpretations. With the advent of print in the 15th century, a boom of murder accounts was recorded in the market, crossing different genres—from broadside ballads to occasional pamphlets, from newsbooks to the early newspapers. Initially imbued with fiction and moral indoctrination, murder and trial narratives progressively offered a more reliable reportage to consumers, thus fostering popular knowledge among a heterogeneous

cross-section of society. Murder stories provided people with a snapshot of both the murderer's and the victim's social standing and behaviour, and offered an insight into police and courtroom procedure which may be said to partly anticipate the scripts of contemporary crime and legal drama TV series.

This was especially the case with occasional news pamphlets. This form of cheap print was very popular in the 17th-century print market, despite its co-existence with the mid-17th-century periodical pamphlets and, later on, with the early newspapers. In comparison with the shorter coverage of trial news supplied by the late 17th-century weeklies, the occasional pamphlet allowed for longer and more detailed accounts of the origin of the murder and its aftermath. Oscillating between factuality, fictionalization and Christian indoctrination, the genre was capable of hooking people through its sensational headlines, and of thrilling them through emotionalization and drama. Its circulation through different social layers and geographical areas was such that authorities appropriated it in order to spread their religious and socio-political propaganda from the lower to the upper sorts, and from the centre to the provinces.

Drawing on historians' claim that 17th-century people gained most of their knowledge about crime and justice from the consumption of cheap print (i.e., broadside ballads and pamphlets), this book explores the 17th-century murder pamphlet as a form of proto-journalism, and traces its linguistic and rhetorical evolution in relation to the religious and socio-political context of the time. Early modern crime pamphlets have often received scholarly attention for their content, which documents aspects of law, criminality and gender bias. However, so far, little focus has been given to persuasive discourse strategies and to the authenticating effect deriving from the juxtaposition and conflation of a variety of text-types within the genre. In the attempt to fill this gap, the study provides a qualitative and quantitative analysis of the ways in which pamphleteers exploited and constantly re-adapted the language of murder pamphlets in order to engage readers emotionally and construct their perceptions of crime and justice at different points in time.

Following its multifaceted development throughout the century, I investigate the murder pamphlet from three major perspectives: 1) as a vehicle of religious indoctrination in post-Reformation England (1600-1640); 2) as a platform for political propaganda during the Irish Rebellion and the English Civil War (1641-1649); 3) as a product approaching a source of public information from the Restoration until the end of the century (1660-1699). Although the propaganda power of cheap print was only partially acknowledged at the beginning of the century, pamphleteers

already knew how to exploit discourse to construct social identities in a way that mirrored and, at the same time, shaped and promoted religious and political ideologies. From this perspective, 17th-century murder pamphlets represent a valuable source of investigation for the historical pragmatician and the historical news discourse analyst, who are not only interested in *what* linguistic and representative choices are made in a text, but also in *why* they are made at all. This requires knowledge of the wider socio-cultural and political context in which the murder pamphlet is produced and consumed, including the history of news, early modern reading practices and history and politics in 17th-century England (Brownlees 2015; Claridge 2010).

In the volume, both paratext and text are systematically examined so as to explore the interplay between language and ideology at the level of headlines, proto-leads, woodcuts, prefaces, and the body of the news. Since texts are neither produced nor perused in a vacuum, the notion of paratext—originally theorized by Genette (1997 [1987]) and more recently refined by Birke and Christ (2013)—is crucial to our understanding of the many ways in which the reader is brought into the news and ushered into the core text from a particular ideological angle. The concept of text is of equal importance. Hoey considers it as "visible evidence of a reasonably self-contained purposeful interaction between one or more writers and one or more readers in which the writer controls the interaction and produces most of (characteristically all) the language" (2001, 11).[1] The nature and purpose of the authorial control over the communicative act with the reader is tackled in the volume in both its explicit and implicit actualization.

In the attempt to outline the features of the news discourse of the 17th-century murder pamphlet, I refer to Shapiro's definition of early modern English news as a "discourse of facts", which is evidenced by credible witnesses and suitable documents, and which is advertised by the authors' claims to authenticity and impartiality (Shapiro 2000). The commercial success of the murder pamphlet, however, also depends on what White calls

[1] As Tyrkkő and Räikkőnen (2020) notice, the definition of text is not unproblematic, since its most important features (i.e., its self-contained character and the interaction between writers and readers) are open to interpretation. For example, it is not clear what makes the text a reasonably self-contained unit and the interactivity Hoey refers to is not limited to the interaction between writer and reader, but also includes the interactive nature of negotiation that is involved in the identification of texts by individual readers through a process of interpretation informed by cultural conventions (see also Eggert 2009). Among the many definitions of text in the linguistic context, see Halliday and Hasan (1976, 1-2) and De Beaugrande and Dressler (1981, 11).

