

Introduction: Publics and Participation in Early Modern Britain

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Abstract The deconstruction of what is termed “the public sphere” in recent decades has resulted in an important shift in scholarly attention towards networks and forms of association. This article explores how greater sensitivity to the unstable and ephemeral nature of “publics,” combined with a stronger awareness of the role of cultural exchange, has undoubtedly enriched our understanding of early modern politics. Some analytical precision has, nonetheless, been lost. A justifiable emphasis on the artificiality of the territorial borders that have defined units of enquiry has occurred at the expense of deeper consideration of the cultural boundaries that dictated the terms on which people could participate in and shape public discourse. Study of the British archipelago can offer new ways of thinking about these problems. Linguistic and ethnic differences, the search for religious concord as well as the reality of confessional division, institutional variation, and the consequences of London’s increasing dominance of the archipelago, are key facets of the reassessments undertaken here. The article concludes by reflecting on how interactions between varieties of “public” and other forms of association can nuance our understanding of early modern state formation.

Just over a decade has passed since Peter Lake and Steven Pincus made their influential intervention, in this journal, into what was then an “ubiquitous” debate on the “public sphere.”¹ Their aim was to historicize Jürgen Habermas’s conceptually useful, but unconvincingly rigid, account of the emergence of a “rational-critical” public sphere that putatively appeared “first in Great Britain at the turn of the eighteenth century.”² Lake and Pincus argued for a more flexible model that allowed a multiplicity of “publics” to take shape over a much longer period, from roughly the mid-sixteenth to the early eighteenth centuries. Habermas’s work had centered on a polity called Great Britain, by which he really meant the state dominated by the English metropolitan core. Lake and Pincus retained this facet of the

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¹ Peter Lake and Steve Pincus, “Rethinking the Public Sphere in Early Modern England,” *Journal of British Studies* 45, no. 2 (April 2006): 270–92, at 270.

² Jürgen Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*, trans. Thomas Burger (Cambridge, 1989), 57.

Habermasian thesis; their unit of study was necessarily English and “emphatically not” British.³

Some years earlier, Joad Raymond’s pioneering work on the emergence of the newspaper had prompted him to think about how Habermas’s “resolutely metropolitan” conceptualization of the public sphere could be made to accommodate the existence of Scotland, Ireland, and Wales. His solution was the development of “several separate spheres ... all strongly influenced by London” and operating “concurrently” alongside a “‘British’ sphere.”⁴ It was a thought-provoking interpretation, one that suggested parallels with Linda Colley’s depiction of the emergence of a British national identity after 1707: Great Britain became “a workmanlike nation of sorts” that offered “an umbrella” under which “other, smaller nations” could “advantageously congregate.”⁵

Raymond’s important collection appeared just as the then equally ubiquitous debate on what was termed New British History was reaching its high water mark.⁶ As scholarship moved on, the questions raised by Raymond’s proposition were left behind. The result was that no scholar sought to engage with the questions raised by Raymond’s proposition. New British History had promoted a deeper sense of the complexity of the political and cultural interactions generated within a polity that, although connected to continental Europe, was nonetheless unusual in possessing borders clearly defined by encircling bodies of water. As new approaches to conceptualizing early modern communicative practices emerged, however, scholars turned away from analyzing the dynamics of state formation in order to study the networks and flows that bypassed, cut through, and subverted political borders.⁷

Although the transformation of the “public sphere” into multiple, episodic “publics” has stimulated new modes of inquiry, it is not always clear that scholars are talking about the same phenomena. The first part of this article, which provides a foundation for the rest of the forum, contends that a gap has opened up between scholars who see publics as cultural constructions and those who seek to assess the role of publics in constituting political communities. Certainly the idea of cultural

³ Lake and Pincus, “Rethinking,” 286n64.

⁴ Joad Raymond, “The Newspaper, Public Opinion, and the Public Sphere,” in *News, Newspapers and Society in Early Modern Britain*, ed. Joad Raymond (London, 1999), 109–40, at 130–31.

⁵ Linda Colley, *Britons: Forging the Nation, 1707–1837*, 2nd ed. (New Haven, 2005), xi–xii.

⁶ The key contributions appeared in the final decade of the twentieth century: Alexander Grant and Keith Stringer, eds., *Uniting the Kingdom? The Making of British History* (London, 1995); Steven Ellis and Sarah Barber, eds., *Conquest and Union: Fashioning a British State, 1485–1725* (London, 1995); Brendan Bradshaw and John Morrill, eds., *The British Problem, c. 1534–1707: State Formation in the Atlantic Archipelago* (Basingstoke, 1996); and Glenn Burgess, ed., *The New British History: Founding a Modern State, 1603–1715* (London, 1999).

⁷ Modern scholars use the concept of transnationalism to explore the ways in which connections and flows moving “over, across, through, beyond, above, under, or in-between” polities and societies were able to bypass, and sometimes subvert, the nation-state. Scholars of earlier epochs recognize that people, goods, and information must have travelled around a politically fragmented early modern world in quite different ways, and with different meanings and consequences, than would be the case once the national state had fixed itself as the dominant form of human organization. Matthew Hilton and Rana Mitter, introduction to “Transnationalism and Contemporary Global History,” ed. Matthew Hilton and Rana Mitter, *Past and Present*, supplement 8 (January 2013): 7–28, at 10–14, citing Akira Iriye and Pierre-Yves Saunier, “Introduction: The Professor and the Madman,” in *The Palgrave Dictionary of Transnational History*, ed. Akira Iriye and Pierre-Yves Saunier (London, 2009), xviii.

exchange can help further our understanding of how different types of publics related to forms of political organization. This relationship could be disruptive as well as constructive. Publics drew upon history, language, religion, and ethnicity, not only to give voice to a collective sense of belonging to a political community but also to create spaces in which different visions of how the community should be organized, and who should be responsible for doing the organizing, could be articulated. This raises questions about the relationship between publics and nations. In Scotland and England, and also in Ireland, the existence of governing and representative institutions claiming competency over defined territories created the conditions in which “national” publics had potential to form. As argued in the third section of this article, however, patterns of linguistic variation and their relationship with processes of confessionalization deserve more attention for their capacity both to fragment the “nation” and to constitute cross-border affinities.

Where does the state fit in with these approaches? Habermas theorized the “bourgeois public sphere” as the coming together of private people into “the *publicum*, the abstract counterpart of public authority.” This *publicum* was brought into “an awareness of itself” through debate “over the general rules governing relations in the basically privatized but publicly relevant sphere of commodity exchange and social labor.”⁸ The relationship between the public, identified by Michael Warner as “the self-consciousness of civil society,” and the state was one of “confrontation.” It is well known that Habermas offered little analysis of the state itself, which was depicted as the repository of the coercive powers wielded by a legitimate public authority.⁹

In recent decades, the state has been reconceptualized as something more complex than an extraction-coercion machine. Historians of the early modern period now argue that “state formation” was a process through which governing elites maintained and advanced their own interests by investing in the state’s capacity to act as a universally acknowledged arbiter of social and political relations. In this analysis, the interest lies in how the state’s unique kind of power is legitimated: state power is negotiated by and through the leaders of local communities rather than simply imposed upon them from the center.¹⁰

This thesis works well for explaining the changing nature of state power within core polities that were already relatively well integrated by the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. It also helps to add nuance to our understanding of the means by which core polities extended their power over neighbor entities to form national states; in this respect, Britain offers an interesting case study. Michael Braddick has argued that a shared interest among the governing elites of Scotland and England in promoting “civility” throughout their respective societies ultimately resulted in “coalescence” into a British ruling class. The cost was the alienation and marginalization of the Gaelic-speaking peoples of Ireland and, arguably with less devastating consequences, Highland Scotland.¹¹

⁸ Habermas, *Structural Transformation*, 18–19, 23, 27, 30.

⁹ Michael Warner, *Publics and Counterpublics* (New York, 2005), 47.

¹⁰ Charles Tilly, *Coercion, Capital, and European States, AD 990–1992* (Oxford, 1992); Michael J. Braddick, *State Formation in Early Modern England, c. 1550–1700* (Cambridge, 2000).

¹¹ Braddick, *State Formation*, 355–78, esp. 337n1 (Britain as a “dynastic state”) and 368 (parallel processes). See also Mark Greengrass, “Introduction: Conquest and Coalescence,” in *Conquest and Coalescence: The Shaping of the State in Early Modern State*, ed. Mark Greengrass (London, 1991), 1–24.

