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### Permalink

<https://escholarship.org/uc/item/4jq9p6vz>

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### Publication Date

2005-09-13

## **Communicating Liberty: the Newspapers of the British Empire as a Matrix for the American Revolution**

William B. Warner

"I beg your lordship's permission to observe, and I do it with great concern, that this spirit of opposition to taxation and its consequences is so violent and so universal throughout America that I am apprehensive it will not be soon or easily appeased. The general voice speaks discontent... determined to stop all exports to and imports from Great Britain and even to silence the courts of law...foreseeing but regardless of the ruin that must attend themselves in that case, content to change a comfortable, for a parsimonious life,..." Lieutenant-Governor of South Carolina, Wm. Bull to Earl of Dartmouth, July 31, 1774. [*Documents of the American Revolution, 1770-1783*, Ed. K. G. Davies. (Dublin: Irish University Press, 1975) VIII: 1774, 154.]

Momentous historical events often issue from a nexus of violence and communication. While American independence from Britain ultimately depended upon the spilling of blood on the battlefields of Bunker Hill, Saratoga and Yorktown, the successful challenge to the legitimacy of British rule in America was the culmination of an earlier communications war waged by American Whigs between the Stamp Act agitation of 1764-5 and the Coercive Acts of 1774. In response to the first of the Coercive acts--the Boston Port Bill--Boston Whigs secured a tidal wave of political and material support from throughout the colonies of British America. By the end of 1774, the American Secretary at Whitehall, Lord Dartmouth, was receiving reports from colonial Governors of North America, like the passage quoted above from the Lieutenant-Governor of South Carolina, William Bull. These official private letters to Whitehall confirmed a catastrophic unraveling of British authority in America: colonial legislatures

were meeting without the permission, or the presiding presence, of the governor; royal courts were prevented from convening; and local militia were openly preparing for war. Remarkably similar acts of resistance to British authority, justified by very similar words, were happening thousands of miles apart at virtually the same time. What may have looked to the ministry like a well concerted conspiracy were in fact self-organizing and decentralized acts of resistance. How did American Whigs fashion this victory over British legitimacy *before* the war that began on April 19, 1775 at Lexington and Concord? How did they promote and prevail in what John Adams would later call “the real revolution,” the revolution which occurred “in the minds and hearts of the people?”<sup>1</sup>

In this essay, I will argue that the newspapers of the British Empire had certain features—diffuseness, belatedness, openness, and availability for copying—that allowed them to enter into a complex symbiosis with the new techniques of public communication and political agency adopted by American Whigs in the decade before the Revolution. Developed in response to the Stamp Act (1765), the Townshend Duties (1768), the Tea Act (1773), and the Coercive acts (1774), these techniques include: the circular letter sent among colonial legislatures of North America, the organization of conventions and congresses, and finally, and most importantly, the committees of correspondence.<sup>2</sup> First developed by the town of Boston in the fall of 1772, the standing committee of correspondence was designed to enable the towns of Massachusetts to expand political participation by sharing political opinion with each other. To counter new

administrative policies, like the Crown's direct payment of colonial governors and judges, policies which the Boston Whigs condemn as threats to their traditional rights and liberties, the Boston Committee of Correspondence publishes the *Votes and Proceedings of the Town of Boston* as an address to the towns of Massachusetts. *The Votes and Proceedings* outlines the basic rights and liberties of English subjects, lists their grievances with British policy, and concludes with an elegantly phrased invitation for further correspondence: "A free Communication of your Sentiments, to this Town, of our common Danger, is earnestly solicited and will be gratefully received."<sup>3</sup> When the *Votes and Proceedings* wins supportive replies from the major towns of Massachusetts, Governor Thomas Hutchinson publicly condemns the activities of the Boston committee as "unwarrantable" and, using the code words for sedition, declares these committees to be "of a dangerous nature and tendency." (*The Boston Gazette*, Feb 22, 1773, Governor's rejoinder to the Council and House' reply to the Governor's speech of Jan 6, 1773). When the Governor's speeches draw spirited responses from the Massachusetts Council and House, the Boston committee emerges as a model for the formation of other committees, in the towns of Massachusetts as well as cities throughout the colonies, for example in Williamsburg, Charleston, Philadelphia, and New York. These committees established regular correspondence, and the committees become an agency for coordinating resistance to East Indian Tea, for sending relief to Boston once its port is closed (on June 1, 1774), and, finally, for planning the meeting of the First Continental Congress (on September 5, 1774).

What is most remarkable about these Whig acts of organization and communication is their public character. The vast majority of the words written and acts undertaken by these Whig political committees were published in the newspapers of the British Empire. Because this tide of political language flows freely into the print media sphere of the empire, their influence is amplified. Each document becomes part of an accumulating dossier of Whig resistance, one that allows readers to become part of an imagined community of resistance to British “tyranny.” Subjects of the British Empire could monitor the evolution of the revolutionary crisis by reading the newspaper. This may explain why there is a fairly broad consensus both among eighteenth century observers and modern scholars that the American Revolution would not have unfolded the way it did without the communication system of the newspaper. But how shall we characterize the productive symbiosis between a media form, the newspaper, and a political event, the American Revolution?

One approach to this issue characterizes the newspaper as a foundry of political propaganda. Arthur Schlesinger’s classic 1958 study, *Prelude to Independence: the Newspaper War on Britain, 1764-1776* demonstrates the importance of the newspapers for intensifying the struggle between Whigs and the British administration, and for promoting the successful Whig cooperation that issues in the American Revolution. But Schlesinger goes further. By narrating the succession of pre-revolutionary crises from the point of view of the newspaper printer-editor, Schlesinger places the newspaper at the operational center of Whig resistance: it becomes an instrument the editor wields to spread

“propaganda” that will mold public opinion to the cause of independence. There are two fundamental problems with this approach. First, the heroic cast that Schlesinger confers upon the American newspaper depends upon anachronistically imposing a nationalist American perspective upon newspapers published before Britain and America were separate. While this is a bias Schlesinger shares with most American scholarship on the American Revolution, it is particularly perverse given the nature of the colonial newspaper. Because so much of the content of the British American papers was reprinted from British papers, and British papers borrowed freely from American papers, an Atlantic interpretation of this newspaper system is indispensable if we are to grasp how the flows of information among the imperial newspapers affects the movement toward war. Secondly, an account centered on describing how the political intentions of Whigs were rendered in the newspaper obscures the general, and politically neutral, operational protocols by which these newspapers actually functioned. I will describe these below.

