

Representations of Criminality and Victimisation in Provincial Newspapers: *The Kentish Post* 1717 to 1768.¹

Esther Snell

I

Attitudes towards criminality held by the ordinary people of the past have always been of interest to crime historians. What contemporaries thought was occurring is recognized to be as significant to the history of crime as positivist assessments of its incidence,² and thus central to the understanding of the phenomenon in its historical context. As James Sharpe concluded in a paper discussing the uses of statistical analyses of crime data:

The studying of homicide rates...although a necessary exercise, will only take us so far. Above all, it will not answer a number of fundamental questions: what was the early modern English man or woman's perception of violence? Did the English think they lived in a violent society?³

Attitudes towards crime are equally important within the local context as they are within the national. Criminality, and perceptions of and responses to its occurrence can provide valuable insights into local communities. Most contemporaries' perceptions of serious crime would not have been formed through personal experience as felon or victim, or of the judicial process, but from the circulation of stories about crime – both oral and printed. The evidential basis for the former is, obviously, minimal. However the discursive narratives that circulated in print are increasingly recognized as being of prime importance to the cultural history of crime in that they constitute perhaps the most extensive extant medium in which historical discourses of criminality were shaped. They advertised widely the occurrence of crime and actively moulded its

definition, suggesting motivations and dynamics for criminal behaviour.

Previous studies of perceptions of crime have tended to concentrate upon a single distinct literary sub-genre: the pamphlet.⁴ Whilst pamphlets were the primary printed medium for the dissemination of crime narratives during the sixteenth- and seventeenth-centuries, by the eighteenth-century, and increasingly as the century progressed, the most significant source disseminating narratives of deviance was the newspaper. In its number, scope and diversity of crime reportage as well as its extensive, wide and continuous publication, the newspaper far outstripped crime pamphlet narratives. In disseminating crime stories the newspaper press operated on an unprecedented scale, but newspapers have been a relatively neglected source in the history of crime. Analysis of newspaper representations of deviance have been largely impressionistic.⁵ Studies by historians of crime tend to adopt a positivist approach, treating newspapers as repositories of facts to be used to supplement analyses based primarily on pamphlet or deposition accounts.⁶ Newspapers, however, were both influencers, as well as reflectors, of perceptions of criminality.⁷ It is impossible to say precisely how or to what extent, but contemporaries certainly thought that the printed word, and thus the newspaper, was influential.⁸ A reader of *The Kentish Post or Canterbury Newsletter* expressed concern in 1739 over the ruin of innocent people's reputations by their being named in the newspaper as a felon.⁹ Reports believed to have incited copy-cat crimes appear to have been a particular fear.¹⁰ One reader of the *Salisbury Journal* wrote to the newspaper in 1738 suggesting that distasteful news be reported with caution. He particularly objected to the comical tone of reports featuring elopements, claiming that such coverage encouraged other women to follow the same course.¹¹ Owen Davis' research into witchcraft suggests that coverage of criminal acts did indeed appear to have led to copy-cat crimes.¹²

One means to access local perceptions of crime are the provincial newspapers that emerged in the beginning of the eighteenth-century and were ubiquitous by the middle of the century.¹³ Local newspapers were not just reporting incidence; they were also shaping discourses. To understand attitudes to crime and responses to it in a local context it is crucial to understand the discourses circulating in the local press. This article offers a quantitative and qualitative analysis of the representation of local criminality presented in one eighteenth-century provincial newspaper: *The Kentish Post or Canterbury Newsletter*. The content of ten complete years of *The Kentish Post* was analysed. Those ten years were selected to represent either significant alterations in the content and style of the newspaper itself, thus representing both a chronological

progression as well as specific short-term periods of change; or, socio-economic criteria known to have influenced the actual incidence of crime. 1729 and 1730 were the earliest available years in which *The Kentish Post* survives in an entire print run; the years 1738 and 1739 witnessed a new literary feature in *The Kentish Post* called the *Kentish Spectator*, which ran until the middle of January 1739; 1752 and 1753 represent years of relative calm and social stability for England; whilst 1759 and 1760 represent years of war; finally 1766 and 1767 were years characterized by poverty and famine. In total 1039 editions, containing a total of 79,611 separate literary items (reportage, advertisements and items of information), were analysed. The aim of the study is to identify the extent and the nature of criminality presented to its readership, to identify the possible experiences of the reader in consuming the text and what possible impact this had on their perceptions of the incidence and nature of criminality both nationally and locally. This essay will show that the local depiction of crime, as represented in *The Kentish Post*'s reportage,¹⁴ was fundamentally violent, diverse, often unpremeditated and regularly went unpunished. Provincial newspapers were texts that were primarily comprised literary material extracted from the London press. Consequently most of the crime reports in *The Kentish Post* concerned events that occurred outside Kent; reports of local offending constituted only a small part of the newspaper's total coverage of crime. However, even these accounts of national criminality had the potential to influence the local reader's perceptions of the incidence and nature of criminality both nationally and locally because the local representation of deviancy – in terms of the types of crimes committed, their nature and consequences – was very similar to the national picture.¹⁵ In this way, both local and national portrayals were mutually confirmatory. Moreover, it will be suggested that the newspaper was a participatory text that, directly and indirectly, fostered an engagement and active participation by the reader. In the majority of reports the tone and perspective of the narrative concentrated upon the experience of the victim, and in so doing provided useful and practical information and advice to the readers concerning the nature and consequences of criminal encounters. Thus the newspaper offered what might be termed a discourse of victimisation.

The Kentish Post was a twice-weekly¹⁶ publication that ran from 1717 to 1768.¹⁷ Although, as Cranfield pointed out, most newspapers of the period contained a mixture of both news and prose, *The Kentish Post* was a pure chronicle of news¹⁸ containing primarily news and only rarely printing poems, letters and other types of literary items. Apart from some short-lived newspapers in Maidstone¹⁹ it was the only provincial news-

paper in east Kent in the first half of the eighteenth century. Thus, *The Kentish Post* offers a unique and excellent opportunity to analyse newspaper content in the provinces. Its longevity demonstrates that it was a successful provincial newspaper, whilst its exceptional survival rate, existing in an almost complete print run from 1729 to 1768, means it can be used for a long-term chronological study that other less successful and erratically-preserved newspapers cannot.²⁰ Moreover between 1729 and 1746 *The Kentish Post's* printer, James Abree, followed an idiosyncratic practice of attributing every report he printed to the source from which it was extracted. This procedure offers a unique opportunity to analyse Abree's editorial policies and the compilation process of his newspaper by detecting trends in the selection and rejection of material.²¹

A 1718 half broadsheet suggests that a consortium of men, most likely local businessmen, controlled *The Kentish Post*.²² However the primary influence upon its content was its printer, James Abree. Born in 1691, Abree was not a native of Canterbury²³ but settled there after completing his London apprenticeship in 1712. The abundance of printers working in the metropolis after the expiration of the Printing Act in 1695 forced many printers to seek employment in the provinces. Abree produced *The Kentish Post* until his retirement in 1768.²⁴ *The Kentish Post* itself only survived him by a few months, being merged that same year with the recently-created rival newspaper *The Kentish Gazette*, to create *The Kentish Gazette, or Canterbury Chronicle*.²⁵

The original newspaper featured a wide range of reportage, advertisements and items of information designed to attract as large a clientele as possible. In contrast to the oppositional political affiliations of most provincial newspapers of the period, *The Kentish Post* was pro-ministerial, although its support of successive governments has been described as 'lukewarm'.²⁶ It also cost slightly less than other provincial newspapers: two-pence in 1760 rather than the standard two-pence half-penny,²⁷ which was possibly the result of its twice-weekly status.²⁸ The printing office was based in Canterbury, Kent's largest town and the chief market-place in the east of the county.²⁹ Traditionally a textile manufacturing town specialising in silk and worsted, in the eighteenth-century the fortunes of Canterbury's principal industry were declining.³⁰

The newspaper served a locale that extended from Canterbury to Barham, Elham, Folkestone, Hythe, Dymchurch, Romney and Lydd, and from Canterbury to Faversham, Sittingbourne, Chatham and Rochester and Milton.³¹ (Fig. 1) This unusually-limited distribution area³² was the maximum vicinity available to Abree being hemmed in by the sea to the east and south, and by the London press pervading from the north as far down as Maidstone. Circulation figures for *The Kentish Post* are

