

COMMUNICATING LIBERTY: THE NEWSPAPERS OF THE BRITISH EMPIRE AS A MATRIX FOR THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION

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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
William Bull to the Earl of Dartmouth, 31 July 1774¹

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 1764–1765 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 19 April 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?”²

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.³ 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 opinions 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.”⁴ 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.”⁵ 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 became an agency for

coordinating resistance to East Indian Tea, for sending relief to Boston once its port is closed (on 1 June 1774), and, finally, for planning the meeting of the First Continental Congress (on 5 September 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, its 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 among both 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 prerevolutionary 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 because 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 affect 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 Marshall McLuhan, Jack Goody, and Elizabeth Eisenstein, he ends up reinscribing 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 republicanism—the posture of disinterestedness, the “supervision” of others and one's self, the ruses of public anonymity exploited so ingeniously by Benjamin Franklin—depends 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.”⁶

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,” Warner subsumes the newspaper into a systemic analysis of the (republican) effects of print.⁷ In a sense, their scholarship offers two sides of a common problematic: it reiterates the post-Enlightenment debate between those, like 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 Warner's characterization of the privileged place of print in mediating the emergence of republican cultural forms.⁸

I. 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.⁹ Paradoxically, what may, from a modern prospective, look like weaknesses in eighteenth-century newspapers 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 prerevolutionary 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-century newspaper aspires to become a telegraphic, historical record of the time.¹⁰ 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* alongside “A dissertation on the laws of excise”; and the same page might juxtapose a reward for an escaped indentured servant and the speech of George III opening Parliament.¹¹ 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, three- or four-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 4 February 1773, despairing of ever having “a just account of this affair . . . at this distance, and through the uncertain medium of the newspapers.”¹² 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.”¹³ 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.¹⁴ 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. Vitiated 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).¹⁵ Nonetheless, matter printed in London could take five to six weeks to travel to North America, and the fastest travel between the cities of coastal British America were as follows: 2 days (New York-Philadelphia), 5–6 days (Boston-New York), 9 days (Boston-Williamsburg), 20 days (Boston-Charleston).¹⁶ Customary travel times were significantly longer, and publication lagged accordingly. Thus the usual interval for a reprinting in *The Virginia Gazette* (edited by 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 11 July, but not made public in Whitehall until 25 August), 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 17 October 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.¹⁷

3. *The independence and "openness" of 18th-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 masthead. 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 prerevolutionary period by Isaiah Thomas's *Massachusetts Spy* [Boston], William 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 N. Green has pointed out in his account of Franklin's strategy with the *Pennsylvania Gazette*, this strategy was both commercial and political.¹⁸ 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, nonpartisan newspaper also discourages the launching of competing papers. Even in times when papers began to function as explicitly po-

litical agents—as when Richard Draper's *Tory News Letter* of Boston refuted the accounts of the meeting of the Town of Boston offered in Benjamin Edes's and John Gill's *Boston Gazette*, and John Trenchard and Thomas Gordon had 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 The Associated Press 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.¹⁹ However, the practice of the free mailing (or "franking") of copies of American 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 Postmaster 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 postmasters to assume responsibility for the distribution of newspapers.²⁰ 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 of literary and scientific writings. By the time of the revolution, the forty-two newspapers of the North American colonies and the many newspapers in Britain had developed into a heterogeneous and 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.

II. 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."²¹ 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 its 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.²²

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*.²³ 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 by demanding, for example, that North American merchants who trade lumber for West Indian sugar 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 A ONE EMPIRE, IN A ONE CENTER, WHERE THE SEAT OF GOVERNMENT IS.²⁴

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.²⁵

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, suggest 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 countermovement, 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 or not to buy; to print or not to print) is distributed through a communication system that is essentially multilateral, nonhierarchical, 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 infrastructure 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.

III. 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 semiautomatic 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.²⁶ 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 John Trenchard and Thomas 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 prerevolutionary 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 14 November 1771, Isaiah Thomas's *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 the 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 & until he does, he is no legal Governor; without this, if he undertakes to rule he is a USURPER."²⁷ 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."²⁸ 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 the press against the Governor's efforts to limit that freedom. Secondly, when Thomas refuses to appear before the Council, they summon Sheriff Joseph Greenleaf, whom the Council declares "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 County.²⁹ 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 directing the attorney general to file an information against the printer. Hutchinson finally declines to do so because the 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. 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."³⁰ But the Governor's effort to punish 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."³¹ 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."³²

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 elemental protocols of revolutionary communication.

tion. 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* (8 August 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 9 May, it provoked a riot or demonstration on 10 June 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, Samuel 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 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 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 Dupes, fitted to be made the slave of dirty tools of arbitrary power.³³

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") 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."³⁴

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 eighteenth-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" than "his Excellency is," his tone has none of the deference his 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 distill 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."³⁵ 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.

