

Media and Public (Dis)Order: A virtual workshop for early modernists at Dresden and Warwick

Veranstalter: Maria Tauber, University of Warwick; Jan Siegemund / Benjamin Seebröcker, Technische Universität Dresden

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This workshop for early modernists at Dresden and Warwick took place virtually across Blackboard Collaborate and Zoom. Twenty researchers from Dresden, Warwick, and Rostock attended proceedings. BEAT KÜMIN (Warwick) and GERD SCHWERHOFF (Dresden) welcomed participants and reflected on the twenty-year history of their research exchanges. The workshop served to strengthen the bonds between doctoral students in different academic cultures and to facilitate insightful conversations on current conceptual and historiographical debates. Speakers from Warwick, Dresden, and Rostock explored the themes of media and public order and disorder across four panels, on the topics of religion and state, print media, material culture, and community politics.

The first panel began with JOE CHICK (Warwick), who explored ceremony as a form of visual media to enforce authority and maintain social order in the town of Reading. Spanning the period before and after the dissolution of the monasteries, Chick displayed how the use of ceremony remained an important tool for governing bodies. He showed how the Merchant Guild adapted existing ceremonies to demonstrate their fitness to rule and display their authority. The examination of ceremony in Reading, a small town, adds to our understanding of the use of ceremony particularly in the context of royal reception, studies of which have thus far been confined to large cities.

FRANCESCA FARNELL (Warwick) then examined the response of the Herician state to the activities of Elizabeth Barton and her associates, through a variety of forms of me-

dia, including oral, printed, and visual forms. Farnell centred the St Paul's Cross sermon preached against Barton as a performative element of the government's multimedia smear campaign, drawing on concepts of ritual and theatre. She emphasized the importance of accounting for the different sensory elements in order to gain a fuller understanding of the sermon experience.

WIEBKE VOIGT (Dresden) shared her work on early reformation pamphlets in the Lutheran context of the 'Wittenberg Disturbances'. Voigt explored contemporary concerns that print media could provoke public disorder, and brought into question the concept of 'uproar'. She examined how Luther used Karlstadt as a scapegoat for unrest, and demonstrated how reformation pamphlets helped to shape contemporary perceptions of public order and disorder.

The second panel saw JAN SIEGEMUND (Dresden) examine libel as a form of conflict management in 16th century Saxony. Using the city of Zwickau and the specific conduct of one Johann Offneyer, Siegemund explored the intermedia threat potential of libel as a weapon of the citizenry against private and public opponents. He demonstrated the interplay between oral and written communication in the dissemination of libel and the increasingly harsh state response to this form of communication in sixteenth-century Saxony. Siegemund emphasized concerns relating to public order in the contemporary discussion around libel, demonstrating through his example how it was perceived both as a means of restoring and disrupting the natural order.

HANNAH STRAW (Warwick) shared her findings on the use of popular print and the figure of general Monck as elements in the reestablishment of monarchical order following the Stuart restoration. Straw demonstrated how a divisive and potentially problematic figure like Monck was retroactively refashioned through mass printed media as the loyal enforcer of the right order, emphasizing how this was made necessary by the fundamental instability of the Restoration settlement.

SERIN QUINN (Warwick) explored depictions of aphrodisiacs in print media as a critique of high society in sixteenth- and

seventeenth-century England. Quinn examined how aphrodisiacs were used as a shorthand for luxury and debauchery in contemporary popular print, demonstrating how this critique of the consumption of the upper classes served as a wider attack on the perceived gluttony and misuse of wealth by the rich, which moralizing authors feared would lead to destitution and disruption of the public order.

The second day began with the third panel. LAURA TACK (Rostock) treated the theme of public disorder through the 1625 storm flood in Rostock. For Tack, natural disasters such as storm floods were perceived as breakdowns of normal life. Tack explored how two forms of media, a printed sermon and an official order from the city council, reprimanded the population for their impiety and immoral behaviour. She showed that both sources offered pragmatic solutions to prevent future disaster, the sermon emphasising religiosity and morality, while the official order focused on more practical, worldly matters.

DANIEL GETTINGS (Warwick) discussed his work on representations of water in English printed media produced in response to the 1641 Irish rebellion. He noted that while water is usually absent from sources where we might expect to find it, the element features heavily in documents related to this acrimonious conflict, not least due to the mass drownings which took place. He explored the duality of water, as both a life giver and life taker, and drew links with water's elemental and divine properties.