This is broadly convincing. Throughout the seventeenth and into the early eighteenth centuries, however, processes of elite integration involved a small number of people. The successful integration of Wales into the English state during the sixteenth century was achieved through the co-opting of English-speaking members of the gentry, but what this development meant for a population that predominantly spoke Welsh can be hard to uncover. Most of the Scottish population enacted and experienced governance through structures with little or no direct link to the coordinating center of the nascent British polity. State power in Ireland, according to Nicholas Canny, “stood aloof from the society it supposedly served” and, in consequence, was far more likely to be experienced as coercion. Unlike the Scots who, to a very considerable extent, were governed by other Scots, the Gaelic Irish population was made subject to English and Scottish landowners who sought to govern through predominantly English legal and administrative forms.¹²

The final section of this article aims to propose ways in which we can begin to think about how the archipelago’s multiple and unstable publics related to multiple and unstable processes of state formation. The lines between state and society now seem fuzzier than Habermas’s theory had allowed.¹³ Historians argue that the relationship between “public authority” and “civil society” was characterized more often by negotiation and compromise than by confrontation and exclusion. The term “public authorities” has tended to mean rulers and the central administration,¹⁴ but a more participatory and inclusive state, embodied by socially quite diverse local office holders and engaged with by sometimes quite humble litigants, has since been posited. If publics can be understood as spaces in which claims about authority, legitimacy, and the common good could be (relatively) widely, freely, and critically debated, then in the process they offered an opportunity for the words and actions of the people who enacted state power, and representations of the values and expectations of civil society, to be tested against one another.

The problem, as we have seen, is that the archipelago’s diverse political communities, each with distinct governing structures and traditions, strongly militated against the integrative processes that tied subordinate social groups, governing elites, and central administrators into reciprocal relationships. Legitimizing state power was difficult in a politically fragmented polity, where office holding and the law did not operate according to broadly similar principles framed by a single, coordinating center. Over the course of the seventeenth century, the English-speaking peoples of the archipelago increasingly shared communicative practices through which they were able to debate the best means to preserve and advance *their* conception of *their* Protestant liberties. This is not meant to imply a linear progression toward an ideologically, politically, and socially unified “British public sphere.” At least one pan-archipelagic public, generated by the need to defend the Solemn League and Covenant of 1643, failed spectacularly.¹⁵ Nor should this development be seen, in

¹² Braddick, *State Formation*, 344–52; Laura A. M. Stewart, “The ‘Rise’ of the State?” in *Oxford Handbook of Modern Scottish History*, ed. T. M. Devine and Jenny Wormald (Oxford, 2012), 220–35; Nicholas Canny, *Making Ireland British, 1580–1650* (Oxford, 2001), 302.

¹³ This paragraph draws on Braddick, *State Formation*, chaps. 1 and 4.

¹⁴ Habermas, *Structural Transformation*, 18. See also Pincus and Lake, “Rethinking,” 3–4, 21.

¹⁵ Jason Peacey, “Print Culture, State Formation, and an Anglo-Scottish Public, 1640–1648,” *Journal of British Studies* 56, no. 4 (October 2017): 815–35.

any unqualified sense, as progressive. The way in which publics construct and represent different social groups as a unitary entity necessarily creates exclusions. Publics that purported to dissolve the archipelago's internal political borders, by opening up spaces in which certain common interests could be debated, also threatened to harden its cultural ones.

FROM "THE PUBLIC SPHERE" TO "FORMS OF ASSOCIATION"

Can publics be investigated as British phenomena? Lake and Pincus expressed skepticism that it was either possible or intellectually desirable to do so. In his critique of the themes explored by the contributors to this forum, Peter Lake reassesses the possibilities for a simply "comparative approach,"¹⁶ albeit one that takes new cognizance of the interactions between the kingdoms in the light of more recent research, both on print¹⁷ and on "public opinion."¹⁸ To understand why a "British" context continues to be problematic for Lake, we need to consider the particular interpretative frameworks that informed what came to be known as New British History.

J. G. A. Pocock—who called for a "pluralist" history of the cultures "grouped around the northern Atlantic" and increasingly subject to English domination—recast "British history" as a "new subject."¹⁹ What arguably remains the most influential application of a "British" approach actually had less to do with investigating diverse cultures than with solving a conundrum about the causes of the English civil war. If early Stuart England was as stable and consensual as "revisionist" reinterpretations of the period claimed,²⁰ then why was it plunged into civil war in 1642? Scotland and Ireland provided the answer. Rebellions in 1637 and 1641 respectively provided the context in which armed conflict between a British king and his English parliament became possible. The difficulty was that this interpretation was predicated on the assumption that what constituted the "political" was the development of institutions and the actions and words of elites. This meant largely ignoring those factors that could help explain the distinctive pattern of the political crisis in England and the reasons why it was so difficult to resolve: autonomous crowd actions, communities

¹⁶ Peter Lake, "Publics and Participation: England, Britain, and Europe in the 'Post Reformation,'" *Journal of British Studies* 56, no. 4 (October 2017): 836–54, at 850.

¹⁷ See, for example, Raymond Gillespie, "The Circulation of Print in Seventeenth-Century Ireland," *Studia Hibernica* 29 (1995–97): 31–58; Alasdair J. Mann, *The Scottish Book Trade, 1500–1720: Print Commerce and Print Control in Early Modern Scotland* (East Linton, 2000); Jonquil Bevan, "Scotland," in *The Cambridge History of the Book in Britain*, vol. 4, 1557–1695, ed. John Barnard and Donald McKenzie (Cambridge, 2002), 687–700; Raymond Gillespie and Andrew Hadfield, eds., *The Oxford History of the Irish Book*, vol. 3, *The Irish Book in English, 1550–1800* (Oxford, 2005); John Hinks and Catherine Armstrong, eds., *Worlds of Print: Diversity in the Book Trade* (New Castle, 2006).

¹⁸ James Kelly, "Public and Political Opinion in Ireland and the Idea of an Anglo-Irish Union, 1650–1800," in *Political Discourse in Seventeenth- and Eighteenth-Century Ireland*, ed. David Boyce, Robert Eccleshall, and Vincent Geoghegan (Basingstoke, 2001), 110–41; Karin Bowie, "Public Opinion, Popular Politics and the Union of 1707," *Scottish Historical Review* 82, no. 2 (October 2003), 226–60; Laura A. M. Stewart, "'Brothers in Truth': Propaganda, Public Opinion and the Perth Articles Debate in Scotland," in *James VI and I: Ideas, Authority, and Government*, ed. Ralph Houlbrooke (Aldershot, 2006), 151–68.

¹⁹ J. G. A. Pocock, "British History: A Plea for a New Subject," *Journal of Modern History* 47, no. 4 (December 1975): 601–28, at 605, 606.

²⁰ The seminal work is Conrad Russell, *The Fall of the British Monarchies, 1637–1642* (Oxford, 1991).

oriented around print production and dissemination, and innovative modes of mobilizing popular political opinion. It also meant completely ignoring the role of crowds, print, and innovative mobilization strategies in Scottish and Irish politics.²¹

The revisionist understanding of politics as the business of elites similarly underpinned analyses of the origins of the British Empire and the construction of an Anglophone “Atlantic world.” It was intellectuals and court elites who “ideologically redefined” the term “empire” so that, after 1707, it could accommodate both Scots and English (less so the Irish) on a more equal footing.²² Whether there was any “popular” or “public” dimension to the creation of, and to reactions against, a British ideology (or ideologies) has proven more difficult to demonstrate. As Tim Harris shows here, there is an obvious reason why.²³ Until the incorporating Union of 1707 merged Scotland and England, at least in theory, into a single coherent political space, it is hard to see how an entity as diverse as the British archipelago could generate the relatively unified projection of a “common good” that Lake and Pincus argued was central to the emergence of publics.²⁴

There was another reason to turn away from the archipelago. For Lake and Pincus, publics were best understood in comparative context, and the “obvious” places to look for similarities with England were France (also discussed by Habermas) and the Dutch Republic. It was there that the authors detected the development of early modern publics whose vibrancy and robustness suggested the most compelling parallels with the English case. The unit of inquiry remained the national state. More recently, however, scholars have begun to explore the connections that, by cutting through or transcending political borders, created possibilities for the emergence of transnational publics.²⁵ Certainly the permeability of political boundaries has always been obvious to scholars of cultural exchange, mindful that Habermas had theorized the evolution of a political public sphere “from the public sphere of the world of letters.” Helmer J. Helmers’s innovative work, for example, has suggested that the cultural artifacts produced in response to the judicial execution of King Charles I in 1649 were consumed by a “non-national” public, whose members had cohered around shared understandings of the rhetoric and symbolism of the event.²⁶

²¹ Although important studies have since revealed how print output from, and about, Scotland and Ireland influenced political debate in England, political debate in Scotland and Ireland was not given consideration. See note 68 below and Laura A. M. Stewart, *Rethinking the Scottish Revolution: Covenanted Scotland, 1637–1651* (Oxford, 2016), esp. chap. 1.

²² David Armitage, “Making the Empire British: Scotland in the Atlantic World, 1542–1707,” *Past and Present* 155, no. 1 (May 1997): 34–63, at 63. See also David Armitage, *The Ideological Origins of the British Empire* (Cambridge, 2000).