IV. INFORMATION PROTOCOLS AND MEDIA POLICY FOR THE NEW REPUBLIC

By way of concluding my discussion of newspapers of prerevolutionary 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 revolutionary generation to set up protections for precisely the sort of decentralized 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 First Amendment (1789), the first copyright act (1790), and the first postal bill (1792). With the First Amendment, the founders developed a powerful formula for protecting freedom of speech and the 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 prerevolutionary 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* the freedom of speech, or of 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 fourteen-year term, renewable once). By adopting British copyright law, as limited in the then-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 the development and circulation of American newspapers as a means to link far-flung states into one print media sphere: by setting postal rates so that personal and commercial letters provided a substantial subsidy to newspapers, so that heavily traveled Eastern routes supported new Western routes, and so that the American postal system functioned as a subsidized public service rather than a for-profit business.³⁶

When new communication technologies emerged in the 19th and 20th centuries—the telegraph, the telephone, the radio, and the 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 prerevolutionary culture of British America. Thus, the technical and software protocols of the Internet (packet switching, 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 a vast amount of content free for reuse, protects user anonymity, and, when combined with the speed and scale made possible by computers, 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.³⁷

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NOTES

¹ Lieutenant-Governor of South Carolina William Bull to the Earl of Dartmouth, 31 July 1774, in *Documents of the American Revolution, 1770–1783*, ed. K. G. Davies, 21 vols. (Dublin: Irish Univ. Press, 1975), 8:154.

² John Adams, Letter of 18 February 1818 to Hezekiah Niles, editor of the *Weekly Register*, in *The Annals of America, 1797–1820* (Chicago: Encyclopedia Britannica, 1968), 4:465.

³ The most important circular letters were the Massachusetts circular letter of 11 February 1768 and the Virginia House of Burgesses circular letter of 12 March 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.

⁴ *The Votes and Proceedings of the Town of Boston* (Boston: Edes & Gill), 33.

⁵ Thomas Hutchinson, Governor's rejoinder to the Council and House's reply to the Governor's speech of 6 January 1773, *The Boston Gazette*, 22 February 1773.

⁶ Michael Warner, *The Letters of the Republic* (Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press, 1990), 41. 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 Letters of the Republic*, "The Cultural Mediation of Print Media," especially 1–18, and his observation that "[t]he 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).

⁷ Arthur Schlesinger, *Prelude to Independence: the Newspaper War on Britain, 1764–1776* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1958), 61.

⁸ 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 from the one

Warner foregrounds, the republican ideal of disinterestedness. Gross, "Print and the Public Sphere" in *The State of American History*, ed. Melvyn Stokes (Oxford: Berg Press, 2002), 245–64.

⁹ Several factors made the prerevolutionary decades a time of expansion for newspapers: swift increases in the general population between 1750 and 1770 (from one million to more than two million, from 1/20th to 1/5th of the population of the British Empire (Gordon Wood, *The American Revolution: A History* [New York: Modern Library, 2002], 6); an "oversupply" of printers' apprentices in the principal cities (Boston, New York, Philadelphia) produces an outward migration to smaller towns to start new papers; and the newsworthy quality of the political crisis itself helps to encourage a doubling of the number of newspapers between 1763 and 1776, and a doubling again between 1776 and 1790 (see Charles E. Clark, "Part One: Early American Journalism," in *A History of the Book in America: Volume One: The Colonial Book in the Atlantic World*, ed. Hugh Amory and David D. Hall [Cambridge: American Antiquarian Society and Cambridge Univ. Press, 2000], 361). Schlesinger reports forty-two newspapers on the eve of Revolution in the thirteen colonies.

¹⁰ See Clark, *The Public Prints: The Newspaper in Anglo-American Culture, 1665–1740* (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 1994).

¹¹ *The Pennsylvania Gazette*, 31 March 1773.

¹² Richard Henry Lee, writing to Samuel Adams, *The Letters of Richard Henry Lee*, ed. James Curtis Ballagh (New York: Da Capo Press, 1970), 82.

¹³ *The New York Gazette*, edited by Hugh Gaine, 4 August 1783, articles signed by Quidnunc. 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 30 May 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 General Johnny Burgoyne, the *Gazette* desists from covering the biggest story of the moment.

