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# Regional Book Distribution and Political Participation in the English Civil War

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## ABSTRACT

Regional book distribution was central to political mobilization in the localities during the English Civil Wars. A contextual approach, building up a picture from print and manuscript sources such as journals, reveals the multiple ways in which books circulated, through a case study of Devon and the south west. In contrast to recent emphasis on activist publishers, these sources highlight the significance of book distribution by puritan clergy. Book distribution in Devon was dominated by the unmatched south-western network of the London publisher Francis Eglesfield (publisher of Robert Herrick's *Hesperides*). However, the political agency of book distribution lies beyond the conventional book trade with the activities of local ministers, exemplified by John Bond of Exeter, Thomas Larkham of Tavistock, and John Symms of Sheepstor and Plymouth. Their distribution efforts provided multiple routes by which books reached their political audiences and created opportunities for political participation in parish communities.

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England's regional book trade played a key role in transmitting the arguments over which the civil wars were fought. Print was central to political mobilization, enabling both sides to articulate their aims and shape durable coalitions necessary to wage war. Recent historiography has stressed the political significance of towns and villages beyond London. Parishes were spaces of political communication and participation, in which ordinary subjects could intervene in wider political struggles.<sup>1</sup> The example of Devon and the south west has been especially important in demonstrating the depth of political engagement in the localities, for which printed texts supply a key source of evidence.<sup>2</sup> In this context, building up a detailed picture of how books circulated to the regions has become a matter for close attention.<sup>3</sup> A recent case study traced the 1640s 'provincialization of religious dispute' from London into rural Hertfordshire, where preachers and political campaigners worked

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<sup>1</sup>Braddick, *State Formation*, pp. 27-8, 431-3. See also Kyle and Peacey, eds., *Connecting Centre and Locality*; Braddick and Withington, eds., *Popular Culture and Political Agency*.

<sup>2</sup>Stoye, *Loyalty and Locality*; also Hughes, 'The King, The Parliament, and the Localities'.

<sup>3</sup>Barnard and Bell, 'The English Provinces', pp. 665-86; Peacey, *Print and Public Politics*, pp. 58-66; also Myers and Harris, *Spreading the Words*.

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through print distribution networks to mobilize a strong local coalition of militant Independents.<sup>4</sup> Local case studies like this reveal the fine detail of practices and networks which, duplicated across the country, helped shape the course of the English Revolution. As Jason Peacey has argued, the circulation of print can be hard to quantify meaningfully, but it can be illuminated through archival examples, ‘trading off a comprehensive picture for a contextual one’.<sup>5</sup> With key economic centres and major strategic ports, the south west was also one of the most bitterly contested regions in the civil war, and has left rich evidence for the distribution of religious and political print. For Devon, detailed information has been assembled on the local book trade, while surviving inventories record the book purchasing of aristocratic households.<sup>6</sup> This essay, however, aims to trace how books circulated at the lower boundaries of the social elite and reached an audience in the wider community, and in so doing created an opportunity for local people to participate in the national crisis.

My four case studies are known but neglected, and they have not previously been brought together to build up a contextual picture. I begin with the London publisher Francis Eglesfield, using his printed title-pages and sale catalogues to identify his trade connections with the south west, unmatched in the book trade for this period. The subsequent sections turn to three puritan ministers based in Devon—authors who published with Eglesfield, and customers who acquired and circulated his books. Each left behind a textual source: first, the printed sermons of John Bond of Exeter; second, the account-book of Thomas Larkham of Tavistock; and third, the journal of John Syms of Sheepstor and Plymouth.<sup>7</sup> Each exemplifies an important provincial book circulation practice. Focusing on these clerical book distributors offers a counterpoint to the research highlighted above, which has often stressed the political agency of ideologically activist publishers based in London, like the royalist Richard Royston, the parliamentarian Edward Husbands, or the radical Richard Overton.<sup>8</sup> Without dissenting from those findings, Francis Eglesfield nevertheless fits better with a more traditional view of stationers as primarily ‘businessmen, not evangelists’.<sup>9</sup> Instead, in the case-studies considered here, the political agency of book distribution lies with activist puritan clergy, working beyond what we would normally call the book ‘trade’. The aim, then, is to present a more textured picture of provincial book distribution. I use the terms ‘distribution’ and ‘circulation’ broadly, to suggest the wide range of routes by which books could reach their readers: these included book-stalls, but also private sales, gifts, loans, oral transmission, and scribal copying. The ministers considered here actively supported the parliamentarian war effort, and they possessed fiery tempers, but they were not radicals. They belonged to the social elite and the broad puritan mainstream (although the divisive Larkham tested its boundaries). Yet they encouraged grassroots political participation, and they were each drawn into heated and subversive confrontations. Their circulation of books formed, as Harold Love put it in an important essay on clerical publication, ‘an integral part of

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<sup>4</sup>Como, *Radical Parliamentarians*, pp. 245–51. Also Walter, *Covenanting Citizens*, pp. 120–30; McKenzie, ‘The London Book Trade in 1644’.

<sup>5</sup>Peacey, *Print and Public Politics*, pp. 39, 67.

<sup>6</sup>Maxted, *Exeter Working Papers in Book History*; Gray, ed., *Devon Household Accounts*.

<sup>7</sup>London, British Library: Loan MS 9 (Larkham) and Add MS 35297 (Syms).

<sup>8</sup>Peacey, *Politicians and Pamphleteers*, pp. 19–20, 117–21; on Royston, see McElligott, *Royalism, Print, and Censorship*, pp. 144–7; on Overton, Como, *Radical Parliamentarians*, pp. 280–3.

<sup>9</sup>Watt, *Cheap Print and Popular Piety*, pp. 51–2.

[their] pastoral cure'.<sup>10</sup> Yet in circumstances of civil war tearing through their region, pastoral work was inseparable from political campaigning, and book circulation was accordingly politicized.

A further context for this study is to shed fresh light on the provincial literary culture of the civil wars. All three of my case studies saw themselves as authors. Larkham even wrote his own verse. Francis Eglesfield is best-known today as the co-publisher of another Devon clergyman-author, Robert Herrick, as well as a handful of other significant literary texts—on this basis alone, closer attention to his business is needed.<sup>11</sup> This essay originally stemmed from a question about the publication context of Herrick's *Hesperides* (1647). Though it has significantly outgrown that question, the picture presented here does offer a distinctive context for reading Herrick. It is difficult to imagine Bond or Larkham reading *Hesperides* with pleasure, but their books were sold alongside Herrick's on Devon bookstalls. Meanwhile, John Syms's primary claim to fame is that he was intruded into Herrick's vacant parish of Dean Prior from 1646 until the Restoration—a situation he addressed through his book circulation activities. The broader picture presented here would have been familiar to writers like Henry Vaughan, lamenting the 'abominable face of things' in puritan Brecknock, or Andrew Marvell, in his parliamentary correspondence with the corporation of Hull.<sup>12</sup> Local book distribution shaped the conditions in which writers articulated their sense of regional identity, and of their communities' place within the national conflict.

