

Early Journalism in Sixteenth- and Seventeenth-Century England: The Interface between Literature and ‘Popular Culture’

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The interface between literature and popular culture is one of the ‘North-West passages’ that currently fascinate me. The other one is the interface between political ideas as formulated by political leaders and thinkers on the one hand, and on the other the reception and re-formulation of these ideas at the ‘receiving end’, *viz.* by the illiterate or semi-literate masses of Early Modern England. During the Early Modern period, they were periodically thrown into the political arena by the factious behaviour of their self-styled ‘betters’ who usually kept preaching of degree and obedience when addressing the so-called rabble. These two ‘North-West passages’ of intellectual history and mentality history are epistemological siblings. Whoever attempts to define the terms of the debate encounters the same methodological maelstrom, and the eye of the maelstrom is always the definition of ‘the people’. For indeed, how can we know what they thought, since they left nothing in print or script behind them? how can we know with certainty that the cheaper sort of printed material was intended for those classically called ‘the people’? and who should be included under that name ‘the people’? and how cheap were those printed goods? and how cheap to ‘the people’, whoever they were? And ultimately: is there such a thing as ‘the people’? are there not subjective connotations in the uses of this term?¹ The danger would then be the depiction an ideal pastoral universe, something one could call with nostalgia in one’s voice and a tear in one’s eye ‘the world we have lost’.² But I fail to see why we should be content with the descriptions of the people as being the mob, the rabble, the many-headed monster, or the multitude.

The ‘popular culture’ I will try to study here is on print. Therefore if some of the mass of the English people –or population– had access to it, it must have been through public readings, in the home, in the tavern, in the village square, in the street, but like much of the reading that was taught

¹ A very harsh criticism of the idea of popular culture can be found in Duval (1998: 35-39 ff.).

² This nostalgic aspect is typical of Laslett (1983).

and performed in those days, it was part of an oral culture. The printed word was, in most of its social uses, a spoken word for those who received its content. Some would define it as chapbook literature,³ as a commodity for the pedlar's pack, and they would be right: pedlars did indeed carry along in their bags broadside ballads, murder pamphlets, scaffold speeches, witch trials, monstrous births in broadside-ballad form with appropriately shocking woodcuts to bring water to the mouths of the Mopsas and Trinculos of so-called merry old England, and to open their purses. If they could not read, someone would read the text to them. The ballad vendor would sing it to them. The memory skills that participants in oral cultures have always developed and still do develop were a most extraordinary substitute for literacy. Of the works I will examine here, none is longer than eighteen pages. All but one were printed in London. The exception, on which I will more particularly focus, was printed in Oxford. It will provide me with an ironical corrective to my initial enthusiasm about the 'popular literature' topos which I have just introduced. This paper is very much indebted to the writings of Margaret Spufford, Peter Lake, Kevin Sharp, Tessa Watt, David Cressy, Ronald Hutton, Keith Thomas, Roger Chartier, Daniel Roche, Robert Muchembled, and François Laroque.⁴

Before the outburst of domestic political news-print of the 1640s, even before the corantos of foreign news of the 1620s and 1630s, was the gutter press; a mock-solemn history of journalism in Early Modern England even ought to begin with "in the beginning was the gutter". In this category of early smut, I include the murder pamphlets and sensational ballads, but also short texts that reported events that had struck the collective imagination: floods, witchcrafts, miraculous cures, monstrous births, bloody murders, but also deathbed- or scaffold-conversions, and providential punishments of the type generally known as 'judgement stories'. Most of the time, the only lawful political elements in this genre were the anti-rebellion propaganda much favoured by Elizabeth, and the royal encomium. Social criticism may not be totally absent from these pamphlets, as we shall see, but it was usually dressed in pious colours that helped the pill down.

I will try to show that behind the ostentatious display of accurate-sounding details (names, places, dates, etc.), the reporter's craft is being invented, for better or for worse, most of the time for worse. I will successively consider the spatial and rhetorical strategies of broadside 'ballads' reporting monstrous births. Then, I will look at the narrative techniques at work in a murder story with a miraculous solution, and I will end with the Oxford-printed account of the murder of a Puritan preacher by a son of the Lincolnshire gentry. My purpose in this paper: showing how cautious and humble we must be in front of these documents which so much look like the journalism we know, which use some of the narrative techniques we enjoy analysing, but which were written for people whose reading competence we cannot assess with any certainty.

The birth of misshapen human beings or animals was a popular subject (*i.e.* 'popular' in the sense of a highly vendible theme) in the Elizabethan age. The refinement of the court culture of the time was never meant to be disseminated 'downwards', as it were, into English society. The two early Elizabethan examples I will now consider are entitled: *The True Discription of two Monstrous Chyldren Borne at Herne in Kent* (London, Rogers, 1565) [STC 6774] and *The Forme and Shape of a Monstrous Child, borne at Maydstone in Kent the xxiv. of October. 1568* (London, Awdeley, 1568) [STC 17194] (see Figures 1 and 2). The siamese twins of the 1565 'ballad' are presented as follows:

³ See Duval (1998), and for a different approach my own analysis in Borot (1998). My analysis of the monstrous births in the present paper bears on the same passages, but with another approach.

⁴ Here is a basic bibliography: Barry (1995); Burke (1978 : 3rd part 205-86); Cressy (1977); Esdaile (1913); Hutton (1996); Lake (1994); Muchembled (1991); Razovsky (1996); Spufford (1979 ; 1981); Thomas (1973 ; 1986); and Watt (1991).

The true discription of two monstrous Chylidzen
 Borne at Herne in Kent. The xxvii. date of Auguste In the yere our of
 1564. In the yere of our Lord 1564. They were booth women Chylidzen and were
 Chylidzen, and lived halfe a yere. The one departed afoze
 the other almost an houre.