"narrative impulse" (1997), which is crucial to the desired reception of the news. It consists in that drama rhetoric which, by means of reported speeches, authorial comments, evaluation, and intensification, makes the news all the more thrilling, titillating, and worthy of reading. Factuality and narrative impulse find interesting forms of discourse interrelatedness in my data, and in the course of the analysis their changing relationship is tracked in relation to the evolving dynamics of the socio-cultural context and to the corresponding ideological transformations.

So far I have made several references to ideology, anticipating its major role in the process of news management, but the concept is complex and we need to stop for a moment to reflect upon its meaning.[2] Ideology has been largely investigated in political and media domains where discourse is reasonably expected to be biased, although in different degrees (e.g. Fowler et al. 1979; Fairclough 1989; Fowler 1991; van Dijk 1991; 1998; Hodge and Kress 1993; Reisigl and Wodak 2001). In my study, I draw on van Dijk's work (1998) and consider ideology as a system of social, political and religious beliefs which is dictated by the dominant order and shared by a social group or community. This system of values and beliefs is activated to construct or reproduce a slanted vision of the world through use of language. Over time, the surface-level discourse practices become a natural part of the group "habitus", in the sense that they are *naturalized* to the point that they are no longer consciously followed or recognized as such (Bourdieu 1991). Over the course of the 17th century, murder pamphlets were appropriated by the Church, the State and political factions, with the primary aim of teaching and spreading ideologies. To ensure the successful indoctrination of the masses, authors had to fit *strange but true* murder events into an already commonly shared *realm of meanings*, which made such news intelligible and acceptable to consumers (Clark 2003, 1). The most effective way for a murder pamphlet to shape ideologies and influence perception of crime and justice was through the encoding of (stereotypical) social identities in discourse. As van Dijk (1998; 1995) claims, ideology formation involves representations of self and others, and these play a key role in social conflict between in-group and out-group members. In light of this, my study examines the discursive polarization existing between the guarantors of socio-political and moral well-being and deviant others who generate chaos and disruption through their criminal behaviour.

[2] The concept of ideology is still vague and elusive. For a discussion of the different definitions of ideologies and their systemic evolution, see for example Kennedy (1979), Boudon (1989), Eagleton (1991), Hawkes (2003). For a historical overview of the evaluative/pejorative connotation of the word, see Garzone and Sarangi (2008).

One last consideration deserves to be made as regards the "sociology of texts" and the way in which the choice of the medium affects the message and its reception (McKenzie 1986; Peacey 2004; Suhr 2011). The idea that the meaning of a text is linked to the publication type in which it appears allows us to interpret the murder pamphlet not only in relation to the aims of the news agents (i.e., printers, publishers, authors)—and of the institutions operating through them—but also in consideration of the socio-cultural and political profile of the imagined reader.

In my volume, I consistently draw upon the perceptive work carried out by socio-cultural and legal historians working in the early modern period. The contributions of scholars such as Joad Raymond, Adam Fox, David Zaret, Peter Lake, Sandra Clark, Randall Martin, Jason Peacey, Malcom Gaskill, Kevin Sharpe, James A. Sharpe, John Maurice Beattie, Alexandra Walsham and Tessa Watt, to mention just a few, have been of paramount importance for my understanding of how cheap print, reading practices and crime perceptions developed in the 17th century. Apart from these historical works, I benefitted from the methodologies of critical discourse analysis and corpus linguistics, research in early modern correspondence, recent studies in modern-day media discourse and, of course, the work carried out by linguists in the field of historical news and courtroom discourse with special reference to the early modern period. Such scholars include Dawn Archer, Birte Bős, Nicholas Brownlees, Krisda Chaemsaithong, Claudia Claridge, Udo Fries, Andreas H. Jucker, Patrick Studer, Carla Suhr, Irma Taavitsainen, Elizabeth C. Traugott. My approach is, therefore, interdisciplinary, as the 17th-century pamphlet genre lies at the crossroads of different discourses, whose co-existence is legitimized by the ideological and commercial interests of the news agents.

1.2 The pamphlet: More than a publication type

Early modern pamphlets had a bad reputation, and were commonly dismissed for spreading calumnies and misinformation—in much the same way as social media platforms are accused of doing today. Nevertheless, pamphlets remained a popular mass product and, just like contemporary social media, they were extensively approached, consumed, shared and passed on by people of different socio-cultural and economic backgrounds. Their popular appeal was such that religious and secular authorities made a clear political choice when they appropriated them to disseminate their views and construct their representations of criminality and justice. As publication type, pamphlets are defined in the *Oxford English Dictionary (OED)* as follows:

> A short printed work of several pages fastened together without a hard cover; a booklet, a leaflet. Formerly freq. used of short printed literary works (usually unbound) having fewer pages then would constitute a book; now more commonly used of factual or informative documents, esp. of a relatively ephemeral nature, issued as a single work. In the 17th cent. used variously of issues of plays, romances, chapbooks, etc., and also of newspapers and newsletters.