²³ Tim Harris, “Publics and Participation in the Three Kingdoms: Was There Such a Thing as ‘British Public Opinion?’,” *Journal of British Studies* 56, no. 4 (October 2017): 731–53.

²⁴ Lake and Pincus, “Rethinking,” 276. For the conceptual problems posed by the question of “how the public sphere constructs itself as a unitary entity,” see Harold Mah, “Phantasies of the Public Sphere: Rethinking the Habermas of Historians,” *Journal of Modern History* 72, no. 1 (March 2000): 153–82, at 155.

²⁵ Jason McElligott and Eve Patten, “The Perils of Print Culture: An Introduction,” in *The Perils of Print Culture: Book, Print and Publishing History in Theory and Practice*, ed. Jason McElligott and Eve Patten (Basingstoke, 2014), 1–16, at 9–11. McElligott and Patten usefully survey the problems of assessing print culture in national and in transnational contexts, but they have less to say about how the two approaches might work together.

²⁶ Habermas, *Structural Transformation*, 30–31 and chap. 7; Helmer J. Helmers, *The Royalist Republic: Literature, Politics, and Religion in the Anglo-Dutch Public Sphere, 1639–1660* (Cambridge, 2015), 23, 262.

While Helmers's thesis undoubtedly opens up fruitful areas for inquiry, it does raise some questions about the political significance and meaning of these kinds of cultural construction. Does it matter that Charles was a self-proclaimed British king, rebelled against by Scots who had sworn a National Covenant, and judicially executed by men who deemed him—as well as the Scottish and Irish regimes that mobilized to defend his son's British claims—to be the enemies of the commonwealth of England?

The rulers and governments of numerous European states, as well as their diplomats, merchants, printers, publishers, financiers, soldiers, and clerics, were interested in these events. Eamon Darcy suggests here that connections to Catholic Europe help to explain the distinctive types of public that emerged in early modern Ireland. I follow others who have pointed to the vital links established in the early seventeenth century among Scottish Presbyterians, English Puritans, and the Dutch publishing world.²⁷ How these connections influenced public debate within the archipelago, and whether they may have generated new kinds of political engagement, are questions that demand greater attention than this forum permits. Yet it is also reasonable to argue that the attempt by successive Tudor and Stuart rulers to bring diverse peoples together under a relatively uniform set of governing principles, although by no means a project unique to the archipelago, was of special significance to their subjects. Moreover, the fact that Tudor and Stuart rule was experienced through different constitutional and legal forms, and that it had especially contentious implications for different religious beliefs and practices, generated debates that were “British” in scope.²⁸

Publics theorized as cultural constructs raise possibilities for extending our investigations beyond early modern Europe's core polities. They have the potential to liberate those societies regarded as peripheral or underdeveloped both from the restrictive assumptions about what constituted “successful” state formation and from the strictures of the ideal-type “public sphere.” This potential has not yet been fully realized. A key problem, of course, is that peripheral peoples and places were, by definition, less well integrated into Europe's core news and information networks.²⁹ In an important attempt to explain variation within Europe's emergent “media landscape,” Brendan Dooley observed that some places seemed to advance toward inclusion more rapidly than others. Paris was better connected than Strasbourg; Poland and Hungary offered “little to speak of” when it came to news publication.³⁰ Dooley is one of the few scholars to have considered how flows of information may have helped to consolidate a Europe of cores and peripheries. That the most urbanized and economically dynamic areas generated the most intense communicative and associative activity is, perhaps, an inescapable historical

²⁷ Eamon Darcy, “Political Participation in Early Stuart Ireland,” *Journal of British Studies* 56, no. 4 (October 2017): 773–96; Stewart, *Rethinking*, 34–37, 148.

²⁸ Harris, “Publics and Participation.”

²⁹ Lloyd Bowen, “Structuring Particularist Publics: Logistics, Language, and Early Modern Wales,” *Journal of British Studies* 56, no. 4 (October 2017): 754–72; Darcy, “Political Participation.” Highland Scotland, discussed below, would also qualify.

³⁰ Brendan Dooley, introduction to *The Politics of Information in Early Modern Europe*, ed. Brendan Dooley and Sabrina Baron (London, 2001), 1–16, at 12.

reality—one that is exposed by the assertion of metropolitan English dominion over the British archipelago.

These approaches have taken scholars beyond a methodology that sometimes seemed to be reduced to tracking newspaper titles around the Continent. Publics could now be understood as a dynamic associative activity, in which private people came together in ways not prescribed by the existing structures of civil society, namely, family, rank, and vocation. Multivalent networks of communication facilitated the formation of a creative dialectic between “places, objects and human actors.”³¹ Hence, the constitutive elements that brought publics into being could be extended beyond print material to include almost anything that was “built, written, printed, crafted, performed, and painted.”³² To qualify as a public, people no longer needed to interact in the specific locations, notably coffee houses and *salons*, where, according to Habermas, it was possible for “rational” discussion to take place.³³ The gossip and rumors circulating around streets, marketplaces, and shops became equally significant designators of “publicness,” blurring the boundaries between private and public interactions and widening the types of discursive practices that could be studied.³⁴

While undoubtedly enriching, especially for those working on political communities where coffeehouses and newspapers were in scant supply, the “making of publics” as cultural exchange poses some problems. It risks manufacturing a homogenized European culture in which the unique aspects of the discourses and exchanges generated by and around particular political structures are lost.³⁵ In their most abstracted manifestation, “publics” cease to act as an historicized tool of analysis, as their ephemeral and imagined qualities make them less agents of change than “the moment of change itself.” Such work has exposed a tension between publics as imagined communities or discursive constructions and the continued use of the language of things—publics are “made” and “created”; publics “exist”—in order to conceptualize them and give them explanatory force.³⁶ For a public to influence political processes, the individuals engaging with it surely needed to be conscious of some affinity with a collectivity distinct from (albeit not unrelated to) the elitist memberships of

³¹ Bronwen Wilson and Paul Yachnin, introduction to *Making Publics in Early Modern Europe: People, Things, Forms of Knowledge*, ed. Bronwen Wilson and Paul Yachnin (New York, 2010), 1–23, at 1–6; Massimo Rospocher, “Introduction: Beyond the Public Sphere; A Historiographical Transition,” in *Beyond the Public Sphere: Opinions, Publics, Spaces in Early Modern Europe*, ed. Massimo Rospocher (Berlin, 2012), 9–28, at 22; Joad Raymond, “Introduction: Networks, Communication, Practice,” in *News Networks in Seventeenth-Century Britain and Europe*, ed. Joad Raymond (London and New York, 2006), 11–13.

³² Wilson and Yachnin, introduction to *Making Publics*, 2.

³³ Habermas, *Structural Transformation*, 30–34.

³⁴ Filippo de Vivo, *Information and Communication in Venice: Rethinking Early Modern Politics* (Oxford, 2007), 2–3, 98–106; idem, “Pharmacies as Centres of Communication in Early Modern Venice,” *Renaissance Studies* 21, no. 4 (September 2007): 505–21; idem, “Public Sphere or Communication Triangle? Information and Politics in Early Modern Europe,” in Rospocher, ed., *Beyond the Public Sphere*, 115–36, at 130–34.

³⁵ Karin Bowie and Alasdair Raffe, “Politics, the People, and Extra-Institutional Participation in Scotland, c. 1603–1712,” *Journal of British Studies* 56, no. 4 (October 2017): 797–815.

³⁶ Wilson and Yachnin, introduction to *Making Publics*, 4, 7. Wilson and Yachnin do not comment on the tension that their work so helpfully exposes. For a different set of problems arising from the discursively-constructed nature of “the public sphere,” see Mah, “Phantasies,” esp. 154–55, 156–68.

formal institutions and defined by some level of consensus opinion that transcended, however fleetingly, otherwise destabilizing differences and disagreements. This concept of discursive construction is critical to the explanatory capabilities of the paradigm. It has been imperiled by definitions so inclusive that almost any form of collective association can now be termed a “public.” There is a risk of collapsing publics into the networks and exchanges that had the potential to facilitate their formation but, crucially, did not always do so.

What, then, was it that distinguished publics from other forms of interaction? The relationship between publics and “the nature of the *polis*” seems important here.³⁷ These kinds of public capture big claims to represent communities possessed of, or seeking to possess, political coherence and cohesion. They have been described as spaces, both conceptual and physical, in which diverse audiences with access to a variety of media constructed themselves as “both legitimately interested in and able to consider” competing arguments about what constituted the common interest.³⁸ This definition enables historians to address certain questions that the study of networks and cultural exchange are less well equipped to answer. Why and in what circumstances did rumor and scurrilous print undermine some politicians and regimes but not others? How, when, and with what consequences did a public come to be seen as “a legitimating authority”?³⁹ To what extent could such activity reinforce sociopolitical hierarchies? What role did history and memory play in ascribing to objects, performances, and words the shared meanings on which the coherence of publics depended? Under what circumstances did the specific terms on which inclusion in a public was predicated result, inevitably, in exclusions? Did most kinds of public reaffirm essentially “masculinist” public cultures in which women, even when not actively excluded, were unlikely to “feel entirely ‘at home’”?⁴⁰ Why, and with what consequences, did publics disintegrate?