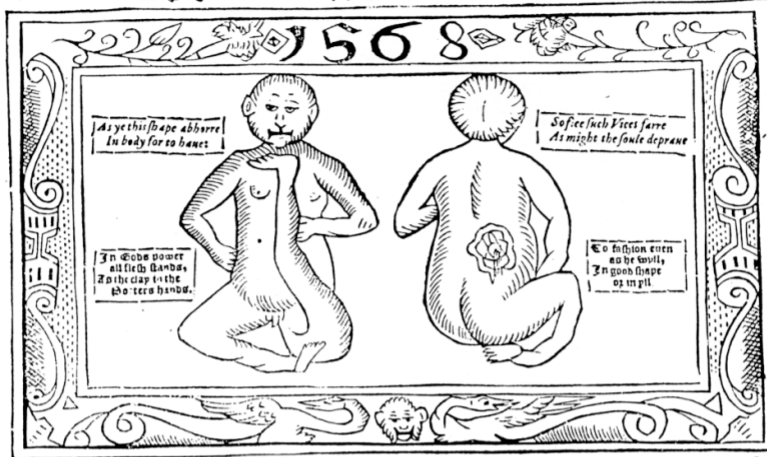


The monstrous and unnaturall shapen
 of these Chylidzen a dyuers yere brought
 forth in our dayes (good reader) is not
 to be seene to gale and wonder of, as
 things happening either by chance, or
 els by naturall reason. as both the old, and our Philo-
 sophers also holde now a dayes: and without any
 farther herde to be had thereto, or els as our common
 custome is, by a by to iudge god onely offended wth
 the parentes of the same, for some notorious tyce of
 offence repnyng alone in them: But they are lessons
 a scholarynges for vs all (as the word monster sheweth)
 who daily offende as greivously as they do, wherby
 god almightye of hys greate mercy and longe suffer-
 raunce, admonyeth vs by them to amendmente of
 our lyues, no lesse tyched, yea many times, more then
 the parentes of suche misshapen be. That it is
 true they had wel perceyved, rightly iudged, and consid-
 red the answer of our Saviour Chylidzen unto hys
 Discyples, asking hym whether weare greater sin-
 ners, the blinde hym selfe, either els hys parentes,
 that he was so borne: To whom our Saviour Chylidzen
 answered, that neither he, neyther they were faultie
 therein, but that he was therfore borne blinde, to
 shew the glory of god myghte be declared on hym,
 and by hym. The same also appereth in another an-
 swere made by our Saviour Chylidzen to them, wherby he
 tolde hym of the Galleyans, whom Pontius pylate
 put to death for theryr rebellion agaynst Augustus
 theryr Synagogue, wherem he declareth (as also
 by those xxiii. persons on whom the Towre by Byle-
 fell) that there were as greate offenders remaininge
 alive, as any of them were. Wherfore he oftentimes ad-
 monyeth them to amendmente of hys in generall, or
 els by theryr examplis threatared them with as greivous
 destruction, as fell vpon any of them. These
 examplis moued me (good reader) in consideracion
 of these dayes of our forgetfulness of duty, wherem we
 set so light the greate bounty and goodnes of god,
 calling vs by these and such lyke examplis to repen-
 taunce and correction of manners, and not styll to
 flatter our selues wth lyke to iudge others and toinke
 at our owne faultes, to cause these thynges thus to
 be poststructed. And sure to hym that considereth
 as he ought to do, the great vney of hartie loue and
 charitie (among many other wantes that the world
 is now fallen in,) and had betwene and behelde the
 two babes, the one as if weere imbrasyng the other,
 and leuynge mouth to mouth, as if weere
 say one another: it myght seeme that we were by the
 other booth vnyng vs, for our faulte by dissemblinge
 and Judas condeyngs a countenaunce, in seynt-
 ly wordes, conceyng Caynes thoughts and cog-
 tations, or els by theryr semblante and example, re-
 boite vs to sincere amptie and true frendshipp, wth
 of all counterfeiting, or els bothe. Forther let any
 man thynke thys an obseruacion ouer careles, for
 as much as Chylidzen selfe hath by chylidzen taught
 vs that we: if we become lyke Chylidzen, we shall
 not come in the kyngdome of heauen. God make vs
 all chylidzen in thys wyse, and perfect and well re-
 uen- to note and obserue to what ende he sendeth vs
 such sightes as these, that here by put in remembrance
 the rather of our duties both to hym and our neigh-
 bours, we may attayne to hys curclassyng by Christe
 our Lord. To whom with the holy Ghost for thys
 and all other hys woordes, be almighty, powre glo-
 ry and doynynge, now and euer. Amen.

Printed at London
 in Fleetstreet by Thomas Col-
 well: for Owen Rogers dwelling
 at St. Dunstons Church doore.

FIGURE 1. The True Discription of two Monstrous Chylidzen Borne at Herne in Kent. London, Rogers, 1565 (STC 6774).

The forme and shape of a Monstrous Child/ bozne
 at Maydstone in Kent, the .xxiiij. of October. 1568.



At Maydstone in Kent there was one Garget Mere, Daughter to Richard Mere of the sayd Towne of Maydstone, who being unmarried, played the naughty pacts, and was gotten with childe, being deliuered of the same childe the .xxiiij. daye of October last past, in the yere of our Lord. 1568. at .vij. of the clocke in the after noone of the same day being Sunday. which child being a man child, had first the mouth sitted on the right side like a Zibardes mouth, terrible to beholde, the left eare layen by the head, fast closed together, having as it were a knot on the forehead, the left leg reaching up to the head, and the right leg reaching to the left leg, the lower part of the body being into the buttocks of the sayd left leg. In the middle of the backe there was a square hole of flesh in fashion like a hole, in the middle of the breast there was a hole, which together like an H. The child had a pale face, and lyeed small bones, and then appeared the face, which may be a creature of flesh, in all such manner of deformities, as to that we maye knowe. And if in their any sense of what they maye knowe them to repentance and amendment of life, which God the Christian like graunte they shall be able to do. And the child was first, as a little child, John Squier called, John Squier of London, but was taken away by some other person, and was never seen again.

A warning to England.

