Oscar Wilde's Sex Trials in Paris' Expatriate Press

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Abstract
Two daily English-language newspapers in Paris – the *Galignani Messenger* and the European edition of the *New York Herald* – covered the world news of Oscar Wilde's London sex trials in 1895. This paper investigates how these expatriate newspapers accessed information about Wilde's sex trials relative to the business structures and text sharing practices of the late nineteenth-century news market. It also examines the kind of sexual information and cultural narratives of sexuality that they transmitted across borders. The Parisian expatriate press, this paper argues, offered distinctive streams of news about the trials that crossed not only the English Channel, but also the Atlantic within an increasingly complex international news market.

Key-words: Wilde Trials, newspapers, Paris.

1. Introduction

"Newspapers around the world have front page stories on the trial", reported the London *Evening News* about the sex trial involving the famous Anglo-Irish playwright Oscar Wilde in spring 1895 (*Evening News* April 4, qtd. in Kaufman 1998: 46). This trial was a criminal libel trial initiated by Wilde against John Sholto Douglas, 9th Marquess of Queensberry for having left him a calling card that accused him of "posing as a somdomite" [*sic*] following failed efforts to end Wilde's acquaintance with his son, Lord Alfred Douglas. Three days into the libel trial, Wilde withdrew his charge, but the Crown responded by bringing him up on criminal charges for "gross indecency" under the Criminal Law Amendment Act of 1885, which led to two further trials and his eventual conviction. Scholars have examined a wide variety of national newspapers for their reporting on the sexual lives and practices at their heart of these trials – in Britain (Foldy 1997;

Cohen 1993), Ireland (Walshe 2005), France (Erber 1996; Wan 2006), Germany (Ivory 2012), Australia (Fotheringham 2003), and New York / Montreal (Robinson 2015). What has not yet been examined is the phenomenon that many newspapers like the *Evening News* were reporting: namely that the trials were attracting concurrent press attention around the world. Daily reports about the trials were written, sold, telegraphed, published, copied, and censored as high value foreign news items in an increasingly interconnected global news market. As Jonathan Silberstein-Loeb explains in *The International Distribution of the News*, the business of foreign news gathering and distribution after mid-century was progressively structured by the global news agency cartel of Reuters, Havas, Wolff, and the Associated Press, which made the most of a rapidly developing worldwide telegraphic infrastructure. My paper begins an investigation of the trials as a globalised media event by looking at their foreign news coverage in Paris' expatriate press.

During the 1890s, there were 33 different English-language periodicals published in Paris. Many of these periodicals were short-lived, about a third of them folding within 3 years, but their profusion and breadth of content, from hard news to language acquisition to esoteric philosophy, reveal the diverse range of British, American, and transatlantic interests that had intersected in Paris, where the 1891 census listed roughly 15,000 British and 5,000 American residents and where there was a yearly average of 175,000 foreign visitors (Gerbod 1995: 574)[1]. Two daily all-service English-language morning newspapers dominated the expatriate press scene of the 1890s, the long-running *Galignani Messenger* and the European edition of the *New York Herald* – or the *Paris Herald* as it was commonly called. These two newspapers covered Wilde's London trials from Paris, highlighting the ways in which news of the trials travelled across national borders into English-speaking places of the world in a process of cultural globalisation.

Relaying the news of Wilde's trials presented a number of challenges to these papers, not least of which to press standards. These were sex trials, as Joseph Bristow and H.G. Cocks remind

[1] *Institut national de la statistique et des études économiques,* 1925, "Recensements de 1851 à 1921 Tableau T 61": http://www.insee.fr/fr/service/bibliotheque/tableaux_sgf/tableaux.asp?domaine=rec, last accessed April 28, 2015.

us. They dealt with culturally peripheral sexual acts and practices – sodomy, male prostitution, sexual blackmail, intergenerational relationships, mock-marriages, cross-dressing, sexual seduction, and "the love that dare not speak its name" (Bristow 2015; Cocks 2003: 3-4). Explicit sexual language and acts pertaining to the trials were deemed not fit to print and were actively censored. The British press relied on euphemistic formulas such as "unprintable offenses" and "improper practices" to replace variations of the word "sodomy", in keeping with what Cocks writes was the British journalistic coordinated "silence on such matters" (Cocks 2003: 78-79; Powell 2009: 125). Even the famously liberal French press was circumspect, referring to "Socratic practices" and "unnatural acts" rather than using plain language (Erber 1996: 573)[2]. The expatriate press in France was no more explicit, but it did transmit distinctive streams of sexual information about the trials as well as cultural narratives of sexuality that have yet to be examined. In an essay on "The Evolution of an Expatriate Paper," John Maxwell Hamilton, Regina Lawrence, and Emily M. Pfetzer make an argument for the value of studying expatriate newspapers for their distinctive paranational reporting (Hamilton, Lawrence and Pfetzer 2013: 2). Drawing on this understanding that expatriate newspapers could operate between national cultures and source news from a mix of local, national, and international markets, I turn to Paris' expatriate press to investigate how it gathered information on Wilde's sex trials and carried foreign news streams from across the English Channel to its readers. Computer-assisted textual comparison of these reports leads to the discovery of distinctive expatriate news streams on the trials, as well as original coverage of the sexual lives and practices on the dock that unfolded within an increasingly interconnected and complex international news market.