These questions raise particular challenges for those who study the British archipelago. Great Britain did not, as we have noted, constitute a coherent political community before 1707. (Whether it ever became one remains debatable.) The following sections consider some of the interactions that cut across the internal boundaries of the archipelago and that generated publics that claimed to represent alternative, “non-national,” expressions of what constituted the common good. In this reading, some types of public possess a disruptive quality vis-à-vis the state; others (contra Habermas) aid elite consolidation of national states.⁴¹ Communicative practices were affected by the existence of the structures that demonstrated, reinforced,

³⁷ Wilson and Yachnin, introduction to *Making Publics*, 2.

³⁸ Peter Lake and Michael Questier, “Puritans, Papists, and the ‘Public Sphere’ in Early Modern England: The Edmund Campion Affair in Context,” *Journal of Modern History* 72, no. 3 (September 2000): 587–627, at 590.

³⁹ Mark Knights, *Representation and Misrepresentation in Later Stuart Britain: Partisanship and Political Culture* (Oxford, 2005), 5.

⁴⁰ For useful reflections on gender, see Brian Cowan, “What Was Masculine about the Public Sphere?: Gender and the Coffeehouse Milieu in Post-Restoration England,” *History Workshop Journal* 51 (Spring 2001): 127–57, at 149. Work is needed on whether the archipelago’s varied political communities were gendered in different ways or whether they manifested different patterns of female participation and exclusion.

⁴¹ T. C. W. Blanning, *The Culture of Power and the Power of Culture: Old Regime Europe, 1660–1789* (Oxford, 2002), 13.

and secured the jurisdictional and territorial claims that ruling elites made. These networks simultaneously had the capacity to generate and to spread appeals to conceptions of a public interest that was distinct from, and that threatened to subvert, such claims.

THE FORMATION OF PUBLICS AND THE PROBLEM OF LINGUISTIC PLURALITY

Almost all communities are “imagined” on some level; publics, as forms of political community, are no different in this respect. Imagining oneself as a member of a political community not only requires communication but also a degree of shared understanding between people who are never likely to meet one another face to face. This observation suggests that language ought to be afforded more importance in debates about publics. Certainly the relationship between language and identity, especially national identity, has been the subject of scholarly interest.⁴² Richard Helgerson’s magnificent study of the writing of England into a nation, for example, observes only in passing that an entity comprising Wales, Ireland, and, later, Scotland must have posed some conceptual problems for people who dreamed, as Edmund Spenser did, of a “kingdom of our own language.”⁴³ By Spenser’s time, there were five Celtic languages operative within the archipelago—Scots Gaelic, Irish Gaelic, Manx Gaelic, Cornish, and Welsh—plus a “pocket” of Flemish speakers whose ancestors had first migrated across the North Sea in the twelfth century. As early as circa 1500, however, as much as two-thirds of the archipelagic population was speaking one of a variety of “Englishes” that had radiated northward and westward with the spread of Anglo-Norman culture from the early twelfth century onward.⁴⁴ Arguments over whether Scots should properly be regarded as a dialect or a language are telling in themselves about the way in which what is now known as Standard English ultimately came to dominate public domains throughout the archipelago. For our purposes, the important point is that Scots and English belonged to the same historic language family, one separate from the Celtic grouping. By the end of the sixteenth century, the various Englishes had become mutually intelligible, albeit with greater or lesser degrees of effort on the part of readers and hearers.⁴⁵

⁴² Elie Kedourie, *Nationalism*, 4th ed. (Oxford, 1994), 56–65; Eric Hobsbawm, *Nations and Nationalism since 1780: Programme, Myth, Reality*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge, 1992), 50–63; Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origins and Spread of Nationalism*, 3rd ed. (London, 2006), chap. 3.

⁴³ Richard Helgerson, *Forms of Nationhood: The Elizabethan Writing of England* (London, 1991), 8. See also John Kerrigan, *Archipelagic English: Literature, History and Politics, 1603–1707* (Oxford, 2008). For a survey of the complexities of the relationship in Lowland Scotland between “Inglis,” “Scottis,” and “natioun,” see John Corbett, *Written in the Language of the Scottish Nation: A History of Literary Translation into Scots* (Clevedon, 1999), esp. chaps. 3–4.

⁴⁴ Peter Burke, *Languages and Communities in Early Modern Europe* (Cambridge, 2004), 5–7, 119.

⁴⁵ Burke does not reflect on this debate. He estimates the number of Europe’s languages at between forty and seventy, which he regards as “a very small number” for a continental population of around eighty million. Burke, *Languages*, 8. For a clear and accessible summary of the debate on Scots and a statement that, despite caveats, it can be regarded as a language, see Caroline Macafee and A. J. Aitken, *A Dictionary of the Older Scottish Tongue*, vol. 12, *A History of Scots to 1700* (Oxford and London, 2002), <http://www.dsl.ac.uk/about-scots/history-of-scots/>.

In Peter Burke's "competition between vernaculars," the Celtic languages count as "losers" because they never migrated successfully into the public domains forged in the early modern period by royal government, law courts, and churches.⁴⁶ More than this, it was the Englishes that became the means by which the Celtic language speakers of the archipelago could communicate with one another: the incompatibility of the Celtic tongues, especially between Welsh and the Gaelics, made it difficult for a Celtic hybrid to emerge as a challenger to the imperial pretensions of the Englishes. A British dynasty determined to foster unity among its peoples through the promotion of cultural values shaped primarily by the dominant language group of the metropolitan core undoubtedly advanced these trends after 1603. Writers had been calling the variant of English spoken in the Lowlands "Scottish," and had been describing Scots Gaelic as "Irish," since at least the fifteenth century, but it was with the creation of the British dynasty that "Inglishe" was upheld as the native language of the people of Scotland. At the same time, the union of the crowns brought under the aegis of one ruler separate Edinburgh- and London-based administrations that had already been exhibiting a parallel tendency to render the Celtic languages synonymous with "incivilitie" and "sedition."⁴⁷

Wholly monoglot Celtic language communities were undoubtedly being squeezed during the seventeenth century, although only Cornish would suffer "linguistic death" (by the later eighteenth century). Here the survival of separate and self-consciously national churches had some potential to cut across the anglicizing agendas of the British imperial dynasty. Although the Protestant Church of Ireland was institutionally hostile to the use of Irish, New Testaments and catechisms had been printed in Irish by the dawn of the seventeenth century, while the near singlehanded effort of William Bedell—provost of Trinity College, Dublin, and, from 1629, bishop of Kilmore—resulted in the appointment of Irish-speaking clergy and an Irish translation of the Old Testament. The Scottish Kirk was English-speaking, but the continuing vitality of Gaelic in Highland areas and, perhaps more importantly, its proximity to a distinct but potentially compatible language community of Irish Catholics, demanded a more pragmatic attitude. During the 1640s and 1690s in particular—decades, significantly, in which Catholic Ireland posed a serious military threat to the Protestant parts of the archipelago—the Kirk promoted the training of Gaelic speakers as parish clergy and the printing in Gaelic of texts such as the psalter and Shorter Catechism. The church in Wales, by contrast, was less committed than its Scottish counterpart to vernacular preaching, but it was more successful at harnessing print to put the Bible and other important texts into the language of the people in the pews. As Charles Withers is surely right to suggest, the national churches were here using the Celtic languages to inculcate into people the moral, religious, and educational principles of a civilizing culture that could be fully accessed only through what the 1760 Scottish General Assembly called "the common language of Great Britain."⁴⁸

⁴⁶ Burke, *Languages*, 82.

⁴⁷ Charles Withers, *Gaelic in Scotland, 1698–1981: The Geographical History of a Language* (Edinburgh, 1984), 2–3, 16, 23–24, 29–31.