Recent scholarship has found a new way to conceptualize the power of print in general, rather than the newspaper in particular. In *The Letters of the Republic*, for example, Michael Warner links the emergence of a republican culture to its embodiment in print. Although Warner offers cogent critiques of the media determinism of scholars of print like McLuhan, Jack Goody, and Elizabeth Eisenstein, he ends up re-inscribing into his argument a form of the media determinism that he has just refuted. At each turn of Warner’s analysis, he argues that the emergence of the key features of the republicanism—the posture

of disinterestedness, the “supervision” of others and one’s self, the ruses of public anonymity exploited so ingeniously by Benjamin Franklin—depend upon print as a medium by which the communicating subject can achieve a disciplined abstraction of himself outside of any particular voice, handwriting, and body. In the process, human difference is broken upon the procrustean bed of the typesetter’s frame; all become types and stereotypes of republican publicity. In spite of the theoretical possibility Warner entertains, that cultures without print might effect these same kinds of communication, Warner concedes that “this universalizing mediation of publicity...would continue to find its exemplary case in printed discourse.”(41)<sup>4</sup>

Schlesinger and Warner offer two different ways to explain how media shapes culture. While Schlesinger turns the press into an instrument for propaganda of the newspaper editor who understands himself as “the maker of opinion” (Schlesinger, 61), Warner subsumes the newspaper into a systemic analysis of the (republican) effects of print. In a sense, their scholarship offers two sides of a common problematic: it reiterates the post-Enlightenment debate between those, like Michael Warner, who show how (print) media determines culture, and those, like Arthur Schlesinger, who insist that media forms arise from and (should) reflect the purposes of culture (or society, or history, or human agents). In the modern period this debate has become circular, unending, and finally more a symptom of our modernity than an interpretation of it. It is a debate modern cultures have rehearsed every time a new media form—from the newspaper and the novel to television and the internet—enables new ways of

using media. In order to account for the intricate symbiosis of media and event, newspaper and revolution, we need an account of the newspaper that is less instrumental than that offered by scholars like Schlesinger. They assume too quickly that newspapers serve the calculable human purposes of their printer-editor. But we also need an account that is less abstract and universalizing than Michael Warner's characterization of the privileged place of print in mediating the emergence of republican cultural forms.<sup>5</sup>

### **The Central Features of the Newspapers of the British Empire**

In the years before the American Revolution, newspapers were not what liberal Whig histories would later try to make them, a forum for the "free" exchange of diverse opinions. Neither were newspapers what both sides in the revolution, Tories and Whigs, Governor Thomas Hutchinson and Samuel Adams, wished they would become: an ideological beacon to guide and inform the people. The ugly duckling of eighteenth century print media, newspapers of the eighteenth century were quite variable in both their form and their content, and they were often held in dubious repute by the eighteenth century readers who nonetheless became addicted to them. British newspapers like the *London Gazette* and *London Chronicle*, as well as the collection of newspaper articles in the *Gentleman's Magazine*, circulated throughout British America, and the main cities and towns of North America had a steadily increasing number of their own newspapers.<sup>6</sup> Paradoxically, what may, from a modern prospective, look like weaknesses in the eighteenth century newspaper, enabled them to become a robust and supple matrix for revolutionary communication. To understand this



paradox, in the remainder of this article I will discuss central features of the pre-revolutionary newspapers, suggest how the circulation of these papers could both support and undermine a Whig idea of a British “empire of liberty,” and, finally, argue that these newspapers helped promote an emergent concept of freedom of the press. In closing, I will suggest how the founders’ idea of the importance of the newspaper for establishing public liberty helps to explain the media policy laid down in the first years of the new republic.

*1: A diffuse collection of print with dubious authority*

To the modern eye, colonial newspapers lack many of the elements that give newspapers coherence. There is no general reportorial perspective claiming to tell us ‘what’s happening now’; no editorial over-voice to tell us what it means; and no attempt to connect the items published to each other. In *The Public Prints: the newspaper in Anglo-American Culture, 1665-1740*, Charles E. Clark describes the general impulses that shape the writing and determine the layout of the earliest newspapers: the most remote (news from Constantinople and St. Petersburg) is placed before the less remote (London); the earliest events come before the more recent; in this way, the eighteenth newspaper aspires to become a telegraphic, historical record of the time.<sup>7</sup> But these principles for ordering the colonial newspapers were applied in an erratic fashion. Thus an ad for candles is placed on the front page of *The Pennsylvania Gazette* along side “A dissertation on the laws of excise” (March 31, 1773); and the same page might juxtapose a reward for an escaped indentured servant and the speech of George III opening Parliament. Letters, articles, ads, grain prices are assembled in an additive and

disconnected fashion and organized with such a weak principle of subordination that their rhetorical effect is paratactic. The reader is left to sift through a cacophony of different voices (usually disguised with pseudonyms or veiled by anonymity) and a variety of writing. For those scanning the single folio, four page, 3- or 4-column newspaper that became standard in the later eighteenth century, coherence of perspective is latent, an effect of editorial bricolage and the reader's active discernment. In sum, one might say, eighteenth century newspapers don't so much use the written record to represent the world, as present the written record, because that's what these newspapers are.

Some of what is published in the eighteenth century newspaper is of very dubious accuracy. Wanting precise and accurate information about the Crown commission investigating the Gaspé incident, Richard Henry Lee writes Samuel Adams, on February 4, 1773, despairing of ever having "a just account of this affair" "at this distance, and through the uncertain medium of the newspapers."<sup>8</sup>