2. *Galignani Messenger* (1814-1905)

The *Galignani Messenger*, founded in 1814 by the Italian-born publisher-bookseller Giovanni Antonio Galignani, was one of the oldest English-language papers on the continent. In the first half

[2] One exception is an April 9 editorial that was published in *Le Journal*, which uses both elevated and vulgar terms for describing people in whose circle Wilde moved.

of the century, this daily all-service morning paper had employed innovative methods for delivering to its anglophone readers the latest news, particularly from London: it made use, for example, of private transportation services to ensure speedy receipt of the London papers within 48 hours (a full day before the Parisian papers) and provided an impressive roundup of news (Cooper-Richet 2002: 126-27). In the age of telegraph news and information acceleration, however, it was no longer an innovator in gathering and relaying the news from abroad. By then, it had to meet the challenge of getting the daily news to its anglophone readers ahead of the evening arrival of the London papers, and faced fierce competition from rivals availing themselves of the latest telegraphic connectivity. One of its main competitors was the *Morning News* (1883-1887), a parvenu English-language Paris daily that was financed by American news magnate James Gordon Bennett and mining tycoon John William Mackay and run by the American newsman Samuel Chamberlain. Introducing an American style of *presse d'information*, it promised to bring the up-to-the-minute British, American, and world news to its Paris-based readers (Pinsolle 2013: 3; Bielsa and Bassnett 2009: 40). Almost immediately upon its launch, the *Morning News* used its editorial pages to attack the *Galignani Messenger*, employing strategies such as running comparative sales figures from Parisian kiosks that showed its sales were 6 to 8 times higher (*Morning News* October 6, 1883). When the *Galignani Messenger* attempted to accelerate its news delivery (by acquiring its own private telegraph wire to London), the *Morning News* dismissed both its methods and news as derivative, accusing its "venerable contemporary" of having "vegetated uninterruptedly" over knitting needles, the Bible, and the Antiquarian Society (*Morning News* October 21; November 13; December 4, 1883). In 1895, at the time of Wilde's trials, the *Galignani Messenger* still billed itself as "the leading and most widely circulated English and American paper on the continent", but for decades it had been struggling to remain competitive in the daily delivery of international news. Its circulation numbers were low, estimated somewhere between 1500-2500 copies per day (Cooper-Richet 2002: 132; Grasilier 1930: 135); it had changed ownership several times through the 1890s[3]; and it faced ruinous competition that began with

[3] Charles-Auguste and Antony Jeancourt, nephews of the Galignani brothers,

the *Morning News*, intensified with the launch of the *Paris Herald* (about which I will say more later), and culminated with the influx of other continental editions of British and American dailies, first Alfred Harmsworth's *Daily Mail* followed by the *Paris Tribune* and the *Paris Times* (Hansen 2014: 23).

If the *Galignani Messenger* was in 1895 awaiting its final coup de grace, it is nonetheless remarkable that it had the most extensive Parisian coverage of Wilde's London trials, French and English papers included. It printed 50 separate items on the trials – just over 48,000 words in total – 41 reports, 7 "London Echoes", and 2 editorials. Much of the coverage was the front-page leading story, with the headline "Society Scandal" followed by sensationalist sub-headlines (or decks to use newspaper jargon) calling readers' attention to "sensational particulars", "remarkable letters" and "astounding admissions" (*Galignani Messenger* April 4 and 5). Name recognition for Wilde was clearly high, as there was no need for elaborate introductions to the aesthete as there were in the German news reports (Ivory 2012: 220). *Galignani Messenger* news reports were also lengthy, never falling off over the two months of protracted proceedings: including the libel trial, the police-court hearings, the first criminal trial (which ended in a hung jury), and finally the second criminal trial, which ended with Wilde's conviction and sentence of two years prison with hard labour. A legally trained reporter educated in court procedures appears to have been behind these reports, notable for their precise and exhaustive account of the parties involved, opening and closing arguments, and witness testimonies and crosses (recorded varyingly in *oratio recta* and *oratio obliqua*). This legal precision by no means mitigated the sensationalism of the trials, however. The detailed descriptions of the crowded courtroom, the look and demeanour of the always riveting Wilde and fustian Marquess, the string of shady young male witnesses who gave evidence against the writer, and the boisterous cheers and hisses of the courtroom gallery co-acted to startle and thrill readers, as did the hints of a terrible, unnamed sex crime:

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directed the *Galignani Messenger* along with Henry Baudry in the 1880s until they sold the newspaper in 1889, after which it had a number of different owners (Grasilier 1930: 135).

> All the appearances of a sensational trial was [*sic*] presented at the Old Bailey to-day, when the Marquis of Queensberry entered the dock to answer the charge of criminally libelling Mr. Oscar Wilde. Although influential people and the ordinary public clamoured at the doors for admission soon after eight o'clock in the morning, it was only the privileged few who gained entry within the judicial precincts. Necessarily, from the peculiar nature of the case, the proceedings were expected to be of a character such as to preclude the admission to court of any but the sterner sex. (*Galignani Messenger* April 4)

This style of reporting with provocative detail and dramatic narrative bears the hallmarks of London's new journalism from 1885 to 1900, a period that "saw some of the most mature and wide-ranging legal reportage, but also the shift towards a new approach for incorporating sensationalism into crime reportage" (Brake and Demoor 2009: 443; Herd 1952: 222; Rowbotham, Stevenson and Pegg 2013: 60). This new journalism is the first sign that the sexual information the *Galignani Messenger* carried across borders was presented very much like the London papers, and was distinctive from the French-language papers in Paris, few of which were directly connected to London by wire and most of which were dependent on the Havas news agency for their foreign news (Pinsolle 2013: 3).