⁴⁸ Burke, *Languages*, 71, 82; Withers, *Gaelic in Scotland*, 31–37; Victor Edward Durkacz, *The Decline of the Celtic Languages: A Study of Linguistic and Cultural Conflict in Scotland, Wales and Ireland from the Reformation to the Twentieth Century* (Edinburgh, 1983), chap. 1; Charles Withers, *Gaelic Scotland: The*

The ambivalence of the Protestant churches towards non-English speakers opened up possibilities for their engagement with the ideas and beliefs expressed by the dominant language group.⁴⁹ By the middle decades of the seventeenth century, preaching, Bible-reading, and catechizing in Scots Gaelic and, in mixed parishes, in both Gaelic and English, were relatively extensive in the Highlands. As Jane Dawson has perceptively noted, the “kind of reformation” advanced in the Highlands and Islands was not the same as that of the Lowlands, but its achievement, perhaps, was that different language groups ended up broadly sharing the same doctrines, structures, and practices. All could consider themselves, and each other, as part of an archipelagic, indeed, an international, Protestant family.⁵⁰ Not long after the 1760 General Assembly deemed the Gaelic language to be a “defect,” a New Testament was finally published in Scots Gaelic. Thanks to such initiatives, the Gaelic tongues did not go the way of Galician or Frisian and opt for “retirement into private life.”⁵¹ Indeed, the survival of Scots Gaelic sermon texts dating from the later eighteenth century onward might suggest a language community regaining confidence after a half-century or so during which both the Kirk and the British state had sought to root out the Gaelic Highland culture in which Jacobitism was thought to flourish.⁵²

Two of the contributions to this forum explore how bilingual mediators enabled Celtic language communities to come into contact with the print and manuscript cultures of the metropolitan core. Taken together, they suggest that differing elite attitudes toward the Irish Gaelic and Welsh tongues respectively, when combined with the fact that Ireland was ethnically diverse in a way that Wales was not, resulted in publics that manifested features distinct not only from English-speaking varieties but also from each other.⁵³ Linguistic Anglicization was far more intimately associated in Ireland with the power of a colonizing state than in either Wales or Scotland, although Patricia Palmer, discussing Ireland, has shown that the relationship between marginal and dominant languages ought to be understood as much in terms of “engagement,” “accommodation,” and “hybridity” as in “resistance” and “silence.”⁵⁴ With this in mind, it may be helpful to make a distinction (not intended to be a rigid one) between “particularist” publics, marked out by “uneasy”

Transformation of a Culture Region (London, 1988), 15, quoting Copy report of Drs. Hyndman, Dick etc. appointed by the General Assembly, 1760, to visit the highlands and islands, CH8/212/1, fols. 81–83, National Records of Scotland (hereafter NRS).

⁴⁹ Cf. Durkacz, *Decline*, 23–33, esp. 25. Durkacz argues that educational practices in Highland Scotland alienated language from literacy more aggressively than in Ireland and Wales.

⁵⁰ Jane Dawson, “Calvinism and the *Gaidhealtachd* in Scotland,” in *Calvinism in Europe, 1540–1620*, ed. Andrew Pettegree, Alasdair Duke, and Gillian Lewis (Cambridge, 1994), 231–53, at 233, 239–42.

⁵¹ Burke, *Languages*, 71; Durkacz, *Decline*, 18–23. The problems that Scottish Episcopalian cleric James Kirkwood and renowned scholar Robert Boyle encountered in the 1680s in their attempt to produce a new edition of Bedell’s Irish Bible for use in the Highlands suggest that cultural divisions between Scottish and Irish Gaelic language communities further favored the consolidation of English. The Bible was not published in Scots Gaelic until 1801. See also Withers, *Gaelic in Scotland*, 43–45.

⁵² Anja Gunderloch, “The Gaelic Manuscripts of Glasgow University: A Catalogue” (Glasgow, 2007), 14–15 (citing McFarlan Papers, MS Gen 1717/2/1–8 [sermons in Gaelic dating from the later eighteenth century]), 19–20 (citing MacNicol Papers, MS Gen 60 [ninety sermons in Gaelic, 1766–1801]), 25–27 (McLea Mss, Box Acc. A1-36 [thirty-seven sermons in Gaelic, 1775–1822]), http://www.gla.ac.uk/media/media_119675_en.pdf.

⁵³ Bowen, “Structuring Particularist Publics”; Darcy, “Political Participation.”

⁵⁴ Patricia Palmer, *Language and Conquest in Early Modern Ireland* (Cambridge, 2001), 4, 14.

relationships with the dominant cultures from which their materials were partly derived, and “counterpublics,” in which subordinate groupings validated their own unique traditions through forms of collective expression that were critical, and that contravened the norms, of the dominant culture.⁵⁵

The Gaelic-speaking “culture region” straddling the seaboard of the North Channel can help us to consider further how different publics might have evolved characteristics influenced by forces of interaction and appropriation, on the one hand, and of reaction and opposition, on the other. The bardic tradition clearly drew on cultural resources distinct to Celtic society. Moreover, as speakers and writers of Gaelic, English, and often Latin, bards acted as mediators not only between different language communities but also across a social hierarchy demarcated, in part, by linguistic competencies (a point discussed further below).⁵⁶ The bardic tradition nonetheless poses problems for historians. Many texts are not as old as they seem, and—even when it can be assumed that they are based on stories, poems, and songs dating from a given period—the relationship between the textual version and its oral precursors is usually opaque. Bardic poetry was overwhelmingly directed toward the celebration of the clan chiefs on whose patronage and favor the profession depended. Such productions created and reified a cultural ideal more than they described the realities of Gaelic society. They were composed in a classical form that was not part of everyday speech.⁵⁷

Vernacular Gaelic poetry came into its own during the civil wars of the mid-seventeenth century. Although not divorced from classical Gaelic, vernacular works were probably better able to engage lower social groups, not least women, who could perform vernacular poetry but who were usually excluded from bardic circles. Productions in the vernacular seem to have exhibited a greater concern with “political propaganda and social comment” than their bardic counterparts.⁵⁸ These attributes are particularly evident in the work of Iain Lom (or John MacDonald, circa 1624–circa 1710). Lom’s poetical reflections on the royalist rising of 1644–1646 simultaneously valorized one of its principal figures, Alasdair MacColla (also a MacDonald),

⁵⁵ Warner, *Publics*, 56, 119–24; Joanna Brooks, “The Early American Public Sphere and the Emergence of a Black Print Counterpublic,” *William and Mary Quarterly* 62, no. 1 (January 2005): 67–92, esp. 67–75. The idea that “linguistically oppressed groups” could acquire ways of expressing social and cultural agency by constructing alternative publics is discussed by Gregg Bucken-Knapp, *Elites, Language, and the Politics of Identity: The Norwegian Case in Comparative Perspective* (Albany, 2003), 9. Bucken-Knapp here draws upon the work of Pierre Bourdieu, whose analysis of how dominant languages sustain social hierarchies is beyond the scope of this article. See Pierre Bourdieu, *Language and Symbolic Power*, ed. John P. Thompson, trans. Gino Raymond and Matthew Adamson (Cambridge, 1992).

⁵⁶ Allan I. MacInnes, *The British Confederates: Archibald Campbell, Marquess of Argyll, c. 1607–1661* (Edinburgh, 2011), 66; John Bannerman, “Literacy in the Highlands,” in *The Renaissance and Reformation in Scotland: Essays in Honour of Gordon Donaldson*, ed. Ian B. Cowan and Duncan Shaw (Edinburgh, 1983), 214–35, at 214, 234.

⁵⁷ Wilson McLeod, “Sovereignty, Scottishness and Royal Authority in Caimbeul Poetry of the Sixteenth Century,” *Fresche Fontanis: Studies in the Culture of Medieval and Early Modern Scotland*, ed. Janet Hadley Williams and J. Derrick McClure (Cambridge, 2013), 231–48, at 239.

⁵⁸ Allan I. MacInnes, “Scottish Gaeldom, 1638–1651: The Vernacular Response to the Covenanting Dynamic,” in *New Perspectives on the Politics and Culture of Early Modern Scotland*, ed. John Dwyer, Roger A. Mason, and Alexander Murdoch (Edinburgh, 1982), 76–92, at 76–88. MacInnes also argues that *ceilidhs* offered an alternative space where debate could take place. Unfortunately, it is unclear what evidence exists for this potentially interesting assertion.

and vilified Clan Campbell, but they do more than simply manifest the hatred of a once-powerful clan for its arch-rival. Lom was also advocating a political and ideological alternative to the militantly Protestantizing regime headed by that fascinating cross-cultural figure, Archibald Campbell, first marquis of Argyll.⁵⁹ The 1638 Covenant, which provided the new government with its ideological base, projected a vision of a nascent national state in a language that Lom did not use. Customs and values that Lom regarded as intrinsic to Celtic society were not easy to accommodate within the ecclesiastical, constitutional, and legal frameworks from which the Covenant claimed its authority. Lom's emphasis on martial heroics and loyalty to the chief of chiefs, the house of Stuart, could be seen as traditional motifs. In many respects they were, but these ideals received renewed vigor with the establishment of the Anglo-Scottish alliance against King Charles I at a time when Gaelic society in general, and its elites in particular, was increasingly influenced by the norms of the English-speaking Lowlands. "Campbell blood well congealed" consequently became the symbol of a social order that Lom wanted to see overthrown in favor of the virtues and valor of the Highland way of life.⁶⁰ In this respect, the subversive meaning that the dominant language groups invested in the *use* of another tongue, far from being entirely negative, might have been reinforced by Gaelic self-identification with a set of positive political ideals that were more than merely reactionary.