<p>A monstrous child in this England whose shape maye seeme to be As if it were a man and woman, And like a man and woman.</p>	<p>A monstrous child, and paynter to be, Half man and half woman; That has a mouth like a man, And like a woman.</p>	<p>A monstrous child in this England, And like a man and woman, That has a mouth like a man, And like a woman.</p>
<p>A monstrous child in this England, And like a man and woman, That has a mouth like a man, And like a woman.</p>	<p>A monstrous child in this England, And like a man and woman, That has a mouth like a man, And like a woman.</p>	<p>A monstrous child in this England, And like a man and woman, That has a mouth like a man, And like a woman.</p>
<p>A monstrous child in this England, And like a man and woman, That has a mouth like a man, And like a woman.</p>	<p>A monstrous child in this England, And like a man and woman, That has a mouth like a man, And like a woman.</p>	<p>A monstrous child in this England, And like a man and woman, That has a mouth like a man, And like a woman.</p>
<p>A monstrous child in this England, And like a man and woman, That has a mouth like a man, And like a woman.</p>	<p>A monstrous child in this England, And like a man and woman, That has a mouth like a man, And like a woman.</p>	<p>A monstrous child in this England, And like a man and woman, That has a mouth like a man, And like a woman.</p>

FIGURE 2. The Forme and Shape of a Monstruous Childe, borne at Maydstone in Kent the .xxiiij. of October. 1568. London, Awdeley, 1568 (STC 17194).

They are lessons and schoolings for us all (as the word monster showeth) who daily offend as grievously as they do, whereby God Almighty, of his great mercy and long sufferance, admonisheth us by them to amendment of our lives, no less wicked, nay many times, more than the parents of such misformed be. That this is true they shall well perceive, that rightly weigh and consider the answer of our Saviour Christ unto his disciples asking him whether were greater sinners the blind himself or else his parents, that he was so born: To whom our Saviour Christ answered [marginal note: John IX], that neither he, neither they were faulty therein, but that he was therefore born blind, to the end, the glory of God might be declared on him and by him.

They are not brought into the world only as warnings for the people whose lives are as lewd as the parents' lives, but to convey a religious and social message to all mankind. Helaine Razovsky's analysis is quite relevant on this particular subject (Razovsky 1996: §§13-19, 22-26). Yet, the shape of the children and their representation on this broadside work as an allegory:

And sure to him that considereth as he ought to do, the great decay of hearty love and charity (among many other wants that the world is now fallen in) and hath viewed and beheld the two babes, the one as it were embracing the other, and leaning mouth to mouth, kissing (as you would say, one another), it might seem that God by them either upbraided us for our false dissembling, and Judas' conditions and countenances, in friendly words, covering Cain's thoughts and cogitations, or else by their semblance and example, exhort us to sincere amity and true friendship, void of all counterfeiting, or else both. Neither let any man think this an observation over-curious, for as much as Christ himself hath by children taught us that unless we become like children, we shall not come in the kingdom of heaven [marginal note: Mark X]. God make us all children in this wise, and perfect and well-learned men to note and observe to what end he sendeth us such sights as these, that hereby (put in remembrance the rather of our duties both to him and our neighbours) we may attain to life everlasting by Christ our Lord.

The allegory of kissing and embracing is knit together with typology, one of the hermeneutic methods which were promoted by the movement towards the inculturation of Protestantism which was central to the ideological politics of Elizabeth's reign. The Hern children are antitypes of the children mentioned by Christ in Mark 10. Their posture is an allegory of the brotherly charity that ought to obtain amongst Christians. Apart from what the full title tells us, we have no details about the circumstances of their births. In a later broadside, we have more typical factual information.

The Maidstone child of 1568 is presented through a much more elaborate artefact, much closer to the rest of the monstrous-birth genre. We are acquainted with the name of the sinful mother and of her father, but not with that of her no less sinful partner in illegitimate parenthood ("one Marget Mere, daughter to Richard Mere of the said town of Maidstone, who being unmarried played the naughty pack, and was gotten with child"). We know everything of the date (Sunday, October 24 1568), time (seven of the clock in the afternoon) and place (Maidstone, Kent). The description of the child is more anatomical at first than in the previous example:

Which child being a man child, had first the mouth slitted on the right side like a libard's mouth, terrible to behold, the left arm lying upon the breast, fast thereto joined, having as it were stumps on the hands, the left leg growing upward toward the head, and the right leg bending toward the left leg, the foot thereof growing in to the buttock of the said left leg. In the midst of the back there was a broad lump of flesh in

fashion like a rose, in the midst whereof was a hole, which voided like an issue. This said child was born alive, and lived 24 hours, and then departed this life.

The moralisation is disappointing, in that it descends from the providentialist hermeneutics of daily life to the banal self-righteous condemnation of lewdness: “Which may be a terror as well to all such workers of iniquity, as to those ungodly livers, who (if in them any fear of God be) may move them to repentance and amendment of life. Which God for Christ’s sake grant both to them and us. Amen”. The juridical or –for us moderns– journalistic evidence is also presented: “Witnesses hereof were these, William Plomer, John Squire, glazier, John Sadler, goldsmith, besides divers other credible persons both men and women”. But who ever checked the matter with these worthy artisans of Maidstone? Accuracy is begged for: circumstances, actors, witnesses are mentioned. Yet what is the purpose of the broadside, if it is not to sell a horrible picture to be bought by gulls to display it in their cottages? The verses that surround the picture and the “ballat” that follows the clinical description suggest a solution which concords with what we have seen before. At the top, on the left and right of the pictures, we can read:

As ye this shape abhor
In body for to have [/
So flee such vices far
As might the soul deprave.

At the bottom, left and right, in black-letter type:

In God’s power all flesh stands,
As the clay to the potter’s hands, [/
To fashion even as he will,
In good shape or in ill.

God’s will and providence are exalted in the paratext to the picture, but the picture is allegorised in the verse that can be seen as a paratext to the prose description, unless the prose description is a paratext to the final verse. Here is a selection from this poor poem:

This monstrous shape to thee England
Plain shows thy monstrous vice,
If thou each part wilt understand,
And take thereby advice.

For weighing first the gasping mouth,
It doth full well declare
What ravine and oppression both
Is used with greedy care.

(...)

The hands which have no fingers right
But stumps fit for no use,
Doth well set forth the idle plight,
Which we in these days choose.
For rich and poor, for age and youth,

Each one would labour fly:
Few seeks to do the deeds of truth,
To help others thereby.

The leg so climbing to the head,
What meaneth it but this:
That some do seek not to be led,
But for to lead amiss.

And as this makes it more monstrous,
For foot to climb to head,
So those subjects be most vicious,
That refuse to be led. (...)