[*The Letters of Richard Henry Lee*, Ed. James Curtis Ballagh (New York: Da Capo Press, 1970), 82.] The New York Gazette reprints from the Edinburgh Evening Post a satiric meditation on the unreliability of newspapers: "the four winds (the initials of which make the word NEWS) are not so capricious, or so liable to change, as our public intelligences." No wonder, this observer concludes, the newspapers must qualify the truth value of their information with these convenient phrases: "we hear; they write; it is said; a correspondent remarks, with a long list of ifs and supposes" (August 4, 1783).<sup>9</sup> Several factors explain these limitations of the eighteenth century newspapers, especially when compared with the newspapers of the

nineteenth and twentieth centuries. A nascent media institution, the eighteenth century newspaper is usually published by a talented printer rather than a formally educated editor. This printer is too modestly situated to put his opinions before his readers in the authoritative tones attempted by the editors of the future. In an epoch before the professionalization of news gathering, the printer-editor has no correspondent or reporter to file authorized reports under their own name. Finally, the liabilities of the eighteenth century newspaper result in part from the network for news exchange into which each paper is inserted. The content of each paper comes from a selective reprinting from the tide of newspapers that come through the mails, from interviews with local sea captains and merchants recently arrived in port, and from official documents from the Governor or the colonial assembly.[Charles E. Clark's account of John Campbell, the publisher of the Boston News-Letter, the first newspaper in America, offers a valuable overview of the earliest techniques of news collection. (*Public Prints*, chapter 4)] The canny editor sorts and selects articles for printing guided by his own common sense, ideological inclinations, and ear for local interests. At the end of this cutting and pasting, many items are published anonymously, abridged, and without the date, place, or newspaper of origin. This often leaves the reader uncertain about the source or authenticity of the text. Because the newspaper lags behind other print forms like the book in organizing responsible writing under the signature of the author, it has an especially erratic relationship to the modern demand for accountability.

## *2: Vitiating by the problem of distance*

Just as the eighteenth century newspapers were not always accurate, they were also unable to report news while it was still new. Benjamin Franklin's

reform of the royal post in America in the middle of the century assured consistent and periodic postal delivery among the cities of British America. After the beginning of the Seven Years War, Britain established permanent, and regularly scheduled monthly delivery of mail, by swift packet ships, between Britain and three American destinations: New York, Charlestown, and the West Indies (Jamaica).<sup>10</sup> Nonetheless, matter printed in London could take 5 to 6 weeks to travel to North America, and the fastest travel between the cities of coastal British America were as follows: 2 days (NY - Phil), 5-6 days (Boston-NY), 9 days (Boston – Williamsburg), 20 days (Boston – Charleston SC).<sup>11</sup> Customary travel times were significantly longer, and publication lagged accordingly. Thus the usual interval for a reprinting in *The Virginia Gazette* (Purdie & Dixon) of a news item from the *Boston Gazette* was a month and one day. In short, those reading their newspapers at least seven decades before the advent of electronic communication understood that even the most “current” news had decayed during the substantial interval required to carry the report to the place where it could be read. These eighteenth century readers were used to living on space-time islands that periodically received reports from other space-time islands, recording conditions that had already changed, sometimes in substantial ways. The effects of this temporal delay can be amusing and ironic. When contradictory news ricochets around the empire, the response of newspaper printers seems to be to treat their sources as printed texts to be passed on to their readers, even when these reports have a drastically different tendency. The printer of the *Providence Gazette* must have taken pleasure in

juxtaposing a long report from General Burgoyne about his successful conquest of the great American fort at Ticonderoga (on July 11<sup>th</sup>, but not made public in Whitehall until August 25<sup>th</sup>), with an official notice that the Continental Congress had voted to have a gold medal struck to commemorate Gate's victory over Burgoyne at Saratoga on October 17, 1777. Here the temporal lag in the news effects an edifying lesson, enjoyable to readers of a moral cast, upon the sudden fall of the great.<sup>12</sup>

### *3: The independence and "openness" of 18<sup>th</sup> century colonial newspapers*

When he started the *Boston News-Letter* in 1704, John Campbell aspired to the official status of the *London Gazette* by using the words "published by authority" on his newspaper's mast-head. However, Campbell's *News-Letter* was a commercial enterprise rather than a government sponsored paper of record. Later in the century, several colonial newspapers explicitly asserted their independence with a telling expression: "open to all parties, but influenced by none." (This identical language is used in the pre-revolutionary period by Isaiah Thomas' *Massachusetts Spy* (Boston), Rind's *Virginia Gazette* (Williamsburg) and the *Connecticut Current* (Hartford). A paper run on an "open" system asserts a brave independence of "influence" and contempt for the narrowness of faction. The printer also offers the paper as a public vehicle for communication, "open" to print ads and opinion of a broad spectrum of the town. A newspaper was open and public in the same sense that stage coaches or public houses of the period were. As James Green has pointed out in his account of Franklin's strategy with the *Pennsylvania Gazette*, this strategy was both commercial and

political.<sup>13</sup> If a printer is too explicitly partisan, opponents will not run ads in the paper or bring other print business to the printer. In the relatively small commercial towns of British America, this loss of business could close down a paper. An open, non-partisan newspaper also discourages the launching of competing papers. Even in times when papers began to function as explicitly political agents—as when Draper’s *Tory News Letter* of Boston refuted the accounts of the meeting of the Town of Boston offered in the Edes and Gill’s *Boston Gazette*, and Trenchard and Gordon have replaced Addison as models for journalistic writing—both Boston papers published documents and opinion pieces from each side of the Whig and Tory divide. All papers, however explicit and obvious their political commitments, sought to appeal to the whole public.

*4: The newspapers of the British Empire become one news commons facilitating free exchange*

Several factors helped forge the eighteenth century post and newspapers into a news commons that resembled, in certain ways, the news services set up by Reuters and AP in the nineteenth century. First, the transportation infrastructure was improving. A reformed postal system made the system of packet-ships, stage coaches, and postal couriers a slow, but increasingly effective system for transporting newspapers. In North America many printers were also postmasters, though this practice had waned by the revolution.<sup>14</sup> However, the practice of the free mailing (or “franking”) of copies of America newspapers among all the printers in the colonies continued into this period and greatly facilitated the free borrowing of print items among the papers of the

empire. When he became Post-master general for the north American colonies, Benjamin Franklin opened the mails to all newspapers by establishing a consistent rate structure. This produced a new financial incentive for local post masters to assume responsibility for the distribution of newspapers.<sup>15</sup> Secondly, there was no functioning system of copyright for materials first printed in a newspaper equivalent to that provided for books published in England. For this reason, colonial and provincial newspapers could draw articles from the *London Gazette*, the official site for publishing news of Crown and government, the *London Chronicle*, the most influential independent news source in the metropolis, and the *Gentleman's Magazine*, itself a compendium of articles culled (in 1774) from 51 British papers, as well as literary and scientific writings. By the time of the revolution, the 42 newspapers of the North American colonies and the many newspapers in Britain had developed into a heterogeneous decentralized news commons that treated the print found in other papers as “shareware” to be adopted and modified according to each paper’s needs and interests.