The fact that pamphlets were usually stitched is indicative of their ephemeral nature, which did not make them worthy of the extra cost, time, and effort of binding (Suhr 2011, 20). More precisely, pamphlets were short quarto books, typically consisting of between one and twelve sheets. They were swift to produce and relatively cheap to purchase, thanks to the smaller size and poorer quality of the paper and the ink. Until the 1630s, before book-price inflation, a pamphlet consisting of up to three or four sheets would have cost 1*d* or 2*d*; twelve sheets, on average 6*d*. By the end of the 17th century, the retail price of pamphlets was almost a penny a sheet, so the price of a work of twelve sheets could rise to as much as one shilling (Raymond 2003, 82-82). Since most of the murder pamphlets selected for analysis contain less than two sheets, these texts can be considered as among the cheapest forms of publication available in the print market and, as such, the best carriers of ideology among the masses. With reference to the *OED* definition of the genre in the 17th century, murder pamphlets fall into the category of "newspapers and newsletters", thereby representing one of the most successful forms of early modern news discourse (Dolan 2013; Borot 1998; Brownlees 2011; Cecconi 2009). Pamphlets reported on many different topics: natural disasters, criminal deeds, monstruous births, prodigies, political spectacle, naval confrontation, notorious battles, discoveries of the New World, and whatever might attract the reader's curiosity. Thanks to a surge in literacy, they could be read by tradesmen, merchants, manufacturers, skilled craftsmen, farmers, artisans and apprentices (Suhr 2011), although they could also reach the illiterate simply by having a short pamphlet read by a neighbour, an apprentice, a schoolboy, a clergyman or a tradesman (Fox 2000, 36-44; Watt 1991, 12-13; Walsham 1999, 34).[3] Barbers, too,

[3] As Watt reports, in early modern England, the ability to read was more widespread than the ability to write—hence "many rural people could get through a text of a broadside ballad than could sign their names to a Protestant oath" (1991, 7). London in the mid-17th century boasted an adult male level of literacy rate of 70% or higher. By the third quarter of the century, nearly 40% of all adult males in England could read (Zaret 2000, 151; Raymond 2003, 89). It is likely that women, too, could acquire a very basic reading level, given that, in the most common curriculum, both boys and girls in 17th-century England were taught reading separately from writing

could provide a complimentary news reading service for their customers. Their shops acted as centres of news circulation and places where newsletters or pamphlets might be seen. Later on in the century, coffee houses offered a tremendous supplement to the reading services of a barber, as the coffee master himself and any of his customers would have been ready readers of pamphlets (Fox 2000, 39). Despite the apparent snobbism of the élite towards cheap print, the upper classes were not immune from "the pamphlet epidemic", to the point that historians agree on a conflation of élite and popular culture in the early modern period (Clark 1983; Raymond 2003; Zaret 2000; Watt 1991; Scribner 1989).[4] Regarding authorship, most pamphleteers were anonymous. The choice could be dictated by their need to avoid persecution in the case of polemical writing, or to their desire to keep their name away from such a stigmatized publication type as the pamphlet was. As Suhr (2011, 22) notices, in the case of non-polemical entertaining pamphlets, persistent anonymity could be due to the low status and bad reputation of professional writing, as well as the lack of a cultural convention which required texts to have identified authors. Even so, it is possible to pinpoint the social status of professional writers as belonging to the "middling sort". They could be either people who had received both a grammar and university education but who lacked employment (Raymond 2003, 58), or educated people who wrote as a secondary occupation (Clark 1983). Ian Green (1996) and Peter Lake (1990; 1994a), for example, note the involvement of the "godly clergy" in the production of many murder and

for the first year. After the first one or two years of learning to read, girls usually stopped their education so that, in most cases, they could read but not write (Spufford 1979). In this regard, Capp also notices that many forms of cheap print targeted a female audience, calling it "[a] fact that a significant minority of ordinary women possessed some degree of literacy" (Capp 2004, 367).

[4] On discussing the meaning of popular print culture in the early modern period, Raymond (2011) points out that popular does not mean that print culture is produced by the people, nor that it is widely read among the people or that it reflects their views. Print culture is popular because "people were understood to be involved in the publicity dynamic, the dynamic by which print came to play a part in public life and the political process" (Raymond 2011, 6). In this sense, popular print culture is considered as a social dialogue—that is to say, a mediation of experience between the representer and the represented facilitated by the texts. For Raymond, it is the array of conversations that originates within and around printed material that reflects/constructs society and popular culture (2011, 12). Some of the literature on print culture in early modern England includes Spufford (1981), Reay (1985), Watt (1991), Halasz (1997), Sharpe (2000), Fox (2000), Zaret (2000), Andersen and Sauer (2002), Sharpe and Zwicker (2003), Brayman Hackel (2005), Lake and Pincus (2006), Craik (2007), Raymond (2011), Patten and Mc Elligott (2014).

trial pamphlets. Clark (2003, 149) recognizes the hand of someone with clerical or legal training in the reporting of a sensational murder pamphlet entitled *The Most Cruell and Bloody Murther committed by an Innkeepers Wife, called Annis Dell* (1606), and Walsham managed to identify a number of "quasi clerical figures" producing providential texts. With the outbreak of the English Civil War, many clergymen became Royalist pamphleteers, who perpetrated the image of the king as Lord's Anointed in order to support the monarchical fight against Parliament.