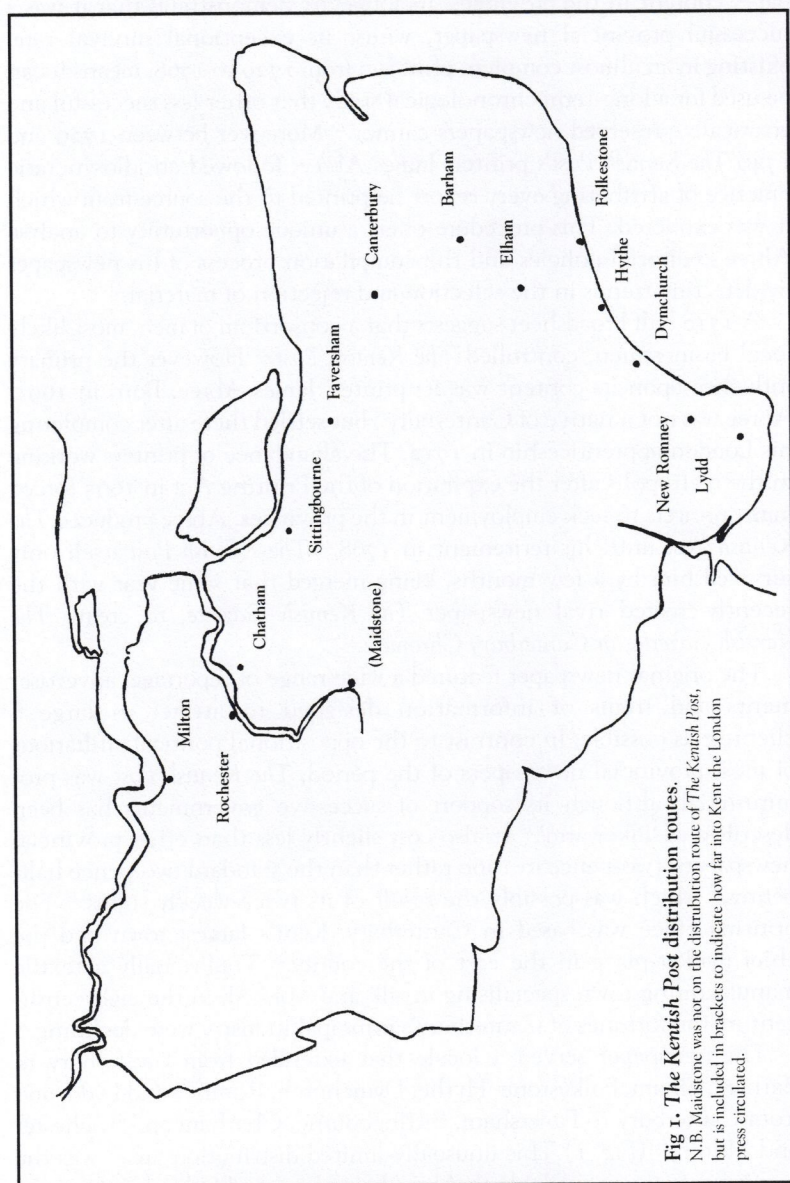


Fig 1. The Kentish Post distribution routes.
 N.B. Maidstone was not on the distribution route of *The Kentish Post*, but is included in brackets to indicate how far into Kent the London press circulated.

unknown. However population figures for Kent give a very rough indication of the limits of possible circulation during the period. The population of Kent by 1700 was just over 150,000. Canterbury alone had an estimated population of seven thousand by 1670, Faversham 1500, Milton 900, Rochester approximately 3,000, Folkestone 500 and Hythe 350-450. The dockyard town of Chatham had at least five thousand inhabitants by 1700.³³ Literacy requirements and the cost of newspapers restricted the purchase and use of newspapers by many of east Kent's poorer inhabitants, such as Canterbury's renowned textile workers; although Professor Clark found that Kentish textile workers owned an above average number of books in the seventeenth century,³⁴ analysis of their signatures display literacy levels of approximately but fifty per cent.³⁵ Certainly the average newspaper reader would have been a member of the middling-sort: such people being more likely to have had both the disposable income to acquire such literature and the ability to read it. They were also more likely to have been members of the urban middling-sort, as newspapers were more readily available in towns, without incurring the expense of postage or having to be delivered by hand. This is not to say however that newspapers had no plebeian readership at all. Their availability in places such as taverns, coffee-houses and barbers' shops; their sale by hawkers for a halfpenny (later one penny); purchase by groups and the sharing of publications amongst friends and family, made newspapers available to many people who could not afford to purchase a full-priced copy themselves. In addition, public readings as well as the natural oral dissemination of items made newspaper content available to a wide and disparate range of consumers.³⁶ Certainly these newspapers had multiple users. Estimated figures range from five to forty per copy, but twenty is that most commonly cited.³⁷

II

The attention afforded crime, both locally and nationally, as a subject in *The Kentish Post* was regular, large and showed an overall increase. In the ten years analysed it featured a total of 56,093 reports. Of those, 14,721 concerned crime. Whilst the number of crime reports increased over the period,³⁸ proportionately its annual coverage remained relatively consistent. In seven of the years approximately thirty per cent of all the reports concerned crime. Only in the war years of 1739, 1759 and 1760 did the proportional amount of crime reports drop to as low as fourteen per cent.³⁹ The consistency of the place of crime in the newspaper reveals its newsworthiness as a subject at all times except those of international conflict.

Local news commanded a constant, if relatively small, part of the newspaper's content.⁴⁰ In total the ten years analysed featured 2730 local reports, constituting five per cent of the total number of reports printed. The annual proportion of local reportage to total reportage remained consistent, with a median of five per cent, ranging from four per cent of total reportage in 1729 to six per cent in 1759 and 1760.⁴¹ Of those 2730 local reports, 1476 – or just over one half – were extracted from London newspapers. The dockyards of Woolwich and Deptford, as well as Chatham, Greenwich, Gravesend and Dartford, were especially common locations featured in these reports. Folkestone, Dover, Sevenoaks, Tunbridge Wells, Rochester, Canterbury, Fooks Cray, Ramsgate, Chilham, Margate, Cobham, Sheerness, Blackheath and Shooter's Hill, were just some of the other locations cited. The remaining 1254 local reports were printed within the section entitled '*Canterbury*' and were those that Abree had acquired independently from the London press.⁴² Although these stories were generally situated within a closer proximity to Canterbury than those Kent reports taken from the London press, there was some overlap. As well as featuring events that occurred in Canterbury itself, they were located in places such as Maidstone, Rochester, Dover, Deal, Faversham and Littlebourne. In some years however the proportion of independent local reports dropped to as low as one third of the total number of local reports printed.⁴³ 789 of the 2730 local reports featured crime, and thus constituted 29 per cent of the total number of local reports printed in the ten years analysed and but five per cent of the total amount of crime reportage. Annually the proportion of local reports that featured crime was less uniform than that displayed in the newspaper more widely, fluctuating between sixteen per cent in 1729 to 37 per cent in 1738 and 1767.⁴⁴

Eighteenth-century newspapers' assimilation and regular presentation of such a large quantity of stories of both local and national offending was unprecedented. As newsworthy and saleable, crime was likely to be central to an editor's remit. The increasing number of such reports was due to the universal growth in the size of newspapers and the simultaneous diminution of the size of the print that was occurring at this time.⁴⁵ But it was a development that, as John Beattie surmises, may have contributed to a belief that crime was increasing.⁴⁶ Lamentations by contemporary social commentators such as Henry Fielding and others⁴⁷ of escalating crime levels, together with the increase in the number of capital offences,⁴⁸ have been utilised by historians as evidence of widespread anxiety over the perceived increase in crime.⁴⁹ From the start of the eighteenth-century, and indeed before, writers related how they had 'with great Concern for some years last past observed the Lamentable

Increase of highway-Men, and House-breakers among us'.⁵⁰ In fact *The Kentish Post* did not editorialise upon rising crime levels and reports expressing concern over a perceived rise in criminality were rare. Nicholas Rogers cites one narrative expressing such fears from the *Whitehall Evening Post* in 1749, but neglects to say how common such statements were.⁵¹ Certainly in *The Kentish Post* they were not representative of newspaper's discourse more widely.⁵² If its readers noticed a large and gradually increasing number of crime reports over the years this was probably due to the newspaper's need to expand rather than an intentional strategy to present deviance as an escalating problem.

However this did not mean that crime was not presented as a problem in *The Kentish Post*. Although crime was not portrayed (proportionally) to be rising, the extensive attention given to deviancy could not fail but to implicitly problematise it. The perpetual, steady and consistent portrayal of crime served to present its incidence as being normative – an everyday, ordinary occurrence – but this very representation of crime as endemic inevitably served to portray it as a concern. *The Kentish Post*'s readership was evidently aware of, and interested in crime: stories of law-breaking, progress reports of trials, and the conviction of offenders, pervaded the text, and created a picture of a society in which a high frequency of criminality was accepted as normal. However, as James Sharpe has noted, the evidence for contemporary concern about crime does not necessarily indicate that society was 'oppressed by fears of violence'.⁵³ Indeed the very endemic nature of crime presented in may indicate that contemporary perceptions were more nuanced; the *Post*'s discourse of criminality may have encouraged both an awareness of the potential for widespread deviancy, and a realistic assimilation of this information into readers' everyday routines.

