Fiasko - Scheitern in der Frühen Neuzeit

Beiträge zur Kulturgeschichte des Misserfolgs

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[transcript] Histoire

Aus:

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Wie stellen sich Menschen ihre Zukunft vor und wie gehen sie damit um, wenn sie keinen Erfolg haben? Moralische Urteile über den Scheiternden sind die Regel – ein schamvoller Rückzug aus der Welt oft die Reaktion. Jedoch: Verlierer sind prädestiniert dafür, aus dem Scheitern zu lernen, über den Zustand der Welt und das eigene Handeln nachzudenken.
Was bedeutet das für die Vorstellung von der Reflexivität der Moderne? Und gilt das bereits für die Epoche der Frühen Neuzeit? Die Beiträge des Bandes widmen sich diesen Fragen – über die disziplinären Grenzen zwischen Germanistik, Anglistik, Geschichtswissenschaft und Theologie hinweg.

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Editorial

Fiasko – Scheitern in der Frühen Neuzeit

Scheitern kann nur, wer Pläne hat. Die Beschäftigung mit dem Thema ist also zugleich eine Beschäftigung mit der Frage, wie sich Menschen ihre Zukunft vorstellen, welche Absichten sie hegen, und wie sie damit umgehen, wenn sie mit diesen Plänen keinen Erfolg haben. Die Erfolglosigkeit muss zugleich eklatant, für das soziale Umfeld des Scheiternden offensichtlich sein, sonst wird man eher von Rückschlägen, Misserfolgen, verzeihlichen Fehlern sprechen. Der Scheiternde ist deshalb von seinem Scheitern als Person betroffen – moralische Urteile Dritter über ihn sind die Regel. Das sagt freilich noch nichts darüber, wie der Scheiternde mit seinem Versagen umgeht: Scham – Leugnen – Lernen? Reinhard Koselleck hat darauf hingewiesen, dass viele neue Ideen ihr Entstehen einem Scheitern verdanken. Die Verlierer seien prädestiniert dazu, über den Zustand der Welt und das eigene Handeln nachzudenken. Scheitern ist demnach günstigenfalls die Bedingung der Möglichkeit, aus Schaden klug zu werden. Reflexivität aus der Erfahrung des Scheiterns also? Für ein historisches Nachdenken eignet sich das Thema jedenfalls gut.

Dass der Umgang mit dem Scheitern keine individuelle Angelegenheit ist, sondern im Rahmen von kulturellen codes funktioniert, erweisen die aktuellen Diskussionen über start-up-Unternehmen. Während ein Firmengründer in den USA mehrfach Fehlschläge erleiden kann und ihm dies sogar als wertvolle Erfahrung für das nächste Projekt zugerechnet wird, gilt ein erfolgloser Unternehmer auf dem europäischen Kontinent als gescheitert. Er braucht mitunter Jahre, um wirtschaftlich wieder auf die Beine zu kommen. Vergleichbare Verhaltensweisen und Erfahrungen werden in der einen Kultur als Risikofreude und als Lernprozess positiv gedeutet, die Verarbeitung eines Scheiterns erscheint hier recht unproble-

matisch. In der anderen Kultur gibt ein geschäftlicher Misserfolg Anlass, über die mangelnden Fähigkeiten des Gescheiterten zu sprechen, es stellt sich hier die drängende Frage nach Verantwortung, ja Schuld. Wenn zwei Kulturen heutzutage zeitgleich solch unterschiedliche Wege gehen, stellt sich die Frage, wie sich der Umgang mit dem Scheitern zu anderen Zeiten darstellte.

Die europäische Frühneuzeit erschien den Autoren dieses Bandes[1] dafür besonders geeignet, da in dieser Epoche im Falle eines Scheiterns regelmäßig heftige Auseinandersetzungen entbrannten über die Frage, ob allein die beteiligten Personen dafür verantwortlich sind, oder ob das Misslingen auf die blinde Macht des Schicksals verweist oder auf das unmittelbare Eingreifen Gottes.