Pamphlets were also very easy to distribute. All the presses that printed legal pamphlets were in London, and so were the bookshops of the publishers who usually funded the print runs (Bayman 2014, 16). The London book trade was clustered around the Royal Exchange and St Paul's, where people of different socio-economic backgrounds gathered to hear and consume the latest news. Cheap print, however, could also be purchased from street vendors, peddlers, hawkers and mercury women, and this guaranteed pamphlets' ready availability in the city and beyond. By crying out the catching title of a pamphlet, or simply through the invitation *come and buy a new book*, newsmongers could attract an array of people from the gentry collector to the labouring poor. There were also quieter means of advertising and selling printed papers. For example, booksellers occasionally used the endpapers of a book to promote their recent publications, specifying the place they could be purchased. A final means of distribution was the second-hand market, which gave a second life to pamphlet news which was no longer fresh. In 1635, the establishment of the first postal service allowed for the distribution of pamphlets and newsbooks enclosed in letters at the cost of a penny or more according to the distance (Raymond 2003, 83). From the second half of the century, the emergence of coffee houses allowed free public access to pamphlets and periodicals, thus ensuring the steady circulation of news. Coffee houses became successful centres of culture through news reading and debating, and soon alehouses adopted the same commercial strategy of stocking newssheets and pamphlets and subscribing to gazettes in order to attract a growing number of customers (Raymond 2003, 88).

So far, I have referred to the pamphlet as a publication type (Claridge 2005; Schmied 1998; Schmied and Claridge 1997; Halasz 1997). Indeed, the variety of topics covered, its borrowing of different text-types (e.g., epistolary correspondence, dramatic dialogue, trial proceeding, polemical argumentation, and news discourse) and its address to a heterogeneous cross-section of society make it hard to consider it as a singular genre. Halasz (1997), for example, introduces the pamphlet as a "floating signifier" in the heterogeneity that is legitimized in the early modern print market.

Even so, I agree with Suhr's conclusion (2011, 36) that by adopting a shifting and dynamic view of genre which "allows for a multiplicity and variability of texts within one", it is possible to consider specific pamphlets (e.g., witchcraft pamphlets, polemical pamphlets, and murder pamphlets) as a genre in their own right. Suhr draws upon Fowler's dynamic view of a genre as a "family whose septs and individual members are related in various ways without necessarily having any single feature in common with all" (1982, 41) and combines it with Rosch's prototype theory of genre (1975), according to which prototypical features associated with a genre (i.e. content, style, form, structure or audience expectations) can be present in different ways and at varying distances, depending on how prototypical these texts are. Both approaches imply that the boundaries of genres are fuzzy and that texts change their conventions over time in relation to socio-economic and political pressure from authorities, commercial competitors, and the changing demands of the readership, whose interests and needs require constant re-adaptations. On these premises, I shall consider murder pamphlets as a news genre in its own right.[5]

1.3 Criminality in 17th-Century England

Murder was considered the most violent manifestation of social and moral subversion. As such, it was the most frequently narrated crime in early modern cheap print. The representation of people transgressing moral and social boundaries was a form of entertainment for the masses and therefore a commercial enterprise. At the same time, however, it also helped society to establish the limit of what was normal, licit and accepted, thus performing a social function (Ward 2014). The following diagram shows the impressive surge in the production of murder literature throughout the century.[6] In particular, it displays the number of printed books (mostly occasional pamphlets and a lower percentage of broadside ballads) contained in the *Early English Books Online* archive (henceforth *EEBO*), which feature the word "murder" (spelling variants included) in their title.

[5] For micro-analyses of pamphlet genres, see Suhr (2011) on early modern witchcraft pamphlets and Bach (1998) on political pamphlets from 1642 to 1647.

[6] The drop in murder books in the 1690s may be due to a number of reasons, among which were the pressing competition with the early newspapers and the appearance of specialized periodical crime literature, which opened up new horizons in crime reporting and affected readers' demands for more sophisticated and reliable sources of information (e.g., *The Old Bailey Trial Proceedings* and *The Ordinary's Accounts of Newgate*).