The problem of the status of text and paratext *vis-à-vis* the picture is not a futile question: which part of this near-emblem is the 'body' of it? the picture? the title, like an emblem's motto? the prose narrative? the verse illustration? is the prose text a comment on the verses, or is the poem a comment on the prose? does the clinical description explain the ultimate theological message, or is it the reverse? Commercially speaking, if we believe Trinculo, Mopsa or Autolycus, the picture is all that matters. If we try to integrate the publisher's policy within the scope of the Elizabethan inculturation of Protestantism, the poem is the key to the whole. If we feign to believe, as Arundell Esdaile did in his 1913 paper on ballad journalism, that this was essentially meant to inform the population, though not about essential matters, the prose text is the most essential feature, with its statements of time and place and with the designation of the actors and witnesses. These notions will be useful to analyse the examples we are now going to consider.

The story of the horrible inn-keeper Mistress Annis Dell was blessed with two printed narratives in 1606.⁵ To summarise the tale, a yeoman and his wife were murdered by thieves; the thieves kidnapped their two children, shared their booty with the innkeeper Annis Dell and her son, then murdered the little boy and cut off the little girl's tongue. The girl became a beggar, and she chanced one day to return to the place of her ordeal, where she revealed the guilt of the inn-keeper first by gestures, then by word of mouth after she miraculously recovered speech. The two narratives (afterwards Dell 1 and Dell 2) are substantially different both in content and style, as if they had been told by two different reporters writing for different audiences; the names of the witnesses are different, the age of the children does not match; yet, the circumstances of the girl's recovery of speech (on hearing a cock crowing, to prompt a comment on Peter's discovery of his denial, Dell 1: 8/ Dell 2: sig. Cr^o) are the same. The first narrative is the shorter one; it begins with the disappearance of two children. We do not hear about the murder of their parents until the very end of the story, and even then this part of the story is not narrated. It provides fewer details about the horrors of the murder and mutilation of the children. The characterisation of the criminals and of the honest witnesses is also weaker (we only know them by their initials or occupation). The final morality (parents should not mourn for the death of their children, because they should believe that they are in heaven before them) is irrelevant to the tale (Dell 1: 9-10).

One of the most revealing differences is that the boy's name, Anthony James, is not in the title of the first story, where he is only "a boy". The second tale must have been written after a closer inquiry, since its chronology and the identity of the characters are given with greater accuracy and more details are provided. The style is loftier, and Latin proverbs at regular intervals display the author's learning and reveal his desire to flatter the reader, who ought to be pleased to be implicitly associated

⁵ Anon. (1606a) abbreviated afterwards as Dell 1, and Anon. (1606b), afterwards Dell 2.

with an educated implied audience. The second version opens with an apologue drawn from Herodotus: the story of Sesostris's mercy to the kings he had subdued, for the sake of the mutability of man's fortune (Dell 2: A2r^o/v^o), then the five-fold narrative is a perfect example of the dominant modes of early journalism's ideological and commercial strategies: 1) the yeoman's industry rewarded (Dell 2: A2v^o-A3r^o); 2) the murder of the yeoman and his wife followed by the murder of their son and the mutilation of the daughter (A3v^o-B2r^o); 3) the peaceful life of the criminals while the girl was starting the life of a beggar and an enquiry is launched (B2v^o-B3v^o); 4) the girl's return to Hatfield, the providential miracle that restored speech to her (B4v^o-Cr^o); 5) the discovery and punishment of the malefactors (Cv^o-C2v^o).

The reader is first pleased by the *exemplum* of virtue rewarded, then his thirst for gore is whetted by the story of the robbery and murders; his pity is then appealed to by the story of the dumb little girl who became a beggar. He is then struck by the marvel worked by the providence of God who restored speech to the tongueless vagrant girl. His appetite for justice can then be satisfied by the story of the trial and punishment of the criminals and by the return of the virtue-rewarded topos. The mute can speak and solve the murder for the judges, whereas the reader knew the whole story from the first. The reader's belief in the powers of the Almighty has been strengthened by the narrative of the miracle (a catechetical alibi for pulp?). The justice of man when it answers the marvels of God's providence to punish the evil-doers provides a saving grace at the end, since the reader is left with a multiple morality centering on the social and religious dimensions: evil-doers will be punished since God will never let them at peace, even in this world. As the printer-publisher Firebrand must have been a commercially-minded man, he added the story of the witch who was burned on the same day as the murderous inn-keeper. There is something more juicy and gory coming to round up the tale.

In perfect conformity with Peter Lake's interpretation of the whole genre of the murder pamphlet (Lake 1994), the Dell story is interspersed with moralistic statements and pious assertions of faith in divine Providence. There are weaknesses in this narrative: the narrator assumes an omniscient stance from the start whereas he could have begun with the mystery of the disappearance of the two children who had been brought to Gammer Dell's inn by the thieves. A narrative starting with the miracle, then with the confusion of the criminals, would have enabled a shrewder story-teller to embark on an analepsis back to the manner of the boy's slaughter and of the girl's mutilation; this would have created a much more efficient tale by our own journalistic and novelistic standards of expectation.

The narrator grants himself omniscient superiority; this may be a naive way of identifying with God's point of view, but Renaissance people believed that God had some devious and ironical ways of dealing with his creatures. Job and Noah were frequent *exempla* in the official *Homilies*. If we compare the Dell pamphlets with more academically legitimate narrative techniques, it is clear that Spenser knew how to manage suspense when he introduced his virtuous knights into the Bower of Bliss and other dens of perdition; Milton would also be an expert at progressive unveiling in narrative strategies, but can we be so sure that the strategy I have just outlined would have been the most appealing to the less sophisticated reader of the early seventeenth century? Perhaps the printer and publisher of this pamphlet thought the opposite. Yet, examples of suspense, of deceived or suspended expectation could also be found in the ballads of the very straightforward, popular, productive and highly vendible William Elderton in Elizabeth's middle years.

From the point of view of journalism, the second author mentions the characters' names, the places, the dates, the names of the Justices and witnesses, their occupations (a labourer and a tailor). The criteria of accuracy are apparently met. However, they were also present in the monstrous-birth broadsides previously considered. Yet, one huge difference between the two versions does not appear in the title-pages of the two stories: in the titles, Annis Dell and her son killed the boy, and this reflects the first version of the story, but in the second narrative, also supposedly based on the girl's testimony, we read that the boy was murdered by the thieves. In that second tale, Mistress Dell 'only'

cut out the girl's tongue. Yet, to anyone concerned with the 'vendibility' of his wares, a female infanticide must have seemed a very efficient selling point and there was no reason to change the title of the second edition for reasons of mere accuracy.