¹⁴ See Clark's account of John Campbell, the publisher of the *Boston News-Letter*, the first newspaper in America, which offers a valuable overview of the earliest techniques of news collection (Clark, *The Public Prints*, chap. 4).

¹⁵ This monthly service between England and the three colonial ports finally overcame the four- to five-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, 4 December 1772, in *Documents of the American Revolution, 1770–1783*, ed. K. G. Davies [Dublin: Irish University Press, 1975], 5: 237–38.)

¹⁶ See David Hackett Fischer, *Paul Revere's Ride* (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1994), Appendix S, 324–25, for his 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: 19 April (Lexington, MA)—20 April (New London, CT)—21 April (New Haven, CT)—22 April (Fairfield, CT)—23 April (New York, NY)—24 April (Philadelphia, PA)—25 April (Head of Elk, MD)—26 April (Baltimore, MD)—28 April (Williamsburg, VA)—3 May (Smithfield, VA)—8 May (Wilmington, NC)—9 May (Charleston, SC).

¹⁷ 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 notified his readers that he was moving his publication date from Monday (the traditional beginning-of-the-week publication date for many 18th-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" (5 August 1776).

¹⁸ See James N. Green, "Part One. English Books and Printing in the Age of Franklin," in *The History of the Book in America*, 248–98.

¹⁹ See Sue Carol Humphrey, "This Popular Engine": *New England Newspapers during the American Revolution, 1775–1789* (Newark: Univ. of Delaware Press, 1992), 79.

²⁰ See Wallace B. Eberhard, "Press and Post Office in Eighteenth-Century America: Origins of a Public Policy," in *Newsletters to Newspapers: Eighteenth-Century Journalism*, ed. Donovan H. Bond and W. Reynolds McLeod (Morgantown, West Virginia: School of Journalism, West Virginia University, 1977), 148. In his order to postmasters on circulation of the newspapers in the mails, reprinted in an Appendix of *Newsletters to Newspapers*, Franklin promotes "the spreading of news-papers, which are on many occasions useful to government, and advantageous to commerce and the public" (Appendix, 153).

²¹ Joseph Addison, "The Royal Exchange," *Spectator* 69.

²² Skeptics of this ideology of empire—from the 18th century to the present—point 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* (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.

²³ See Thomas Pownall, *The Administration of the Colonies* (1768), A Facsimile Reproduction, with introduction by Daniel A. Baugh and Alison Gilbert Olson (Delmar, New York: Scholars' Facsimiles & Reprints, 1993).

²⁴ Pownall, 9–10.

²⁵ Pownall, 34–35.

²⁶ See Richard Brown, "Periodicals and Politics, Part 2: The Shifting Freedoms of the Press in the Eighteenth Century," in *A History of the Book in America*, 366–76.

²⁷ Mucius Scaevola [pseud.] quoted by Cotton Mather [Samuel Adams] in the *Boston Gazette*, 25 November 1771.

²⁸ Mucius Scaevola, quoted from the *Massachusetts Spy* of 14 November 1771, in Schlesinger, 140. Scaevola's essay was from the *Massachusetts Spy* and is quoted by Schlesinger. I have not been able to examine an original copy of this rare number of the *Massachusetts Spy*; because of the litigation it sparked, it is often cited.

²⁹ Schlesinger, 141.

³⁰ Joseph Greenleaf, *Boston Gazette*, 13 January 1772.

³¹ Sir William Blackstone, *Commentaries on English Common Law*, 4 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1769), 4:152.

³² Greenleaf, *Boston Gazette*, 13 January 1772. 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*. For an account of the *Junius* affair see Robert R. Rea, *The English Press in Politics: 1760–1774* (Lincoln: Univ. of Nebraska, 1963), 159.

³³ "Determinatus" [Samuel Adams], *Boston Gazette*, 8 August 1768, in *The Writings of Samuel Adams*, ed. Harry Alonzo Cushing, 4 vols. (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1904), 1:240.

³⁴ For "divan," see the entry for this word in the *OED*. 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 Tennenhouse, "The Americanization of *Clarissa*," *The Yale Journal of Criticism* 11.1 (1998): 177–96.

³⁵ John Trenchard and Thomas Gordon, *Cato's Letters*, ed. Ronald Hamowy, 2 vols. (Indianapolis: Liberty Fund, 1995), 1:111 (4 February 1720).

³⁶ See Richard R. John, *Spreading the News: The American Postal System from Franklin to Morse* (Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press, 1995), especially chap. 2, "The Communications Revolution."

³⁷ 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: Univ. of Chicago Press, 2004), chap. 8, "Cyber-Politics and Bad Attitude."