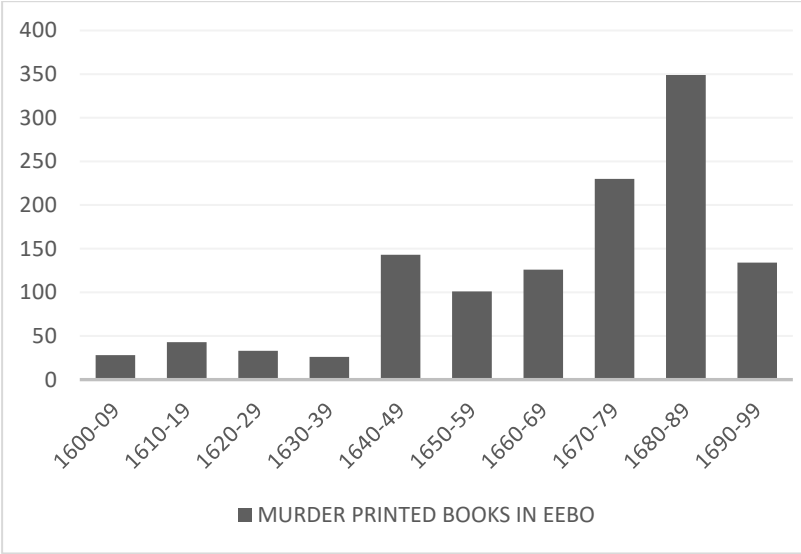

Table 1.1 Quantitative distribution of murder printed books in *EEBO* from 1600-1699.

The diagram prompts some questions about the relationship between murder reporting and crime rates. For example, we need to ask if this growing interest in the representation of murder was justified by homicide rates throughout the century. Although it is hard to generalize, since crime statistics change across provinces, Sharpe's findings suggest a shift from a more to a less brutal society in the early modern period. In particular, his study shows a steady decline in the number of trials for homicide throughout the 17th century in Cheshire (1999, 87), which is consistent with Beattie's report of a steady drop in the homicide rate between 1660-1800 (Beattie 1986, 107-112).[7] The disjunction between the increasing quantity of murder

[7] Study of homicide was complicated by the emergence of infanticide as a new offence in the 16th century. Infanticide consisted in the killing of new-born children by their mothers—with men only occasionally involved as accessories—and it was often recounted in pamphlet literature as the highest manifestations of immorality. In 1624 England passed a statute against the offence. Despite an "infanticide wave" around the 1630s and in the 1650s in Cheshire, Sharpe notices that by the end of the century, infanticide was being indicted roughly as often as simple homicide. In Essex, infanticide was much more common than witchcraft as shown by records of thirty-one women executed for infanticide between 1620 and 1680, as opposed to twenty for being witches (Sharpe 1999,158).

pamphlets and the corresponding decrease in homicide suggests that the production of crime literature is not transparently indicative of trends in criminality. Another case in point is the discrepancy between the many pamphlet narratives featuring female murderers and the records of the Essex assizes, where homicide (non-infanticidal) committed by women constituted only 16% of all the indictments between 1620 and 1680 (Sharpe 1999, 154-155). These data underpin our understanding of murder pamphlets as a social construct which enhances the desired perceptions of criminals and crime, no matter how consistent this might be with statistics. In this sense, crime news does not mirror but rather constructs social realities. It does so through a set of linguistic choices which reflect the values and interests of the dominant institutions, and influences the consumer's opinion accordingly.

As anticipated, each society at different points in time establishes what is criminal by setting the boundaries of what is licit and acceptable. In the 17th century, the notion of illegality was strongly interwoven with that of immorality, and religion played a key role in assessing criminal behaviour within a community (Sharpe 1999; Elton 1977; Gaskill 1998). For contemporaries, crime was not seen as distinct from sin, and this raised concern about disorder in its cosmic and apocalyptic sense. Terrified by episodes of moral and social disruptions, people demanded order and regarded law as fundamental for curbing humankind's passions and preserving civic well-being. In this sense, a large proportion of inhabitants cooperated with State authorities in the maintenance of law and order, for example by reporting on a crime scene or by prosecuting suspects (Sharpe 1999, 207). Furthermore, judicial authorities could rely on a State Church which preached the virtues of obedience and attempted to enforce conformity to Christian standards of behaviour through its courts. People perceived State and Church as strongly interwoven to the point that any criticism towards the Christian religion was interpreted as an act of subversion against the State.