### Francis Eglesfield: London Bookseller

Francis Eglesfield was 'one of the largest and most important publishers of theological literature', and would have been a familiar name to the Devon ministers who bought and read his books.<sup>13</sup> But he barely features in recent histories of the mid-seventeenth century book trade. Eglesfield had been apprenticed to James Boler at the Marigold in St Paul's Churchyard in 1628, alongside another future stationer, John Williams.<sup>14</sup> He later collaborated frequently with Williams, including on the titles for which he is best-known today, Herrick's *Hesperides*, and two editions of *Eikon Basilike* (1649). James Boler died in 1634, after which the shop at the Marigold was carried on independently by his widow Anne. Anne Boler attested to Eglesfield's 'faythfullness & Care' in helping to run the business, and in December 1637 he bought her out with the help of another stationer (probably Philemon Stephens).<sup>15</sup> Books carrying Eglesfield's name in the imprint appear steadily from 1638 until 1662, with an infrequent trickle continuing up to 1676.<sup>16</sup> Using the *English Short Title Catalogue* and *Early English Books Online*, it is possible to identify 139 titles whose imprints name Eglesfield or the Marigold as the publisher or place of sale in this period. In addition to theological material, as noted,

<sup>10</sup>Love, 'Preacher and Publisher', p. 231.

<sup>11</sup>The printing and construction of *Hesperides* has been more thoroughly studied than its book trade context: see Dobranski, *Readers and Authorship*, pp. 154–60, and Cain and Connolly's 'General Introduction' in Herrick, *Poetry*, vol. 1, pp. 403–11.

<sup>12</sup>Henry Vaughan, 'To his Retired Friend, an Invitation to Brecknock', in *Olar Iscanus*. London, 1649. (Wing V123). p. 9.

<sup>13</sup>Plomer, *Dictionary*, p. 69. On the pronunciation of 'Eglesfield' note the variant spelling 'Eaglesfield'.

<sup>14</sup>McKenzie, ed., *Stationers Company Apprentices*, p. 46.

<sup>15</sup>Jackson, ed., *Records of the Court of the Stationers' Company*, pp. 302–3. On Anne Boler see Helen Smith, *Women and Book Production*, pp. 116–117, 131–2.

<sup>16</sup>1676 is the last new title, Wing Q207; his name also reappears into the 1680s on reprints of standard works that he had formerly published, e.g. Wing D2465AB, G2242.

Eglesfield published a modest but interesting literary list, including Francis Quarles's *Emblemes* (1639, also with Williams); several works by John Hall including his translations of Longinus's *Peri hypsous* (1652) and of *Hierocles Upon the Golden Verses of Pythagoras* (1657); plays by Sir John Suckling (1642) and James Shirley (1640); and Thomas Hobbes's essay *Of Liberty and Necessity* (1654). Eglesfield's catalogues also show that he carried a number of play quartos from other publishers, and one reader noted in their commonplace book 'see for Shirleys plaies at y<sup>e</sup> marigold'.<sup>17</sup>

The most distinctive feature of Eglesfield's business is his strong connection with the south west. This link appears to have been inherited with the Marigold business.<sup>18</sup> James Boler had published a catechism by the Exeter preacher John Mico in 1631, during Eglesfield's apprenticeship, with an imprint directing it 'to be sold by Thomas Hunt in Exeter'.<sup>19</sup> Hunt went on to become one of Eglesfield's most important south-western booksellers, named alongside him in the imprints of two further books by Devon ministers: the puritan Christopher Jelinger's *The Excellency of Christ* (1647) and Herrick's *Hesperides*. Eglesfield also supported Hunt's attempt in 1645 to take over the king's printing press as 'the Exeter presse'.<sup>20</sup> But Eglesfield's imprints in fact reveal links with a wide range of westcountry booksellers. William Russell in Plymouth and George Treagle in Taunton are named in three imprints apiece; and one imprint each names John Ratcliffe in Plymouth, John Long in Dorchester, William Ballard in Bristol, Christopher Hunt in Barnstaple, and John Mongwell jr. and Walter Dight, both in Exeter.<sup>21</sup> These towns included the largest urban centres in the south-west, large enough to sustain bookshops. While there are obvious exigencies of survival here, the extent of westcountry contacts recorded in Eglesfield's imprints is significant. All but one of the above booksellers appear in imprints with other publishers: John Long of Dorchester, for example, sold four books from Richard Royston.<sup>22</sup> But no contemporary publisher comes close to matching Eglesfield's number and range of partners, across the region's major centres. By combining evidence of imprints with other biographical information, it is possible to identify westcountry links for 37 of Eglesfield's 139 titles (just over a quarter, 26%).<sup>23</sup> To these we could also add authors from New England (John Cotton and Thomas Hooker), in view of the westcountry ports' strong links with the American colonies. Among these titles are several texts that speak to ideas of regional identity and political mobilization. The three sermons published for George Treagle in Taunton offer a paradigmatic example. These were anniversary sermons, preached every 11<sup>th</sup> May to

<sup>17</sup>STC 20542, 22453; Wing L2999, S6125A, H2252. On Eglesfield and William's agreement with Quarles, see Cain and Connolly, 'Appendix 1', p. 405. BL Add MS 22608, f. 111r, discussed in Kirsch, 'Caroline Commentary', p. 260 n7.

<sup>18</sup>Eglesfield himself was from Kent: McKenzie, ed., *Stationers Company Apprentices*, p. 46. See Kentish 'Fraunces Eglesfield' listed in Lambarde, *Perambulation of Kent* (1575), p. 56 (and a conjectural Kentish etymology for 'Egel-' names at p. 321). He published a sermon by a James Eglesfield, vicar of Chewton Mendip in Somerset, who may have been a kinsman: (1640) STC 7545.

<sup>19</sup>STC 17863.

<sup>20</sup>Wing J542. Fuller, *Good Thoughts*, sig. A4v. Ian Maxted, *A History of the Book in Devon*, chapter 36, 'Printing in 17<sup>th</sup> century Exeter', <https://bookhistory.blogspot.com/2007/01/devon-book-36.html>.

<sup>21</sup>William Russell: STC 12393.5, STC 24870.5, Wing J542; George Treagle: Wing N1045A, B1148, J513A; John Ratcliffe: Wing R1352A; John Long: Wing F1487A; William Ballard: Wing H469A; Christopher Hunt: Wing B3133A; John Mongwell: Wing A959; Walter Dight: Wing Q208.

<sup>22</sup>Only Christopher Hunt of Barnstaple is unique to Eglesfield imprints. Long's books with Royston: Wing B3177A, B5347A, W1776, W1785A.

<sup>23</sup>This figure omits south-western writers who had left the region, such as Hobbes and Joseph Hall (former Bishop of Exeter). Five titles were published in multiple editions. One, Larkham's *A Discourse of Paying Tithes* (1656), sometimes appears appended to *The Parable of the Wedding Supper Explained* (1656).

commemorate the relief of the siege of Taunton in 1645, a central, identity-forming ritual for Taunton puritans that expressed their continuing commitment to the godly cause.<sup>24</sup>