### **Whig Ideology and the empire of liberty**

As an incoherent collection of items from somewhere else, and as a commons facilitating exchange, run on an “open” system, these newspapers resemble the trading system as envisioned by those Whig apologists who preached the transformative benefits of a free circulation of goods. Thus the words with which Joseph Addison, writing in *Spectator* No. 69, so famously naturalized the free traffic in goods around the world can be applied to the

eighteenth century information commons: “Nature seems to have taken a particular Care to disseminate her Blessings among the different regions of the World, with an Eye to this mutual Intercourse and Traffic among Mankind, that the Natives of the several Parts of the Globe might have a kind of Dependence upon one another, and be united together by their common Interest.”(*Spectator*, 69, “The Royal Exchange”) The eighteenth century newspaper is an institutional embodiment of this Whig idea that mutual dependence and common interest can be achieved through exchange and circulation. The eighteenth century newspaper exists to promote this circulation: the circulation of material goods (by providing information such as tables of commodity prices in different regions, by reporting the arrival and departure of ships, by publishing advertisements); the circulation of public opinion and public knowledge; and finally, of course, the circulation of the newspaper itself, so as to bring revenue to their printers in the form of subscriptions and ad revenues. In this way the eighteenth century newspaper, whatever its explicit politics, advances the Whig and liberal credo—given expression across the century from Addison to Adam Smith’s *The Wealth of Nations* (1776)—that increases in circulation will bring spontaneous increases in wealth, power, and liberty. For the Whig apologists of empire, Britain’s “blue water policy”—free trade and a strong navy to clear the world’s oceans for that trade—was to be contrasted favorably with the restricted and monopolistic trading policies of the French, Dutch, Danes and Spanish, which developed a host of ways to favor the mother country at the expense of the colonies. For Whigs, the reward of this ever expanding trade was to be an “empire of liberty,” a



sovereignty compatible with liberty, because that empire would be woven together by a commerce that is non-coercive and beneficial to all.<sup>16</sup> The ideal of an empire founded in the free circulation of goods and information is haunted by this contradiction: there is nothing in this system of circulation that guarantees the British control of the flows of goods and information in their Atlantic empire. The possible contradiction within this imperial project is grasped by Thomas Pownall, a would-be reformer of the British Empire, who, writing in the wake of the Peace of Paris in 1763, sets forth the problem with eloquence and clarity in his *The Administration of the Colonies (London: 1764/1768)*.<sup>17</sup> Thomas Pownall, a youthful former governor of New Jersey and Massachusetts, in both this treatise and his speeches in Parliament, makes himself a defender of the trading prerogatives and political rights of the American colonists. Along with British Whigs like Edmund Burke and American Whigs like Benjamin Franklin, Pownall grasps the vast scale and potential wealth of the newly settled continent. Pownall argues that all the American colonies (of the British, French, Dutch and Spanish), by their diverse mix of mutually useful products, have a natural trading affinity, an affinity that the old navigation acts cannot in fact controvert, for example, by demanding that North American merchants who trade lumber for West Indian sugar must ship both commodities through England. Rather than upholding this trading system, Pownall insists that a wise administration must be framed so that Great Britain may be no more considered as *the kingdom of this Isle only, with many appendages of provinces, colonies, settlements, and other extraneous parts*, but as A GRAND

MARINE DOMINION CONSISTING OF OUR POSSESSIONS IN  
THE ATLANTIC AND IN AMERICA UNITED INTO ONE EMPIRE,  
IN ONE CENTER, WHERE THE SEAT OF GOVERNMENT IS. (9-  
10, caps in original)

But this new conception requires constant vigilance and careful administration, and a granting of political rights. While Pownall's enlightened Whig proposal is to give the American colonies generous representation in the British Parliament, the gravitational analogy that Pownall develops to describe his ideal state (colonies circulating naturally around the great solar orb that is Great Britain) quickly discloses another possibility—that the subordinate orbs might “form a principle of cohesion with each another” such that they displace the priority of Britain as “first mover.”

...

Great Britain, as the center of this system, of which the colonies by actual union shall become organized, not annexed parts, must be the center of attraction to which these colonies, in the administration of every power of their government, in the exercise of their judicial powers, in the execution of their laws, and in every operation of their trade, must tend. They will remain under the constant influence of the attraction of this center; and cannot move, but that every direction of such movement will converge to the same. And as it is not more necessary to preserve the several governments subordinate in their respective orbs, than it is

essential to the preservation of the whole empire to keep them disconnected and independent of each other, *they must be guarded by this union against having or forming any principle of coherence with each other, above that whereby they cohere to this center, this first mover.* They should always remain incapable of any coherence, or of so conspiring amongst themselves, as to create any other equal force which might recoil back on this first mover.

(34-35, italics original)

Pownall's Copernican conceit makes his proposed reorganization of the British empire seem both natural and sublime. However, through the rest of this pamphlet, the eloquent precision with which Pownall describes the forces motivating trade among the diverse colonies of America (British, French, Dutch and Spanish), and his warning to the British reader that there is nothing to prevent the North Americans from embarking upon their own manufacture of goods to compete with British manufactures, suggests what is specious about the elaborate gravitational conceit structuring this passage. British priority in trade does not derive from her being a "prime mover" in either the Aristotelian or Christian sense as the origin and continuing source of motion. Instead, British political and commercial control is an artifact of history, and therefore fully reversible, by the development of an "equal force which might recoil back on this first mover." Pownall's own language foresees the "revolution", or counter-movement, away from central control, that his policy would ward off.

Viewed from a certain angle, this Atlantic system is centered in London and the British government and it is controlled from there. Thus, when the King opens Parliament each autumn, the text of his speech is broadcast through the empire by the reprinting it receives in the newspapers of the empire. When the monarch dies, or an heir is born, many papers devote a special issue to these events. However, the eighteenth-century newspaper must not be confused with the highly centralized, top-down broadcasting systems developed for radio and television in the twentieth century. While newspapers occasionally cast one message broadly, they do so from within a highly decentralized system of production by artisan-printers. The Atlantic trading system and the Atlantic newspaper system are difficult to control for the same reasons: they sponsor flows of goods and information among a diverse group of producers, distributors, and consumers. The authority to make decisions (to buy/ not to buy; to print/ not to print) is distributed through a communication system that is essentially multilateral, non-hierarchical, and horizontal in its topology. These flows have no necessary or possible systemic center. The primacy of England is based in the traditional location of administration (in Whitehall), custom and culture, and the sheer economic scale and dynamism of London. While the administrative apparatus of empire is controlled from the center by the King in Parliament (what Pownall flatteringly calls the 'prime mover'), there is nothing in the nature of this communications or commercial infra-structure that assures its primacy. The American Revolution demonstrates precisely how the flows of goods and

information that underpin this Atlantic system can be reconfigured and redirected to challenge the traditional centrality of Britain.