Have we been any further in our discovery of the marketing target of these pamphlets? The addition of the witchcraft story in the second edition clearly reveals the commercial intentions of the publisher, yet the presence of a scholarly reference to Herodotus reporting the story of Sesostris in the prologue, and the Latin proverbs suggest a desire to aim at a more 'up-market' readership the second time. This would seem to confirm Keith Thomas's assumption that belief in witchcraft began to decline when the middle classes started to find it disreputable to believe in it, by the end of the seventeenth century; in 1606 this was not the case yet (Thomas 1973: 765-66 and ch. 22: 767-800). The providentialist comments were the sort of argument that the already Protestant parts of the population would find congenial to their beliefs, and that they would find desirable to spread among the rest of the people, as Peter Lake and Helaine Razovsky explain.

From a different point of view, it is also possible to say that this is already journalism, not the best journalism, but definitely the kind of journalism that still attracts a huge number of readers in the last years of the twentieth century. One partial element of methodological conclusion at this stage could be that pulp journalism appeals to universal tendencies of the human psyche; this implies that the study of this phenomenon almost as legitimately belongs to the field of anthropology as to the sociology of the media. This attraction for gore is nothing new or post-modern. It is a frighteningly archaic streak in human nature. It is legitimate to wonder how the readers of 1603 reacted to the tale about the murder of a Puritan minister on which I am going to conclude.

On August 30 1602, young Francis Cartwright, the son of a Lord of the Manor of the Lincolnshire market town of Market Raisen, savagely butchered to death the vicar William Storre, BD, MA (Oxon.), a man in his early forties, the father of four children. Young Cartwright was sent home without bail or jail by the JPs. Storre was the son of a husbandman, which made him a representative of the Elizabethan clerical meritocracy, who had been sent to Corpus Christi, Oxford, with an exhibition of the Lincoln Common Council, became a fellow of his college before returning as a minister to his native county (McConica *et al.* 1986 : 684). This at least is the story as this pamphlet tells it (Anon. 1603). Cartwright's confession, published in 1621, confirms some of the following hypotheses, and shows how the misdeeds of his youth were punished by Providence (Cartwright 1621). But how did this terrible story reach us, and can we still find out who it was written for?

The Storre case is mentioned in Lake (1994) among other murder pamphlets. Lake's purpose was to show the way murder-pamphlet authors tried to use the readers' least noble instincts to inspire them with properly Protestant providentialism. He pays much attention to the tone of the narratives, to the theological language used to qualify the causal chains underlying or explaining the events reported, but he does not pay sufficient attention to the style of the pamphlets, and to the pamphlets as books, as I will explain later. By looking at the rhetoric of such pieces, you can try to assess the audience which the author may have had in mind, or at least his preconceptions about his audience. By looking at their narrative strategies, you may find the psychological motivations and commercial strategies at work in the pamphlet. I will suggest that the paratext may also be important in the assessment of items of such poor literary value.

The pamphlet that tells us of the murder of William Storre is an octavo volume of two quires, signatures A and B, which indicates a small, and certainly a cheap volume. It was printed in Oxford by Joseph Barnes in 1603, probably, as I shall show, for the anniversary of the preacher's death, and as the murderer's confession allows us to conjecture, on the occasion of the malefactor's return. The title page, which bears no mention of authorship, but displays the crest of the University, the open book with the initials AC:OX, reads: *The Manner of the Cruell Outragious Murther of William Storre Mast[er] of Arts, Minister, and Preacher at Market Raisin in the County of Lincoln: Committed by*

Francis Cartwright, one of his Parishioners, the 30. day of August Anno 1602. The name of the murderer is on the title page alongside the name of the victim. The verb “committed” is isolated in the centre of the title area of the page, and the end of the title with the murderer’s name is in italics. It reads like a denunciation, and this is exactly what the pamphlet is about. The first part of the pamphlet is the narrative proper (four pages), then comes an address “to the reader” (A4r^o), introducing the testimonies of 24 parishioners, 24 ministers, 12 knights and esquires, 26 Oxford divines, over four more pages; with the introduction and the list of testimonials, the memorial and apology of the deceased take more space (five pages) than the narrative itself. This is the only instance of a constructed paratext that I have found among the twelve murder pamphlets I have consulted for this paper.

The narrative begins like the best journalism of the murder pamphlets I have read: with a date and a place.

About Lammas last viz. A.D. 1602, there happened some controversie betwene the Lords and the rest of the inhabitants of Market Raisin in the county of Lincolne, concerning their commons and liberty in the Towne-Fields, and the matter being moved by one of them in the Church immediatly after evening praier, on a Sabbath day, divers hot intemperate speaches passed among them. (A2r^o)

Lammas, the feast of August 1, sometimes celebrated on the nearest Sunday, indicates the time according to the festive and liturgical calendars. For Jacobean readers, more accustomed than we are to retrospective computation, since the date of the murder stated on the title page was August 30, this incipit defines the time-scope of the narrative as just about a month. The term Sabbath may be perceived as an echo of the Puritan idiom, and East Anglia happened to be a hotbed of religious dissent. But the term Sabbath was also used by members of the established Church, so this is not a decisive criterion. The author could be a clergyman, since he dates from Lammas, but as it was a traditional landmark of summer festivities and pastoral activities, this is not a decisive criterion either, and it is well known that ‘godly’ ministers used to oppose the pre-Reformation rituals that accompanied the pastoral festivals that the established Church had not abolished. Yet, we get a piece of sociological information: the controversy was probably about enclosures, a frequent point of conflict between Lords and tenants at the time, more especially in the Fens. We also learn that the tension is extreme, so extreme that, as the “minister”, as he is called, says, they lose respect of the time and place: Sunday and the parish-church.

To appease the tensions in the community, the minister advises the creation of a representation of the multitude by “two or three of the fittest, and most substantiall men to answer, and undertake for all the rest”, to avoid the domination of the men “of the least government”. The wise minister declines the offer to speak his mind before the representation starts parleying, as he knows that his enemy, young Francis Cartwright, is there. “The young gentleman is portrayed thus: A young man of an unbridled humor: the only sonne, and heire to one of the same Lords of the Towne, betwixt whom, and himself there was growne no small unkindnesse”(A2r^o).