Lom is rightly regarded as a "public poet" who was "very aware of his responsibilities in forming opinions."⁶¹ Of course, the precise nature of exchanges between the Gaelic and English speech domains, the overwhelming majority of which occurred orally, can be difficult to uncover. We know little about whether people corresponded with one another in Gaelic or what effect vernacular Gaelic political poetry might have had on opinion. Nonetheless, such productions offer possibilities for investigating the emergence of counterpublics, in which a common good particular to the Gaelic culture region was constructed in antagonistic dialogue with the ideologies that English-speaking elites and institutions promoted. Such materials provided the potential for a Jacobite counterpublic to form. The poet Alexander MacDonald, writing at the time of the 1745 rebellion, asked his readers to remember "our mighty MacColla," who had left his "rebel" Campbell foe, the laird of Lawers, "lying lifeless and silent" on the battlefield at Auldearn almost exactly a century earlier.⁶² Jacobitism was an internationalist phenomenon, but its resonance amongst the Gaelic speakers of Scotland (and perhaps of Ireland, too) drew on a well-rooted discourse of cultural conflict that had emerged within a specifically archipelagic context.

⁵⁹ Argyll was a Highland chief, a politician of Scottish and British importance, and a devout Calvinist. Campbell estate business appears to have been recorded in English, probably because leases and contracts drawn up in Gaelic would have been imperiled as legal instruments. Macinnes, *British Confederate*, 51. There is more work to do on the ways in which Celtic language speakers engaged with, or were excluded from, legal and governing processes.

⁶⁰ David Stevenson, *Highland Warrior: Alasdair MacColla and the Civil Wars* (Edinburgh, 1994), 158, quoting *Orain Iain Luim: Songs of John Macdonald, Bard of Keppoch*, ed. Annie M. MacKenzie (Edinburgh, 1973), 20–25, 238–43.

⁶¹ Anja Gunderloch, "MacDhòmhnail, Iain Lom (John MacDonald, c. 1624–post 1707)," in *Celtic Culture: An Historical Encyclopedia*, ed. John T. Koch (Santa Barbara, 2006), 1:1215–17.

⁶² Stevenson, *Highland Warrior*, 264, quoting J. L. Campbell, ed., *Highland Songs of the Forty-Five* (Edinburgh, 1933), 58–61.

We saw with regard to the bardic tradition that the frontiers between different language domains could also map onto socio-political hierarchies. For some lower social groupings, dominant English-speaking publics could be accessed only through the mediation of their superiors, thereby suggesting that the ability to operate in English served to reinforce existing hierarchies within Celtic-speaking communities.⁶³ Indeed, even within English language domains, the ideal of equal participation and engagement was tested by hierarchies that came to be associated with accents and dialects. As Hamish Mathison has astutely noted, socially conscious Scots conferred the mark of civility not simply on readers of the London newspapers but on those who enunciated the words like speakers from the metropolitan core.⁶⁴ In general terms, however, a shared language had considerable potential to cut across hierarchies, allowing people of widely differing statuses to engage, albeit in different ways and to different degrees, with critical assessments of what constituted the public interest.

Linguistic compatibility fueled, and was furthered by, the consolidation of London's position as the archipelago's news and information hub, drawing people from far beyond the metropolis into the European and transatlantic communication networks that flowed through it. Not all of these developments can be fully assessed here. Three contributions to this forum (by Lloyd Bowen, Eamon Darcy, and Karin Bowie and Alasdair Raffé) demonstrate the ways in which different national institutions and traditions countered trends toward metropolitan dominance. Two others (by Tim Harris and Jason Peacey) focus more closely on the ways in which interactions across borders, often at moments of political crisis, created spaces in which shared interests could be discursively constructed into new kinds of public. The purpose of the final section of this essay is to offer a preliminary survey of how public discourses fashioned *within* the archipelago's English-language speech domains could transcend its internal political boundaries. It also aims to suggest ways in which further research can develop our understanding of the relationship among publics, national identity, and state formation in the decades around the Anglo-Scottish Union of 1707.

CROSS-BORDER COMMUNICATION AND ARCHIPELAGIC PUBLICS

One of the most important criticisms that historians made of the Habermasian model was its failure to take into account the role of religious controversy in opening up spaces for public debate during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. "Issues of religious identity and division" forged diverse publics within post-Reformation England, but we can also argue that there was a British dimension to these developments: these issues "came together," long before Elizabeth died, with particular "dynastic and geopolitical" issues that were archipelagic, rather than exclusively English, in origin. The possibility that the Anglo-Scottish marriage alliance of 1503 would result in a Stuart successor to the English throne, principally in the persons of the Catholic Mary, queen of Scots, and her Protestant son, James VI,

⁶³ See also Dawson, "Calvinism," 234–35.

⁶⁴ Hamish Mathison, "Robert Hepburn and the Edinburgh *Tatler*: A Study in an Early British Periodical," in Raymond, ed., *News Networks*, 147–61, at 152.

raised awareness of both the opportunities and the threats presented by the bringing together of the archipelagic nations under one ruler.⁶⁵ Although Scottish Presbyterians volubly expressed fears that their church would be contaminated by the half-reformed one next door, those who believed that attaining religious unity in Britain would be the opening act in a divinely inspired project to reunite Christendom countered such views. The outbreak of the Thirty Years' Wars (1618–1648) placed arguments over the particularities of national churches into the context of the international—indeed, universal—struggle to defend the Protestant faith. Supporters and opponents of ecclesiastical congruency on an English model asserted competing claims of what constituted the public good in terms that, although acutely cognizant of national difference, also sought to transcend it by creating a sense of common interest.⁶⁶

The collapse of the British imperial monarchy a mere three decades into its existence proved to be a transformative moment in the making of archipelagic publics.⁶⁷ Important work has shown how the defense of the Scottish National Covenant against a king with archipelagic resources at his disposal helped to stimulate print production in England, but less is known about the circulation of political information elsewhere in the archipelago.⁶⁸ Fragmentary evidence is suggestive. Material originating on London presses seems to have enjoyed wide circulation in Scotland, and not only in print form.⁶⁹ The Campbells of Glenorchy, residing in the linguistic frontier zone of Perthshire, were receiving scribal copies of English newsletters by the end of 1640. One notable news item included an update on the latest proceedings against the “tua graitt pylotts of that Romishe navigatioune,” namely William Laud, archbishop of Canterbury, and Thomas Wentworth, earl of Strafford. Wentworth's opposition to the Covenant had also been generating debate in Ulster, where the presence of Scottish nonconformist clerics, exiled from their native kingdom during the 1630s, had exposed religious divisions amongst the planter community. As governor of Ireland, Wentworth not only sponsored publications against the Covenant but also sought to force Ulster Scots to take the “Black Oath” abjuring it. Here was material for the emergence of cross-border publics. Appeals to a common good encompassing all the Protestant peoples of the archipelago, expressed as mutual support against the evils of popery and corruption, was

⁶⁵ Lake and Pincus, “Rethinking,” 274; Peter Lake, “The King (the Queen) and the Jesuit: James Stuart's *True Law of Free Monarchies* in Context,” *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 6th ser., 14 (2004), 243–60; Nicholas Tyacke, “Puritan Politicians and King James VI and I, 1587–1604,” in *Politics, Religion and Popularity in Early Stuart Britain: Essays in Honour of Conrad Russell*, ed. Thomas Cogswell, Richard Cust, and Peter Lake (Cambridge, 2002), 21–44.

⁶⁶ Stewart, *Rethinking*, 135–38.

⁶⁷ Lake and Pincus propose a “transitional” phase for England covering the civil wars and Restoration era. Lake and Pincus, “Rethinking,” 279–80. For the “transformative effect” of unprecedented access to print during the 1640s, see Jason Peacey, *Print and Public Politics in the English Revolution* (Cambridge, 2013), chap. 2, at 80.

⁶⁸ Raymond, *Pamphlets and Pamphleteering in Early Modern Britain* (Cambridge, 2003), chap. 5; David Como, “Secret Printing, the Crisis of 1640, and the Origins of Civil War Radicalism,” *Past and Present* 196, no. 1 (August 2007): 37–82. See also Stewart, *Rethinking*, chap. 1.

⁶⁹ W. J. Couper, *The Edinburgh Periodical Press: Being a Bibliographical Account of the Newspapers, Journals and Magazines Issued in Edinburgh from the Earliest Times to 1800*, 2 vols. (Stirling, 1908), 1:70, 163–65; John Spalding, *Memorials of the Troubles in Scotland and In England, A.D. 1624–A.D. 1645*, ed. John Stuart, 2 vols. (Aberdeen, 1850–51), 2:93, 97.

being constructed against an alternative discourse, stressing loyalty to the king and his ecclesiastical establishment as the only sure means of securing peace and stability.⁷⁰

The apogee of cross-border cooperation was the 1643 Solemn League and Covenant, a treaty framed with all three of Charles I's kingdoms in mind. The aims of the Solemn League were institutionally autonomous Presbyterian churches, broadly uniform in doctrine and worship; an archipelagic monarch installed as a constitutional figurehead; and the securing of national parliaments as the repository of the "rights and liberties" of their respective peoples.⁷¹ In order to promote this vision to potential allies, in England as well as further afield, Scottish politicians and clerics sought places in London-based institutions and embedded themselves in the capital's Presbyterian publishing networks. As Jason Peacey shows in this forum, the need to garner support for an archipelagic settlement on the basis of the Solemn League facilitated the creation of an Anglo-Scottish public.⁷² The paradox was that the architects of the Solemn League, who had never intended the treaty to become a topic for uncontrolled debate, nonetheless stimulated the conditions under which this development came about.