A valuable record of Eglesfield's business is preserved in the run of printed catalogues that appear in several of his books of the 1650s. Catalogues are salient to the question of the regional book trade because it has been suggested that booksellers began issuing them in the late 1640s in response to their predominantly royalist readers' exile from London. The best-studied publishers of catalogues, Humphrey Moseley and William Leake, advertised their literary and dramatic outputs, genres that were indeed popular amongst rustivating royalists.<sup>25</sup> Eglesfield's catalogues have generally been overlooked, but he was one of the very earliest booksellers to adopt the practice in 1649, and more of his catalogues survive than has been realised. Searching through *EEBO* reveals nine separate examples in the decade 1649-59.<sup>26</sup> These between them list 158 titles, of which almost half (78) were not in fact published by Eglesfield himself, but acquired from other publishers (a common practice) or inherited from the Bolers.<sup>27</sup> Conversely, 42 titles of the decade 1649-59 list Eglesfield in their imprint but were omitted from his catalogues. These omissions complicate the interpretation that catalogues were aimed at exiled or provincial readers. While it is impossible to account for all the omissions, a significant sub-group represent more ephemeral material that relates to events in Plymouth, Exeter, and Taunton.<sup>28</sup> Most of these titles were sold at the Marigold, but several were also directed specifically for sale in those towns, notably the sermons printed for George Treagle in Taunton discussed above. Their primary audience was in the west, and the evidence below shows that some of these texts circulated in Plymouth. Plenty of titles with westcountry imprints and connections also appear in Eglesfield's catalogues (e.g. Herrick's *Hesperides*), probably indicating that a small portion of copies were dispatched to the west, and the majority remained on sale at the Marigold. But the omission of ephemeral titles specifically targeted towards local western matters seems to confirm that catalogues were mainly aimed at the London market. A slightly different picture, however, emerges from the latest, longest, and most elaborate of Eglesfield's surviving catalogues, dated 1659. This catalogue supplies much more detail, making it easier to identify each title remotely. This additional information includes a number of geographical identifiers with a distinctly south-western trend: 'Mr. [John] Mico late of Exeter', 'Mr. [Martin] Nicholes of Plymouth', 'Thomas Hobbs of Malmsbury', 'John Chishull, Minister of Tiverton in Devon', 'a Sermon preached . . . in Devon' [by Francis Moore], and 'Thomas Ford Minister of the Gospel at Exon'.<sup>29</sup> These items reflect only a handful of the catalogue's 127 entries, but they could conceivably reflect an appeal to westcountry browsers.

If Eglesfield possessed an unmatched western trade network, did this make him complicit in political communication with the west? Scholars have assumed that his

<sup>24</sup>Wing N1045A, B1148, J513A. Gibson, *Religion and the Enlightenment*, pp. 60-65.

<sup>25</sup>Hooks, 'Booksellers' Catalogues'; Lindenbaum, 'Publishers' Booklists'; also Pollard and Ehrman, *Distribution*, pp. 164-72; and Taylor, *Book Catalogues*, pp. 82-6.

<sup>26</sup>In Wing D1404 (1649), A688 (1650), H2654 (1651), C4468cA (1653), H469 (1655), L441B (1656), B6099 (1657), D1403 (1659), F1517 (1659).

<sup>27</sup>Pollard and Ehrman, *Distribution*, p. 171; Hooks, 'Booksellers' Catalogues', p. 449. A handful of titles, such as Martin Nicholes, *A Catechisme* (London: 1642, Wing N1083), were reprinted by Eglesfield under the Bolers' names.

<sup>28</sup>STC 24870.5, 7545; Wing T2763, C5973, M836, M1996, F1487A, A958, A959.

<sup>29</sup>Dickson, *An Exposition* (Wing D1403), unpaginated catalogue.

output was characterized by ‘strong royalist credentials’, albeit with a ‘distinctly Presbyterian slant’.<sup>30</sup> The basis for his royalist reputation is eye-catching but slight. At the Restoration, Eglesfield proudly published his own *Life* of Charles II. The fact that this ran to over three hundred pages presumably implies some enthusiasm for the subject.<sup>31</sup> His other obviously royalist publications are his collaborative editions, with John Williams, of Herrick’s *Hesperides* and *Eikon Basilike*; Eglesfield and Williams were also blocked from publishing an unauthorized edition of the Book of Common Prayer in 1660.<sup>32</sup> In each of these cases, it is likely that Williams was the leading investor (for example, the title-page of *Hesperides* carries his sign, the crown) and that Eglesfield’s contribution to the cartel was his specialist western distribution network. A Restoration pamphlet and *Eikon Basilike* are not necessarily instructive: these two occasions were the most prolific for royalist publishing, which attracted many stationers to cash in.<sup>33</sup> Furthermore, these titles represent a tiny minority of Eglesfield’s overall output, which presents a very different picture to the more overtly royalist propaganda and literature published by Richard Royston and Humphrey Moseley. From the Bolers, Eglesfield inherited a business already associated with puritan opposition to the Laudian regime, and in the 1640s and 1650s he continued to publish a broad spectrum of puritan opinion.<sup>34</sup> These included influential conformist puritans of previous generations, like Richard Sibbes and John Preston; moderate reformers, like Sir Edward Dering and Bishop James Ussher; a few Presbyterians, like David Dickson and Thomas Ford of Exeter; and several leading stars of Congregationalism: the New England preachers John Cotton and Thomas Hooker, and figureheads of parliamentary Independency, Thomas Goodwin and Jeremiah Burroughs. Eglesfield’s authors sat in the Westminster Assembly (Goodwin, Burroughs, John Bond, and Thomas Ford of Exeter), or worked for the Cromwellian church structure of Triers and Ejectors (Bond, Ford, and George Newton of Taunton).<sup>35</sup> Unsurprisingly, given the religious profile of towns like Exeter, Plymouth, and Taunton, this puritan colour becomes even more pronounced in Eglesfield’s west-country business. This creates a puzzle: how to reconcile Eglesfield’s puritan market with his apparently royalist leanings? His Restoration pamphlet lashes out against the ‘abominable monsters at Westminster’ and ‘fleabitten Ministers of Edinburgh’, despite having been a leading publisher of their books.<sup>36</sup> Such apparent contradictions were not uncommon amid the reversal of 1660 and may reflect some judicious camouflaging of his political colours, or a genuinely conflicted conscience. Whatever his personal beliefs, the ideological tenor of Eglesfield’s output appears to have followed the commercial logic of his markets in London and in the puritan centres of the south-west. We must therefore look elsewhere to recover the political agency that drove the dissemination of his books—to the puritan clergymen who wrote, bought, and circulated them.

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<sup>30</sup>Cain and Connolly, ‘Appendix 1’, pp. 407-8.

<sup>31</sup>Eglesfield, *Life and Reigne* (Wing E253A and E254).

<sup>32</sup>McKenzie and Bell, eds., *Chronology and Calendar*, vol. 1, p. 475.

<sup>33</sup>Cain and Connolly, Introduction and ‘Appendix 1’, pp. xlv-ii, 407-8; Lynch, ‘Three Printers of *Eikon Basilike*’, p. 306.

<sup>34</sup>Clayton, ‘Dissent in the English Book Trade’, pp. 25-6.

<sup>35</sup>e.g. STC 22501; Wing P3303, D1104, U156, D1404, F1517, C6425, H2654, G1267, B6064, N1045.

<sup>36</sup>Eglesfield, *Life and Reigne*, p. 123.

## John Bond: Distributing Printed Sermons

John Bond was born in Chard, Somerset, in 1612, matriculated at Oxford in 1632, and began his preaching career in Exeter in the late 1630s. One of his sermons describes Somerset and Devon as (respectively) ‘my Mother and my Nurse’.<sup>37</sup> Expelled from Exeter by the royalists’ capture of the city in September 1643, Bond fell back on his network of Westminster patrons, securing preferment as Master of the Savoy, and appointment to the Westminster Assembly, where he was identified as one of ‘the westerne men’.<sup>38</sup> He is not to be confused with John Bond of Dorset, an MP and Master of Trinity Hall, Cambridge, with whom he was conflated by Anthony Wood.<sup>39</sup> This MP’s father, Denis Bond, was an influential alderman and MP of Dorchester, a leading figure on the Commons Committee of the West, and also one of Bond the preacher’s principal parliamentary patrons. This is evident from the Commons Journal on occasions when Bond was invited to preach to parliament, and ‘Mr. Bond’ was deputized to convey the House’s thanks ‘unto Mr. Bond’.<sup>40</sup> It was in support of the Committee of the West that John Bond preached his most distinctive sermon, *Job in the West* (1645). After the civil war, Bond maintained his contacts with the westcountry, helping to establish Presbyterian government in Devon. He returned to Exeter in 1647 to preach at the first anniversary of the city’s relief, when he received a gift of 10 pounds ‘for his greate paynes [and] services performed by hym for this Cittie’.<sup>41</sup> He died in 1658, as testified by Eglesfield’s catalogue of 1659: ‘Mr. John Bond, late of the *Savoy*, deceased’.<sup>42</sup> Bond possessed a fiery temper, and attests that he relied on his Westminster allies to defend him from enemies in Exeter who branded him ‘*Troubler, Pestilent, Schismaticall*’; later, in London, he continued to attract controversy for his support for the Cromwellian regime and his excitable preaching.<sup>43</sup> His sermons reveal an important and valued intermediary between puritan networks in Westminster and pulpits in the westcountry, and an activist who sought to escalate the political temperature in his local community.