It is not, moreover, simply a case of similar reporting styles. The *Galignani Messenger* reports of the Wilde trials frequently matched the London papers word-for-word. A custom-built database that is being developed by Michael Joyce, Simon Fraser University's library Web and Data Services Developer, houses my corpus of British and international news reports on the trials and includes a text-comparison application, or what Charles Cooney, Glenn Roe, and Mark Olsen refer to as a "similarity tool" which can be used "to discover shared passages, borrowings, plagiarisms, and other forms of text recycling" (Cooney, Roe and Olsen 2014). This similarity tool makes immediately apparent the extent to which reports from the *Galignani Messenger* copied from the London papers. Its most substantive reports on the trials very closely matched those published in the London *Star* (1888-1960), a half-penny evening daily that had built its reputation on Ernest Parke's sensational coverage of the Ripper murders (Brake and Demoor 2009: 597), and *Reynolds's Newspaper* (1851-1967), a widely-

circulating London penny weekly that included extensive court and police news (Brake and Demoor 2009: 540-41). Over one third of its total number of news reports had a high degree of matches to reports carried in these two London papers, at the sentence, paragraph, and document levels.

FIGURE 1
Matching news content in the *Galignani Messenger* (April 12), *Star* (April 11), and *Reynolds's Newspaper* (April 14)

Frederick Atkins, a pale-eyed, pimply-faced lad of 20, in a green cord waistcoat with pale blue spots, a blue oxford shirt and a jacket of rough brown tweed, was the next witness. He deposed that he first knew the prisoner Taylor and the establishment at Little College-street. Taylor introduced him to Wilde in November, 1893, when all three, and another man--one of the Nameless Men of the Old Bailey proceedings--dined together at the Florence Hotel in Soho. Wilde asked witness if he would like to go to Paris with him as his private secretary. He said "Yes," and they went two days later, by the Club Train from Victoria. Arrived in Paris, they went to 29, Boulevards des Capucines. Next day they lunched at the Cafe Julien, and in the afternoon went to the Grand Hotel to have their hair cut. Wilde spoke in French to the barber, who began to curl witness' hair. It will be remembered that Wilde's version of this incident is that the lad wanted to have his hair curled, and he forbade him. They dined together, "the best dinner I ever had in my life," said the witness, and afterwards Wilde gave him a louis and permission to go out and amuse himself.

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> 91.8% - London Star - April 11 1895 | compare

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> 72.8% - Reynolds' Newspaper - April 14 1895 | compare

One example of a verbatim match at the paragraph level can be found in a report published in the *Galignani Messenger* from April 12 on Wilde's second hearing at Bow Street Magistrates' Court. It includes a description of testimony by a witness named Frederick

Atkins on his relations with Wilde during a trip to Paris. As Figure 1 shows, the degree of directly matched text suggests that the *Galignani Messenger* was copying without acknowledgement from one of these two papers – almost without a doubt the *Star*, with which it matches most closely (almost 92% in this passage), and which published an evening edition that the *Galignani Messenger* could receive before the following day's publication. A less likely possibility is that the Parisian paper was drawing heavily from the same unnamed news source for all of these papers, such as the Central News Agency, a London-based news gathering service that was founded by William Saunders in 1863 and competitive with Reuters and Britain's Press Association by the end of the century (Brown 1985: 116, 120ff; Herd 1952: 180; Gray 2010: 101)[4].

Given the high cost of international telegrams in this period, however, it is far more likely that a small and struggling publication like the *Galignani Messenger* was not telegraphing all of its news from London, but rather gathering its news about Wilde's trials through some combination of copying from London's evening papers like the *Star*, borrowing from early/advance editions of the Sunday weeklies like *Reynolds's Newspaper*, and drawing on short news agency telegrams[5]. This Parisian newspaper was not alone in engaging in 'scissors and paste' journalism. "Through the processes of copying, reviewing, re-hashing of what had been read elsewhere, and the circulation of the same agency telegrams", Lucy Brown observes, "the news became a mix of similar ingredients in papers of very different quality and information" (Brown 1985: 125). Rather than dismiss the *Galignani Messenger* for its bad journalism, then,

[4] *Reynolds's Newspaper* cited the Central News Agency as its news source multiple times in 1895, including its reports on the Wilde trials from April 21 and May 26. Attribution was not standardised in this period, so it is likely its use of the service was more extensive (Rowbotham, Stevenson and Pegg 2013: 83). The Central News Agency was denounced more than once, including by the London *Times*, for embellishing and even fabricating stories (*Morning News* November 8, 1883; *Times* June 15, 1895 and April 15, 1896; cf. Paley 1995: 102ff).