The conceptualization of human law as a refraction of divine will was reinforced in the post-Reformation period, when Puritan preachers exploited crime literature as an effective tool for the re-Christianization of society. The return of the Stuarts in 1660 marked the end of Puritanism, and although religion was never fully removed, the following decades featured a shift in emphasis towards a more measured and rational treatment of crime which envisaged a deeper interest in forensic details and courtroom evidence.[8]

[8] After the lapsing of censorship in 1695, the more rigorous application of laws against libel made writers and printers far more cautious in blending facts and fictions in their narratives (Gaskill 1998, 29). In this regard, Davis (1997, 92) reports that the common law courts were more troublesome than the Licensing Act for

Another interesting transition which characterized the last decades of the century was the move from a general concern over order and its disruption to a focus on the defence of property (Sharpe 1999, 214). This change of attitude is traceable in the shift from the representation of murder in isolation to the encoding of murder with property offences. In order to understand the reasons behind this move, we have to draw a distinction between the rate of property offences in London, where most of the pamphlets were produced, and that in the provinces. While the level of indictments for robbery, burglary and theft fell throughout the 17th century outside the capital and other major industrial cities (Sharpe 1999, 85), London recorded a high percentage of property offences linked to violence, with an unprecedented proportion of women charged with such crimes (Beattie 2001, 18-20). Contemporaries were aware of the violent consequences of robberies, burglaries and housebreaking. They knew, for example, that criminals caught in the act could be tempted or panicked into using force, thus causing serious physical harm and even death to the person who had been robbed. As a result of their reading of *The Old Bailey Proceedings,* periodical news and murder pamphlets, news consumers from London and the provinces alike grew convinced that injuries and murder connected to property offences were common in the late 17th and early 18th centuries, and that they were steadily increasing (Beattie 2001).

1.4 Dataset and methodological framework

My study is based on a dataset of 105 murder pamphlets published between 1600 and 1699. All the texts have been taken from *EEBO*. The dataset is subdivided into three sub-corpora in relation to the three time-spans covered in the volume. The first sub-corpus contains 25 pamphlets and represents the period between 1600 and 1639 (period 1), the second sub-corpus includes 20 pamphlets which document the decade between 1640 and 1649 (period 2), and the third sub-corpus consists of 60 texts covering the period from 1660 to 1699 (period 3). The different quantitative distribution of samples is determined by the overall number of murder pamphlets available for each period. As we said, in the course of the century there was a surge in the production of murder pamphlets, which is reflected in the smaller quantity of samples in the early decades compared to almost double that number in the later ones. A methodological problem posed by the *EEBO*

printers as they could not be forewarned of the illegality of their pamphlets and could run the risk of having their entire printed edition confiscated after they had produced it. In addition, they could be fined, imprisoned and physically punished.

data is that while some pamphlets have been digitized and allow for a computational analysis through the tools of corpus linguistics, others are available only as an image or pdf file and as such they have been examined manually and mostly from a qualitative perspective. In particular, the sub-corpora of period 1 and period 2—given their more limited number and the scarcity of digitized renditions—have been more suitable to a manual and qualitative investigation (Cf. chapters 2 and 3), whereas the quantity of digitized texts in period 3 has been sufficient to carry out a corpus-assisted discourse analysis of the body of the news (Cf. chapter 4).

In my analysis, I follow the broad principles of Critical Discourse Analysis (e.g., van Dijk 1988a; 1988b; 2005; Bell 1991; Fowler 1991; Fairclough 1995)—more specifically, those of the Discourse-Historical Approach as developed by Wodak and Meyer (2009), Wodak (2015) and Reisigl (2017). Texts are investigated qualitatively but, where possible, a combination of the quantitative and qualitative approach is adopted in line with the tenets of Corpus-Assisted Discourse Studies (CADS) theorized, among others, by Stubbs (1996; 2001) and Partington (2004; 2009).[9] Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) considers discourse as a form of social practice in which there is "a dialectical relationship between discursive acts and the situations, institutions and social structures in which they are embedded" (Wodak and Meyer 2009, 8). This means that discourse affects the social context in much the same way as the social context constitutes and constructs discourse. CDA has found interesting applications in the field of contemporary and historical media discourse. Analysts focus on the process and motivation behind linguistic and representative choices in order to uncover ideologies which may either reproduce or challenge the dominant socio-political order. In particular, my study concentrates on the rhetorical strategies, scripts and reality paradigms through which pamphleteers naturalise ideologies which are connected with power structures and encode identities by spreading prejudices towards certain social categories as well as compassion towards others within a polarized logic of good *vs* evil.[10]

[9] Through the synergy between Corpus Linguistics and Discourse Analysis, Corpus-Assisted Discourse Studies allow researchers, first, to discover previously unnoticed regular patterns of language use through a statistical overview and then, link them to specific societal discourse practices through a qualitative investigation of their occurrences in both the textual and wider socio-cultural context.

[10] For Emmott (1997, 24) scripts represent our general knowledge of stereotypical sequences of events which may be based in stereotypical locations and have stereotyped participants (see Schank and Abelson 1977; Bower et al. 1979). Fairclough provides a more subject-focused definition and claims that scripts represent the subjects which are involved in a set of activities and their relationships.

