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Abstract: 'The Creation of Popular Print Culture in Interregnum Scotland'

Alasdair Mann, the noted scholar of book culture in early modern Scotland, has suggested a significant shift occurred in Scottish society whereby the nation experienced an increasing interest in 'the polite engagement with book culture and leisure' by the end of the seventeenth-century. In particular the number of printers and booksellers doubled between 1660 and 1680. This study sets out to explain how the Interregnum period in Scotland fundamentally changed the nation's relationship to the printing press and created a consumer culture of popular print that necessitated this significant increase in production and distribution. From the sale of the press and patent of Evan Tyler to the London Stationers Company in 1647 through more than a decade of tumultuous politics, Scotland's press shifted away from a primary focus on producing works for foreign markets to the production of polemical works for a Scottish audience, the introduction of the first serial news journal, the growth of a competitive market for up-to-date printed news and the beginning of going out for the Saturday morning paper. More than just an anomaly which flourished during a period of occupation, these fundamental changes forever altered Scotland and ensured that during the Restoration a new cultural context was firmly in place which required the provision of a far greater degree of information than Scottish regimes previously had to provide. This article discusses the implication of foreign ownership of an early modern press, the impact of political changes and shifting censorship parameters, and the introduction of a large-scale chapbook culture into early modern Scotland. This large scale production of tracts designed for public consumption came to bear influence not only on literary culture but produced a material culture in which printed 'facts' made the tracts objects of value and power.