The minister agrees to voice his opinion, but in very balanced and measured terms, to paraphrase the narration. But when the Divider is loose in the world, looking for mischief, he will miss no opportunity:

[The minister] delivered his opinion, using therein such discretion, and reasons to confirme the same, that they could not directly except against him. Notwithstanding seeing him incline more to the right of the free-holders, and the rest of the commons,

than to favour their intended purpose, they seemed to dislike his speeches and to cavill at the same.

Young Cartwright standing by, not able any longer to containe himselfe, took occasion hereupon to break forth abruptly into these words. *The priest deserveth a good fee, he speaketh so like a Lawyer.* (A2r^o)

Storre is presented as a model of quietness and respect, and also of cautiousness, since he knows his opponent's "hot stomacke, and hastiness", whereas the latter, in spite of his own father's presence, uses, as we are modestly told: "manie moe such base and odious tearmes, that for modestie sake, I forebeare to rehearse them" (A2 v^o).

If we resume our hermeneutics, the term "priest", could be interpreted as a polemical term. Because it is used by the Book of Common Prayer, it is not the term most in use in religious writings at the time to refer to the clergy by those who regarded themselves as the "Godly party". Was it really used by Francis Cartwright, or was it designed by the narrator who otherwise seems so keen to use the term "minister"? "Priest" can also be used by the gentleman in a satirical intention to look down on the clergyman, who would be no better than pre-Reformation priests. To use a well-known phrase, Storre must have been a "meddlesome priest", as was Thomas Beckett to Henry II. The parallel between priest and lawyer should not be read as a mark of 'radicalism' on the part of the young gentleman, but rather as an expression of contempt for those men who make a living because of what they have studied at University or at the Inns of Court, as opposed to a gentleman's 'natural' position of eminence in society. The theological leanings of Master Storre cannot be deduced from this obviously disparaging use of the term "priest" by Cartwright at this stage in the development of the story, or when he uses it again (or when he is again made to use it by a manipulating narrator) in the following encounters.

The next encounter took place on the following day, in the Cartwrights' house. The father was meeting the minister with some his neighbours about the Sunday's business. Young Cartwright interrupts the conversation and insults the minister, who answers back; his enemy grabs his dagger and is only stopped by his father. The narrator appetises the reader: "had not his father hindred it, he had there presently with his dagger effected some part of that mischiefe, which afterward he putt in practice" (A2v^o). The same day, Cartwright junior voices open threats on the market place: "That Storre was a scurvy, lowsie, paltrie priest: that whosoever said he was his friend or spake in his cause, was a rogue, and a rascall: that he would (but for the law) cut his throat, tear out his hart, and hang his quarters on the maypole" (A2v^o).

The term "priest" is again present, the adjectives are rather explicit, the insults aimed at his friends are no less clear, and the hyperbolic threat refers to this favourite bugbear of Puritan preaching: the maypole. Unless the young man was insane, unless the narrator was making the speech up, the conjunction of "priest" and "maypole" cannot but sound ironical and polemical. Had Storre preached against May games? Cartwright's later confession designates Storre as a meddling Puritan who meant to reform his parishioners' manners, with no regard for degree (Cartwright 1621: A3v^o-A4v^o). The young gentleman repeated his public threats and insults for several days, which led the minister to ask the protection of the Justices of the Peace:

[Storre] went to some Justices neere adjoining, acquainted them with these proceedings, and desired the good behaviour against the said Cartwright. But they doubting whether they might grant the same in this case, or not, offered him for his present safegard the peace, and the other at the next quarter sessions, if occasion so required. (A2v^o)

Justices of the Peace were empowered to enforce bail on someone who publicly threatened another; there were two degrees, surety of the peace and surety of the good behaviour, or good abearing, each based on the degree of danger feared for the complainant. Any JP could grant the surety of the peace, but good abearing could require a more qualified *quorum*, two at least. They would set a fine, produce a legal writ under their seal, enjoining the offender to keep the peace, not to threaten the complainant, until a certain date. For the good abearing, it could be broken by the offender merely by the company he kept, or by the use or mere carrying of weapons. Yet, as JPs belonged to the local gentry, securing the good behaviour against one of their set would have proved ill-advised, especially if the man was known to be violent.⁶ This time, they did not see cause to give the man surety of the good abearing until the next quarter sessions, which would have been about Michaelmas day, on September 29, which proved to be one month too late.⁷ If our Jacobean readers knew their calendar, they would guess this from the date of the murder on the title page.

Our narrator reports that Storre's next sermon, on Isaiah 1: 9, was taken down by Cartwright, who seemed to take every word for himself. A week later, seeing the minister in town one morning, he bought a cutlass from a cutler's shop and slaughtered his unarmed foe. The anatomical accuracy of the description does not abate the reader's discomfort: this is also pulp literature, for all the polite tone and virtuous intention:

[Cartwright] being armed both with force and fury, would abide no parly, but presently at the first blow cutt his lefte legg almost of, and then making at his head, the other casting up his armes to defend it (for other weapon had he none) he gave him two mortal wounds on the forepart thereof through the brain-pan, cut off three of his fingers, and gave him other two grievous wounds on the outside of either arme, betweene the elbow, and the hand, the one to the midst of the arme, and the other more then half in sunder, deviding the maine bone above two ynces one part from another. Thus massacred he fell backward into a puddle of water, and striving to recover himselfe, the splinter bone of his lege halfe cut through afore, knapt in two, and his heele doubled back to the calfe of his legge. [Cartwright] gave him another gash on the outside of the right thigh to the very bone. And again on the left knee, his legge being bended, as he lay, he cut him the fashion, and compasse of an horse shoe battring in pieces the whirlbone, and the nether part of the thigh bone, that it was most grievous ever to behold. (A3r^o)

The discovery of the scene is the occasion for much pathos, not without contempt for the inefficiency and inadequacy of the people's actions on seeing their minister "thus wallowed in the mire". "He was a full week a-dying, edifying the beholders by his divine meditations" (A3v^o). The offender escaped thus: "Either for lack of their due information of the truth, or by the corrupt, and favourable affection of the magistrate, or both, there was a very slender baile taken, and the malefactor by this sleight sent away" (A4r^o). The notations are sociological rather than theological, but the report of the extenuations formulated by the murderer's friends allows us to focus more closely on the Puritan *motif* of the pamphlet. The murderer, according to some, acted out of anger, excited by the minister's hard words. For others, labelled "enemies to the ministry of the Gospel", it was a just reward for Storre and for "most of his calling for their over-bold checking, and (as they tearme it) domineering over their betters, because indeede, they reprove the generall corruptions that abound in every corner" (A4r^o). The second part of the latter sentence is of course the commentary of the narrator advocating the ministers' vocation.