III

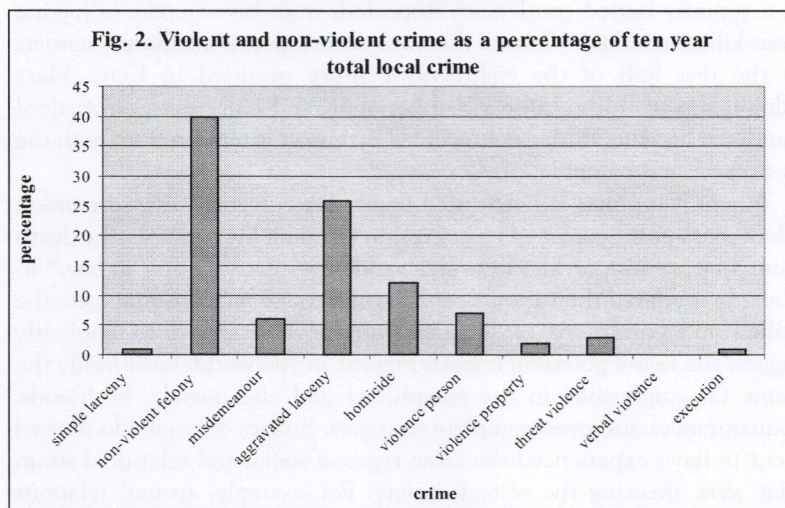
Yet whilst metropolitan and national discourses of criminality dominated the newspaper, vastly outnumbering the local crime reports, this did not mean that the local readership would not have been able to identify with the text or utilise its content in a practical way. As a composite text, the newspaper's representation of criminality emerged out of the whole of its numerous and diverse assortment of stories, embracing both local and national. Significantly the separate portrayals of local and national criminality found within *The Kentish Post* were almost identical. The picture of national deviance presented was composed of a wide variety of different types of offending, from the most horrendous murders, rape and robberies, to acts of petty theft and deceit.

The relative annual attention afforded the different types of criminality remained largely constant over the period. Overall non-violent offences constituted the largest category, followed by that of aggravated larceny, homicide, violence against the person, misdemeanour without violence, threat of violence, verbal and written violence, malicious damage of property, and finally simple larceny. Somewhat curiously, in a number of reported executions no crime was mentioned.⁵⁴ Coverage of violent crimes predominated over non-violent (63 per cent against 36 per cent).⁵⁵ Those reports primarily concerned aggression perpetrated against a person rather than property, and they were largely unpremeditated crimes of passion or negligence, perpetrated often by a non-family member and sometimes even a stranger. The perspective of the narratives engaged with the experience of the victim, rather than, as in the case of the pamphlets with their felon biographies, with the criminal. This was a discourse of victimisation. Finally, it was a representation that showed the fallibility of the justice system. Annually approximately 45 per cent of all the crime reports presented the felon/s as receiving no punishment at all for their offences.

Crucially, however, when the local readers read stories of such heinous crimes, many originating from far-flung places, their subjects and messages were not necessarily alien, because *The Kentish Post* was also simultaneously presenting the same picture of crime in Kent. If the newspaper's portrayal of local offending presented it to be increasing, it paralleled the national depiction, violent, gruesome, of a diverse nature, unpremeditated, often unpunished and offered from the perspective of the victim. The shocking stories it retold were located within the reader's own county, maybe even in their own towns and villages. On occasion those stories featured their own acquaintances or family members. The only difference was that such local crimes were portrayed as occurring less frequently. The juxtaposition of these two distinct but identical depictions were therefore mutually confirmatory; the one corroborating and enforcing the portrayal of the other.

Studies of the incidence of crime using court records show that the prosecution of misdemeanours far outweighed those of serious or felonious violent offences.⁵⁶ However this was not reflected in *The Kentish Post*. Cases of disorderly behaviour,⁵⁷ regulatory offences such as selling underweight bread,⁵⁸ illegal trading⁵⁹ and the breaking of by-laws⁶⁰ were reported. In this respect *The Kentish Post* presented a more realistic picture of the nature of criminality than that found in pamphlet literature, which almost exclusively concentrated upon the serious crimes of homicide and highway robbery. But whilst occurring, reports of non-violent misdemeanour did not dominate the local news. In fact they

were quite rare; the sample reveals only 45 local reports of such misdemeanours, plus a further seven of acts of simple larceny. In both the national and local cases non-violent misdemeanour was only the fifth most commonly reported crime genre. (Fig. 2)



Source: KP: 1729, 1730, 1738, 1739, 1752, 1753, 1759, 1760, 1766, 1767

Instead reports of a serious, violent nature were shown to predominate in Kent as well as in the country more widely. Mirroring the national representation, reports of local violent offences outweighed those of non-violent, be it only just with 52 against 47 per cent.⁶¹ Even the most heinous crimes of infanticide, highway-robbery, arson, rape, and theft, were presented as not just occurring far away but, crucially in locations closer to the reader's own lives. Moreover, the local violence reported in *The Kentish Post* more frequently concerned hostility against people than property.

Murder, which was considered to be the apex of criminality, was depicted in the newspaper to have occurred regularly in Kent. Annually murder was the third most reported local crime genre in the newspaper (Fig. 2). In total there were 97 published reports of local homicides in the sample years between 1729 and 1767. Its coverage was often gruesome. Take the case of Jane Plane, a widow from Ospringe, who was viciously stabbed twenty times by Stephen Diaper in 1738.⁶² The residents of Kent had their share of discovering the corpses of suspected murder victims. The inhabitants of Rotherhithe received a shock in February 1753 when 'the Body of a young Woman sew'd up in a Mat, with her Throat cut

from Ear to Ear in two places, and her Legs tied together' was found in the Thames at Kings-Stairs. The report gruesomely concluded that 'She had been so long in the Water, that her Body was almost putrified [sic]'.⁶³ An unfortunate farmer from Plumstead, near Woolwich, dug up the body of a recently-buried gentleman, suspected, from his wounds, of having been killed in a duel.⁶⁴ Two of the most notorious pre-meditated murders of the first half of the eighteenth-century occurred in Kent: Mary Edmondson of Rotherhithe killed her aunt, and Gill Smith of Dartford murdered his wife. Both cases received extensive attention from both the newspaper and pamphlet presses.⁶⁵

Where pamphlets concentrated upon cases of premeditated murder, *The Kentish Post* broadened its discussion of homicide to emphasise death caused by passion, recklessness and accident – manslaughter in law.⁶⁶ In doing so it related the various scenarios and social tensions that were the milieu and conditions of such encounters, and served to implicitly suggest the many potential hazards present in the world, both inside the home (as emphasised in the pamphlets) and also outside, by friends, acquaintances and even complete strangers. Stories of homicide showed Kent to have experienced the same types of social and relational strain that were affecting the rest of society. For example, spousal relations were often portrayed as fraught. A publican in Rotherhithe in 1766, 'having some words with his wife, cut her on the skull with a pewter pot in so dangerous a manner, that her life is despaired of.'⁶⁷ Similarly in 1753, John Sullivan of Dover 'was taken up on Suspicion of murdering his Wife, by beating and abusing her'; fortunately for him, he was cleared after the Coroner's Inquest concluded that the wife died of natural causes.⁶⁸ Illicit sexual relations were often the backdrop to cases of infanticide. In February 1729 Elizabeth Pilcher of Buckland was committed to St Dunstan's gaol, Canterbury, accused of murdering her illegitimate child: it was reported that 'she has confes'd it was still born, and that she burnt it, being brib'd by the Father for that purpose, to prevent a Discovery'.⁶⁹

Death through dangerous and negligent driving was portrayed as an alarming matter for people in both London and Kent. The sheer number of vehicles in the capital forced Londoners to renegotiate the uses of public space in their city, as the large number of hackney coaches conflicted with pedestrian users of the streets and allegedly also adversely affected trade.⁷⁰ As elite society displayed decreasing tolerance to manslaughter, dangerous driving became subject to ever-harsher legislation.⁷¹ Kent also encountered this difficulty. In 1766 Henry Minster was reported to have illegally driven 'a Waggon and three Horses on a Gallop, as he sat on the Rods, without any Person on Foot, in the

Highway of St Lawrence Parish'. In consequence of his foolishness a girl was run over, suffering such bruising to her head 'that her Life is in danger'.⁷² An advertisement placed in the newspaper in 1759 by the Justices of Kent to somewhat belatedly inform readers that a fine of up to ten shillings, or a spell in gaol for up to one month, would be the punishment for injury or death caused through dangerous driving under 27 Geo.II, Cap.16.⁷³ John Beattie has suggested that convictions for manslaughter were less likely before 1760.⁷⁴ Is it possible therefore that the amassing of so many cases of dangerous driving, and other such negligent behaviour in the eighteenth-century, and their publication in printed form may have contributed to this growing intolerance towards accidental death?