The Discourse-Historical Approach (DHA), as a refinement of Critical Discourse Analysis, aims at integrating linguistic analysis with information about the historical context of discourses. Within this framework, the investigation of paratextual and textual features of 17th-century murder pamphlets in "context" becomes of paramount importance.[11] Indeed, the historical, socio-political, commercial and cultural circumstances in which texts are produced provide extralinguistic variables which inform our understanding of the choices made by publishers and pamphleteers in terms of news selection, framing, structural reporting and the representation of social actors. In this regard, one of the most salient features of the DHA is its endeavour to work interdisciplinarily, multi-methodically and on the basis of a variety of different empirical data as well as background (Reisigl and Wodak 2001, 35). This pluralistic approach allows the researcher to 1) achieve a more comprehensive view of all the contextual dynamics which affect a specific discourse occasion; 2) extend the investigation to other genres which coexist in the print market and which relate to the same discourse domain; and 3) choose and apply an eclectic collection of methodologies which explain the studied feature best. In line with these objectives, the volume includes a corpus-based comparative analysis between murder pamphlets and *The Old Bailey Proceedings* in order to reveal forms of discourse interrelatedness between the two crime publications. It also relies on different methodologies (e.g., appraisal theory, address and reference terms, speech-representation, and corpus linguistics) in order to provide a more exhaustive account of the major linguistic features of the genre.

More precisely, "scripts typify the way in which specific classes of subjects behave towards each other—how they conduct relationships. For example, people have scripts for a doctor, for a patient, and for how a doctor and patient can be expected to interact" (1989, 132). Both definitions apply to my analysis of scripts in 17th-century murder pamphlets. The notion of reality paradigm, on the other hand, was theorized by Archer (2002; 2011). Drawing upon Fowler (1986, 130), Archer defines a reality paradigm as corresponding to the "systems of beliefs [and] values…by reference to which a person or society comprehends the world, that is their truth-filter" (2017, 15). Archer originally coined the notion of reality paradigm to refer to the many and varied "particularized" mental perspectives of reality which lawyers construct to support their own interpretation of events in the courtroom (Archer 2002).

[11] I adopt the multilayered definition of context in Pahta and Taavitsainen where context is described as an overarching notion involving "textual contexts as well as socio-historical conditions of text production with its societal, situational, historical, ideological and material sides" (Pahta and Taavitsainen 2010, 551).

1.5 Structure of the book

The book consists of the present introductory chapter, three main chapters and a conclusion. In chapter 2, I analyse the paratextual and textual features of early 17th-century murder pamphlets (1600-1639) by inspecting the way in which the coalescence of socio-cultural scripts, truth-authenticating strategies and interpersonal communication blends information and ideology within a commercially alluring product designed for mass consumption. The chapter aims to establish the conventional features and functions of the first-generation murder pamphlet, which developed in post-Reformation England in the attempt to raise standards of Christian beliefs and conduct through a blending of titillation and edification. As we will see in the course of the analysis, the quantitative predominance of providential murder pamphlets over journalistic ones shows that at the time the informational value of the news was still subservient to Puritan teaching.

Chapter 3 covers the period from 1641 to 1649 and examines two sets of murder pamphlets: those related to the Irish Rebellion and those appropriated by Royalists and Parliamentarians during the English Civil War. In both cases, the genre undergoes a process of functional transformation and from a mere vehicle of Protestant indoctrination it changes into a weapon of political propaganda used to legitimize the supremacy of one faction over the other. Opposing discursive patterns and contrasting naming policies are (re)activated in order to inscribe war-related murders and their social actors within the desired ideological framework. In line with a growing demand for political transparency and authenticity, more and more pamphlets present their murder accounts in the form of a letter from an eye-witness, or corroborate their narratives with the inclusion of official documents which were considered off limits to the masses up to that time. The appropriation of popular crime literature as a source of political information initiates a process of democratization by which humble readers could become fairly well informed about contemporary issues, no matter how distorted by the political ambitions of each party.

Chapter 4 takes as its focus late murder pamphlets, from the Restoration to the end of the century (1660-1699). This second generation of murder pamphlets differs from the first one in the layout of the title page and in an increasing insight into the forensic aspects of the trial in the body of the news. In order to discover the motivations behind these structural and content transformations, the chapter examines the genre in the context of the growing news competition in the print market and the consequential changes in readers' tastes and demands. The development of periodical press and the appearance of *The Old Bailey Proceedings* as the first

specialized periodical crime genre both affect the style and content of pamphlets by giving rise to interesting forms of cross-fertilization. A corpus-assisted comparative analysis of murder pamphlets and the trials at the Old Bailey reveals instances of overlapping discourse, where features of one genre filter into the other. If the second-generation murder pamphlets borrow specialized terms and phraseology from *The Old Bailey Proceedings*, the early numbers of the *Proceedings* inherit the providentialism and judgmental attitude typical of the traditional murder pamphlet, thus revealing their origin from popular print culture.