[5] The *Galignani Messenger* reports also include matches to other London, regional, and European newspapers, though to a far less degree than matches to the *Star* and *Reynolds's Newspaper*. Other papers to which the *Galignani Messenger* has matching content include the Guernsey *Star* (April 4), *Irish Times* (April 4), and *Pall Mall Gazette* (April 6, April 30).

it is more pertinent to note how its apparent practice of copying from the London papers worked to transmit to Paris a version of the Wilde sex trials very much shaped by London's 1890s sensationalist news market, distinct from other Paris-based publications fed by international news services like Havas.

The foreign news of Wilde's sex trials that the *Galignani Messenger* relayed across the Channel was not unadulterated, however. There are repeated instances of it censoring the sexual information published in the London papers on which it was drawing. To return to the April 12 report, it omits the detail that Wilde's hotel room in Paris communicated with Atkins's room, which both the *Star* and *Reynolds's Newspaper* include. Later in the same report, it also omits compromising testimony regarding homosexual blackmail. Both the *Star* and *Reynolds's Newspaper* transcribe an exchange during which Charles Parker, an ex-valet, admits to "impropriety" with an unnamed gentleman who was the target of a blackmailing scheme. The *Galignani Messenger* report excludes this remarkable admission, as well as the fuller questioning about extortion, as seen in Figure 2 which compares a passage from its report to one from the *Star*.

FIGURE 2
Comparison of the *Galignani Messenger* (April 12; left column) and the *Star* (April 11; middle column). The right column compares the two texts, showing the matches and highlighting the differences.

Just before that did you get £30, in conjunction with two other persons, by threatening to accuse a gentleman of a crime? I didn't. The others gave it to me.Then it was hush money? I don't know that.Sir John Bridge: Isn't that substantially what it was? I don't know what they gave it to me for. They only told me who it came from.	"Just before that did you get £30, in conjunction with two other persons, bythreatening to accuse a gentleman of a crime? "I didn't. The others gave it to me. "They had EXTORTED IT FROM A GENTLEMAN?--I think that is right.They extorted more than the £30?--I think so.That was your share?--Yes.Had you been guilty of impropriety with that gentleman?--Yes.Then it was hush money? -- I don't know that.Sir John Bridge: Isn't that substantially what it was? -- I don't know what they gave it to me for. They only told me who it came from.	just before that did you get 30 in conjunction with two other persons by threatening to accuse a gentleman of a crime i didn t the others gave it to me they had extorted it from a gentleman i think that is right they extorted more than the 30 i think so that was your share yes had you been guilty of impropriety with that gentleman yes then it was hush money i don t know that sir john bridge isn t that substantially what it was i don t know what they gave it to me for they only told me who it came from *Match:* 63.2%

This omission is not simply an example of trimming, but a strategic cut that minimises disclosure about sexual blackmail. Where the

Galignani Messenger appears to censor sexual content that appears in the *Star*, *Reynolds's Newspaper* even seems to embellish it, with an additional description of the astounded reaction of the courtroom: "The quiet, assured tone in which he announced this literally stunned the astounded court. Wilde, leaning back in the corner of the dock, a dull, lifeless expression in his eyes, took no notice. Taylor pretended to be delighted". This addition sets up a hermeneutic pathway connecting sexual blackmail to Wilde and Taylor and, in the larger cultural process of the trials, linking sodomy to blackmail (Bristow 2015). That the *Galignani Messenger* moderately censored some of the sexual information from the London papers invites questions about the extra-national reach of Britain's convention of silence around homosexual matters.

If, however, there are some signs that the *Galignani Messenger* censored the sexual information it transmitted from London, suppressing detailed public knowledge about homosexual lives and practices, its gossip and editorial pages present a somewhat more tolerant attitude about Wilde's sex scandal. The paper ran a regular column called "London Echoes" which featured light news and gossip collected by an unnamed London correspondent. There were 7 separate "echoes" related to the Wilde trials—on the withdrawal of the libel suit against Queensberry, the removal of the author's names from London playbills, the rumours that Mrs. Wilde had gone abroad with her sons, and the "spicy revelations" of other men who visited the rooms of Alfred Taylor (Wilde's co-defendant in the first "gross indecency" trial) (May 22). In his very first "Echo", the correspondent regrets, with a kind of Paterian urgency about the "awful brevity" of life, that Wilde did not remain silent:

> The marvel is why this apostle of the beautiful – knowing what was in the background of his life – should have thought it advisable to take proceedings against Lord Queensberry. After the first day's cross-examination it was plain that the man had walked deliberately into a morass of infamy from which there was no escape. […] That in the gravest emergency of his life this man, who complained of being charged with 'posing as an immoral person', should pose before the jury as a philosopher who saw no distinction between right and wrong, simply amazed his auditors and disgusted his counsel. The evidence which Mr. Carson was not obliged to produce was, I understand, of the most appalling kind. The mere shadow

of it has overwhelmed Oscar Wilde with social ruin, even supposing there are no graver consequences. He is extinguished as a playwright, for I hear that contracts for the performance of his pieces are being cancelled left and right. (*Galignani Messenger* "London Echoes", April 6)

The unnamed thing in the "background of [Wilde's] life" is "appalling", elicits "disgust", and leads to his "social ruin", perpetuating the period's negative signifiers for homosexual acts and identities. It is significant, however, that the correspondent does not condemn the man. Instead, he suggests that he could have controlled the narrative differently by remaining silent. He essentially makes a "don't tell" argument, one that sustains the Victorian convention of silence around homosexual matters; not in the interest of limiting public knowledge, but rather to protect the individual from "man's grim justice" (Wilde 2003: 361). This argument is inadequate by today's standards, but advances liberal opinion in face of the "gravest emergency" of a man's life on the verge of being "extinguished" and "cancelled". Moreover, even as the correspondent makes a "don't tell" argument, he mounts the classical liberal defence of free expression. In his "Echo" about the trials on the following day, he denounces the removal of Wilde's name from playbills for *The Importance of Being Earnest* and *An Ideal Husband*. "To blot out the name of the author, as if this act absolutely separated Oscar Wilde from his own work, is rather childish", he writes, adding that Wilde's name is "practically indelible" (*Galignani Messenger* April 7).