Violence, deliberate and accidental, was presented as a part of local life, and such violence, even if it did not result in death, was newsworthy.⁷⁵ Thus the newspaper covered the actions of Margaret Jones who stabbed Elizabeth Rooney 'in the back Part of the Head with a Fork' in 1759,⁷⁶ and Alexander Adamson who stabbed George Craigs in the leg with a clap knife in 1766.⁷⁷ Less serious, but nevertheless newsworthy, William Syburns threw dirt and stones at William Cook in the 'public street' in 1760 causing him to be 'wounded and bruised'.⁷⁸ The newspaper presented a society that was not immune from violence; people often, in anger, lashed out at others, while suicide was a not an uncommon form of newsworthiness.⁷⁹

Reports of sexual violent crime were rarer than those of murder or common assault. In the ten years analysed, taken from the whole country, only 291 reports of sexual assault were printed in *The Kentish Post*.⁸⁰ 56 per cent of these featured completed rape,⁸¹ of which children under the age of consent constituted the largest proportion of victims.⁸² Several of these cases occurred in Kent. Soldier Caleb Campbel was reported to have been committed to Canterbury gaol on 16 October 1738 'for the horrible Fact of ravishing Elizabeth Burton, a Child about five Years old'.⁸³ The rape of ten-year-old Margaret Lamb by her teacher Samuel Abbot was a particularly notorious case in 1759. Abbot, who kept a reading and writing school at Greenwich, had previously been 'guilty of little Indecencies to several of the Female Scholars'. But 'one Afternoon he detained this Girl [Lamb] after the rest of the Children left the School, and letting down a Bed, by Force committed the Fact, stopping the Blanket into her Mouth to prevent her crying out.' The inability of the girl's mother, a poor woman, to prosecute her daughter's violator lead the Governors of the Magdalene House, where she worked, to prosecute Abbot on her behalf.⁸⁴ Abbot raped Lamb by 'Force and Violence'. As this case indicates, many of the attacks were portrayed as

aggressive. Campbel, for example, took his victim to 'the necessary House in the Garden, from whence she was heard to cry very much'. She contracted both venereal disease and 'a very virulent Gonorrhoea' as a result of the attack.⁸⁵ Campbel was eventually acquitted of rape, but found guilty of assault with intent to ravish, fined 13s. 4d. and sentenced to three months imprisonment.⁸⁶ Abbot was sentenced at the Maidstone Assize to a fine of 3s 4d, three months in gaol and to stand on the pillory in Greenwich.⁸⁷ But children were not the only victims discussed in the newspaper. In 52 of the 291 reports of sexual assault it is possible to identify the age of the female victim as being between seventeen and 69. It is noticeable that in these reports the incidence of extreme and gratuitous brutality (in addition to the rape itself), gang rape and additional offences such as theft, were high.⁸⁸ The details of the alleged rape of adult women, being difficult to disentangle from seduction, often proved inconclusive from jurymen's perspectives. However, where there was hard evidence such as beatings and gang rape, commonly represented by the external injuries suffered by the victim, it served as a criterion by which rape of adult women was perceived to be at a serious remove from normative sexual behaviour, and thereby rendered undoubtedly criminal. These less disputable cases of rape and attempted rape were much more likely to be reported by the *Post*.

IV

Thus local and national portrayals of crime were not mutually exclusive or antithetical. Even stories of serious offences occurring outside Kent could acquire a relevancy to the reader by virtue of the reporting of similar offences committed locally. In this way the newspaper encouraged the engagement of the reader with its entire text, not just that pertaining to the local vicinity. However, using the portrayal of violent theft – the second most frequently reported local offence⁸⁹ – as illustration, it is possible to suggest ways in which the reportage directly and indirectly encouraged active engagement and participation from its readers.

The simple juxtaposition of so many narratives allowed the reader to become broadly aware of the nature of the crime, and thus of the dangers of the town, street or highway. This was, in part, achieved through *The Kentish Post's* focus upon the experience of the victim, which comprised a novel perspective. Pamphlets, in their attempt to achieve a didactic message, concentrated upon the biography and motivations of the felon, thereby encouraging empathy with the fallen state of the criminal. Attention was therefore drawn away from the victim. This was reversed

in newspaper reportage. The crime was presented from the viewpoint of the victim often because the felon had not been caught, and commonly the victim was the only witness to the events. The content of the reports thus concerned the precise nature of the attack, the danger and injury inflicted on victims, together with the repercussions on them, items stolen, the location, and a description of the perpetrator to aid arrest. The publication of such information, drawn from the perspective of victims, was on an unparalleled scale in the newspaper. It would be going too far to suggest that crime reportage constituted a practical guide to ensuring individual safety, but its details could promote a climate of circumspection.⁹⁰ Perhaps for the first time the regular – if not systemic – descriptions of violent theft featured in the newspaper, potentially at least, bred a familiarity with the dynamics of crime, which could not be provided by the sporadic publication of pamphlets.

First, robberies were presented as highly aggressive and even potentially fatal. A butcher from Harrietsham, returning from Maidstone market, had his thumb shot off by a footpad during an attempted robbery,⁹¹ whilst David Carr, Samuel Philips, Thomas Viccory and James Knell were committed to St Dunstan's gaol in 1760 on charges of 'assaulting and violently beating and abusing...W[illia]m Nauton, and on suspicion of robbing him'.⁹² Many of the reported attacks resulted in the death of the victim. A bricklayer from Deptford, returning from his brother's house in Chatham in 1759, was robbed and murdered by two thieves on the road to Gravesend. It was chillingly reported that

it is supposed they first knocked him down, and then robbed and murdered him, and threw him over the Hedge, where he was soon after discovered, having received many Wounds and Bruises, being stabbed in the Neck with a Bayonet, and his Head bruised in a most shocking Manner.⁹³

The robbery and death of John Atherfold from Sundridge, near Sevenoaks, by his servant Murphew in August 1753 was the subject of a series of reports that year.⁹⁴ Originally covered in the local section of the newspaper, the case was soon taken up by the London press from whom Abree printed a detailed account of the 'shocking Action'. Murphew killed Atherfold for a considerable sum of money he had acquired from a day selling hops. The body was later discovered at the side of a wood near his house. He was reportedly 'bathed in his Blood, his Throat cut, and Wounds in several Parts of his Body'.⁹⁵ Many of the thieves, like William Thomas and Joseph Budd who attacked James Palmer on the highway in 1767,⁹⁶ were depicted as operating in pairs and even gangs, an arrange-

ment that served to emphasise their efficiency and threat. Resistance was presented as being especially dangerous. In 1760 it was reported that 'two Fellows attacked a Servant of Lady Honeywood's between Kent-street Turnpike and Deptford, who not immediately delivering his Money, one of them shot the poor Man through the Groin'.⁹⁷ A report from 1739 graphically stated the danger:

Robberies frequently are attended with Murder, yet in general it must be urged ...that it is either done when the Ruffians cannot Escape unless they commit it, or cannot come at their Booty without.⁹⁸

Thieves were portrayed as indiscriminate in their choice of the gender and age of their victims. The chivalrous romantic highwaymen that graced the pages of pamphlet literature in the seventeenth- and eighteenth-centuries only rarely appeared in *The Kentish Post*. One unfortunate young woman reportedly suffered a terrifying attack in 1767 when she was both robbed and raped by two footpads in sailors' uniforms on the Deptford road. One of the thieves 'presenting a pistol to her, swore that if she did not follow him without any hesitation, he would blow her brains out'. When she screamed the other attacker knocked her down. She was raped by both men, one restraining her whilst the other carried out the act. She was so terrified that by the time she arrived at her relation's house 'she fell into convulsions; and it was thought she would have died that night'.⁹⁹ Susanna Record was more lucky being stripped only of her clothes and two prayer books by Charles Dailey and Thomas Elliot on the highway in Chatham.¹⁰⁰ No doubt was left therefore that being robbed was a terrifying experience. Whilst familiar in the light of modern journalism, we should not lose sight of the fact that this portrayal was not an inevitable aspect of eighteenth-century crime reporting. Printed accounts could, and did, dispel some of the threat of violence in robbery by emphasising other aspects of the crime. The most notable examples are, of course, the pamphlet accounts of highway robbery where the emphasis upon highwaymen's gentility or humorous repartee often provided a distraction from their violence.¹⁰¹ But no such diversion of the reader's attention was apparent in *The Kentish Post*, in which sinister threat or outright brutality were unremitting.

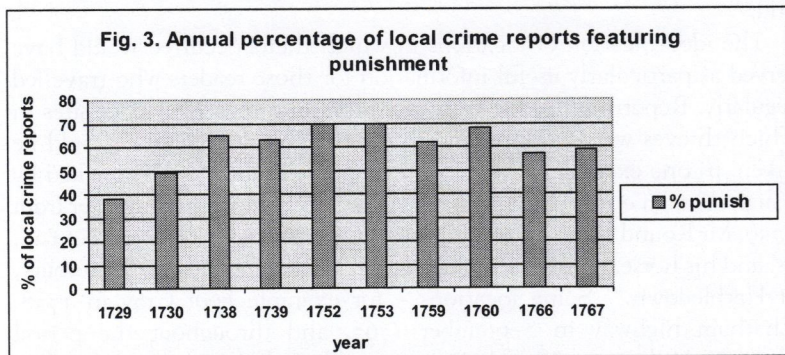
By discussing the tricks and methods by which thieves attacked their victims, newspapers implicitly, and sometimes explicitly, provided advice on precautions to take whilst travelling.¹⁰² For example, strangers should never be trusted. Stories told of felons deliberately befriending their intended victims, sometimes travelling with them for several days, until making their strike at an isolated location. The 'Marine

and...Militia-Man' who robbed and killed the bricklayer on the Gravesend road in 1759, mentioned above, had travelled with their victim and even 'stopt [sic] to drink a Mug of Beer together' before they robbed him.¹⁰³ Ship's carpenter William Aylmer alleged that he had been attacked by three men as he walked from Deal to Canterbury in 1729. Purportedly they overtook him as he was leaving Wingham Street 'and walked with him about a Mile and an half, till they came into a Field near Littleborn [sic], where they attacked him'.¹⁰⁴ Aylmer was later found to be lying and was jailed as an impostor.¹⁰⁵ It is possibly a testament to the universal knowledge of such modes of *operandi* by thieves, and their successful dissemination by printed and oral medium that Aylmer was able to create and deliver such a believable tale. The account of a ship's mate who was followed and robbed by three men in 1767 after 'imprudently pulling out twelve guineas at a public house at Deptford,' served as a reminder of the good sense of keeping money hidden from prying eyes.¹⁰⁶ Occasionally the newspaper proffered direct warnings of specific criminal activity in order, as it claimed, 'to prevent other Persons from being imposed upon in the like Manner'.¹⁰⁷ A 1739 account cautioned travellers 'not to Travel with Things of too great a Value' after one gentleman was robbed of over twenty pounds on Shooters Hill, Blackheath.¹⁰⁸ Others sought to thwart potential crime by alerting readers to suspicious persons, exemplified by one in 1766 concerning John Williams, arrested in Maidstone after lurking for some time armed with a large loaded horse pistol; he gave an unconvincing account of himself, but no actual offence was attributed to him and he was released. The report contained a detailed description of his appearance, and was said to have been 'inserted for the public good, that all persons may be wary of him'. The account ended with the disconcerting postscript that the pistol was later found to have blood stains on the brass at the butt-end.¹⁰⁹