⁶ Though the law commanded them to do so (Lambarde 1581 : 1. 16).

⁷ The other quarter days were Lady Day (March 25), Midsummer Day (June 24) and Christmas.

This slander leads him to vindicate the dead man through the testimony of four juries, whereas there was no jury to try the murderer. Among the members of the last “jury”, two prominent Puritan figures of Oxford, and particularly of Corpus Christi College: the President, John Rainolds, and the Provost, Henry Airey. The others include Professors of Divinity, of Hebrew or Greek, a future archbishop of Canterbury (Abbot, Laud’s predecessor) and many contemporaries of Storre in the Divinity school of Oxford. The letter signed by the academic worthies is dated June 29, 1603, which would make this most unusual murder pamphlet an anniversary piece, allowing it two months to be published by the end of August. Cartwright’s *Confession* will soon help us to clear up this matter.

The key to the ideological subtext to this pamphlet is not in the text, but in the paratext. The partisans of the dead man’s reputation provide a clue to the story. Yet, one should beware of paratexts: in the 1518 Basel edition of More’s *Utopia*, the letters by More’s friends, supposed to authenticate the discussions with the fictitious character Hythlodæus are component parts of the fiction. The utopian alphabet is a fiction, the letter about the man who would be the first bishop of Utopia is a joke about a man who is likely to have existed. Therefore, our newsmaker’s paratext may also be a part of a campaign to rehabilitate a staunch militant, or to wreak the prospects of a villainous and prosperous young felon.

Why do I tend to believe the paratext of this pamphlet whereas I have but distrust for the authority of the witnesses mentioned by the monstrous-birth ballads? Is it because the language is academic, and I happen to be an academic? Is it because the pamphlet is about a man who takes sides with the poor, a cause with which it is easy to sympathise? What if the murderer really was insane at the time of his deed? Do I tend to sympathise with the prejudiced tone of the narration because this is such an obvious case of miscarriage of justice? I began by asking for whom this pamphlet was written. Probably not for the same intended audience as the monster ballads. The broadsides were designed to attract voyeurism, whereas this text has no pictures. Yet, it has a narrative strategy, building up the narrative to the climax of the anatomically described slaughter of the vicar.

We have the same hesitations as in front of the second monster broadside of 1568, when our question was: which is the text, which is the paratext? Here, the question is rather for the historian or interpreter than for the literary critic: we have several factual clues in the narrative that can direct our investigation towards a social crisis. We feel that the language is very close to that of the godly party in the Church. Is this pamphlet a sociological revenge, or a theological one? What is known about William Storre, the husbandman’s son (an information which is not in the text), can incline the reader towards the sociological interpretation. What the language of the text, and the paratext, tell us, is that the hidden issue is very likely to be a religious controversy between the landed gentry and the godly party in Lincolnshire.

Then, the status of the pulp narrative of Storre’s murder may be different from that of the murder of the little boy in the Dell case: Storre would then be a martyr, a witness, whose agony would therefore have to be likened to that of the heroes of the true faith portrayed in Foxe’s *Acts and Monuments*. Yet, the narrative does not make him the victim of a religious controversy, but of a sociological tension in the local community, or of a maniac in a very acute phase of insanity.

Some of the keys to the unanswered questions raised about this pamphlet are provided by Cartwright himself in 1621. Cartwright’s confession is an in-quarto pamphlet in two parts: “Francis Cartwrights Publique Repentance for his Bloudie Sinne” (A2r^o-C3r^o) and “Francis Cartwrights Resolution and Religion” (C4r^o-E3r^o). Almost twenty years after his first crime, Cartwright publishes a typical confession-narrative, assuming the stance of a repenting reprobate. In theological terms, from a Calvinist point of view, in spite of his aspirations, his own tale of his early years suggests that he is predestined to eternal death, but from a Catholic or Arminian point-of-view, he can still achieve a proper conversion. Much of the religious language of the *persona* is Calvinist, but many aspects of his psychological and spiritual analysis betray his hope in a possibility to achieve justification through

works of penance, even regretting that Protestant Churches did not offer the possibility to practice deeds of repentance in monasteries. The possibility to pray to the saints, the belief in Purgatory and monastic penance were items of the Roman faith which he could have had many “carnall reasons” to adopt: “For such as I whose conscience is burthened, are held fit to be new molded and tutored in their Monasteries, and set upon strange and hideous Exploits, for redemption of themselves, and good of that Church” (Dv^o). Yet, shortly later, he asserts the strength of his Protestant faith, not without some contradiction with his temptation to believe in Purgatory:

I professe, I doe not encline to beleeeve the Romish Doctrines of the Masse, Transubstantiation, Merit, Iustification by Workes, and such like. I acknowledge that all the glorie of our salvation is due to God, who worketh all in all. And to our Lord Jesus Christ we owe all the thanks, who by his owne sufferings, and with his most precious blood hath satisfied the Law [...]. (Dv^o)

He then proceeds to profess his attachment to the Church of England, and to express his love for the Scriptures, his only solace, which the Church of Rome denies its lay members (D2r^o). At the end of the “Resolution”, when he recapitulates the main tenets of his religion, he writes:

I am delivered of the danger and infection of the Romish Religion. For if I were of the Religion, I would attempt any sinfull course, as Theft or Piracie to releeeve my wants in hope of Pardon, Penance or Purgatorie, (for no punishment should terrife me, let it bee whatsoever it could be even Purgatorie it selfe, so it might have end I would willingly endure it, if so be it might procure me pardon, and under that condition grant mee libertie to sinne). (E2r^o)

Obviously, Cartwright confuses Catholicism with some form of antinomianism, and he has never heard of the distinction drawn by the most exacting confessors between mere attrition and sincere contrition (Delumeau 1991). Fear generates the former, but only the latter can obtain for the penitent efficient absolution. As he fears eternal punishment, he would prefer the temporary purifying fires of Purgatory; this means that his sins would not be a burden if he indulged in them with the certainty of the efficiency of mortification.