**Newspapers as censorship-resistant; or, the “freedom of the press” as an emergent concept**

The modest weekly newspaper of the mid eighteenth century was at once local and global, enjoyed relative autonomy and yet transmitted events and decisions, inscriptions and voices throughout the British Empire. When efforts to rationalize the administration of the colonies sparked colonial resistance to British measures in 1765, the newspaper quickly emerged as a medium for circulating news of popular resistance. In the decade of political crisis that followed the Stamp Act, the apparent liabilities of the eighteenth century newspaper contributed to making it difficult to control or silence: its formal incoherence, its anonymous publication of writing, its eschewal of the accountability of the author, its use of the ‘open’ system, and its semi-automatic borrowing and reprinting of writing from around the empire. All these traits helped to protect the newspaper and its printer from censorship by government authorities.

It was part of the common sense of the eighteenth century that liberty of the press could easily shade into license, political censure into seditious libel. Administrative authorities on both sides of the Atlantic tried to police the boundary between responsible newspaper publication and unacceptable license. The historian Richard Brown demonstrates how, even in the wake of the Zenger case (1735), the appeal to the freedom of the press remained inconsistent and

self-serving.<sup>18</sup> Rather than castigating American Whigs for hypocrisy, or for their failure to realize a modern liberal concept of the freedom of the press as a general right, it is more useful to see American Whigs, along with their English precursors—from John Milton (*Areopagitica*, 1644), and Trenchard and Gordon (*Cato's Letters*, 1720-1721), to contemporary British Whig allies, like John Wilkes—as the developers of an emergent concept of freedom of the press. To do so allows us to see how the abstract idea emerges from the exigencies of pre-revolutionary communication.

The issue of the “liberty of the press” repeatedly frames Boston’s struggle around how far a newspaper dare go in criticizing Crown government. On November 14, 1771, Isaiah Thomas’ *Massachusetts Spy* published an attack on Governor Hutchinson, written by one “Mucius Scaevola”, attacking the British administration’s decision to pay the Governor directly, from funds raised by customs, rather than having the Governor receive his salary through annual appropriation of the House of Representatives of Massachusetts. The Governor’s attempt to check the strident critique of the ministry by “Mucius Scaevola” follows the three part rhythm of what one might call a “free press incident”: an act of expression in print (1) provokes an attempt to curb the expression through sanctions (2). The silenced party then appeals to general principles of law to defend their right to freedom of expression (3).

In the attack, “Mucius Scaevola” insists that “A Massachusetts Governor the King by Compact may *nominate* and *appoint*, but *not pay*: for his support he must stipulate with the people & and until he does, he is no legal Governor;

without this, if he undertakes to rule he is a USURPER.” (Quoted by “Cotton Mather” [Samuel Adams] in the *Boston Gazette*, November 25, 1771) Scaevola continues: “A ruler, independent of the people is a monster in government,” and “the council, according to the charter, should take upon itself the government of this province” (Schlesinger, 140). It is not surprising that Hutchinson read this as a fundamental challenge to his authority. He therefore convenes the Council, and wins their agreement to have the printer Isaiah Thomas sued for seditious libel. This has several effects. First, it provokes a series of articles in the *Boston Gazette* and the *Massachusetts Spy* invoking and defending the freedom of press against the Governor’s efforts to limit that freedom. Secondly, when Isaiah Thomas refuses to appear before the Council, they summon Sheriff Joseph Greenleaf, “generally reputed to be concerned with Isaiah Thomas” in publishing the *Spy*, to appear before them. Finally, when Greenleaf also refuses to appear, the Council declares him in contempt and dismisses him as Justice of the peace in Plymouth Country.(Schlesinger, 141) In February, 1772, the Chief Justice of the Superior Court fails to win an indictment against Thomas from a grand jury; though the administration considers taking Thomas directly to court “on information.” Hutchinson finally declines to do so because Council advises of the disturbance this might cause among the people.

What results from this failed prosecution, and others like it in England, is an expansion of press freedoms. Joseph Greenleaf, writing to the readers of the *Boston Gazette* after his dismissal by the Council, shows a keen sense of the dangerous legal precedent that might have resulted from his cooperation with the

Governor in prosecuting the *Massachusetts Spy*. “The proceeding alarmed me, as I judge it WHOLLY illegal, for I could have no idea of the legality of erecting a court of INQUISITION in this *free country*, and could find no form for such a citation in the province of law books: My duty to my country therefore forbad my paying any obedience to it, especially as it might hereafter be used as a precedent.” (*Boston Gazette*, January 13, 1772) But the Governor’s effort to punish Isaiah Thomas is in fact entirely consistent with English law. After the expiration of the licensing act in 1695, freedom of the press means that printers enjoy freedom from “prior restraint”, that is, restraint prior to publication. But sanctions after publication continue to be part of English law. This key legal distinction is made by Sir William Blackstone, in two sentences from his *Commentaries on English Common Law*: “The liberty of the press is indeed essential to the nature of a free state: but this consists in laying no *previous* restraints upon publications, and not in freedom from censure for criminal matter when published. Every free man has an undoubted right to lay what sentiments he pleases before the public: to forbid this, is to destroy the freedom of the press: but if he publishes what is improper, mischievous, or illegal, he must take the consequence of his own temerity.”<sup>19</sup> (London, 1769, Volume IV: 152). In refusing to obey the Governor in pursuing legal action after publication, Greenleaf ignores the tradition outlined by Blackstone, and instead appeals to a higher duty and law: “The freedom I now contend for, is, a right of resistance, or rather withholding my obedience, when unlawfully commanded. ...But if a Justice of the Peace may be dismissed from his office, because he refused to be examined



about a common News-Paper,” if he may be dismissed, because he is “supposed by people in general to be concerned with the printer,” or any other person, that the governor has conceived a dislike to, “we are in a pitiable case.”<sup>20</sup>

The Greenleaf-Thomas-Hutchinson free press incident helped to establish the idea, by the fall of 1771, that there was no practical way for the Governor or the Council to censor the local newspapers. In other words, a year before the founding of the Boston Committee of Correspondence, and two years before the agitation against the Tea Act, this incident secured the operational latitude needed by the American Whig press. Freedom of the press, and its oral cognate freedom of speech, emerged as an elemental protocols of revolutionary communication. Freedom of the press did not emerge as a value for the reasons emphasized by liberal thinkers like John Stuart Mill in the nineteenth century: that by freeing speech and the press, the most diverse set of voices will be able to compete in the “marketplace of ideas.” Neither Whigs nor Tories seemed particularly interested in the kinds of ground rules for rational communicative action that Habermas promotes in the twentieth century. In fact the disinterested quest for truth took second place to other concerns. Instead, Whig republicans valued freedom of the press and freedom of speech in three distinct, but related, ways: as a pragmatic mode of articulating resistance in a moment of political crisis; as a symptom of freedom as a spiritual possession of the people; and, finally, as a way to perform or enact that freedom.