The identification of locations in which thefts occurred would have served as particularly useful information for those readers who travelled regularly. Reporting the location of attacks informed readers of sites in which thieves were working and thus where extra vigilance should be taken. In one example, a Mr Grinstead and his family were attacked by a highwayman on the road from Faversham to Selling.¹¹⁰ In another from 1759, Mr Round Lampard of Doddington was robbed by a footpad of £22. 8s. and his horse, on the turnpike a quarter of a mile outside Canterbury, at Harbledown.¹¹¹ Some locations – for example Foot Cray in 1738, Chatham highway in September 1767, and throughout the period Shooter's Hill¹¹² – appear to have been particularly infested with bandits. The latter location was 'a Place famous for the Commitment of many

Robberies' and equally notoriously a haunt of smugglers. In 1739 the newspaper reported on endeavours to widen the road at Shooters-Hill so that 'three Carriages [could]...pass a-breast' because 'it was formerly so narrow that it was impossible for a Passenger, if way-laid, to escape falling into a Ruffian's Hands'.¹¹³ As merchants, traders and businessmen, it is doubtless that many of the readers of *The Kentish Post* would have travelled regularly, using those very same roads identified as the scenes of robbery. These reports provided travellers with knowledge that, first, thieves were an ever-present threat and, secondly, of specific sites in which thieves were working at that time and thus where extra vigilance should be taken. As in the Lampard case above, many of the thieves reported in *The Kentish Post* escaped justice. The fact that many of these villains were likely to still be at large, and comprised a remaining threat gave such information a particular and immediate relevancy.

The rhetoric of inevitable retribution has been identified as one of the main tropes of the crime pamphlets. It was achieved by featuring the biographies of capital convicts who were awaiting execution, and once hanged, an account thereof, central to which was the – supposed – last-dying speech of the condemned. In a period where the emphasis was upon private prosecution, such a message, it has been suggested, was a crucial deterrent to potential criminals; providing a warning to the readers of the consequences of pursuing a sinful life.¹¹⁴ Pamphlets helped to disseminate this moral to the masses, playing a part in social control by aiding readers to internalise obedience.¹¹⁵ But, the newspaper did not attempt such a didactic function. On average annually forty per cent of the local crime reports in *The Kentish Post* presented the felon/s as receiving no punishment at all for their offences.¹¹⁶ (Fig. 3) Instead of emphasising the infallibility of the judicial system, newspaper discourse advertised its failings. The effects of such discourse upon the readership



Source: KP: 1729, 1730, 1738, 1739, 1752, 1753, 1759, 1760, 1766, 1767

are difficult to ascertain, and are potentially numerous, but it is possible that in reporting offences for which the felon escaped, the newspaper may actually have undermined the ideological notions of authority and order projected in executions and further disseminated in the pamphlets. However it is also possible that the newspaper's presentation of the rate of punishment, rather than causing anxiety, may simply have confirmed what the readers already knew: that many crimes went unpunished. Conversely, the numbers of reports featuring punishment may have exceeded some reader's expectations and thereby became reassuring.

It was the newspaper's rapacious need for reports to fill its pages that led it to use unsolved cases. In covering on-going events the newspaper achieved an up-to-the-minute specificity that was not available in other printed crime literature. In pamphlets featuring felons who had been brought to justice, the location of the offences was largely of retrospective, rather than predictive, interest. In the newspaper, however, locations were uncompromisingly presented as the hunting grounds of thieves still at large, a worrying prospect for those who might have cause to be in those areas.

But newspapers did not just publicize the inadequacies of the judicial system. Increasingly they became a medium in which assistance in finding perpetrators was sought. It was not uncommon for both national and local reports to provide the reader with the felons' descriptions, as a means to facilitate their arrest. On rare occasions the newspaper revealed that its advertisements did work. The arrest of suspected robber and murderer Murphew, discussed above, was achieved following his identification by an old acquaintance, who had read the advertisement and spotted him in Scotland.¹¹⁷ *The Kentish Post* openly appealed for witnesses and local knowledge in solving crimes. When the body of a female baby was discovered in a ditch in Harbledown in 1767 the report surmised that 'There is great reason to believe the child belonged to some person near this city, as it appears to have been murdered as soon as born': it concluded that 'the petticoat [in which the baby was wrapt] remains in the hands of the parish officers of Harbledown, for the inspection of those persons who can give any intelligence of the affair'.¹¹⁸ In these ways, the readers themselves were drawn into the justice system by the newspaper.

V

The Kentish Post, as a successful and long-running newspaper was, along with oral culture that has left little accessible data, the most important vehicle for the dissemination of information about crime in east Kent. It

is difficult to say exactly how and to what extent, but its discourse of crime must have shaped its readership's understandings of criminality in their own communities and more widely. However, its reportage was at variance both with the content of pamphlet literature, and with the main business of the local courts. Whilst readers of the pamphlet press were consuming a picture of crime based almost exclusively on the most serious, but solved, crimes of pre-meditated murder and highway-robbery, readers of *The Kentish Post* were subject to a significantly broader and more diverse representation of the incidence, causes, nature and consequences of criminality. Of course it is probable that many newspaper readers would also have read at least some pamphlets. Together the two texts would have influenced the reader's perceptions, possibly creating a more balanced interpretation. However, being published twice a week for 38 years and featuring thousands of crime stories in that time, *The Kentish Post*'s influence was likely to have outweighed that of the much less frequently published pamphlets. Its almost complete lack of aetiology, together with its propensity to cover unsolved and thus unpunished crimes, ensured that *The Kentish Post* was a more multifaceted and thus less-reassuring text. In its coverage of petty offences, it presented a more realistic depiction of criminality than that found in the pamphlet literature. But it in no way reflected the near predominance of misdemeanours in the business of the Canterbury Quarter Sessions.¹¹⁹ In both the national and local contexts, considerations of newsworthiness placed a premium on serious and violent offences, though stories of less-serious criminality clearly had a place in saleable reportage. As a consequence, whilst stories from outside Kent massively outnumbered those originating inside the county, these had the potential to acquire a relevancy to the reader's perceptions and experience of crime, because of their essential similarity in nature to the newspaper's depiction of local deviancy.

Narrative devices used in the newspaper could engage the reader even more closely however. The focus upon the experience of the victim sought an identification between the reader and the injured party. Again this was in direct contrast to the narrative angle of the pamphlets, which encouraged identification between the reader and the felon. This perspective facilitated a new kind of crime deterrence. This was no longer one that relied on persuading potential criminals not to offend, but instead one that, by virtue of publishing on-going information concerning felons at large, their various *modus operandi* and currently dangerous locations, both implicitly and on occasion explicitly, encouraged circumspection amongst the readership as potential victims. This was accompanied by requests, in stories and advertisements, for help in

solving local offences. Together these elements created a participatory text that encouraged an active engagement on the part of the reader. The news in *The Kentish Post* could therefore be used in a practical way that stories in pamphlets, focusing, as they did, upon such extreme and rare acts of premeditated and solved murder, were never able to. The examination of crime reportage therefore reveals the importance of printed media to crime discourse in the local context. The picture of crime in the newspaper does not, of course, provide access to what the inhabitants of east Kent thought or believed about crime, though there are implications. But the systematic study of crime reportage does allow us to identify with a high degree of precision the parameters set upon criminological information in this perhaps most important vehicle for its printed dissemination in the locality. It is the integration of the potentialities of discourse, revealed in the newspaper press, with our analyses of the incidence and nature of offending derived from the study of the courts that offers the best opportunity for understanding how contemporaries perceived and reacted to crime in their neighbourhoods.