Bond published five sermons, four of them with Eglesfield. His first book was a compilation of two sermons: *A Doore of Hope* and *Holy and Loyal Activity*. Internal evidence indicates that they were preached in November 1641. Bond signed his prefatory epistle to the printed version ‘From my Study in Excester, February 5. 1641 [2]’, and George Thomason dated his copy March 19<sup>th</sup>. Notwithstanding Eglesfield’s claim to sell ‘All the sermons which are in print of Mr. John Bond’, this first sermon was published by John Bartlet.<sup>44</sup> Thomason acquired a copy in London, and the sermon addresses a national audience, holding up Exeter as a ‘Beacon upon an hill’. But it is also closely focused on local campaigns in Exeter, at one point highlighting that the town Mayor was present in the room when it was preached.<sup>45</sup> The sermon was framed around the

<sup>37</sup>Bond, *Job in the West* (Wing B3572), sig. A1r. *Alumni Oxonienses*, s.v. ‘Bond, John’.

<sup>38</sup>*Commons Journal*, July 3<sup>rd</sup> 1644. van Dixhoorn and Wright, eds., *Westminster Assembly*, vol. 2, pp. 184 and 575; vol. 3, p. 176.

<sup>39</sup>Wood, *Athenae Oxonienses*, vol. 2, pp. 116–18.

<sup>40</sup>*Commons Journal*, 27<sup>th</sup> March 1644. On Denis Bond of Dorchester, see Roberts, ed., *History of Parliament*, vol. 1, pp. 730–4, and Underdown, *Fire From Heaven*.

<sup>41</sup>van Dixhoorn and Wright, eds., *Westminster Assembly*, vol. 4, p. 454; Exeter, Devon Heritage Centre, ECA 1/2/1/8, f. 197v.

<sup>42</sup>Dickson, *An Exposition*, unpaginated catalogue. The date of death often wrongly given, 1676, belongs to John Bond MP.

<sup>43</sup>Bond, *A Doore of Hope* (Wing B3569), sig. A34r. See attacks on Bond in anonymous broadside, ‘Be it known and declared’ (1649, Wing B1554) and Sanderson, *A Compleat History* (Wing S646), p. 638.

<sup>44</sup>Dickson, *An Exposition*, unpaginated catalogue.

<sup>45</sup>Bond, *Doore of Hope*, pp. 49, 104.



Protestation, the declaration of loyalty to parliament and Protestantism first taken by MPs in May 1641. At first, the Protestation was taken voluntarily: a special swearing had been held in Exeter in August, with further celebrations in November, when Bond initially preached the sermons.<sup>46</sup> Bond urges his hearers to support the Protestation and be vigilant against enemies: ‘do but marke (my Brethren) what persons (Lay or Clergy) are most dull and backward . . . to the late *Vow* and *Protestation* . . . which I call *Anti-Deliverancers*’.<sup>47</sup> Here is an obvious, and somewhat disturbing, effort at partisan identity-forming within Exeter, encouraging parishioners to monitor one another’s behaviour, and introducing pejorative labels to brand foot-draggers as ‘Anti-Deliverancers’. This came close to ‘particular preaching’, whereby individual parishioners could be named and shamed, though not so dramatic as Thomas Larkham’s exuberant use of this technique in Tavistock.<sup>48</sup> The official Protestation return for Bond’s parish of St Lawrence, Exeter, names Protestation refusers in the congregation, against whom his words were implicitly targeted. The return is dated February 20<sup>th</sup> 1642, when parliament was enforcing the Protestation systematically.<sup>49</sup> This matches with the print publication of Bond’s sermon—too closely to be coincidental. The distribution of the sermon in print, with its ostentatious dedication to his parliamentary patrons, was evidently designed to support the local swearing campaign. Bond understood this as a moment of political participation, across a broad social spectrum, declaring that ‘there is not the poorest *Mechanick*, nay, childe, or servant, that hath an estate, a body, or a soule, but behold, they all doe lye now at stake’. This language drew on mainstream Protestant rhetoric, but in the conditions of the mass mobilizations of 1641–42 took on a more radical colouring, urging the political agency of ‘mechanics’, servants, and women.<sup>50</sup>

Once civil war had broken out, Bond’s preaching contributed actively to the parliamentary war effort. His second published sermon indicates its martial context in the title: *A Sermon Preached in Exon, Before the Deputy-Lieutenants, Captaines, and other Military Officers and Souldiers of the County of Devon*.<sup>51</sup> This text dates from March 1643, coinciding with a ‘meeting at Exon’ which John Syms records attending on 4<sup>th</sup> March 1642/3, ‘for the 3 adioyning Countyes to associate themselves’ and to turn the war ‘upon Cornwall’ (held for the king by Ralph Hopton).<sup>52</sup> This was the first sermon for which Bond turned to Eglesfield’s superior western distribution network. A minor mystery attaches to this text, in the form of a printed separate which Bond signed from ‘Exon. Aprill 8 1643’ (Thomason acquired it on April 13<sup>th</sup>). Bond complains that the published text of *A Sermon Preached in Exon* was a ‘bastard-copy’, forged and released by the printer, ‘T.B.’ (Thomas Brudenell).<sup>53</sup> The pages of the sermon were then reissued under a new title-page as *The States Stability*. There are no changes to the text, which offers an uncontentious justification for the parliamentary cause. It therefore appears

<sup>46</sup>Walter, *Covenanting Citizens*, pp. 120, 124–6, 160.

<sup>47</sup>Bond, *Doore of Hope*, p. 10.

<sup>48</sup>Arnold Hunt, *Art of Hearing*, p. 252. See also Leng, ‘Meanings of ‘Malignancy’’.

<sup>49</sup>London, Parliamentary Archives, HL/PO/JO/10/1/86/45; viewable online at <http://digitalarchive.parliament.uk/HL/PO/JO/10/1/86/45>.

<sup>50</sup>Bond, *Doore of Hope*, pp. 83, 131.

<sup>51</sup>Wing B3575.

<sup>52</sup>Syms, f. 15r.

<sup>53</sup>Wing B3571 (1643). For the identification of Thomas Brudenell as printer, see the identical title-page of Thomas Neesham, *A Sermon Preached At the Funerall of the Honorable Sir Francis Vincent* (London: 1642, Wing N440A).

that Bond had taken issue with the timing of the original edition's release—perhaps before he had sent copy for a dedicatory epistle. Whatever mix-up had occurred, it was the printer Brudenell who took the blame, as Bond continued to publish with Eglesfield thereafter. But the incident suggests how seriously Bond sought to manage the distribution of his sermons after printing, going so far as to cancel and reissue an edition when his wishes were ignored. The separate also links Bond's distribution practices to his political coalition-building, claiming that the wrongly published sermon would have 'abused' the 'very Cause', and professing himself 'The Causes Jo. Bond'.