The fourth and final panel began with MAX ROSE (Dresden) presenting his findings on libelling in the legal system of early seventeenth-century England. Remarking that the bulk of studies on this topic tended to focus exclusively on London and print, Rose stated his aims of leading a holistic inquiry into the culture of libelling outside the English capital, reconstructing the conflict causes and studying the subsequent reactions of the authorities. Of special interest to Rose is the court of the Star Chamber, which he argues was the main avenue through which citizens could protect themselves from libel.

MARIA TAUBER (Warwick) then shared her work on the effect of changing media

systems on the election campaigns of MPs in England during the eighteenth and early nineteenth century. Using the Middlesex election 1747 as a case study, Tauber explored how new media changed the campaign strategies and self-perception of MPs, arguing that newspapers brought public opinion closer to the election process. Alongside, she noted the ongoing significance of traditional election media such as the ceremonial procession on polling day, which had its function shaped by the usage of these emerging platforms of discourse.

The workshop concluded with a discussion started off by the organisers of the event. A variety of key topics emerged, including the ongoing debates on the emergence of the public sphere and differences between German and English historiographies on media and public order. Participants noted how divergences in source survival, the lack of an urban and intellectual centre like London in Germany and the different ways in which higher education institutions tend to organize their research (in particular the existence / absence of *Sonderforschungsbereiche* and/or doctoral colleges), changed the outcome of the research in the two respective countries, making for an informative comparison of methods and results. The bias of research towards printed media was also a central topic during this discussion. Participants discussed possible reasons like availability and highlighted the need to take this fact into consideration during their own research. Other aspects touched upon were the tendencies of German works to study libel within a more legal framework and of linking print media directly to uproar as a result of the connection between the Reformation and the spread of the printing press. Schwerhoff thus called for more comparative studies between England and Germany, with occasions like this workshop offering congenial platforms.

The presentations complemented each other well and contributed to a further understanding of the topic of media and public (dis)order in early modern Germany and England. Starting with Chick's late medieval study and ending with Tauber's work which reached into the nineteenth century, the various papers covered the thematic scope

of the topic through the length of the early modern period. At the end, contributors from both universities stated their wish to meet in person in order to discuss these topics and continue their collaborative work on media and public order. Due to the difficulties surrounding travel at this present moment no exact time frame could be set, with the plan remaining to meet at some point in the near future.

Conference overview:

Beat Kümin (Warwick) / Gerd Schwerhoff (Dresden): Introduction

Panel 1

Chair: Maria Tauber (Warwick)

Joe Chick (Warwick): Ceremony, Guilds, and Government: Image and Authority in English Monastic Towns

Francesca Farnell (Warwick): Elizabeth Barton and the Media Machinations of the Tudor State

Wiebke Voigt (Dresden): A Threat to Divine Order? The Debate on Uproar in Early Reformation Pamphlets and Their Disruptive Potential

Panel 2

Chair: Marjolein Schepers (Brussel)

Jan Siegemund (Dresden): Libelling and the Dynamics of Conflict between Citizens and Magistracy. The Case of Zwickau 1599

Hannah Straw (Warwick): Divine Right Destabilised: Popular Print, General George Monck, and the Re-establishment of Monarchical Order

Serin Quinn (Warwick): Consumption as a Point of Contention: Aphrodisiacs in Sixteenth- and Seventeenth-Century Print

Panel 3

Chair: Franziska Neumann (Rostock)

Laura Tack (Rostock): Storm Flood Sermons and Other Media as a Means to Enforce Order After Natural Disasters in the South Baltic

Daniel Gettings (Warwick): Water: Tool of Violent Repression and Symbol of Defiance in Early Modern English Print

Panel 4

Chair: Benjamin Seebröker (Dresden)

Max Rose (Dresden): Repression and the Uses of Justice. Libelling in the Legal System of Early Seventeenth Century England

Maria Tauber (Warwick): Contested Seats, Contested Messages – Challenging and Negotiating Order Through Printed Election Addresses in 1747 Middlesex

Concluding discussion

Beat Kümin (Warwick) / Gerd Schwerhoff (Dresden) / Maria Tauber (Warwick) / Jan Siegemund (Dresden) / Benjamin Seebröker (Dresden): Final remarks

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