Notes

1. I would like to thank Professor Peter King, Drs Nathan Johnstone and Jackie Eales, for their comments on earlier drafts of this article.
2. For a discussion of these issues see Joanna Innes and John Styles, 'The crime wave: recent writing on crime and criminal justice in eighteenth-century England', in A Wilson (ed.), *Rethinking Social History: English Society 1570-1920 and its Interpretation* (Manchester, 1993), pp.201-8.
3. J A Sharpe, 'The history of violence in England: some observations', *Past and Present*, 108 (1985), p.215.
4. *Idem*, 'Domestic homicide in early Modern England', *The Historical Journal*, 24, 1 (1981), pp.29-48, 40-41; *idem.*, 'Last dying speeches': religion, ideology and public execution in seventeenth-century England', *Past and Present*, 107 (1985), p.166; P Lake, 'Deeds against nature: cheap print, Protestantism and murder in early Modern England', in K Sharp and P Lake (eds.), *Culture and Politics in Early Modern England* (1994), pp.257-83; F E Dolan, 'Home-rebels and house-traitors: murderous wives in early Modern England', *Yale Journal of Law and Humanities*, 4 (1992), pp.1-31; *idem.*, *Dangerous Familiars: Representations of Domestic Violence in England 1550-1700* (1994); M Gaskill, *Crime and Mentalities in early Modern England* (Cambridge, 2000); L B Faller, *Turned to Account: The Forms and Functions of Criminal Biography in Late Seventeenth- and Early Eighteenth-Century England* (Cambridge, 1987); *idem.*, 'The myth of Captain James Hind: a type of primitive fiction before Defoe', *Bulletin of the New York Public Library*, 79 (1976), pp.139-66. See also G Walker, 'Demons in Female Form': representations of women and gender in murder pamphlets of the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries', in W Zunder and S Trill (eds.), *Writing and the English Renaissance* (1996), pp.123-39; N Johnstone, *The Devil and*

- Demonism in Early Modern England* (Cambridge, 2006), ch. 5; A McKenzie, 'Martyrs in low life? dying "game" in Augustan England', *Journal of British Studies*, 42 (2003), pp. 167-205; M A Doody, "'Those Eyes are Made so Killing". Eighteenth-century murderesses and the law', *Princeton University Library Chronicle*, 46 (1984), pp.49-80; J Pocklington, 'Highway Robbery in London 1660-c. 1720: Practices, Policies and Perceptions', (unpublished D.Phil. thesis, University of Oxford 1997), ch. 4; J H Baer, "'The Complicated Plot of Piracy": aspects of English criminal law and the image of the pirate in Defoe', *The Eighteenth Century*, 23, 1 (1982), pp.3-26; I A Bell, *Literature and Crime in Augustan England* (1991); P. Rawlings, *Drunks, Whores and Idle Apprentices: Criminal Biographies of the Eighteenth Century* (1992).
5. G A Cranfield, *The Development of the Provincial Newspaper 1700-1760* (Westport, Connecticut, 1978); R M Wiles, *Freshest Advices: Early Provincial Newspapers in England* (Ohio, 1965), p.26; J Black, *The English Press in the Eighteenth Century* (1987).
 6. See for example Innes and Styles, 'The crime wave', p. 221; J A Sharpe, *Dick Turpin: The Myth of the English Highwayman* (2004); A R Ekirch, 'Bound for America: a profile of British convicts transported to the colonies, 1718-1775', *The William and Mary Quarterly*, 3rd ser, 42, 2 (1985), pp.185-7; R W Malcolmson, 'Infanticide in the eighteenth century', in J.S. Cockburn (ed.), *Crime in England 1500-1800* (1977), p.190; J M Beattie, 'Violence and society in Early Modern England', in A N Doob and E L Greenspan (eds.) *Perspectives in Criminal Law: Essays in Honour of John L.L.J. Edwards* (Aurora, Ontario, 1984), p.42. For studies that have gone beyond using newspapers in this supplementary role, see D T Andrew and R McGowen, *The Perreaus and Mrs. Rudd: Forgery and Betrayal in Eighteenth-Century London* (2001), esp. pp. 63-4, 67, 69, 81-2; P King, 'Newspaper reporting, prosecution practice and perceptions of urban crime: the Colchester crime wave of 1765', *Continuity and Change*, 2, 3 (1987), pp.423-54; J Styles, 'Print and policing: crime advertising in eighteenth-century provincial England', in D Hay and F Synder (eds.), *Policing and Prosecution in Britain 1750-1850* (Oxford, 1989), pp.55-111; O Davies, 'Newspapers and the popular belief in witchcraft and magic in the modern period', *Journal of British Studies*, 37 (1998), pp.139-65; M J Weiner, 'Alice Arden to Bill Sykes: changing nightmares of intimate violence in England, 1558-1869', *Journal of British Studies*, 40 (2001), pp.184-212. R Chartier and D Roche, 'New approaches to the history of the book', in J LeGoff and P Nora (eds.), *Constructing the Past: Essays in Historical Methodology* (Cambridge, 1985), p.210.
 7. R K Baker and S J Ball, *Mass Media and Violence*, Vol. 9, *A Report to the National Commission on the Causes and Prevention of Violence* (1969), pp. 3-4.
 8. D Chappell and M Walsh, "'No Questions Asked": a consideration of the crime of criminal receiving', *Crime and Delinquency*, 20, 2 (1974), p.165; C Y Ferdinand, *Benjamin Collins and the Provincial Newspaper Trade in the Eighteenth Century* (Oxford, 1997), pp.174-5; J R Sutherland, 'The circulation of newspapers and literary periodicals, 1700-30', *The Library*, 4th ser, 13 (1935), pp.116, 118; . Harris, 'The structure, ownership and control of the press, 1620-1780', in G. Boyce et al (eds.), *Newspaper History from the Seventeenth-Century to the Present Day* (1987), pp. 95-6; W Prest, *Albion*

- Ascendant: *English History 1660-1815* (Oxford, 1998), p.128; I Rivers, 'Dissenting and Methodist books of practical divinity', in Rivers (ed.), *Books and their Readers in Eighteenth-Century England* (1982), pp.128, 134-6, 145.
- M. Spufford, *Small Books and Pleasant Histories: Popular Fiction and its Readership in Seventeenth-Century England*, (Cambridge, 1981), p.249, concurs with the influence of these religious works on the attitudes and sensibilities of the uneducated.
9. *The Kentish Post or Canterbury Newsletter*, 2285, 3 October 1739, p.2. Hereafter KP. A flier by printer James Catnach in 1819 claiming London butcher Thomas Pizzezy was a body snatcher resulted in 200 people breaking into Pizzezy's house and assaulting him and his family; R Collison, *The Story of Street Literature: Forerunner of the Popular Press* (1973), pp.4-5.
10. A McKenzie, 'Making crime pay: motives, marketing strategies, and the printed literature of crime in England 1670-1770', in G T Smith, A N May and S. Devereaux (eds.), *Criminal Justice in the Old World and the New* (Toronto, 1998), pp.242-3; Wiles, *Freshest Advices*, pp.211-2; Davies, 'Newspapers and the popular belief', p.145; Chappell and Walsh, "No Questions Asked", p.165.
11. Wiles, *Freshest Advices*, pp. 211-2.
12. Davies, 'Newspapers and the popular belief', p.145.
13. J. Black, 'The development of the provincial newspaper press in the eighteenth century', *British Journal for Eighteenth-Century Studies*, 14 (1991), p.159; *Idem.* "Calculated Upon a Very Extensive and Useful Plan": the English provincial press in the eighteenth century', in P Isaac (ed.), *Six Centuries of the Provincial Book Trade in Britain* (Winchester, 1990), p.63; Cranfield, *The Development*, pp.v, 13; Wiles, *Freshest Advices*, p.26; H Barker, 'Catering for provisional tastes: newspapers, readership and profit in late eighteenth-century England', *Bulletin of the Institute of Historical Research*, 69 (1996), pp.42, 44.
14. Advertisements and items of information were also integral components of the newspaper's content and contributed to its discourse of crime. Unfortunately, lack of space prohibits an in-depth consideration of them here.
15. For a detailed discussion on the overall representation of criminality in *The Kentish Post*, see E J Snell, 'Changing discourses of crime: representations of criminality in the eighteenth-century newspaper press', *Continuity and Change*, forthcoming (2007) and *idem.*, 'Perceptions of Violent Crime in Eighteenth-century England: a Study of Discourses of Homicide, Aggravated Larceny and Sexual Assault in the Eighteenth-century Newspaper', (unpublished Ph.D Thesis, University of Kent, 2004.)
16. It was published on both Wednesday and Saturday. After 1725 the only other provincial newspaper that attempted twice-weekly publication was the *Eton Journal*, created to capitalise upon the demand for news generated by the political upheavals of the Jacobite rebellion of 1745. Once the political situation stabilised however, the *Eton Journal*, in conformity to other provincial newspapers, resorted to weekly publication. Cranfield, *The Development*, p.196.
17. The newspaper first appeared on 16 October 1717.
18. Cranfield, *The Development*, p.101.
19. Black, *The English Press*, p.37.

