



Sonja Schultheiß-Heinz. *Politik in der europäischen Publizistik: Eine historische Inhaltsanalyse von Zeitungen des 17. Jahrhunderts*. Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag, 2004. 357 pp. EUR 62.00 (paper), ISBN 978-3-515-08028-6.

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Political Journalism in Seventeenth-Century Europe

Newspapers in early modern Europe have received relatively little scholarly attention. In this book, Sonja Schultheiß-Heinz works to correct this neglect by taking up the call of scholars such as Jürgen Wilke for more empirical research on journals with an international perspective.[1] Her study explores political journalism in three European journals: the *Teutscher Kriegs-Kurier* (founded in Nuremberg in 1673), the *Gazette* (1631) and the *London Gazette* (1665). Schultheiß-Heinz selected these journals because each focused on political reporting. The *Gazette* and the *London Gazette*, as the only officially recognized journals in France and England respectively, were obvious choices. Her desire to have as complete a collection of each journal as possible then led her to select the *Teutscher Kriegs-Kurier* as the representative journal for the Holy Roman Empire. She also decided to limit her evaluation of the journals to the years 1672-79, a period with significant international conflicts that Schultheiß-Heinz refers to as the “Dutch-Swedish War.”

The study combines empirical with hermeneutic analysis. Schultheiß-Heinz first briefly portrays the relationship between newspapers and their readers in the seventeenth century, and then characterizes each journal. The bulk of the work that follows is an empirical analysis of the coverage in the three journals. The analysis was conducted with a code plan that evaluated every entry in the journals for its content, whether the report was “personalized,” and whether the “person” (generally a person or government) was judged positively,

negatively or neutrally. The code plan, which has almost 300 elements, breaks the entries into seven major categories (conflicts; domestic politics; economy and trade; court and diplomacy; sensations; notices and advertisements; and non-categorized material) and numerous sub-categories. Although this section is dominated by charts and tables, Schultheiß-Heinz also summarizes the analysis, includes examples from the journals, accounts for variations in the reporting among the three journals and ties the results to previous research.

The analysis shows significant unanimity among the journals in terms of coverage and confirms the impression that the reporting is focused on Western European politics, especially conflicts. All three journals devote a majority of their coverage to international conflicts (68.4-77.8 percent).[2] However, Schultheiß-Heinz does detect two significant differences between the journals. While the *Gazette* devoted an average of 23 percent of its space to the court and diplomats, the other two journals averaged about half as much coverage (10.1-11.7 percent). Secondly, 7.2 percent of the *London Gazette* contained advertisements and notices, while the other two journals averaged only 0.02-1.0 percent. The remainder of the space is devoted to domestic politics (4-8 percent); economy and trade (1.7-3 percent); sensations (0.05-1.6 percent); and non-categorized material (1.3 percent). These figures correlate well with the findings of Neumann, Schröder and Wilke.[3] Schultheiß-Heinz also does a good job accounting for differences between the

journals, which she ascribes primarily to each journal's local interests and structure.

Schultheiß-Heinz is able to document patterns of representation in the journals similar to those Rystad found in reporting during the Thirty Years' War.[4] The three journals contained selective reporting that tends to emphasize the destruction of the enemy, while masking or minimizing the losses and inflating the small victories of their own forces. Nevertheless, Schultheiß-Heinz notes that over 90 percent of the reporting in each journal was neutral. Interestingly, negative reporting outweighed positive reporting by approximately three to one. Furthermore, editors often printed material from correspondents without attempting to create a uniform perspective. Schultheiß-Heinz points to one issue of the *London Gazette* in which the Battle of Enzheim is portrayed in separate reports as a French victory, a draw and a victory for the Imperial forces (p. 208).

Unsure of the conclusions to be drawn from the quantitative evidence that all three journals offer value judgments, Schultheiß-Heinz employs a hermeneutical analysis to ascertain if a typology of the reporting allows one to determine whether a neutral or a partisan character dominates the reporting (p. 210). She demonstrates that all three journals present their army and allies as conducting a just war, while portraying the opponents as militarily and politically corrupt. However, she is also able to establish a noteworthy distinction among the journals. The rhetoric in the *Teutscher Kriegs-Kurier* employed a vocabulary that creates a *Feindbild*; that is, it stylized the French not only as opponents but also as enemies—at one point equating them with the *Erbfeind* (the Turks). Similarly, the *Gazette* also utilized a *Feindbild* in its coverage; however, this journal was much more interested in positive self-representation than in branding French opponents. The *London Gazette* seemed to adopt the most neutral stance of the three. It engaged in relatively little self-promotion and has little interest in stigmatizing the enemy.

One further interesting point that Schultheiß-Heinz notes is the continuity in language between the journals and the broadsheets /supplements they distributed.

(The broadsheets and supplements are not included in the quantitative analysis.) The supplements tended to be quite partisan in tone, while the journals claimed neutrality. Schultheiß-Heinz's analysis shows that, rather than conducting two separate discourses, the broadsheets and the journals participated in a single discourse spread along a continuum. The relationship between the journals and broadsheets and their use of language merits further study.

Using Schultheiß-Heinz's analysis to make direct comparisons between the content of these three journals with those analyzed in previous empirical research will prove difficult, because each scholar develops categories that are best suited to his or her interests and/or body of material. However, the study's methodology is convincing and the analysis is readable. Schultheiß-Heinz presents a narrowly focused study that confirms previous research in this area while at the same time adding to our understanding of journalism and the public sphere in the seventeenth century.

Notes

[1]. Jürgen Wilke, *Nachrichtenauswahl und Medienrealität in vier Jahrhunderten. Eine Modellstudie zur Verbindung von historischer und empirischer Publizistikwissenschaft* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1984), pp. 239-240.

[2]. All percentages are a percentage of the total number of lines printed in the journal(s).

[3]. Heinz-Georg Neumann, "Der Zeitungsjahrgang 1694. Nachrichteninhalt und Nachrichtenbeschaffung im Vergleich," in *Presse und Geschichte II. Neue Beiträge zur historischen Kommunikationsforschung*, ed. E. Blühm and H. Gebhardt (Munich: Saur, 1987), pp. 127-157; Wilke, *Nachrichtenauswahl*, passim; Thomas Schröder, *Die ersten Zeitungen. Textgestaltung und Nachrichtenauswahl* (Tübingen: Narr, 1995).

[4]. Göran Rystad, *Kriegsnachrichten und Propaganda während des Dreissigjährigen Krieges. Die Schlacht bei Nördlingen in den gleichzeitigen, gedruckten Kriegsberichten* (Lund: Gleerup, 1960).

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