In his London career after the fall of Exeter, Bond established himself as a specialist preacher on western affairs. This status is exemplified by *Job in the West*, preached in the autumn of 1644 at two fasts in support of the Committee of the West, then campaigning to revive the south-western war effort following the Earl of Essex's humiliating defeat at Lostwithiel that September. The sermon was published in January 1645. That it appears in Eglesfield's 1649 catalogue listed separately as 'Mr. Bonds Iob in the West', while the others were lumped together as 'All his other Sermons in Quarto', suggests that this text was Bond's best-known work.<sup>54</sup> It was acquired by John Syms in Plymouth, listed as 'Bonds Job in the West', and, Syms records, loaned out to a navy or army officer: 'lent to capt Fearne'.<sup>55</sup> As with the previous sermon, Bond's preaching was applied to the instruction of local military personnel. The sermon pleaded for greater support from 'all such as *ought to be good friends* to the *West*'. Bond strives to articulate a sense of distinctive regional identity, addressing an audience 'met together . . . to weepe over the bleeding country of our nativity'.<sup>56</sup> These words were primarily intended to concentrate minds in Westminster, but Syms's circulation of the text in Plymouth also suggests how they could bolster morale in parliament's remaining western strongholds.

This picture, drawing on printed texts, including the fortuitous survival of the separate, alongside parliamentary archives like the Protestation returns and Commons Journal, has suggested the motivation and orchestration of Bond's print campaigns. Printed sermons captured symbolic gatherings of the region's political community, but also provided an important bridge between Westminster politicians and regional supporters. The appearance of Syms here indicates how we can gain still more granular insights into the processes of book circulation on the ground by turning to private journals. It is to this kind of evidence, in Larkham and Syms, that the following sections turn.

### Thomas Larkham: Parish Distribution Networks

Thomas Larkham's account book, on indefinite loan to the British Library, records his regular expenditure, and a wealth of associated biographical details and spiritual meditations, during his tenure as minister for Tavistock from 1650 until 1660, with further fitful entries up to his death in 1669. The diary has been studied as a literary text in the tradition of 'spiritual accounting'. We are fortunate that the intensely detailed and

<sup>54</sup>Wing D1404 (1649), unpaginated catalogue.

<sup>55</sup>Syms, f. 182v. A naval captain Ferne is recorded in the Channel and south-west coast theatre in 1646: Powell and Timings, eds., *Documents Relating to the Civil War*, pp. 247, 293. An alternative reading may give 'Peares', identifiable as a captain recorded in the Plymouth garrison in 1645: Worth, 'Siege Accounts of Plymouth', pp. 218, 233, 235.

<sup>56</sup>Bond, *Job in the West*, pp. 1, 10.

cramped manuscript can now be consulted alongside a modern critical edition by Susan Hardman Moore.<sup>57</sup> Larkham led a turbulent life, dogged by scandal and controversy: thirteen years as vicar of Northam in Devon, followed by three years in New England in 1639-42; he then served as an army chaplain in Sir Hardress Waller's regiment of foot, which brought him back to his native westcountry in 1648. Ejected from Waller's regiment, and finding Tavistock without a settled minister, Larkham was installed in 1649. The 1650s were spent in a furious battle over the town's sectarian identity. When his local opponents had him summoned to the Commission of the Triers in 1657, Larkham sought advice from 'my Countryman', John Bond, then serving as clerical assistant to the Ejectors.<sup>58</sup> At the Restoration Larkham was finally ejected, and briefly imprisoned, reduced to becoming an itinerant preacher and apothecary. He was recognized by contemporaries as a 'feirce Independent', with an intensely confrontational style of preaching which reportedly left parishioners 'ready to vomit'. He held strict views on admission to the sacraments, distinguishing sharply between his work as 'public preacher' to the parish, and as pastor to the gathered church, whose membership he restricted increasingly strenuously.<sup>59</sup> Unlike John Syms, Larkham has not left a detailed record of his book ownership—the account book occasionally gestures to wider book-buying activities and the purchase of many more notebooks, in some of which he must have kept his library inventory and reading notes. But the account book does preserve valuable information about his publication arrangement with Eglesfield, and the strategies by which he distributed books to his parishioners.

Larkham regarded book-circulation as part of his pastoral mission. However, in the conditions of the 1650s struggle over church government this also meant an effort of partisan coalition-building, whose techniques were well understood by Larkham, veteran of the highly politicized environment of the New Model Army. The local controversy in Tavistock spilled into several rounds of print, leaving traces in Larkham's account book. For example, he spent £8-7s-7d on printing and transporting his pamphlet attack on local opponents, *Naboth*, in 1657.<sup>60</sup> By this time an embattled figure, Larkham appears to have entrusted these later rounds of print campaigning to his local allies, and the controversy consequently features only intermittently in the accounts.<sup>61</sup> But these distribution campaigns drew on Larkham's already well-established network, whose previous activities he recorded very thoroughly. Book distribution was central to his campaign of evangelizing and coalition-forming both in Tavistock and across the region. For example, he acquired dozens of copies of a catechism and a psalm book, which his parishioners distributed to their neighbours.<sup>62</sup> The psalm book has been persuasively identified as an Eglesfield publication, the puritan minister William Barton's *The Book of Psalms in Metre* (1654), further illustrating the important role of clerical distribution in Eglesfield's business.<sup>63</sup>

<sup>57</sup>Hardman Moore, ed., *Diary*. Folio references to the manuscript are followed by page references in Hardman Moore's edition in parentheses. See Smyth, *Autobiography*, pp. 104-22. Also Hardman Moore, 'Pure folks' and the parish'.

<sup>58</sup>Larkham, *Naboth*, in Hardman Moore, ed., *Diary* p. 331; for Bond's appointment, see the Ordinance for ejecting Scandalous Ministers, August 1654 in *Acts and Ordinances of the Interregnum, 1642-1660* (London: HM Stationery Office, 2011), *British History Online*, <https://www.british-history.ac.uk/no-series/acts-ordinances-interregnum>.

<sup>59</sup>Hardman Moore, ed., *Diary*, pp. 6-7, 14-15; Smyth, *Autobiography*, p. 107.

<sup>60</sup>Larkham, f. 26v (Hardman Moore, p. 159).

<sup>61</sup>Later deputized to his cousin-by-marriage David Condy and leading church member John Sheere: f. 31r (p. 184).

<sup>62</sup>On the politics of Larkham's early printed campaigns, see Hardman Moore, ed., *Diary*, p. 18.

<sup>63</sup>Hardman Moore, ed., *Diary*, pp. 20-1.