Two editorials on the sex trials also appeared in *Galignani Messenger*, supplementing opinion in the "Echoes". Little is known about the paper's editorship during these turbulent years, but the wild inconsistency between these two editorials suggest cross-purposes or different hands. The first editorial from April 7, the day after Wilde's arrest for "gross indecency", links Wilde's "effeminacy" and his school of aestheticism to deeply corruptive sexual "vices" and "profligacy":

It is difficult to imagine a more dangerous character and influence than a man of the Oscar Wilde type. Gifted, as he undoubtedly is, with rare intelligence, almost amounting to genius, he links a certain real taste for beauty with profligate habits, and succeeded in covering his vices with such a glamour of false philosophy and meretricious wit that the healthy,

honest taste of Englishmen was in danger of being perverted. (*Galignani Messenger* April 7)

By contrast, the second editorial published on April 12 matches the liberal tone of the "Echoes" by advancing an aesthetic defence of the writer, triggered perhaps by the knowledge that there was "an artistic martyr to defend" (Fotheringham 2003: 62). His art is defended in face of reports that the British Museum and Paddington Free Library were removing his books from circulation:

> Why, because this man is discovered to be a monomaniac, should his works, which contain no vice, suddenly assume hideous features to the librarian of the British Museum, and the Executive Council of Paddington, which they never discovered till now?
>
> Oscar Wilde, let it be remembered, who, as a literary man, earned his spurs by gaining scholarships at Oxford, has written plays which have been enjoyed, laughed at, and applauded to the echo by crowded houses of the noblest, the greatest, and the purest of both sexes in the land; and his success was not the result of a happy hit, but through the acknowledgement by the public of undoubted genius of a high order.
>
> Why should these plays now be stopped? And, above all, why should the author's name be removed from the bills? For goodness' sake do not let our French neighbours be justified in applying the word 'cant' to English people, which they seem to think describes many of our actions. (*Galignani Messenger* April 12)

With this aesthetic defence of the author, framed within Anglo-French cultural relations, the Paris paper stands with Wilde to a far greater degree than did certain London papers, such as the *St. James's Gazette*, which early on denounced the "degraded wretches" caught up in such cases (April 4). If segments of the London press had turned art into a new signifying code for the homosexual, as Ed Cohen argues (Cohen 1993: 128ff), then the defence of art in the second editorial of the *Galignani Messenger* might be read as a defence of the homosexual. Even near the end of its run, I would argue, the Parisian paper remained an organ of liberal values, values originally forged by the house of Galignani when, at the turn of the nineteenth century, it set up operations in Paris and published self-exiled writers such as Lord Byron and Percy Bysshe Shelley who had fled England for their sexual misconduct (Cooper-Richet 2006: 39ff; Barber 1961: 273-276).

For the *Galignani Messenger*, then, the foreign news of Wilde's sex trials was substantially the London news, ripped from its most sensationalist papers and censored of some of its most compromising sexual details. Although the paper's journalism was largely of the 'scissors and paste' kind and editorially inconsistent, it offered a distinctive combination of sensationalist London news and liberal editorialising on individual and aesthetic freedom relative to the trials. Its 'bad journalism' allowed it to operate outside the global news market and to carry a unique patchwork of sexual information across borders.

2. *The Paris Herald* (1887-present)

The *Paris Herald*, the other English-language Paris newspaper that covered the Wilde trials, was founded in 1887 by the multi-millionaire American news baron James Gordon Bennett Jr. His father had founded the *New York Herald* in 1835, a mass-market penny newspaper that was a major player in American news-making throughout the nineteenth century and an influence on British new journalism. Bennett took over his father's business soon after the American Civil War, continuing his father's strategic investments in newspaper combinations, telegraphic communications, foreign correspondents, and national and transatlantic affiliations (Crouthamel 1989: 43-55; Cottrell 2010: 3-11; Silberstein-Loeb 2014: 37). Also like his father, who had launched a short-lived European edition of the *New York Herald* in 1846, Bennett set his sights on a continental edition of the family paper, a realisable ambition given his relocation from New York to Paris in the mid-1870s. By the early 1880s, Bennett had begun developing the telecommunications infrastructure for this transatlantic endeavour. He was one of the financiers behind the *Morning News*, the American-style English-language daily in Paris that went head to head with the *Galignani Messenger* by setting up a special telegraph wire with London and by testing the new and faster undersea cable that was financed by Bennett and Mackay's Commercial Cable Company, connecting Ireland to Nova Scotia (Robertson 1987: 16). As Dominique Pinsolle shows, the *Morning News*'s telecommunications restructuring set the stage for the continental edition of Bennett's New York newspaper. Well placed for gathering news from all over Europe,