Nimmt man die frühneuzeitliche Wortgeschichte im Deutschen und im Englischen in den Blick, bietet sich gegenüber der aktuellen Diskussion um unternehmerisches Scheitern ein anderes Bild: Das neuhochdeutsche Wort *Scheitern* hat in seiner bildhaften Herkunft einen materiellen Hintergrund, denn es bezeichnet ursprünglich das Auseinanderbrechen eines Schiffes, das dabei zu Holz*scheiten* zerschellt. Dem Scheitern eines Schiffes liegen zwar meist höhere Gewalten zugrunde, Naturgewalten zumal, vielleicht auch göttliches Walten. Es kann freilich auch auf Navigationsfehler zurückzuführen sein. Der Wortursprung umfasst im Deutschen demnach sowohl schuldloses als auch schuldhaftes Scheitern.

Das gilt auch für das Englische, freilich betont es eher die Verantwortung des Scheiternden. Denn die beiden häufigsten Wörter *fail/failure* und *miscarry/miscarriage* verweisen auf einen Mangel an persönlicher Kompetenz und Ausdauer bzw. auf ein Fehlverhalten. Diese pejorative Tendenz wird schon durch das negative Präfix in *miscarry* evoziert, ähnlich zu *misbehaviour*, das damit durchaus in Verbindung gebracht wird. Obschon *miscarry/miscarriage* bevorzugt zur Bezeichnung eines selbstverschuldeten Misserfolgs verwendet wurde, transportiert das Wort – wie das deutsche *Scheitern* – in seiner spezifischen Bedeutung aber auch tragische Konnotation, denn es bezeichnet eine Fehlgeburt.

Der frühneuzeitliche Sprachgebrauch weist somit im Deutschen wie im Englischen Ambiguitäten auf. In ihm scheint Kontingenz auf,

1 | Der Band geht auf eine Ringvorlesung der Fakultät für Geisteswissenschaften an der Universität Duisburg-Essen im Sommer 2013 zurück.

die menschliches Handeln stets prekär macht und die im Scheitern besonders hart hervortritt. Der spezifische Umgang mit diesem zentralen Problem kann als ein Hinweis auf den Charakter einer Zeit aufgefasst werden; in den sprachlichen Veränderungen erkennen wir Indizien für den historischen Wandel schlechthin.

Stefan Brakensiek/Claudia Claridge

"A full Account of the rise, progress and declension of our Journal"

Negotiations of failure in early English newspapers

Birte Bös

1. Introduction

In the first three decades of the 18th century, the English newspaper landscape witnessed an unprecedented growth. For newsmakers, it was a time of experimentation, innovation and success, but – unavoidably – also failure. Clearly, the notion of failure is open to interpretation. Vivid evidence of how the newsmakers[1] themselves viewed and negotiated failure is found in their papers, in self-referential passages, in which they position themselves and their papers.

Such editorial metadiscourse, i.e. "passages written ostensibly by the news editor or publisher as distinct from [...] reports written by various correspondents and reporters printed within the news publications"[2], was generally much more frequent and comprehensive in those early days of news writing than it is today. Starting a new project, newsmakers would lay open their motivations, outline their plans, and express their hopes for success[3]. However, some inaugural issues also discuss the failure of previous newspapers which resulted in new publication projects, the renaming and relaunch of existing ones, or the merging of newspapers. In the final

1 | The term 'newsmaker' is used here as an umbrella term for the voice representing the newspaper. In the early days of the newspaper, this voice would often stand for the author *cum* editor (and occasionally *cum* owner) of the paper. However, in many cases, a fictitious editorial persona represented the newspaper.

2 | Brownlees (2015), 5.

3 | Cf. Winkler (1998), 200-202.

issues, certainly not surprisingly, metadiscourse is less frequent than in the inaugural issues. Not every newsmaker took the chance to comment on the closing of their publication, and thus, many papers disappeared from the market without a word. Still, newsmakers were not unlikely to deal with the (potential) failure of ceasing publication in their final edition.[4]

Those insightful comments form the basis of the qualitative analysis pursued in this paper to gain insights into conceptualisations of (newspapers') failure in the early 18th century. After a short sketch of the contemporary newspaper landscape (section 2), which allows for a historical contextualisation of the study, section 3 will provide further information on the data and methods of analysis. Section 4 will focus on newsmakers' strategies of negotiating failure, which range from negating and reframing it to processes of self- and other-attribution. Finally, section 5 takes a closer look at the metaphorical domains exploited, which provide further evidence of how failure was conceptualised by early modern newsmakers.