The possibility that a cross-border Presbyterian grouping would defeat the king and impose a new order throughout the archipelago generated a reaction in which a distinctively English reading of the meanings of liberty and freedom of conscience could be advocated.⁷³ With the disintegration in England of the structures of authority that promoted discourses of consensus, marginal political and religious opinions could now be expressed in terms of a wider appeal to the common good. Such ideas had very limited traction in Scotland (and even less in Ireland), where a settlement with the king in 1641 had reinvested Scotland's representative, governing, and ecclesiastical institutions with legitimacy. It was the Covenant, and its implications for kingly authority, that set the parameters for public debate in Scotland, even while Scottish soldiers, politicians, and clerics were being exposed, through active participation in the English civil war, to alternative ideas. Scottish politicians and clerics deliberately represented religious independency as an alien English phenomenon, thereby reinforcing the status of the Covenant as the definitive expression of the national interest.

An English republican army's conquest of Ireland and Scotland shattered the archipelagic networks that had formed around the Solemn League, ending the prospect of a federal constitutional framework for the British kingdoms. Although communication across the four nations was probably more extensive during the republican era than current research suggests, it nonetheless seems likely that the replacement of indigenous institutions with government by garrison severely constrained the

⁷⁰ Copy of an English newsletter, Nov. 1640, GD112/1/530, NRS. Sir Robert Gordon of Gordonstoun in Morayshire received copies of the English *Weekly Intelligencer* in 1644. Couper, *Edinburgh Periodical Press*, 2:71. See also Canny, *Making Ireland British*, 294–95, 560–61.

⁷¹ "A solemn league and covenant for reformation and defence of religion, the honour and happiness of the king, and the peace and safety of the three kingdoms of England, Scotland and Ireland," *English Historical Documents, 1603–1660*, vol. 5(B), ed. Barry Coward and Peter Gaunt (Abingdon, 2010), no. 337.

⁷² Peacey, "Print Culture."

⁷³ Rachel Foxley, *The Levellers: Radical Political Thought in the English Revolution* (Manchester, 2014), 92–108.

spaces in which debate could occur. Scotland and Ireland were granted representation at Westminster, but this was an English institution that convened infrequently in a faraway place.⁷⁴ English military supremacy almost certainly entrenched existing negative perceptions of national difference. After the Restoration, all things Scottish and Irish became associated with sedition and threat, further discrediting the alternative constitutional and ecclesiastical models established in Confederate Ireland and Covenanted Scotland during the 1640s.

The reappearance during the Exclusion Crisis of a satirical character called Sir John Presbyter can illustrate this development. In one of Richard Overton's "Martin Mar-priest" tracts, published illicitly in 1645–1646, Sir John was called upon to defend Mr. Persecution who, on being discovered "amongst the papists," had changed his name several times, then "jump[ed] out of *Scotland* into *England*" as a "zealous *Covenanter*." Embodying the putatively anti-monarchical ambitions that had driven the Presbyterian Scots to rebel against their lawful king, Sir John was a reminder of who, exactly, had been responsible for the anarchy and destruction of the civil war era. Charles II's supporters found in Sir John a convenient device with which to attack the king's English parliamentary critics at a time when memories of the civil-war era were deliberately being invoked.⁷⁵ In 1690, balladeers were still warning their English readers that "Jack Presbyter" had designs to raise Scotland's clans and use them to bring down the bishops: a tellingly inaccurate stereotype, since the restoration of the Scottish Presbyterian church in that year had alienated many Episcopalian Highland clans, thereby cementing their support for the Jacobite cause.⁷⁶

The rebirth of Sir John or Jack Presbyter might suggest that, unlike the civil-war period, when the Scottish Covenanters had been an active force in metropolitan politics, the Restoration era saw the Scottish role in the capital's publics reduced to negative stereotyping. Further research might not only uncover the networks through which the Scots and Irish, and perhaps the Welsh, participated in a London-oriented news culture but also further develop existing work by Mark Knights on the way in which claims "to a national voice" came to embrace Scotland, Ireland, and the American colonies.⁷⁷ Even if the republican era can be shown to have had a stifling effect on flows of news, it clearly did not last. Scottish interest in London and Westminster politics might, if anything, have intensified in the second half of the century. During the 1670s, Charles II's polemicists countered those vying to have his Catholic brother, James, excluded from the succession by presenting public opinion as united across all three kingdoms behind the principle of hereditary monarchy.⁷⁸ A market

⁷⁴ Cf. Patrick Little and David L. Smith, *Parliaments and Politics during the Cromwellian Protectorate* (Cambridge, 2007). See also Peacey, *Print*, 183–94.

⁷⁵ Stewart, *Rethinking*, 275; Richard Overton, *The arraignment of Mr. Persecution* ([London], 1645), 1. Whig politicians also deployed negative representations of Scottish and Irish politics. Tim Harris, *London Crowds in the Reign of Charles II: Propaganda and Politics from the Restoration until the Exclusion Crisis* (Cambridge, 1990), 134. For references to "Jack Presbyter" in an English context, see idem, *London Crowds*, 140, 169; and Andy Wood, *Riot, Rebellion and Popular Politics in Early Modern England* (Basingstoke, 2002), 182. See also Tim Harris, *Restoration: Charles II and His Kingdoms, 1660–1685* (London, 2005).

⁷⁶ *Jack Presbyter. To the tune of, Some said the Papist had a plot, &c.* ([London], 1690).

⁷⁷ Knights, *Representation*, 110–11.

⁷⁸ Harris, "Publics and Participation," 735, et passim.

was developing in Edinburgh for reprints of London publications on newsworthy topics: the king's speeches to his English parliament or religious controversies like the trial of the Anglican preacher, Henry Sacheverell.⁷⁹ While some of these publications were direct copies of the London originals, others appeared north of the border in slightly different forms, perhaps to reduce costs. The English printer, Christopher Higgins, who was sent to Scotland in 1650 and who continued to work into the Restoration period, took a small book containing speeches by the king and the earl of Manchester in 1660, and he compressed the work into a broadside for Scottish audiences.⁸⁰

When considering flows of news, historians have tended to focus on print titles that can be tracked relatively easily through bibliographical resources and library catalogues. Historians of England have studied scribal communication, and its development as a commercial operation, but these issues have rarely been considered in an archipelagic context.⁸¹ The Kerr family, headed by the earl of Lothian, received scribal newsletters in the mid-1660s from a London correspondent based in Covent Garden. Although only four appear to have survived, they are suggestive of the kind of relatively mundane political news with which the writer assumed his readers desired to be acquainted. Events at Westminster and Whitehall featured strongly. On 16 May 1665, “the dutches of Yorck went by watter to vissit his highness”; there was “nothing new agitat in the parliment” on 3 November 1666.⁸² These letters also looked beyond the capital to cover international events of relevance to the Protestant peoples of the British archipelago, such as the “Immediat cessation” that, it was thought, would herald the securing of a peace treaty with the Dutch in 1667.⁸³

The supply of information to Scottish recipients from London and continental Europe pulled them into the international news networks flowing through the capital. At the same time, Scottish readers were being exposed to the ideas, concerns, and practices of a metropolitan political culture that most would never experience

⁷⁹ “Printed papers, mainly public notices, including Proclamations and Acts of Parliament, pamphlets etc.,” GD331/46, NRS; *His Majesties gracious speech to the honorable house of Commons in the Banqueting-house at White-hall, March 1662* (London, 1662); *The Arch-bishop of York’s Speech to the House of Lords, relating to Dr Sacheverell’s Impeachment. Edinburgh, Re-printed conform to the Copy Printed at London, for William Garnet near Westminster Hall [1710]*; F. F. Madan, *A Critical Bibliography of Dr: Henry Sacheverell*, ed. W. A. Speck (Lawrence, Kansas, 1978), nos. 161, 162, 164. Another publication about the trial was printed at Nottingham, for sale in York and Hull, for example, *Remarks on the several paragraphs of the Bishop of Salisbury’s speech ...* ([April 1710], Madan, *Critical Bibliography*, no. 327. I am grateful to an anonymous referee for this reference. See also Mark Knights, ed., *Faction Displayed: Reconsidering the Impeachment of Dr: Henry Sacheverell* (Oxford, 2012). For Edinburgh reprints of London publications in 1689–1690, at least one of which also appeared in the Dutch Provinces, see Couper, *Edinburgh Periodical Press*, 1:194–201.