Africa, and the Near East, and then relaying it to New York and equally well placed to vie against the global news agency cartel and Western Union's control over the other transatlantic telegraph cables (Pinsolle 2013: 3; Headrick 1991: 33), the *Paris Herald* became a leading-edge daily for its telecommunications, international news, and press technology (e.g. use of linotype, American rotary presses, photogravure) (Robertson 1987: 17, 19). When Bennett launched his paper, over which his involvement was apparently total, he imported the American editor Chamberlain from the *Morning News*, tried unsuccessfully to buy out *Galignani Messenger*, and set up a mostly English staff to produce a 4-page daily that more credibly claimed to be "the leading English paper on the continent", though its circulation was still quite small, estimated at 12,000 and 20,000 per day (p. 4)[6]. With access to its own transoceanic cable and its own private telegraph wire with London, the *Paris Herald* was clearly operating with far more capital and enterprise than the *Galignani Messenger*, which is evident in its more diversified and exclusive coverage of Wilde's sex trials.

One important difference is that the *Paris Herald* had its own London correspondent report on the Wilde trials and regularly telegraphed reports back to the Paris office "by Herald's Special Wire". These were hard news reports, not the gossipy "London Echoes" from the *Galignani Messenger.* Notable too is the use of the first-person voice in these reports, characteristic of the "personal journalism" ushered in by Bennett's father and the new leveraging of journalistic personality (Cottrell 2010: 4; Brake and Demoor 2009: 19). The journalistic 'I' had the double captivating effect of creating the impression of special access to news and cueing the narrative mode, evident in the lead to the first day's report of Wilde's libel trial:

> The trial, as the day waned and the centre of gravity, as it were, shifted from the defendant to the prosecutor, became absolutely dramatic, and I have never seen so crowded a court preserve such absolute silence as during the half-hour of Mr. Wilde's cross-examination. Crowded is hardly the term

[6] To compare the circulation figures for the *Paris Herald* with Parisian dailies from the mid-1880s, see the following estimates: *le Temps* around 30,000, *le Figaro* around 90,000, and *le Petit Journal,* over 500,000 (Albert 1977: 47).

to apply to the courtroom; it was absolutely suffocatingly packed. (*Paris Herald* April 4)

The *Paris Herald*'s correspondent was also more than a journalistic device, for he broke stories about trial events that spilled out of the courtroom and onto the streets. In an exclusive report from April 6, following the dramatic conclusion to the libel trial when Wilde withdrew his suit, the correspondent describes how he tracked down Queensberry at Carter's Hotel and spoke with him at length, furnishing from this interview a 345-word quotation from the marquess, of which this is just a brief excerpt:

'I think', said Lord Queensberry to me later in the afternoon when I found him at Carter's Hotel, Albemarle-street, his table littered with congratulatory telegrams which continued to arrive in batches at intervals, 'I think I have done my duty, not only to my family and myself, but also to the community. It has cost me £1,200 and now if the law of England does not step in I must make my own law. I have sent a message to this creature Wilde that if he chooses to leave the country, I, for one, shall certainly not lift a finger to stay him, but he must distinctly understand that if he takes my son with him I shall follow him and shoot him like a dog. But I think he ought not to be allowed to leave the country; I think he ought to be placed where he can ruin no more young men'. (*Paris Herald* April 6)

The interview was a distinctly American journalistic practice, only spreading to Europe in the 1880s and not fully accepted by the British until after 1900 (Bielsa and Bassnett 2009: 40). This exclusive interview with Queensberry was thus an American presentation of sexual information about the London trials delivered to Paris readers, only possible because of the presence of a correspondent with access to London's aristocratic circles and a developed telecommunications infrastructure. The importance of this exclusive interview is highlighted the very next day by the paper, couched in the form of a rectification wherein Queensberry explains "he did not threaten to actually shoot Wilde, but merely said that he would be justified in doing so if he cared to take the trouble" (April 7)[7].

[7] Presumably he was advised that uttering death threats was punishable under the 1861 Offences Against the Person Act.

Papers around the world had relayed the news that Queensberry had threatened to reporters that he would shoot Wilde, but it was only the *Paris Herald* that scooped the lengthy interview[8]. It thus transmitted to Paris a version of the Wilde sex trials that was shaped by the different information-gathering methods of American-style journalism, and perceived as influential enough to prompt Queensberry's response.

This was not the only exclusive Queensberry interview the *Paris Herald* ran. Reporting a few weeks later on May 22 about a street brawl between Queensberry and his son Lord Douglas of Hawick that transpired in Piccadilly after the conviction of Alfred Taylor for "gross indecency", the correspondent describes how he tracked him down in the evening to get his account of the incident that landed both father and son before a police court on charges of "disorderly conduct". In this 388-word interview "Lord Queensberry Speaks Out", the marquess describes how his son assaulted him, angered by a letter he had sent to his wife along with a drawing of "a huge iguanodon" that he had endorsed as "a possible ancestor of Oscar Wilde". Queensberry further elaborates on their fraught relationship:

> There has been bad blood between my son and myself for sometime, and I think this encounter has probably let some of it out. At all events I feel more kindly disposed towards him than I have been for some years past, and I think very possibly he may think all the better of me. (*Paris Herald* May 22)