20. Many newspapers survive in only single copies. Wiles, *Freshest Advices*, p.42.
21. For a discussion of this process see Snell, 'Perceptions of Violent Crime'.
22. D Shaw and S Gray, 'James Abree (1691? – 1768) Canterbury's first "modern printer",' in P Isaac and B McKay (eds.), *The Reach of Print: Making, Selling and Using Books* (Winchester, 1998), p.22.
23. Shaw and Gray, *op. cit.*, p.22.
24. Abree announced his retirement in the 11 May 1768 edition of his newspaper, *Ibid.* F W Cock, 'The Kentish Post or the Canterbury Newsletter', reprinted from *The Library*, (July 1913), p.8.
25. James Simmons, having just completed his apprenticeship in London, returned to home to Canterbury to establish his own newspaper. Having proposed a partnership with George Kirkby the new printer of *The Kentish Post*, which was rejected, Simmons launched his own rival, twice-weekly, newspaper, *The Kentish Gazette*, which was first issued on 28 May 1768. Within four weeks it was announced that the two newspapers would merge. Shaw and Gray, *op.cit.*, pp.27-8.
26. Cranfield, *The Development*, p.125.
27. *Ibid.*, p.47; Cock, 'The Kentish Post', p.6.
28. Black, *The English Press*, p.37. All Wednesday and Saturday editions were included in the sample.
29. C W Chalklin, *Seventeenth Century Kent* (Rochester, 1978), p.31.
30. *Ibid.*, ch. 7; P Langford, *A Polite and Commercial People: England 1727-1783* (Oxford, 1989), p.418.
31. Shaw and Gray, *op.cit.*, p.23.
32. Cranfield, *The Development*, p.46.
33. Chalklin, *op.cit.*, pp.27, 30-2.
34. Additionally civic libraries first appeared in Kent around 1640, and before this date Faversham had an extensive school library. P Clark, 'The ownership of books in England, 1560-1640: the example of some Kentish town-folk', in L Stone, *Schooling and Society: Studies in the History of Education* (2nd edition, 1978), pp.96, 101.
35. K Levine, *The Social Context of Literacy* (1987), p.76. For figures see D Cressy, *Literacy and the Social Order: Reading and Writing in Tudor and Stuart England* (Cambridge, 1980), pp.132-4.
36. E S De Beer, 'The English newspapers from 1695-1702', in R Hatton and J S Bromley (eds.), *William III and Louis XIV. Essays 1680-1720* (Liverpool, 1968), p.121; Sutherland, 'The circulation of newspapers', p.124; D Nichol Smith, 'The newspaper', in A S Turberville (ed.), *Johnson's England: An Account of the Life and Manners of his Age*, 2 Vols (Oxford, 1933), II, p.341; Ferdinand, *Benjamin Collins*, pp.129, 93; Black, *The English Press*, pp.105-6; Cranfield, *The Development*, pp.176-7; I R. Christie, *Myth and Reality in Late Eighteenth-Century British Politics* (Houndsmill, 1970), p.325. Although the 1743 Act to suppress hawkers, who in the earlier decades of the century primarily dealt in unstamped newspapers, did manage to remove many such vendors from the streets; Harris, 'The structure', pp.86, 912.
37. Black, *The English Press*, p.105; Cranfield, *The Development*, p.177; Sutherland, 'The circulation', pp.123-4; Prest, *Albion Ascendant*, p.70; Ferdinand, *Benjamin Collins*, p.130.
38. Annual number of total reports and total crime reports, 1729: 4270, 1185; 1730: 3755, 1177; 1738: 4647, 1368; 1739: 5190, 1095; 1752: 6221, 2008,

- 1753: 5885, 1774: 1759: 5617, 802; 1760: 6633, 1108; 1766: 7418, 2260; 1767: 6457, 1944.
39. Annual proportion of reports that featured crime: 1729: 28%; 1730: 31%; 1738: 29%; 1739: 21%; 1752: 34%; 1753: 30%; 1759: 14%; 1760: 17%; 1766: 30%; 1767: 30%.
40. Reports were classified as 'local' if they concerned either events occurring within the county of Kent or a person identified as being from Kent. Whilst locations such as Woolwich or Deptford may not, for example, have been deemed 'local' by someone from Dover, Kent was a recognised geographical area, and *The Kentish Post* often specifically identified such locations as being in the county. This definition thus avoids arbitrary and artificially-imposed decisions of local space. Reports that only mentioned a location in Kent in passing, and which did not constitute the focus of the report, were discounted.
41. 1729: 4%; 1730: 5%; 1738: 4%; 1739: 5%; 1752: 5%; 1753: 5%; 1759: 6%; 1760: 6%; 1766: 5%; 1767: 4%.
42. 98 per cent (54,839 reports) of all the reports printed in the ten years analysed, were taken from London newspapers and newsletters. In 1729 and 1730 the two chief annual sources of crime narratives were the *St. James's Evening Post* and the *Whitehall Evening Post*. In 1738 and 1739 they were *The London Evening Post* and the *General Evening Post*. Together these newspapers accounted for over half the total amount of crime reports printed in *The Kentish Post* in these years. The remaining two per cent of reports (1254) were acquired independently from the London press.
43. Total number of independent local reports and their proportion of total local crime reports: 1729: 90, 57%; 1730: 61, 36%; 1738: 99, 50%; 1739: 116, 43%; 1752: 148, 46%; 1753: 142, 49%; 1759: 118, 36%; 1760: 194, 51%; 1766: 190, 53%; 1767: 96, 38%.
44. Annual percentage of local reports that featured crime: 1729: 16%; 1730: 28%; 1738: 37%; 1739: 29%; 1752: 32%; 1753: 33%; 1759: 25%; 1760: 17%; 1766: 32%; 1767: 37%.
45. Over the period the number of lines printed in newspapers rose from seven lines per inch before 1725 to nine and a half lines per inch after 1750; Wiles, *Freshest Advices*, p.54.
46. Beattie, 'Towards a study of crime', p. 299.
47. H Fielding, *An Enquiry into the Causes of the late Increase of Robbers, etc. With some proposals for Remediating the Growing Evil* (2nd edition, 1751), pp.1-2. For a debate on the role of Henry Fielding in the harshening attitude of and action taken by authority toward deviance, see H Amory, 'Henry Fielding and the criminal legislation of 1751-2', *Philol. Quarterly*, 1, 1971, pp.175-92. *Hanging not Punishment Enough, for Murtherers, Highway Men, and House-Breakers. Offered to the Confederation of the Two Houses of Parliament* (1701) p.1.
48. J M Beattie, 'The pattern of crime in England 1660-1800', *Past and Present*, 62 (1974), pp.47-8.
49. Dr Johnson regarded crime levels to be rising. W A Speck *Literature and Society in Eighteenth-Century England: Ideology, Politics and Culture*, 1680-1820 (1998), pp.114-21. Speck offers a discussion on the various ideas of Daniel Defoe, Bernard Mandeville and others on the perceived causes of criminality. See also, Beattie, 'The pattern of crime', p.47.

50. *Hanging not Punishment Enough*, p.1.
51. N Rogers, 'Confronting the crime wave: the debate over social reform and regulation, 1749-1753', in L Davidson *et al* (eds.), *Stilling the Grumbling Hive: The Response to Social and Economic Problems in England, 1689-1750* (New York, 1992), p.77. His example is taken from the *Whitehall Evening Post*, 14-7 January 1749.
52. Some rare examples can be found in KP, 1121, 19 February, p. 4; 1151, 28 May 1729, p.1; 3564, 4 January, p.4; 3568, 18 January, p.4; 3578, 22 February 1752, p.2.
53. Sharpe, 'The history of violence', pp.214-5.
54. These categories were those used for the quantitative analysis of the newspaper's content and were based upon contemporary criminological definitions. Because the study focused upon violent offences non-violent crimes were incorporated within the broader classifications of non-violent felony, simple larceny and misdemeanour (without violence).
55. In one per cent of reports the fact of criminal act was noted or alluded to but the specific crime was not revealed.
56. D Hay, 'War, dearth and theft in the eighteenth century: the record of the English courts', *Past and Present*, 95 (1982), pp.117-60; J M Beattie, *Crime and the Courts in England 1660-1800* (Princeton, New Jersey, 1986); *idem.*, 'The pattern of crime', pp.70-106.
57. KP, 3676, 10 February 1753, p.4; 4479, 8 October, p.4; 4484, 25 October 1760, p.2. For an excellent report on con-artist Elizabeth Grew who deceived several people into parting with money through a sorrowful tale about losing her husband and having four children to maintain see, KP, 5135, 21 January 1767, p.4.
58. KP, 1167, 23 July 1729, p.3.
59. KP, 2180, 30 September 1738, p.1. 3570, 25 January p.3; 3613, 24 June 1752, p.4; 4404, 19 January 1760, p. 4; 5044, 8 March 1766, p.3.
60. KP, 1180, 6 September 1729, p.1; 3745, 10 October 1753, p.1.
61. One per cent of local crime reports featured execution for which no crime was mentioned.
62. KP, 2227, 14 March, p.4; 2204, 23 December, p.4; 2205, 27 December 1738, p.4; 2229, 17 March, p.1; 2230, 24 March, p.4; 2232, 31 March 1739, p.1. For Mary Hall's similar case, see 3580, 29 February, p. 4; 3582, 7 March, p.4; 3585, 18 March, p.4; 3587, 25 March 1752, p.4.
63. KP, 3681, 28 February 1753, p.1.
64. KP, 1120, 19 February 1729, p.1.
65. For reports on Smith see KP, 2127, 29 March; 2129, 5 April; 2131, 12 April; 2132, 15 April; 2133, 19 April; 2134, 22 April 1738. For Edmondson, see KP, 4309, 28 February; 4311, 7 March; 4317, 28 March; 4319, 4 April; 4321, 11 April; 4323, 18 April; 4329, 9 May 1759; 4381, 31 October 1759; 4425, 2 April 1760. *A Full Refutation of the Pretended Genuine Narrative of the Trial and Condemnation of Mary Edmondson*, (1759); *A Genuine Narrative of the Trial and Condemnation of Mary Edmondson, For the Murder or Mrs. Susannah Walker, her Aunt. At the Assizes held at Kingston Upon Thames, for the County of Surry, On Saturday, March 31, 1759* (2nd edition, 1759); *The Trial at Large, Behaviour, and Dying Declaration, of MARY EDMONDSON, Who was Try'd and Convicted at the Assizes held at Kingston upon Thames, in Surry, on Saturday, the Thirty-First Day of March, 1759. For the Murder of Mrs.*

Susannah Walker, *Widow, her Aunt...*, (1759); *A Full, True, and Genuine Account of the Uncommon Behaviour of Mr. Gill Smith, Late of Dartford, in Kent, Apothecary; From the Time of his receiving Sentence of Death to his Execution, on Monday, April the 10th, 1738...*, (1738); *The Genuine History of the Life of Gill Smith. Late of Dartford, Apothecary. Who was Executed at Kennington-Common, April 10, 1738, for the Murder of his Wife in St. George's-Field...*, (1738).