⁸⁰ *The Earl of Manchester’s Speech to his Majesty, In the name of the Peers, at his arrival at Whitehall, the twenty-ninth of May, 1660. With his Majesties gracious answer thereunto* (Edinburgh, 1660) [Wing (2nd ed.) / M399]. See the London version at Wing / M397. The patent to print in Scotland appears not to have been profitable. Cyprian Blagden, *The Stationers’ Company: A History, 1403–1959* (London, 1960), 142–43.

⁸¹ Harold Love, *Scribal Publication in Seventeenth-Century England* (Oxford, 1993); Alex W. Barber, “It Is Not Easy What to Say of Our Condition, Much Less to Write It’: The Continued Importance of Scribal News in the Early 18th Century,” *Parliamentary History* 32, no. 2 (June 2013), 293–316; Noah Millstone, *Manuscript Circulation and the Invention of Politics in Early Stuart England* (Cambridge, 2016).

⁸² Papers of William, 3rd Earl of Lothian, secretary to Charles II: Newsletters, 1665–[1667], GD40/12/80/1, 2, NRS.

⁸³ GD40/12/80/3, NRS.

firsthand. Newsletters in the possession of a Borders lairdly family, the Scotts of Harden, suggest that City politics was of particular interest to Scottish audiences in the early 1680s, after Charles II had dissolved the third Exclusion parliament at Oxford and embarked on a campaign to remove prominent Whig politicians from positions of influence. When compared to the succinct, bullet-point style of the Kerr letters, the correspondence sent to the Scotts perhaps suggests a writer aware of the need, in an increasingly competitive market, to craft engaging narratives for his clients. Writing on 11 November 1682, the Scott correspondent revealed that the government had sent Henry Bennett, Lord Arlington, to remonstrate with London's common council about "the late tumults that hath happined in the City." A dramatic sense of immediacy for the reader resulted from putting Arlington's words into the present tense and the first person singular: "My L[or]d mayor I am commanded to tell you that his Ma[jes]tie is hugely displeas'd."⁸⁴

These reports constructed London politics as a matter of concern for audiences throughout the archipelago and reinforced the capital's status as the political center of the British dominions. They may also have acted as a means by which city politics could be projected as a "public," engaging people from far beyond the capital itself in a debate about what was in the common interest. Newsletter accounts of the reception given to King William on his return from Ireland in September 1690, after the defeat of King James VII and II at the Boyne earlier in the year, offered a means by which geographically dispersed audiences could be instructed in political acts of loyalty towards the Williamite regime. It was reported that a fifteen-foot scaffold had been erected in Covent Garden, within which "was placed the frame of a coach and within it ... the effigies of a man hanged." The London populace, invigorated by the free flow of wine, called him "the French King whome after they had used with all manner of contempt." The effigy was set alight and, later, "thousands of printed papers with the reasons for his execution were found about the streetes." The letter contained further news of the ongoing campaign in Ireland and included a listing of the men killed and wounded from a regiment that, being commanded by one Lieutenant-General Douglas, may have been of particular interest to Scottish readers.⁸⁵

The Kerrs and the Scotts were landowning families who expected to have a role in public politics and who possessed the means to pay someone to keep them abreast of developments. Scribal material was probably too expensive for most people to purchase themselves,⁸⁶ but its contents may have become known more widely, either by copying and lending or through discussion. It can be difficult for historians to demonstrate precisely how and in what ways these networks affected public debate. The Scotts, for example, seem to have been part of a wider "textual community" that included an Edinburgh advocate, Mr. David Fearn.⁸⁷ Fearn's connections

⁸⁴ Newsletters sent, from London, to Sir William Scott of Harden, 1674–1707, GD157/2681, no. 10, NRS.

⁸⁵ Newsletters from London addressed to Mr David Fearn, 2 September 1690–9 May 1691, RH15/85/2, no. 4, NRS.

⁸⁶ Peacey, *Print*, 31–35.

⁸⁷ Knights, *Representation*, 236. Similar handwriting and layout in some of the newsletters sent to both Fearn and the Scotts of Harden may indicate one writer with multiple clients. RH15/85/2 and GD157/2681, NRS.

to both scribal and print circulation point toward the most obvious way in which identities molded within the relatively contained networks of scribal correspondence could influence wider society. In 1709, Fearn was briefly granted a license to publish the *Scots Postman* on Tuesdays, Thursdays, and Saturdays.⁸⁸ There is more work to do on how an evolving relationship between scribal and print networks helped to construct, enhance, and refine the cultural identities of participants exposed to, and able to communicate to others, the political news from the capital.⁸⁹

The content of these newsletters at least suggests the possibility that the key elements out of which an Anglo-British national identity would later be forged were being put in place several decades before 1707: the portrayal of France as the natural and inevitable enemy of the British people; the positioning of the monarchy as the fulcrum of the British constitution and the guardian of its freedoms; and a shared popular culture focused less on the Protestant religion, which continued to generate dispute within and between the kingdoms, than on anti-papery.⁹⁰ Most historians agree that the people who espoused a British cultural identity during the seventeenth century were primarily courtiers and *literati*⁹¹ but that the forging of a British *national* identity, shared by the population at large, followed in the wake of a coercive and periodically violent process in which the English state came to dominate the entire archipelago.⁹² Bringing publics and the networks underpinning them into the debate about state formation suggests an alternative perspective. It is one that confirms Braddick's emphasis on coalescence, brokerage, and integration, but also one that does so by looking beyond the governing elite to address the complexities and difficulties involved in assessing such processes among wider, more clearly differentiated, social groupings. News about political institutions, diplomacy, war, and political performances invoked discussion both about the sort of polity in which the peoples of the archipelago were living and about the degree to which its governance should be a matter of legitimate public interest. There are new possibilities here for investigating whether a public voice was under construction in the later seventeenth century—a voice that facilitated the identification of Scotland's middling and professional social groups with metropolitan political norms while simultaneously allowing them to assess critically whether specific policies and political developments fitted with their conception of what was in the Scottish national interest.

⁸⁸ RH15/85/2, NRS. The *Scots Postman* appears to have run under Fearn's direction only from August to December 1709. Fearn was probably the assignee of James Donaldson, publisher of the *Edinburgh Gazette*, with whom the *Postman* shared a title until, it seems, Donaldson and Fearn fell out. Couper, *Edinburgh Periodical Press*, 1:229–33. See also Bob Harris, *Politics and the Rise of the Press: Britain and France, 1620–1800* (London, 1996), 8–12.

⁸⁹ For discussion of the role of newspapers in constructing identities, see Raymond, "Newspaper," 130.

⁹⁰ Colley, *Britons*. See also Colin Kidd, *British Identities before Nationalism: Ethnicity and Nationhood in the Atlantic World, 1600–1800* (Cambridge, 1999).

⁹¹ Best known to scholars is the circle around the English playwright Ben Jonson; the Scottish poet Sir William Drummond of Hawthornden; and the Scottish secretary Sir William Alexander of Menstrie, later earl of Stirling.

⁹² Jonathan Scott, *England's Troubles: Seventeenth-Century English Political Instability in European Context* (Cambridge, 2000), 14–21; John Morrill, "Thinking about the New British History," in *British Political Thought in History, Literature and Theory, 1500–1800*, ed. David Armitage (Cambridge, 2006), 23–46.

As Lake and Pincus have so usefully reminded us, publics were never either homogenous or all-encompassing. Coexisting with a range of alternatives, British publics distinguished themselves by a set of legitimating discourses through which a shared political space became accessible to the diverse peoples of the archipelago. The terms of inclusion were subject, episodically, to intense dispute across the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. This process of debate helped to define the kind of power exercised through the governing and representative structures of the nascent British state, and by such means publics ultimately became “instrumental” within it. Increasingly insistent claims by the metropolitan center to exercise power over diverse archipelagic peoples demanded ongoing efforts at legitimation and reaffirmation—and still do to this day.⁹³

Participants were not always in agreement about who and what a British public ought to represent at any given moment in time, although its discourses—expressed in increasingly standardized English—privileged dominant social groups while excluding others, most notably Catholics and Gaels. At the same time, and partly because of these exclusions, political norms were challenged, satirized, and condemned in ways that destabilized British publics. Two forces appear to have been at work in this respect. British publics emerged, developed, and mutated in relation to alternative national publics that were themselves fragmented by “particularist” and “counter” publics given expression, in some cases, through languages other than English. Publics of all kinds had to contend with the existence of networks that cut through, bypassed, ignored, or resisted them, and it is to these complexities that scholars now need to turn their attention. Scholars need to explore further the meaning and consequences of the interactions between the varieties of archipelagic public and other forms of association. This collection aims to begin that work.

⁹³ Knights, *Representation*, 111.