Over the next two days, the correspondent continued to report on the fracas, in fact paying far more attention to the family brawl, the police court hearing, and reporting on this incident than he did to Wilde's second trial for "gross indecency" that was by then underway. He emphasises that the *Paris Herald* was the only newspaper that reported the incident accurately as "the press in general, both English and French, stated that it was Lord Alfred Douglas, instead of Lord Douglas of Hawick, who was the other combatant" (May 24; cf May 23). (The *Galignani Messenger* was

[8] See, for example, April 6 reports from the *New York Times* and London's *Pall Mall Gazette*, and an April 8 report in the Sydney *Evening News*.

one of the papers that confused the brothers; May 22). He also links this interview to letters and telegrams sent by Lord Alfred Douglas to the French papers *Le Temps* and *Le Figaro* (to which he had written because he had fled to Paris) detailing how his father had been sending harassing letters of "an inconceivable grossness" to his brother's wife for months and how his mother had divorced his father "on account of cruelty and adultery extending over a period of eight years" (May 24). With its correspondent on the ground, collecting interviews and getting scoops, the *Paris Herald* thus positioned itself as a serious rival to the London papers with its special access to foreign news about the larger family saga that was unfolding around Wilde's sex trials.

This is not to say that the *Paris Herald* did not rely on the London papers or draw its news from news agencies, such as the Central News Agency; there is evidence it did both (cf. April 9; May 4). It also gathered news from Reuters news service – one of the big four news agencies of the period that supplied international news (Barth 2014: 35). It relayed the news, for example, of Wilde's arrest at the Cadogan Hotel carrying at his side the *Yellow Book*, a London literary periodical (April 6). As far as current research shows, this news (which commentators have since called into question) did not circulate the same day in the London papers, only Britain's regional papers and American papers, which were supplied with telegrams diffused through Reuters and its partner agencies[9]. The *Paris Herald* also occasionally referenced French papers on the trials, such as *Le Figaro*, *Le Quotidien illustré,* and *Le Temps,* to register their response to a scandal that caught up a personality "almost as well known to Parisians as he was to Londoners" (*Le Figaro* qtd. in Wan 2006: 48) and to link the scandal in London with Englishmen in Paris (April 7; April 11; May 24). Finally, it carried news from its parent paper the *New York Herald* via the Commercial Cable with dispatches on American institutional responses to the trials, such as the withdrawal of Wilde's plays from the Lyceum theatre and the removal and destruction of his works by the St. Louis and Newark Public Libraries (April 8; April 10). In short, the news of Wilde's trials that the *Paris Herald* relayed across the Channel was gathered

[9] See, for example, April 6 reports from the *Yorkshire Evening News* and the *Daily Inter-Ocean* and an April 7 report in the French paper *le Matin*.

from its own correspondent, from agencies like Reuters that specialised in the international news market, from London papers and local London news agencies, from Parisian French-language papers, and from its New York affiliate. Its news was thus truly multi-scaled, moving between London and international news markets while also attentive to the French press, making it not only distinct in its coverage from the *Galignani Messenger*, with its heavy dependence on the sensationalist London papers, but also revealing the kind of diversified reporting of the news that was possible for a well-capitalised expatriate press at the intersection of national cultures and thwarting the growing uniformity of the news while drawing from the same basic materials (Barth 2014: 40; Brown 1985: 125).

Withal its multi-scaled informational infrastructure, it is nonetheless clear that the *Paris Herald* adopted one of the most anti-Wilde stances of any of the world's newspapers. After Wilde's withdrawal of the libel charges and arrest, the paper's correspondent declared that it was "felt by everyone that Lord Queensberry has rendered a positive service to the community" (April 6). His crime is "more odious than that of murder", "sickening", and elicits "shuddering disgust" (April 6; April 7). The language the paper used to describe the criminal charge against Wilde was, like most newspapers, not explicit, but operated on an affective register of disgust that we would today readily identify as homophobic. As a consequence, it scaled back its reporting of the "gross indecency" trials, in stark contrast to the bloated and sensationalist coverage of the trials in the *Galignani Messenger*. A report from April 7, which covered the day after Wilde's arrest and his first pre-trial hearing before a Bow Street Magistrates' Court, explains that it will give "only some brief facts", and passes over that day's testimony of various men about their relationships with Wilde (April 7). The paper's overall coverage of the trials contained 46% fewer items and 65% fewer words than the *Galignani Messenger*. The *Paris Herald* set its own direction for covering the trials, but by actively suppressing the testimony of the Parker boys and Frederick Atkins about same-sex practices and identities that a number of other newspapers allowed into public discourse.