Larkham's accounts have attracted attention for shedding light on publication agreements for sermons where strong sales were anticipated in the preacher's home parish.<sup>64</sup> He provides detailed lists of recipients and prices, with much further information scattered through the main diary, for two of his titles: *The Wedding-Supper* (1652) and *The Attributes of God* (1656).<sup>65</sup> The first edition of *The Wedding-Supper* (1652) was published by the radical printer Giles Calvert, and Larkham received 300 copies—a large portion of a print run that, for this ambitious text, might easily have numbered 750 or more.<sup>66</sup> Larkham's distribution campaign had a national dimension, with copies sent to patrons in London and in the Army. But most of the documented copies were sold in Tavistock and the south west. He placed copies with local booksellers: 20 each for John Mungwell and Thomas Hunt in Exeter, and 24 for John Radcliffe in Plymouth.<sup>67</sup> For *The Attributes of God* in 1656, Larkham transferred to Francis Eglesfield, who published both the *Attributes* and a new edition of *The Wedding-Supper*, advertising both in his catalogues.<sup>68</sup> Larkham paid Eglesfield £10 'in money & books', and received 56 copies of the *Attributes* in return, which he paid 14 shillings to transport to Tavistock.<sup>69</sup> By 1656, with his ambitions for national recognition mired in local controversy, it made sense to turn to a publisher with superior regional trade links, including with all the booksellers named above.<sup>70</sup> Larkham subsequently broke with Eglesfield: his later writings in the pamphlet controversy over Tavistock were all printed privately for the author, and do not name any publisher. Eglesfield himself was certainly not averse to publishing local controversy: in 1658-59 he published two pamphlets in a very similar battle over communion-membership that had flared up in Exeter, in the congregation of a similarly factious Independent minister, Lewis Stucley, one of Larkham's key regional allies. That Eglesfield's involvement was on the side of Stucley's opponents suggests a likely rift with Larkham.<sup>71</sup> This is circumstantial evidence, but it appears to show Larkham, like Bond, switching deliberately between publishers to orchestrate his publication campaigns.

Larkham's evidence goes beyond merely illustrating his relationship with the book trade, and reveals much about the social depth and economic contexts of his distribution efforts. His motivations were not commercial. He sold *The Wedding-Supper*, a volume of 270 pages, at one shilling per copy, much cheaper than the prices John Syms records paying at bookstalls in London and Plymouth (for example, 11d, just short of a shilling, for Bond's *Job in the West*, only 92 pages). Larkham sold to trade booksellers at an even lower rate: in Plymouth, Radcliffe paid 16s for his 24 copies; in Exeter, Mungwell and Hunt each paid for their 20 copies in books, Mungwell with a copy of Giovanni Diodati's *Pious Annotations upon the Holy Bible* (London, 1643) which Larkham later valued at 11s.<sup>72</sup> Larkham's second book, *The Attributes of God*, was much more expensive, at 4s a copy—reflective of higher overheads, with only 56 author copies suggesting a smaller

<sup>64</sup>Hunt, *Art of Hearing*, p. 165.

<sup>65</sup>Wing L442 and L441. The lists appear on unfoliated leaves at the end of the manuscript (Hardman Moore, pp. 377-83).

<sup>66</sup>Green, *Print and Protestantism*, pp. 176-78.

<sup>67</sup>Larkham, f. 10r, and unfoliated (pp. 51, 380-81).

<sup>68</sup>The second edition of *The Wedding-Supper* appears to have been Eglesfield's speculative venture, as Larkham makes no mention of it, and was still trying to shift copies of the first: f. 28r (p. 168).

<sup>69</sup>Larkham, f. 21r-v and unfoliated (pp. 119, 124, 382-3).

<sup>70</sup>Ideological differences may also have been a factor, given Calvert's increasing involvement with Quakerism.

<sup>71</sup>Larkham, f. 32v (p. 190); Toby Allein, *Truths Manifest* (1658, Wing A958) and *Truths Manifest Revived* (1659, Wing A959), the latter sold by John Mungwell in Exeter. On this controversy, see Edwards, 'Susannas Apologie'.

<sup>72</sup>Larkham, unfoliated (pp. 380-81).

print run, but also a much longer work, of 530 pages in three volumes.<sup>73</sup> Even at the higher price, it has been calculated that he only just managed to cover his costs for printing and transportation.<sup>74</sup> If Larkham did not profit financially from his bookselling, it still brought secondary benefits in a cash-poor economy held together by credit, obligation, and exchange.<sup>75</sup> Larkham was never poor before the 1660s—he had tenants and kept servants—but he struggled continuously with liquidity, regularly signing off his accounts with phrases like ‘No mony in house’.<sup>76</sup> It is notable (above) that he paid Eglesfield and received payments from booksellers partly through books in kind. Selling books therefore provided him with a useful trickle of ready cash, essential for maintaining his credit.

Book distribution was enmeshed within a wider network of economic transactions. Many of the 89 named individuals recorded in the diary as receiving books from him also appear in his expenditure accounts. These include his lawyer, and his tailors, barber, chandler, joiner, and maltster; other names appear selling him butter, ironmongery, and firewood. Others received goods and services from Larkham: several were his tenants, to one of whom he also sold furniture. The majority obviously received his services as minister, including paying the standard 10s fee for a funeral sermon. He sold one book to a widow whose husband he had buried the week before; another to a widow who he buried a few months later.<sup>77</sup> This information also illustrates the social depth of political campaigning in Larkham’s Tavistock, where opponents accused him of pandering to the lower classes.<sup>78</sup> His books were bought by local schoolmasters and university students, but also by the tradesmen already noted, and his maidservant.<sup>79</sup> These people were sufficiently affluent, and sufficiently literate, to pay a shilling for a book—at least at the importunity of their overbearing minister. They indicate that rural Tavistock could supply parallels to the London wood-turner Nehemiah Wallington, who confessed to spending large sums of money on books.<sup>80</sup> Larkham’s practice was akin to Bond’s, quoted above, in conceiving of religio-political participation across a broad social spectrum, and including women. It is remarkable that of Larkham’s 89 identifiable book-recipients, 19 (a fifth) were women, several of whom did not just buy books, but actively participated in their distribution. 20 copies of *The Wedding-Supper* were dispatched for circulation by Larkham’s sisters in Lyme. In Tavistock, 12 copies were distributed by ‘H[enry] Green’s wife’, to whom Larkham allowed a 2s gratuity for her efforts.<sup>81</sup> The involvement of leading parishioners like Mrs. Green in distributing substantial numbers of copies illustrates how book-circulation was a mode of political participation. It offered

<sup>73</sup>Hardman Moore suggests that Larkham was selling only the first part of the *Attributes*: ed., *Diary*, p. 382. However, the 4s price tag seems more reasonable for a 530-page work than a 180-page part.

<sup>74</sup>Hunt, *Art of Hearing*, p. 165.

<sup>75</sup>Muldrew, *Economy of Obligation*, pp. 149 and passim.

<sup>76</sup>Larkham, f. 15r (p. 90).

<sup>77</sup>Butter: Mary Charles, f. 35r (p. 207); ironmongery: Emmanuel Frost, f. 48r (p. 295); wood: Richard Peeke, f. 31r (p. 181); sugar: Peter Trix, also a tenant, f. 28r (pp. 168-9); lawyer: ‘Mr. Raddon’, f. 27v (p. 166); tailors: Daniel Sowton, f. 16v (p. 103), William Baker, f. 12r (p. 65); barber: Ellis Bray, f. 10v (p. 55); chandler: William Webb, f. 17r (p. 107), also a tenant, f. 16v (p. 102); maltster: Beville Wivell, also a tenant, f. 34r-v (pp. 200, 203); joiner: John Sheere, f. 13v (p. 81); tenant who bought furniture: John Middleton, f. 14r (p. 82); widows: Mrs. Sitwell, f. 14v (pp. 88, 90), Thomasin Dodge, f. 14v, 15v (pp. 90, 97).

<sup>78</sup>Hardman Moore, ed., *Diary*, p. 16 and n.

<sup>79</sup>Maidservant: Dinah Woodman, f. 23v (p. 136).

<sup>80</sup>London, BL, Add. MS 40883, f. 15v.

<sup>81</sup>Larkham, f. 16v (p. 102).

a means of community-forming within Larkham's gathered church, including women and non-elite members, who were sent out to evangelize and lobby their neighbours.