All three traits of freedom of expression are in evidence in an essay Samuel Adams publishes, writing as “Determinatus,” in the *Boston Gazette*

(August 8, 1768). The essay was written during Boston's agitation against the Townshend Acts. When John Hancock's ship *Liberty* was seized for customs violations on May 9<sup>th</sup>, it provoked a riot or demonstration on June 10<sup>th</sup> that in turn led the customs commissioners to flee Boston for the protection of Castle William. His "Excellency" Governor Hutchinson was joined by the ministry in accusing the Boston Whigs of unruly and unlawful mob behavior. In this essay, Adams defends the Boston Whigs and their followers by upholding their right to speak boldly in defense of liberty. At issue is the proper manner of such speech.

"I am no friend to 'Riots, Tumults and unlawful assemblies,' I take upon me to say, any more than his Excellency is: But when the People are oppress'd, when their Rights are infring'd, when their property is invaded, when taskmasters are set over them, when unconstitutional acts are executed by a naval force before their eyes, and they are daily threatened with military troops, when their legislative (sic) is dissolv'd! and what government is left, is as secret as a *Divan*, when placemen and their underlings swarm about them, and Pensioners begin to make an *insolent* appearance—in such circumstances the people will be discontented, and they are not to be blamed—their minds will be irritated as long as they have any sense of honor, liberty and virtue—In such a Circumstances, while they have the spirit of freedom they will *boldly assert* their freedom; and they are to be justify'd in so doing---I know very well that to murmur, or even to

*whisper* a complaint, some men call a riotous spirit. But they are in the right of it to complain, and complain ALOUD. And they *will* complain, till they are either redress'd, or become poor deluded miserable ductile (sic) Dupes, fitted to be made the slave of dirty tools of arbitrary power." –DETERMINATUS (August 8, 1768)<sup>21</sup>

This passage engages the Manichean oppositions of republican activism as described by Bernard Bailyn and others: on one side are the “people”, isolated, endangered, and at risk of becoming “slaves”; on the other side, are the authorities who operate the devious and multiform machinery of arbitrary power (with the secrecy of a *divan*, an “oriental council of state” {OED}), by oppressing, infringing, and invading with acts, force, and troops. If this were the scene from a sentimental novel or drama, it could be characterized with the words Samuel Richardson uses to characterize his heroine, Clarissa: ‘virtue in distress.’<sup>22</sup>

According to Determinatus, for the loyal subject beset by arbitrary power, where loyalty precludes any clearly illegal act of physical resistance, the only recourse is to “complain, and complain ALOUD.” The proper way to reclaim their freedom and to demonstrate that they still have “any sense of honor, liberty and virtue” is to “*boldly assert* their freedom” through speech. At such a moment the subject, like Determinatus, will speak “freely”—that is directly, sincerely, and with little show of respect for (supposed) “betters.” Here the exigencies of the moment justify a suspension of the usual social rules for speech across rank—especially the flatteringly respectful address expected between a subject and a ruler, like the King or Governor. These conventions of respect are encoded into 18th

century speech through forms of address like ‘Your Majesty’ and ‘Your Excellency.’ While Determinatus claims to be no more a “friend to ‘Riots, Tumults, and unlawful assemblies’” as “his Excellency is,” his tone has none of the deference its use of this honorific title requires. But in this political emergency, bad manners become a sign of virtue. Finally, bold free speech is more than a vehicle for ideas; it is an act of passion, embedding a testament to the speaker’s “spirit of freedom,” as if to say, ‘I am the sort of person who is free, who will be free, and will show you this through my way of addressing you.’ In an essay from *Cato’s Letters*, entitled “Of Freedom of Speech,” Trenchard and Gordon distilled this idea about the correspondence between the manner and meaning of speech in a concise formula: “A free people will be showing that they are so, by their freedom of speech” (Feb 4, 1720).<sup>23</sup> In his printed essay, Determinatus models the kind of bold speech that he defends. This bold citizen thereby embodies the most abstract ideal of the Enlightenment—Liberty—through his speech. Such speech, especially by the way it becomes self-reflexive about the right to speak, is not just the condition of the possibility of all communication; by its morally zealous rhetoric, this speech aspires to communicate liberty, so that liberty spreads like a contagion.

### **Information Protocols and Media Policy for the New Republic**

By way of concluding my discussion of newspapers of the pre-revolutionary British America, I will speculate, in a very elliptical fashion, about how the communication wars of the revolutionary generation shaped media

policy in the new republic. The Whig activism in the years before the American Revolution helps to explain why certain terms—like “open,” “free,” and “public”—came to articulate both the content and the form, both the informing values and the information protocols, of early American communication. Although the newspaper system of the British Empire was not designed to enable revolution, the founders of the American republic came to value that newspaper system, and reproduced many of its traits in the media policy of the early republic. The successful struggle against the British state encouraged the generation of the revolution to set up protections for precisely the sort of de-centralized communication that had been essential to the revolution's challenge to British rule. Without explicitly advocating public challenges to the new federal government, the first Federal Congress adopted measures that supported an information policy that would make possible future challenges to their government. The legal underpinnings of that policy were laid down by the 1<sup>st</sup> Amendment (1789), the 1<sup>st</sup> Copyright act (1790), and the 1<sup>st</sup> Postal Bill (1792).

With the First Amendment, the founders developed a powerful formula for protecting freedom of speech and press as constitutive elements of the new American political culture. I quote, preserving the three-part division observed in legal studies:

1. Congress shall make **no** law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof;
2. or **abridging** the freedom of speech, or of the press;

3. or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances.