The conclusion illustrates the evolution of the genre by touching on the major instances of discourse continuity and change which occurred throughout the century in relation to important socio-cultural, religious, political and commercial variables. Transformations in genre conventions construct and respond to the ideological imperatives of a changing order. In this regard, the return of the Stuarts in 1660 meant the end of Puritanism as a political force and determined a gradual retreat of the godly ideology from murder pamphlets. By the end of the century, the murder pamphlet genre gradually shifts from the providential conceptualisation of the narrative as moral exemplum towards a slightly more secular representation of the news as a source of public information.

CHAPTER TWO

THE LANGUAGE OF NEWS IN THE MURDER PAMPHLETS OF POST-REFORMATION ENGLAND (1600-1640)

2.1 Introduction

From the 16th century, the availability of the printing press and the steady growth in literacy contributed to the development of a popular news culture which was deeply concerned with crime and its discursive representation. The crime pamphlet was a staple in the London print market of the 17th century and privileged stories of murder, witchcraft, religious subversion and high treason. Its sensational and newsworthy stories informed people on national criminal activity and instructed them on the beneficial nature of lawful behaviour and reformed manners. As commercial products bound to the socio-cultural contingencies of the time, 17th-century crime pamphlets did not provide a static representation of criminality but rather adjusted its structure and rhetorical conventions to meet the changing tastes of their readership and the ideological imperatives of the institutions. For this reason, I refer to the early 17th-century pamphlets as first-generation crime pamphlets to distinguish them from the second-generation pamphlets of the late 17th century.

The entries in *EEBO* for the period from 1600 to 1640 show that crime pamphlets mostly recounted murder stories. Indeed, murder epitomizes the complete disruption of the social order and Christian morality on which the peace and stability of State and Church were founded. Their proliferation is consistent with statistics, according to which homicide and (from 1624) infanticide were more frequently indicted in the late 16th and early 17th centuries than in later periods (Sharpe 1999, 79). What is striking, on the other hand, is the disjunction between the predominant gender-based representation of the murderer as "unnatural wife" or "pitiless mother" and real statistics on domestic homicide which show that the murder of wives by husbands was at least twice as common as the reverse in the early modern

period (Dolan 1994; Clark 2002,10).[1] The discrepancy between facts and their representation evidences the stereotypical and ideological bias attached to the murder news of the time. As we will see in the course of the analysis, authors privilege female agency as the gravest manifestation of a world turned upside down in order to voice society's deepest fears of attacks on established social and gender hierarchies (Pettegree 2014).

Historians of 17th-century popular culture have provided detailed accounts of the soteriological and edifying character of murder pamphlets, showing how cheap print was successfully exploited as a vehicle of religious indoctrination to reach otherwise unapproachable sections of society (Walsham 1999; Lake 1994b; Zaret 2000; Clark 2002; 2003; Raymond 2003; Martin 2005). Although providentialism was an essential component of early murder pamphlets, the emphasis on its pervasiveness has partly diverted attention from the pamphlet as news text-type with its own structural conventions, persuasive strategies and values.[2] It is exactly from this perspective that my dataset is examined in order to show how pamphleteers communicate, reproduce and establish consensus over ideologically biased murder narratives. By drawing upon the principles of critical discourse analysis (CDA) features of news presentation and news reporting are investigated in relation to both the situational context of text production and reception and the wider socio-cultural context, where values of law and order intermingle with the Protestant drift towards reformation of manners. In this regard, a corpus of 25 murder pamphlets is taken from *EEBO*, covering the period from 1600 to 1640, and is analysed in terms of linguistic and representative choices made at the level of the paratext and the text. The pamphlets have been selected by searching for the words "murder" and "murther" in their title.

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[1] Beattie reports the Grand Jury Verdicts in Surrey Courts by "Gender of the Accused", showing that in the period lasting from 1660 to 1880, 266 men were accused of murder, whereas the accused women were only 29 (1986, 404)

[2] Liapi (2017) notices how historians of 17th-century crime literature have excluded accounts of crime from news reporting by focusing on generic elements of crime representation. Lake (1994a; 1994b) accounts for the Puritan appropriation of the murder pamphlet, Faller (1987) analyses specific myths of the criminal, Dolan (1994) and Clark (2002; 2003) examine representations of female agency and Walsham (1999) inscribes crime narratives within providential literature. In her study, Liapi (2017) examines the press coverage of James Turner, a burglar in the 1660s, focusing on crime news transmission and its role in the construction of public opinion. In the field of historical news discourse, studies on crime news reporting have been conducted, amongst others, by Suhr (2002; 2011; 2012), Fries (2009), Traugott (2011), Doty and Hiltunen (2002), Doty (2007), Chaemsaithong (2013) and Cecconi (2009; 2015; 2020a).