### John Syms: Lending and Copying

John Syms's 'A Daybooke of some special passages & mercyes both personal Nationall, particular and Generall' records both his experiences and wider events around Plymouth during the civil wars.<sup>82</sup> Syms was almost certainly the 'John Symes of Somerset, gent' who matriculated at Oxford in 1615.<sup>83</sup> From May 1623, he served as curate at 'Shittestor' in Devon (now usually referred to as Sheepstor). In late 1643, he was driven from Sheepstor by royalist threats in the region; after a period on the run, he arrived in Plymouth in March 1644, providentially just in time to take the Covenant. As indicated by its multiple titles, the journal represents a generic hybrid, combining a chronicle of 'Certaine passages at and betweene the severall seidges of plymmouth' and a more private account of 'personal favours and deliverances'.<sup>84</sup> There is another comparison here with Nehemiah Wallington, who kept parallel notebooks of political news ('A Bundel of Marcyes') and spiritual reflections ('The Groth of a Christian'). In Wallington's case, these categories overlap and blur considerably—as public events inevitably prompt religious meditation—and similarly, despite giving separate headings, Syms's journal moves organically between these categories.<sup>85</sup> Suggestively, Wallington wrote with the expectation of readership, as ostensibly private reflections were intended to be edifying for others. Syms likely also intended his notes either to be shown to readers, or to inform his oral teaching. His memorials of the sieges of Plymouth represent an attempt at the manuscript genre of civic chronicle that gained new urgency in the 1640s, comparable with examples surviving in Exeter or (further afield) Manchester.<sup>86</sup> In August 1644, Syms took up a new post as chaplain aboard the frigate *Providence*, guarding parliamentary supply lines and confronting privateers. He provided religious instruction to the sailors as they worked the ship's guns in combat—a visceral experience of the front-line role of clergy in civil-war mobilization.<sup>87</sup> The following November, he provoked a near mutiny in a dispute with the ship's commander over the toleration of swearing. Syms drew up 'a petition & articles against him' and had it signed by a number of petty officers, while also aiding the ordinary seamen to draw up their own petition 'concerning their grievances against the Captaine'. The situation was only defused when Syms was granted leave to press his case at London—ultimately fruitlessly—in December 1644.<sup>88</sup> This incident illustrates Syms's literacy in the tools of political campaigning, but also the fiery, dogmatic temper that (as with Bond and Larkham) led this sober and learned man into radical confrontation. It is in this context that we need to read Syms's circulation of religio-political print.

<sup>82</sup>Syms, f. 2r. The journal's contents are summarized in Miller, 'John Syms'; and noted (but not closely analysed) in Peacey, *Print and Public Politics*, pp. 43, 74.

<sup>83</sup>*Alumni Oxonienses*, s.v. 'Syms, John'.

<sup>84</sup>Syms, ff. 14r and 19r. Note that twelve pages are missing from Syms's foliation sequence, so that the latter heading (f. 19r) appears on the leaf Syms numbered 31.

<sup>85</sup>London, BL Add MS 21935 and Add MS 40833.

<sup>86</sup>Exeter, Devon Record Office, 73/15 (chronicle of James White); Manchester, Chetham's Library, A/6/51 (Richard Hollingworth, *Mancuniensis*).

<sup>87</sup>Syms, ff. 42v-43r.

<sup>88</sup>Syms, ff. 54v-55v, 57v-58r.

Syms's journal is also remarkable for preserving three separate booklists that provide detailed evidence of his activities both as a book customer and as a book distributor in his own right. First, in August 1644, he catalogued the library of 23 printed books that he carried on board the *Providence*, including books deposited by other crew members for safekeeping, and some loaned out (e.g. a 'Physicke Book' lent to 'Mr prat the Surgion').<sup>89</sup> Second, at the end of the notebook, he compiled a list of 126 books under two headings: 'the bookes I have heer' and 'the bookes I bought at London & Plymouth'. The first four pages of this list supply prices for each item. That no title on the list is later than 1646 identifies it as an inventory of Syms's library taken at his move to Herrick's vacant living of Dean Prior in August of that year. That he had left Plymouth is confirmed on the leaf at the end of the list, which gives the dates of his children's birthdays, copied from the Sheepstor parish register, followed by that of his installation at Dean Prior.<sup>90</sup> The third and final list records 10 'bookes lent', on a leaf dated 1649.<sup>91</sup> Syms was poorer than Larkham, and operated on a substantially smaller scale. His price list permits a crude calculation that he spent on average 13s 10d per year on books during the period 1644-46, which can be contrasted with Larkham's turnover on his print distribution campaigns, which averaged 28s per year during 1652-55. Syms circulated books by lending rather than selling them. The list of 1646 records, on the first page, three titles on loan to other readers at the time the list was made. It seems fair to conjecture that more titles were probably loaned out: the lists of 1644 and 1649 demonstrate that he continued to lend books throughout the period. The survival of some titles across multiple lists suggests how some books could hypothetically have been borrowed by multiple readers over several years. Syms also operated (like Larkham) in a network of mutual exchange, as the journal indicates that he also borrowed books from others (discussed below). The loaned titles on the 1646 list include an influential older work of puritan exegesis, John Udall's *Commentarie upon the Lamentations of Jeremy* (1593, likely in the edition of 1637), but, more significantly, two works of contemporary religious controversy: Thomas Blake's *Infant baptisme, freed from Antichristianisme* (1645) and, as noted, Bond's *Job in the West* (1644). The tendency toward Presbyterian controversy is even more pronounced in the 1649 lending list, including William Prynne's assault on Archbishop Laud, *The Popish Royall Favourite* (1643), and no fewer than three anti-sectarian works on 'the Errors now in the land', one of which is identifiable as Robert Baillie's *A Dissuasive from the Errours of the Tyme* (1645).<sup>92</sup> Controversial works of the mid-1640s evidently remained desirable titles in Syms's library in the febrile conditions of 1649. These records all indicate how Syms's book-lending practices were driven by concerns of Presbyterian factionalism or, in the case of Bond's *Job in the West*, the local war effort.

The lists allow us to assess Syms's profile as a book customer, his access to and consumption of books, rare for a reader below the wealthiest merchants and landed gentry. The 1646 list's title, 'bookes bought in London and at Plymouth', indicate that some were acquired during his trip to London in December 1644. Access to printed matter in Plymouth included not only the bookshop of John Radcliffe, with whom (we have seen) both Eglesfield and Larkham dealt, but also the regular naval traffic, indicated

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<sup>89</sup>Syms, f. 1v.

<sup>90</sup>Syms, ff. 183-179 (reversed).

<sup>91</sup>Syms, f. 183r (reversed).

<sup>92</sup>STC 24498; Wing B3146, P4039, B456.

by entries in the journal prefaced with phrases like ‘the parliam<sup>t</sup> shippes arriving brought newes’.<sup>93</sup> Of the books that can be confidently identified, Syms’s preferred publishers were unsurprisingly specialists in puritan theology, with seven titles published by Samuel Gellibrand, six by Christopher Meredith, and five by Thomas Underhill. Against these we can set five books published by Francis Eglesfield, and one published by the Bolers which remained in his stock at the Marigold, plus a further two Eglesfield titles omitted from the lists but transcribed into the main journal, bringing the final total to eight.<sup>94</sup> Identifying Eglesfield as one of Syms’s most frequently acquired publishers provides circumstantial support to the picture of Eglesfield as the dominant supplier to the westcountry puritan market.