Here freedom of the press is embedded within four other expressive rights and freedoms: to worship, to speak, to assemble and to petition the government. These range from the most personal and private (religious worship) to the most public and political (to assemble and petition government for redress). Although the amendment's first two clauses deal with religion, their antithetical structure neatly reflects the double stance of the new government toward media: it desists from the "establishment" of any official government newspaper (like the *London Gazette*), and it refrains from preventing others from the "free exercise" of their media freedoms. Because the political critique of British policy by the press was indispensable for mobilizing pre-revolutionary opposition, here freedom of the press is linked to explicitly oppositional forms of public expression: peaceful assembly and the petition for redress of grievances. Finally, the freedom of the press is protected from legislative control with a verbal formula that gets its power from a double negative: "Congress shall make *no law...abridging* freedom of speech or the press." (my emphasis) This double negative hollows out a theoretical space for freedom of speech and the press prior to, and immune from, the law-making powers of Congress.

The founders also took steps to guard speech against commercial control. To further encourage the unencumbered circulation of information, the first American copyright bill, passed in 1790, adopts the limited copyright and patent law that then prevailed in Britain and America (a 14 year term, renewable once).

By adopting British copyright law, as limited in the recent ruling of the House of Lords in *Donaldson v Becket* (1774), the founders assured that writing and inventions would pass quickly into the public domain, and become free to users. Finally the Postal Act of 1792 encouraged development and circulation of American newspapers as a means to link far-flung states into one print media sphere: first, by setting postal rates so that personal and commercial letters provided a substantial subsidy to newspapers, heavily traveled Eastern routes supported new Western routes, and the American postal system was conceived as a subsidized public service rather than a for profit business.<sup>24</sup>

When new communication technologies emerged in the 19th and 20th century--the telegraph, the telephone, the radio, and television-- the early American reticence about centralized control of information continued to discourage government ownership of each new communication system, even though the federal government was often a sponsor of early research. This bias in favor of a decentralized, market sustained media sphere has sometimes had perverse effects. In the 20th century the federal government has, through the formation of the Federal Communications Commission (1934), collaborated with the largest corporations in gradually delivering *de facto* control and ownership of the public airwaves into the corporations' hands. By contrast, several recent histories of the Internet suggest that its structure and development reflect the communications bias first developed in the pre-revolutionary culture of British America. Thus, the technical and software protocols of the Internet (packet switching; and open source software like TCP/IP ("transmission control protocol/

internet protocol”) and HTML (“hypertext markup language”); and its decentralized address system) have produced a communication system that observes a formal equality among those on the network, one that is (relatively) open to entry, offers content free for reuse, protects user anonymity, and, when combined with the speed and scale made possible by computers, the internet has so far proven to be as immune from central control as the very different communications infrastructure of British America. Given this network architecture, it should be no surprise that early Internet libertarians promoted an ideology as suspicious of authority, and as boldly protective of rights, as the leaders of the American Revolution.<sup>25</sup> [For useful and cogent histories of the Internet and the Web see, Janet Abbate, *Inventing the Internet*. (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2000) and Tim Berners Lee, *Weaving the Web: The Original Design and Ultimate Destiny of the World Wide Web* (New York: Harpers Business, 2000). On Internet libertarians, see Alan Liu, *The Laws of Cool: Knowledge Work and the Culture of Information*, Chicago: U of Chicago Pr., 2004.]

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<sup>1</sup> Letter of Feb 18, 1818 to Hezekiah Niles, editor of the Weekly Register; *The Annals of America*, Vol 4, 1797-1820, Chicago: Encyclopedia Britannica, Inc., 1968. 465.

<sup>2</sup> The most important circular letters were the Massachusetts Circular Letter of Feb 11, 1768 and the Virginia House of Burgesses circular letter of March 12, 1773); congresses include the Stamp Act Congress {New York, 1765}, the Convention of Towns of Massachusetts {Boston, September, 1768}, and finally, the First Continental Congress.

<sup>3</sup> Boston: Edes & Gill, 33.



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<sup>4</sup> In his general critique of media determinism, Michael Warner is particularly valuable for demonstrating the futility of attempting to confer some identity or meaning upon print outside of the cultures and practices within which it emerges. So to say, as many do, that the 18th century had a "print culture" is not to say that they had a culture *of* print, in the sense that "print," as an abstract totality, becomes culture's informing nature. See Warner's valuable introductory chapter, to *The Republic of Letters*, "The Cultural Mediation of Print Media", especially, 1-18. "The assumption that technology (i.e. print) is prior to culture results in a kind of retrodeterminism whereby the political history of a technology is converted into the unfolding nature of that technology." (9)

<sup>5</sup> In "Print and the Public Sphere in Early America," Robert Gross offers an historian's critique of Warner's deployment of the concept of the public sphere: Warner's "incisive account of an ideology has been taken as a social fact." To complicate social facts, Gross shows how anonymous publication can serve ends very different than the one Warner foregrounds, the republican ideal of disinterestedness. Melvyn Stokes, ed., *The State of American History* (Oxford: Berg Press, 2002), pp. 245-264.

<sup>6</sup> Several factors made the pre-revolutionary decades a time of expansion for newspapers: swift increases in general population between 1750 and 1770 (from 1 to more than 2 million, from 1/20<sup>th</sup> to 1/5<sup>th</sup> of the population of the British Empire (Gordon Wood, *The American Revolution: A History*. New York: Modern Library, 2002. 6); an "oversupply" of printer's apprentices in the principle cities (e.g. Boston, New York, Philadelphia) produces an outward migration to start

new papers; and the news-worthy quality of the political crisis itself helps to encourage a doubling of the number of newspapers between 1763 and 1776, and then doubling again between 1776 and 1790. (Clark in Amory, 361)

Schlesinger reports 42 newspapers on eve of Revolution in 13 colonies.

<sup>7</sup> *The Public Prints: the newspaper in Anglo-American Culture, 1665-1740.*

Oxford: Oxford UP, 1994.

<sup>8</sup> *The Letters of Richard Henry Lee*, Ed. James Curtis Ballagh (New York: Da Capo Press, 1970), 82.