Cartwright is a gentleman, and wherever he goes, he is treated as such by his peers, and his gentlemanly soul, though it is the soul of a murderer, receives the tender care of “painful” ministers, even when he is in jail after a second murder (*e.g.* Bv^o, B4v^o). Even when his ship is caught by the Turkish navy in front of Gibraltar, he meets with a favourable fate, and sails back to England. He heaps upon himself all the testimonies of God’s grace as he builds the case for his own indictment in front of the Almighty’s tribunal. This awareness of his obduracy in sin and this ability to perceive – albeit always too late– the mercies bestowed by God on him are a frequent feature of Puritan writings. The presence of judgement stories concerning the English sailors who turned Moslem connects Cartwright’s confession with a tradition which was popular amongst the “godly” readership of the time (Dr^o). The same could be said of the numerous biblical quotations and parallels that are intertwined in the narrative to insert the events of the narrator’s life within a general typology in which he is the antitype of murderers like Cain and of penitents like Saul / Paul. Yet, unlike the latter, Cartwright is a backslider.

Cartwright’s version of the murder is apologetical though he means to “accuse, to arraign, and to condemne” himself (C4r^o); he denies he ever intended to kill the minister, and swears that he only meant to injure him:

Being thus enraged against him, and resolving to execute some notable revenge against him; I did not (as the Searcher of all hearts witnesseth with me) intend more to him then some slight wounding, as the manner I tooke him in may in some sort witnesse: the place being publike and in the sight of many, my selfe unreadie, and unprovided for my own safetie by flight, which I should have ordered my course for, had my intent beene murtherous. (C4r^o)

To do worse than this denial of his blinding rage, Cartwright even implicitly claims that the parson had some responsibility in the state his murderer was in:

I might perhaps by way of extenuation say, that had he used greater words and milder reprehensions to me, he might by Gods blessing have plucked me out of the snare of Satan, and so had prevented this shortning his owne dayes by my hand. I might say that my distemper was enraged by his unseasonable corrosives, which might perhaps have beene allayed and cured by gentle Balmes. But I disavow all abating any parts of my crime. (C3v^o-C4r^o)

A real rhetorician would have known that preterition is a mark of hypocrisy. Cartwright seems to be aware of the portrait of his person that the murder pamphlet of 1603 had painted. He is replying all the objections which the reader could draw from that terrifying portrait. He has beforehand admitted that his nature had always inclined towards sinfulness, but this preterition is here to deny his penitential purpose.

He does not admit that he was brought to court and left free from indictment; on the contrary, he tells that he fled to Berwick, where he was arrested for his crime (A4v^o); he escaped and sailed to France and the Netherlands, where he was entertained by Sir Francis Vere, and comforted by pious ministers. His father procured a royal pardon which enabled him to return home in 1603 (Bv^o), but his pardon was contested by the minister's widow... in the year when the Oxford pamphlet accusing Cartwright was published. The pardon was considered valid by all the judges who were seized of the case by the victim's friends, (B2r^o) which may explain why the Oxford pamphlet's narrative is so harsh on the magistrates. Even after his second crime, the judges fail to find him guilty, and he escapes unscathed. (B3r^o-B4v^o)

To conclude and recapitulate this long exposition about the Storre case, the function of the Oxford murder pamphlet appears more clearly: the murderer was unjustly pardoned, he was back in England, and time had come to obtain justice against him. The witnesses who are named in the paratext to the pamphlet are so many voices that testify against what the Storre family regard as a miscarriage of justice. Cartwright's confession is therefore a very late and weak *pro domo* plea, and never so close to efficient journalism as the murder story. Both texts try to appeal to the godly sort, but the most efficient is the accusing pamphlet: it is cold and straightforward, except in the description of the murder, it provides criteria of accuracy that can be tested; it enlists the respectable part of the county community and the hierarchy of the Oxford Divinity school in support of its case. These arguments could only appeal to a certain set of readers. The confession, on the other hand, displays a very weak command of rhetoric, theology and narration. It tries to play the Godly's game by speaking their own language and imitating one of their favourite literary genres: the conversion narrative. Yet, the self-interest that motivates the writing is not moving... for the readers who have read the story of the murder. For such reasons, I do not think that the Oxford murder pamphlet can be treated exactly like the Dell stories: there is enough internal and external evidence to identify the implied readership, and despite the gory passage about the slaughter of the minister, it is not meant to exalt the divine

Providence. The sponsors of this pamphlet intend to indict the justice of men for its incapacity to punish sacrilegious murderers. Cartwright tries to prove that all his trials were the sign that the hand of God was punishing him for what the justice of men had failed to sentence him, but the recurrent self-apology is there to blur the impression of spiritual regeneration that the self-interested author wants to convey.

By way of conclusion, and to return to the questions raised in the introduction, I will admit that some critics may be right when they raise doubts about the nature of the intended audience or readership of the material we have analysed. On the contrary, they are wrong when they doubt that there existed a popular audience that was more especially targeted by the publishers: the visual appeal of the broadsides certainly attracted a very heterogeneous audience, the plain and straightforward narrations of the Dell case was also for a rather broad audience, though the two texts were certainly expected to be bought by people who would not need any picture to buy the item. The evolution of tone and structure between the two stories seems to point in that direction. The Storre pamphlet is the most surprising piece: the intended audience is defined by the tone of the narrative and by the paratext. The Oxford University crest on the title page conveys a strange impression in this particular genre: the memorialist and apologist is constantly present behind the edifying avenger. The clues provided by the murderer almost two decades later confirm our initial scepticism.

My methodological conclusion is that the kinds of texts I have been dealing with, are not only an object for the historicist literary scholar only, nor for the historian only, nor for the divine only. No correct understanding of such texts –or rather: no relevant definition of the problems at stake– is likely to come from anyone with a single-method approach. I hope that we continental Europeans will be able to bring a wide array of competence and the necessary cultural distance to the understanding of such a range of cultural productions from the English Renaissance.

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