2. The English newspaper landscape in the early 18th century

Actually, it was failure that instigated the boom in the English newspaper market at the turn of the 18th century. When the Licensing Act[5] had lapsed in parliament in 1695, the doors were opened for new print publications, ending the three decades of unrivalled supremacy of the *London Gazette*.[6] The growth was furthered by the social and economic conditions of the time. The expanding middle class and the increasingly more literate working class yielded more diversified readerships which needed to be catered for. The conflict-laden political situation – both at home and abroad – pro-

4 | Additionally, certain changes in the newspaper market triggered editorial metadiscourse as well. Some such comments are included in this discussion (e.g. ex. 1 and 2 below). Yet, such a historical, event-based approach would certainly be worth more systematic investigation.

5 | "An Act for preventing the frequent Abuses in printing seditious treasonable and unlicensed Bookes and Pamphlets and for regulating of Printing and Printing Presses".

6 | Fries (2012), 53.

vided ample material for discussions, to be fuelled by opposing newspapers and hotly debated in the flourishing coffeehouses.[7]

Right in 1695, the first tri-weeklies, the *Post Boy*, the *Post Man* and the *Flying Post*, started to appear.[8] In 1702, the first daily newspaper, the *Daily Courant*, entered the market, a publication format, which remained unrivalled for 17 years. The first evening paper, the *Evening Post*, made an attempt for daily publication, when it was first published in 1709. Yet, after only a few weeks, it was cut down to tri-weekly publication.[9] Still, the *Evening Post* and further evening papers that followed, were more successful than their morning competitors. They sped up news coverage, including the latest news of the day, before the papers were sent off to the country in the evening[10]. In addition to these papers, there were many short-lived publications, which hardly survived for a few weeks or months.[11]

A new direction of news writing was set by the publication of literary periodicals and political papers like Daniel Defoe's *Review* (1704), Richard Steele's *Tatler* (1709), Jonathan Swift's *Examiner* (1710), and Joseph Addison's *Spectator* (1711). Experimenting with new forms and styles (like the club motive and an inventory of fictitious correspondents), they "presented the reader with a ready-made form of public opinion on recent events"[12], paving the way for the leading article.

Growth and diversification were drastically impeded by a series of Stamp Acts, which, when first introduced in 1712, raised a tax of ½d or 1d, depending on the format of the paper. With every renewal of the Act, the taxes increased, reaching their peak in 1815 with 4d, before they finally were abolished in 1855.[13] Clearly, the taxes were not just introduced to raise money. In fact, Downie points out, the Stamp Act was designed to fund a lottery, which promised more money than the actual tax, but, more

7 | Clarke (2010), 49.

8 | Black (1987), 13.

9 | It is likely that this was a measure to avoid complete (financial) failure. Yet, as neither the first nor the last issues are available in the Burney Collection, no editorial metacomments discussing the reasons for this decision have been preserved.

10 | Clarke (2010), 50.

11 | For more details cf. Fries (2012).

12 | Clarke (2010), 56.

13 | Schneider (2002), 20-21.

importantly, "it was also intended to reduce the amount of opposition propaganda that found its way onto the streets."[14]

Anyway, the taxes cost many newspapers their existence and stoked fears among the newsmakers. This is vividly expressed in the comments of contemporary authors like Jonathan Swift (ex. 1)[15] and Joseph Addison (ex. 2).

(1) Do you know that Grub Street is dead and gone last week? No more ghosts or murders now for love or money. I plied it pretty close the last fortnight, and published at least seven penny papers of my own, besides some of other people's: but now every single half-sheet pays a halfpenny to the Queen. The *Observator* is fallen; the *Medleys* are jumbled together with the *Flying Post*; the *Examiner* is deadly sick; the *Spectator* keeps up, and doubles its price; I know not how long it will hold. Have you seen the red stamp the papers are marked with? Methinks it is worth a halfpenny, the stamping it. (*Journal to Stella*, letter 51, 7 Aug 1712)[16]

(2) This is the day on which many eminent authors will probably publish their last words. I am afraid that few of our weekly historians, who are men that above all others delight in war, will be able to subsist under the weight of a stamp and an approaching peace. [...] A facetious friend of mine, who loves a pun, calls this present mortality among authors, 'The fall of the leaf.' (*Spectator*, No. 445, 31 July 1712)

Indeed, the *Spectator* ceased publication on 6 December 1712, not without emphasising the ruinous effects of the Stamp Act in an editorial comment (cf. ex. 11 below). Yet, "tax or no tax, there was more general activity in journalism after 1712 than before"[17], and in the 1730s, further new formats entered the market. For example, with the *Daily Advertiser* (1731), the first newspaper was published whose financing rested completely on advertising. The *Gentleman's Magazine* (1731), as a new type of weekly

14 | Downie (1979), 160.