<sup>9</sup> Problems gaining accurate news were particularly acute in the aftermath of battle. In late May 1775, news reports were circulating in London about the battles of Lexington and Concord. *The London Gazette*, official publication of the British administration, reports on May 30, 1775 in large font: "A report having been spread, and an account having been printed and published, of a skirmish between some of the people of the province of Massachusetts Bay and a detachment of His Majesty's Troops; it is proper to inform the Publick, that no Advices have as yet been received in the American Department of any such Event." The measured, objective tone of this announcement has the effect of enabling the Gazette to discredit reports it is not yet in the position to dispute. Similarly the *London Gazette* refuses to publish a report on the outcome of the battle of Saratoga, though other London papers are doing so. Instead, because government has not yet received the only account that can be credited as accurate, the official report from the commander in the field, in this instance

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General Johnny Burgoyne, the Gazette desists from “covering” the biggest story of the moment.

<sup>10</sup> This monthly service between England and the three colonial ports finally overcame the 4 to 5 month winter hiatus in mail delivery caused by the difficulty of travel on the northern route in the first century and a half of British settlement. This postal service required from four to five ships for each run. (Postmaster-General to Earl of Dartmouth, December 4, 1772; *Documents of the American Revolution, 1770-1783*, Ed. K. G. Davies. (Dublin: Irish University Press, 1975), Volume V, Transcripts, 237-238).

<sup>11</sup> See David Hackett Fischer, *Paul Revere's Ride* (New York: Oxford UP, 1994, Appendix S, 324-325.) See David Fischer's valuable table on the “spread of the news of the first shots at Lexington.” The commencement of military hostilities, which justified the use of express riders to spread the news at maximum speed, offers a profile of the upper limits of American communication in 1775: April 19 (Lexington, Mass) – April 20 (New London, Conn.) – April 21<sup>st</sup> (New Haven, Conn.) – April 22<sup>nd</sup> (Fairfield, Conn.) – April 23<sup>rd</sup> (New York, NY) – April 24<sup>th</sup> (Philadelphia, Pa) – April 25<sup>th</sup> (Head of Elk, Md) - April 26<sup>th</sup> (Baltimore, Md) – April 28<sup>th</sup> (Williamsburg, VA) – May 3 (Smithfield, Va) – May 8 (Wilmington, NC) – May 9 (Charleston, SC).

<sup>12</sup> The reliance of each paper upon numberless other papers encouraged papers to time their publication date to the flows of information. In the summer of 1776, John Dunlop, publisher of the *Pennsylvania Packet*, changed his publication date to gratify reader demand for timely news from the battlefield in New York. He

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notified his readers that he was moving his publication date from Monday (the traditional beginning of the week publication date for many 18<sup>th</sup> century papers) to Tuesday, since “the posts from New-York and Virginia arrive in this city every Monday, and the intelligence they bring will be a means of rendering the *Pennsylvania Packet* still more agreeable to our readers” (August 5, 1776).

<sup>13</sup> See Charles E. Clark, “Periodicals and Politics: Part 1: Early American Journalism: News and Opinion in the Popular Press”, in Hugh Amory & David D. Hall, ed; *The History of the Book in America* (American Antiquarian Society. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2000), 255-257.

<sup>14</sup> See Sue Carol Humphrey, “*This Popular Engine*”: *New England Newspapers during the American Revolution, 1775-1789*. (Newark: U of Delaware Pr, 1992), 79.

<sup>15</sup> Wallace B. Eberhard. “Press and Post Office in Eighteenth-Century America: Origins of a Public Policy”, 148 in *Newsletters to Newspapers: Eighteenth-Century Journalism*, Ed Donovan H. Bond and W. Reynolds McLeod, ed. School of Journalism, West Virginia University, 1977. In his order to post-masters, Franklin promotes “the spreading of news-papers, which are on many occasions useful to government, and advantageous to commerce and the public”(153).

<sup>16</sup> Skeptics of this ideology of empire—from the 18<sup>th</sup> century to the present—pointed to the periodic resort to force in forging an empire: in conquering native lands and peoples (from Ireland to Madras), in enforcing the Navigation Acts, and in competing with rival powers in a series of wars with Spain, the Netherlands, and France. See the Introduction to Edward Said’s *Culture and Imperialism*.

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(New York: Vintage, 1994). However, our contemporary struggles around the effects of global trade also suggest that the idea of a global empire of trade is not simply wrong.

<sup>17</sup> See *The Administration of the Colonies* (1768), A Facsimile Reproduction, with introduction by Daniel A. Baugh and Alision Gilbert Olson. Delmar, New York: Scholars' Facsimiles & Reprints, 1993).

<sup>18</sup> See ““Periodicals and Politics: Part 2: The Shifting Freedoms of the Press in the Eighteenth Century,” in Hugh Amory and Donald D. Hall, *A History of the Book in America: Volume One: the Colonial Book in the Atlantic World*. (American Antiquarian Society. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2000), 366-376.

<sup>19</sup> Clarendon Press: Oxford, 1769, Volume IV: 152.

<sup>20</sup> The difficulty that Governor Thomas Hutchinson had in punishing printers like Isaiah Thomas in Boston echoes the difficulties the British Parliament had in suppressing the speech acts of John Wilkes throughout the 1770s, as well as the problems the ministry had, during the summer of 1770, in prosecuting the newspapers that had reprinted the anonymous and notoriously critical essays of *Junius*.

<sup>21</sup> *The Writings of Samuel Adams*, ed. Harry Alonzo Cushing (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1904) I: 240.

<sup>22</sup> For the immense popularity of *Clarissa* in the American colonies before, during, and after the American Revolution, where it came to function as a kind of allegory of virtuous American resistance to a corrupt Britain, see Leonard

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Tennenhouse, "The Americanization of *Clarissa*." *The Yale Journal of Criticism* 11.1 (1998): 177-96.

<sup>23</sup> See *Cato's Letters*, Ed. Ronald Hamowy. (Indianapolis: Liberty Fund, 1995) I: 111.

<sup>24</sup> See Richard R. John. *Spreading the News: The American Postal System from Franklin to Morse*. Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1995. Especially, chapter 2, "The Communications Revolution."

<sup>25</sup> For useful and cogent histories of the Internet and the Web see, Janet Abbate, *Inventing the Internet*. (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2000) and Tim Berners Lee, *Weaving the Web: The Original Design and Ultimate Destiny of the World Wide Web* (New York: Harpers Business, 2000). On Internet "cyberlibertarians," see Alan Liu, *The Laws of Cool: Knowledge Work and the Culture of Information*, Chicago: U of Chicago Pr., 2004, chapter 8, "Cyber-Politics and Bad Attitude."