66. For a discussion on the developments of the law of manslaughter see Beattie, *Crime and the Courts*, pp.79-80, 91-6.
67. KP, 5076, 28 June 1766, p.4. See also, 2256, 23 June 23 1739, p.1.
68. KP, 3744, 6 October 1753, p.4.
69. KP, 1121, 19 February 1729, p.1. For other cases, see KP, 2107, 14 January 1738, p.4; 3589, 1 April 1752, p.4; 5072, 14 June 1766, p.4; 5199, 9 September, p.4; 5207, 7 October 1767, p.4. Servants were also presented as a vulnerable sector of society, as demonstrated by the account of the milkman from Deptford, who locked his servant-maid in a room for 'a considerable time, and almost starving her', 5140, 7 February 1767, p.4.
70. M Jenner, 'London streets and hackney coaches, c.1640-c.1740', in T Hitchcock and H Shore (eds.), *The Streets of London: from the Great Fire to the Great Stink* (2003), p. 45.
71. N Gurr, 'Historical trends in violent crime: a critical review of the evidence', *Crime and Justice: An Annual Review of Research*, 3 (1981), p.300; L Stone, 'Interpersonal violence in English society 1300-1980', *Past and Present*, 101, (1983), p.24.
72. KP, 5076, 28 June 1766, p.4, and cf. 5119, 26 November 1766, p.4. In 1767 a drunk coach driver overturned his vehicle causing injury to all four passengers'. KP, 5141, 11 February 1767, p.3.
73. KP, 4343, 25 June 1759, p.4.
74. Beattie, *Crime and the Courts*, p.89.
75. There were 59 local reports featuring violence against one or more people in the ten sample years, constituting seven per cent of the total amount of local crime reportage. Overall it was the fourth most commonly reported offence. (See Fig. 2.)
76. KP, 4325, 25 April 1759, p.4.
77. KP, 5066, 24 May, p.4; 5068, 31 May 1766, p.4.
78. KP, 4401, 9 January 1760, p.4.
79. For some reports of local suicides, see KP, 1120, 15 February, p.4; 1128, 15 March, p.1; 1135, 9 April, p.1; 1157, 18 June 1729, p.3.
80. This figure includes acts of rape, attempted rape, and also malicious accusations of both, against men and women,.
81. 164 reports.
82. 86 reports. The age of consent has been taken as fourteen for boys and twelve for girls. Although in 1576 the female age of consent was reduced from twelve to ten, sexual intercourse with a girl aged either ten or eleven remained a misdemeanour if achieved with her consent, and a felony if perpetrated against her will. For a discussion of the complexities of the changing legal age of female consent see A E Simpson, 'Vulnerability and the age of female consent: legal innovation and its effect on prosecutions for rape in eighteenth-century London' in G S Rousseau and R Porter (eds.), *Sexual Underworlds of the Enlightenment* (Manchester, 1987), pp.182-205.

83. KP, 2186, 21 October 1738, p.1: see also the case of the rape of Margaret Forbus and the attempted rape of her sister Jane Forbus, 3671, 24 January, p.4; 3689, 28 March 1753, p.4, and the attempted rape of four-year-old Mary Hanger, 3739, 19 September 1753, p.4.
84. KP, 4336, 2 June 1759, p.4.
85. KP, 2186, 21 October 1738, p.1.
86. KP, 2204, 23 December 1738, p.4.
87. KP, 4355, 8 August 1759, p.4. Rape was a capital offence. That Abbot was not sentenced to death reveals that he was guilty of attempted, not completed, rape.
88. For further discussion of the representation of sexual violent crime in *The Kentish Post* see Snell, 'Perceptions of Violent Crime', ch. 8.
89. 209 reports featured local crimes of aggravated larceny.
90. This was a function that the seventeenth-century rough pamphlets had already provided. See S Clark, *The Elizabethan Pamphleteers: Popular Moralistic Pamphlets 1580-1640* (1983); G. Salgado, *The Elizabethan Underworld* (Stroud, 2nd edition 1992), p.7; Rawlings, *Drunks, Whores and Idle Apprentices*, p.4.
91. KP, 5044, 8 March 1766, p.4.
92. KP, 4479, 8 October, p.4. See also, 4481, 15 October 1760, p.2; 5072, 14 June 1766, p.4; 5145, 25 February, p.4; 5178, 20 June 1767, p.2.
93. KP, 4374, 6 October 1759, p.4: see also 2206, 30 December 1738, p.2.
94. KP, 4726, 4 August 1753, p.4.
95. Murphey was tried at Maidstone Assizes and discharged by Proclamation. KP, 3728, 11 August, p.2; 3733, 29 August 1753, p.4.
96. KP, 5066, 24 May 24 1766, p.4; 5183, 8 July 1767, p.4.
97. KP, 4480, 11 October 1760, p.1.
98. KP, 2260, 7 July 1739, p.2. In 1730 it was reported that robbers had left notes on Blackheath warning travellers that they would be stripped and cudgelled 'very heartily,' if they carried less than ten shillings; KP, 1186, 17 January 1730, p.1.
99. KP, 5203, 23 September 1767, p.2. For an in-depth discussion of the representation of violent sexual crime in the newspaper, see Snell, 'Perceptions of Violent Crime'.
100. KP, 4459, 30 July 1760, p.4. For an account of a child robbed, see 5120, 29 November 1766, p.4.
101. See, Fallor, *Turned to Account*, pp.168-71.
102. In his article concerning the 1765 Colchester crime wave, Peter King noted that newspaper coverage of the robberies suggested that the attacks were violent in nature and committed against lone travellers, by un-mounted, organised gangs operative in woodland areas. Moreover, the felons, who appeared to be strangers to the surrounding communities, were reported as wearing white smocks and false beards; their victims were primarily tradesmen, farmers and professionals; King, 'Newspaper reporting', pp. 434-6.
103. KP, 4374, 6 October 1759, p.4. For a similar story, see 5195, 26 August 1767, p.4.
104. KP, 1179, 24 December 1729, p.4.
105. *Ibid.*, and 1182, 3 January 1730, p.4.
106. KP, 5178, 20 June 1767, p.1. National reports suggested the existence of

criminal networks who reconnoitred targets, see 3648, 4 November 1752, p.2. One footpad was reported to have had prior knowledge of a diamond ring that his victim usually wore, 4451, 2 July 1760, p.4.; See additionally, 1116, 1 February 1729, p.1; 3660, 16 December 1752, p.2; 4405, 23 January 1760, p.4; 5199, 9 September 1767, p.2.

107. KP, 3620, 18 July 1752, p.2.

108. KP, 2234, 7 April 1739, p.4. For some national examples, see 3659, 23 December 1752, p.2; 4475, 24 September 1760, p.2; 5198, 5 September, p.1; 5205, 30 September 1767, p.2.

109. KP, 5107, 15 October 1766, p.4.

110. KP, 3683, 7 March 1753, p.4.

111. KP, 4380, 27 October 1759, p.4.

112. KP, 4426, 5 April 1760, p.4; 5066, 24 May, p.4; 5083, 23 July 1766, p.2; 5199, 9 September 1767, p.1.

113. KP, 2266, 28 July 1739, p.2.

114. Lake, 'Deeds against nature', p. 260.

115. Sharpe, "Last dying speeches", pp.148, 161, 163, 166.

116. The annual rate of local punishment was more erratic than that displayed in the national depiction of crime, ranging from 38 per cent in 1729 to seventy per cent in 1753.

117. KP, 3728, 11 August 1753, p.2.

118. KP, 5207, 7 October 1767, p.4.

119. Because Canterbury was a county corporate, its Quarter Sessions had the jurisdiction to try felonies and also to conduct executions. F H Panton, 'Finances and Government of Canterbury, in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries', (unpublished Ph.D thesis, University of Kent), pp.291, 294. Increasingly, however, the most serious cases were sent to the Maidstone Assizes.