It was not the testimony about lavish champagne dinners, perfumed rooms, mock marriages, shared beds, and unclean sheets

that fed the sensational story of the Wilde trials in the *Paris Herald*. Rather, from the beginning, it was the family dysfunction of the Queensberry clan. During the libel trial, the trial reported on most closely, the correspondent highlights testimony disclosing the family strife that led Queensberry to leave the infamous calling card for Wilde. Significant attention is paid to Wilde's testimony about the meeting in 1894 between him and Queensberry at his house in Tite Street over Lord Alfred Douglas. We hear of Queensberry's threat to "thrash" Wilde "if he caught him at any public restaurant with his son", and Wilde's quick reply, "I don't know what the Queensberry rules are, but the Wilde rules are to shoot at sight" (April 4). Similarly we get detailed reporting about the vicious missives exchanged between Queensberry and Lord Alfred Douglas over his son's affair with Wilde:

> A telegram from Lord Alfred to his father, which elicited one of the letters ran as follows: 'What a funny little man you are', an expression of filial opinion which was received with loud hisses by the crowded Court. A post-card written by Lord Alfred to his father was also read. In this he threatened if attacked by his father to defend himself with a loaded revolver which he always carried for the purpose, and asserted that either he or Mr. Wilde would be justified in so acting in self-defence against a violent and dangerous 'rough' such as he considered his father to be, and ended by saying that if the marquis were dead, not many people would miss him. (April 5)

The correspondent sides with Queensberry, as he does throughout, explaining his letters "were such as any father might have written to a son whom he considered to be under the evil influence of a third person" (April 5). The correspondent punctuates this testimony by drawing attention to the family's presence in the courtroom, noting "the fragile-looking Lord A. Douglas and the sturdier and more manly looking Lord Douglas of Hawick" present on the first day of the libel trial (April 4), and, on the second day, the marquess' inquisitive stares "across the courtroom at his son Lord Alfred" (April 5). With the correspondent's exclusive interviews with Queensberry, the focus on the avenging father and family saga continues through the two "gross indecency" trials as their drama spills out of the courtroom into the press (with Lord Alfred Douglas' extraordinary letters to British and French papers commenting

on his family) and into the streets (with the smack-down between Queensberry and Lord Douglas of Hawick in the West End). The story he does not tell is that Queensberry was a violent man, hating and hated by his two sons, willing to aggrieve others via letters, utter death threats, and even come to blows. The *Paris Herald* did not advance the more tolerant attitude we might have expected from a paper based in a city where Englishmen were said to have fled for refuge during the trials, in a country where there was no comparable law against homosexual offenses, and in a literary field that privileged aesthetics over ethics (Erber 1996: 550). Instead, it mobilised its multi-scaled informational infrastructure to relay an 1890s version of the aristocratic duel, where male members fought to restore sexual honour, a duel that was undertaken by more than one man caught up in the scandal, including the Parisian writer and journalist Catulle Mendès who fought a duel with journalist Jules Huret for naming him as one of Wilde's French "intimates" (Erber 1996: 565). Queensberry's story might not be the one we wanted from a paper based in the City of Light, but the exclusive sexual information the *Paris Herald* transmitted across borders about Wilde's sex trials was the cultural narrative of a father avenging his child's seducer, updated for the queer 1890s as a fight to restore his son's sexual honour.

3. From expatriate press to transatlantic press

Two different expatriate papers delivered the latest information about the Wilde trials to anglophone readers in Paris and on the continent: one that read much like the sensationalist London papers, but with liberal editorialising, and the other that offered truly distinctive reporting, but from a pro-Queensberry stance. Their different forms of foreign news acquisition can be linked to budgets and circulation, while their contrasting tones suggest different social attitudes for different expatriate readers. In the case of the *Paris Herald*, the news did not stop with its reporting in Paris. Its familial narrative of a sexual seduction and a father's rage extended across the Atlantic to New York breakfast tables and clubs, highlighting how the paper's reporting extended beyond its own pages and fit within a counter-cartel network of information about Wilde's trials that was available to contemporaries on both sides of the Atlantic.

The *New York Herald* (1835-1924) was a major nineteenth-century American newspaper established by Bennett's father in 1835. Like most American newspapers, it reported widely on the Wilde trials, publishing a total of 22 reports and related pieces. Wilde's American tour in 1882 had turned him into a well-known personality in America as well as a newsworthy topic. On the opposite side of the Atlantic, the *New York Herald's* foreign news coverage of the trials was differently sourced than the continental papers, yet unlike that of most other American papers, or even other national papers. It drew on two foreign news sources for the trials that set it apart from most other American papers, as well as newspapers around the world.

For one, it drew some of its foreign news from the United Press news agency. As Menahem Blondheim relates, the *New York Herald* had battled against the telecommunications monopoly in America at least since the first undersea cables were laid (Blondheim 1994: 146, 163), and by the mid-1890s was, along with the *New York Times*, directing the United Press organisation in a bitter contest with the Associated Press (Davis 1921: 179). Many of its reports on the Wilde trials share matching text with those from the *New York Times*[10] rather than newspapers that subscribed to the Associated Press. In addition to carrying news from an alternative foreign news service, the *New York Herald* carried some of the *Paris Herald's* breaking news on the trials, mainly its exclusive interviews with Queensberry, which told the story of a father seeking revenge for his son's sexual seduction. These were transmitted via the Commercial Cable from Paris to New York, appearing on the very same day (*New York Herald* April 6, May 22).

A particular news stream on the Wilde trials that was generated in the expatriate press was thus carried across the Atlantic via a news network that operated outside the dominant international news structures, bridging expatriate and transatlantic understandings of the sexual issues and cultural narratives at the heart of Wilde's trials. Further computer-assisted text analysis as well as archival research could reveal other English-language news streams from different regions of the world that shaped cultural narratives of sexuality and

[10] See, for example, shared reports from April 6 and April 12 in the *New York Times* and the *New York Herald*.

tested editorial standards on what was fit to print during those two spring months of 1895.

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