The lists also illustrate the intellectual ambitions and interests that Syms brought to his work as a parliamentary preacher. The authors he brought onto the Providence included popular English puritans like Arthur Dent, and the Somerset preacher William Sclater, but also learned continental theologians including David Pareus, Jeremias Bastingius, and Lucas Osiander. The list also includes secular works, notably ‘Cambdens Remaines’, William Camden’s *Remains Concerning Britain* (1605), which Syms notes was lent to a ‘corporall’, presumably in the Plymouth garrison.<sup>95</sup> Intriguingly, this antiquarian interest was shared by John Bond, who also refers to Camden in *Job in the West*, invoking his names for the Romano-British tribes who inhabited the south west, the ‘Danmonii’ of Devon and ‘Belga’ of Somerset.<sup>96</sup> This suggests a context for Syms’s interest in Camden, locating puritan mobilization within a shared historical resource for national and regional identities. A handful of Syms’s titles evidence his interest in south-western affairs: most obviously *Job in the West*, but also a funeral sermon preached for William Gould, the commander of the Plymouth garrison, also published by Eglesfield in 1644.<sup>97</sup>

As was common practice, Syms did not itemize ephemeral material like periodical news, but rather lumped it together as ‘severall weekly occurences’, or simply ‘newes’ (a loan recorded in the 1649 list).<sup>98</sup> A number of topical titles are not included in the lists but are transcribed directly into the journal—presumably indicating that Syms either passed them immediately on to others, or had borrowed them himself. The first portion of the manuscript transcribes a news pamphlet published by Eglesfield, *A True Narration of the Most Observable Passages, in and at the late Seige of Plymouth*, acquired by Thomason on February 5<sup>th</sup> 1644.<sup>99</sup> This transcription is followed by Syms’s heading (already quoted), ‘Certaine passages at . . . the several seidges of plymmouth’, suggesting that he conceived of his chronicle as a continuation of the pamphlet.<sup>100</sup> Later, in the narration of events in February and March, the margins become crammed with annotations drawn from a subsequent pamphlet, which Eglesfield published in April 1644, *A continuation of the true narration of the most observable passages in and about*

<sup>93</sup>Syms, ff. 24v, 62r.

<sup>94</sup>Gellibrand: Wing M1452, C3812, B456, B459, W2220, H340, M789. Meredith: STC 21816; Wing C256, C261, N909, G589, plus Edmund Calamy, *A Just and Necessary Apology* (London: Christopher Meredith, 1646). Underhill: Wing B3146, A3535, D2867, T1758, B5655. Eglesfield/Bolers: STC 4019, 1225; Wing B3572, B3574, D1108A, M1996, T2763, C5973.

<sup>95</sup>Syms, f. 1v (no name supplied).

<sup>96</sup>Bond, *Job in the West*, p. 31.

<sup>97</sup>Stephen Midhope, *Deaths Advantage* (London: 1643, Wing M1996).

<sup>98</sup>Syms, ff. 182r, 183r. See Peacey, *Print and Public Politics*, pp. 42, 61.

<sup>99</sup>Wing T2763.

<sup>100</sup>Syms, f. 14r.



*Plymouth*.<sup>101</sup> Evidently Syms had already written up this period when the pamphlet arrived, about April 17<sup>th</sup>, and he had to squeeze the additional material into the margins. He then interrupted the main text of the journal to transcribe further contents from the pamphlet.<sup>102</sup> Although Thomason did acquire both pamphlets in London, they were among the items that Eglesfield omitted from his London sales catalogue, and Syms's reception of them in Plymouth demonstrates that they reached a target audience in the westcountry.

Several more transcriptions from topical print are scattered through the journal, until 1646—the end of the siege of Plymouth, and Syms's move to Dean Prior—whereafter all the remaining material is transcribed from print sources. Syms had now moved away from the regional centre, with less ready access to books; following the end of the first civil war, the centre of attention had now shifted firmly to London. Items he copied include the Heads of Proposals (1647), the peace settlement offered by the New Model Army officers; a Leveller text, 'A Humble Petition of thousands well-affected persons' in support of *The Agreement of the People* (1648); and, written up in his neatest handwriting, *A perfect Narrative of the proceedings of the High Court of Justice in the Tryall of the King* (1649).<sup>103</sup> In light of the relatively conservative Presbyterianism evidenced above, it is striking to find Syms consuming texts associated with the Army and the Levellers—and to imagine him circulating such materials among Herrick's former parishioners at Dean Prior. He evidently selected some texts with these local circumstances in mind, most obviously parliament's 'Ordinance for Keeping in Godly Ministers, placed in Livings by authority of Parliament', apparently anticipating a local power-struggle comparable to that faced by Larkham in Tavistock.<sup>104</sup> These examples all illustrate how the outer limits of book circulation could reach beyond the printed copy itself. Again, scribal copying indicates that Syms presumably either passed on the book immediately or had borrowed it—keeping his copy for manuscript circulation or as a script for oral transmission.

## Conclusion

This essay has sought to chart the many different forms of book-circulation visible in the westcountry during the 1640s and 1650s, and to show how such activities can be interpreted as forms of political participation. This process is hard to present in quantifiable terms; instead, a contextual picture has been built by bringing together printed title-pages and catalogues with archival sources. Thus, we have seen that Bond's sermons worked to broadcast Westminster political arguments to his regional audience, and there are signs that he actively orchestrated his print dissemination to coincide with important political campaigns. Larkham enlisted his parishioners in repeated rounds of book distribution, evangelizing neighbours and lobbying for the Congregationalist position within local sectarian power-struggles. Syms deployed his literacy skills in various forms of political campaigning: drafting subversive petitions, copying ephemeral printed news, and collecting and lending works of religious controversy. A broader implication of this

<sup>101</sup>Wing C5973.

<sup>102</sup>Syms, ff. 31r-34r.

<sup>103</sup>Wing E3032; Wing L2188; Syms, f. 100r, f. 126v, f. 163v, f. 166v.

<sup>104</sup>Syms, f. 157v.

picture is to offer a counterpoint to scholarship that has emphasized the agency of ideologically-motivated publishers like Richard Royston or Richard Overton, who ran sophisticated partisan propaganda campaigns. Francis Eglesfield, by contrast, exemplifies more traditional publishers—perhaps the majority—who remained ideologically ambivalent, and whose motivations appear to have been primarily commercial. The survey of Eglesfield's business has demonstrated that he published a wide range of predominantly puritan and parliamentarian material, despite his apparently royalist leanings. His unmatched distribution network in the south west made him an attractive publisher for Devon puritans. The political agency that drove the regional distribution of Eglesfield's books lay outside of the conventional book trade. The clerical circulation traced here ran through commercial sellers, as Larkham placed his books at shops in Plymouth and Exeter. But they were primarily non-commercial: Larkham sold at or below the cost of production; Syms loaned books and made scribal copies. Rather, in a context where local booksellers sold materials from across the ideological spectrum—as Thomas Hunt of Exeter sold both Larkham and Herrick—it was clerical circulation that connected books with their target political audiences. Such activities were not confined to the radical fringe: Bond and Syms were well within the puritan mainstream, and Larkham, though pungently confrontational, was no extremist. Yet all were possessed of dogged and fiery tempers that thrust them into revolutionary conflict, and they encouraged political participation by the non-elite and by women. Their activities contributed to coalition-building, sometimes evoking a distinctive sense of regional identity, at other times providing an intermediary between the westcountry and Westminster, and always working to escalate feeling and galvanize activity in the region.

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 Add MS 22608 (Abraham Wright, commonplace book)

Add MS 35297 (John Syms, journal)  
 Add MS 40883 (Nehemiah Wallington, notebook)  
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