15 | In all the examples, spelling and typeface are taken over from the original.

16 | http://ebooks.adelaide.edu.au/s/swift/jonathan/s97s/letter51.html (last accessed: 26 May 2013)

17 | Morison (1932), 84.

journal, furthermore intensified the competition.[18] Again, this damaging influence was discussed extensively in the editorial metadiscourse of papers suffering from it, most notably in the last issues of *Grub-street Journal* (22 and 29 December 1737), as will be illustrated in section 4.3.

3. Data and methods

The data for this study are taken from the *17th-18th Century Burney Collection Newspapers*[19], which is accessible online and provides the opportunity to download the relevant material in PDF-format. 70 editions of late 17th/early 18th century newspapers, particularly first and last issues, were scanned for metadiscursive evidence of negotiations of failure. 15 issues published between 1695 and 1737 were selected for the close-up, qualitative investigations pursued in this paper.

The relevant editorial metadiscourse takes different shapes and sizes. It ranges from short, mostly one-sentence passages informing about changes in the publication conditions, and "Addresses to the Public" comprising one to two columns, to highly complex discourses extending over one or more pages. It is hardly surprising that the longer and more explicit negotiations of failure are mainly observed in the 'opinionated press'. There, editors meticulously dissect the reasons for the discontinuation of the publication, they raise accusations against their enemies and refute their enemies' accusations against themselves. Repeatedly, they also promise to return to the newspaper market, yet, usually without any specification as to how and when, as illustrated by ex. (3).

(3) It is possible, however, that when our first *Hurry of Business* is a little over, I may have Leisure, more than enough, to talk on, as I have done hitherto: But under what *Name* or *Shape*, I shall make my Appearance, is a Matter I am wholly dark in. *(Plain Dealer,* 7 May 1725)

Occasionally, the last editions of newspapers also recycled material from other sources, as in the case of the *Grub-street Journal*, which devotes large

18 | Conboy (2010), 45-46.

19 | http://find.galegroup.com/bncn/start.do?prodId=BBCN&userGroupName=duisburg&finalAuth=true (last accessed 29 October 2014).

parts of the last two issues to a reprint of the preface to the *Memoirs of the Society of Grub-street*, published a few months before (4 May 1737), and "giving a full Account of the rise, progress and declension of our Journal" (*Grub-street Journal*, 22 December 1737).

4. Negotiating failure

In the data, three major strategies of negotiating the (potential) failure of discontinuing a paper can be observed. In some cases, failure is negated or even reframed as success. When failure is admitted, self-attribution and/or other-attribution can be observed.

4.1 Negating and reframing failure

Negating failure or even reframing it as success is obviously the most promising strategy to avoid face loss. Thus, some of the editorial metadiscourse investigated provides not much more than dry information on certain changes in the publication conditions (cf. ex. 4).

(4) *WHereas I have for several Months published a News Paper call the* Post Boy*, and the* Historical Account*, I have now for some reasons, thought to continue my HISTORICAL ACCOUNT, by the same Author, with the additional Title of the POST MAN; and to give notice that what Advertisements shall be sent to me, shall be incerted in my News Paper as formerly,* Richard Baldwin. (*Post Man, And the Historical Account, &c.*, 24 October 1695)

Here, the background of the publisher's decision is kept deliberately vague. Yet, as pointed out in the headnote on the *Post Man* given in the Burney Collection, Richard Baldwin's "split from the *Post Boy* (which had been printed for him until the issue of 17-19 October 1695) was apparently acrimonious".[20]

Similarly, it is only by studying the socio-historical context that it becomes clear that in the case of ex. 5, the fusion was by no means a volun-

20 | *Burney Collection*, headnote on *Post Man, And the Historical Account, &c.*

tary decision by the *Daily Courant* and the other two papers mentioned, but ordered by Sir Robert Walpole's ministry.[21]

(5) *The Authors of the several Political Letters in the* London Journal, Free Briton, *and this Paper, will, for the future, publish their Dissertations on Publick Affairs in a New Paper, entitled* The DAILY GAZETTEER*; the first Number of which will make its Appearance on Monday next.* (*Daily Courant*, 28 June 1735)

By uniting the *Daily Courant*, the *London Journal* and the *Free Briton*, which had been loyal to and subsidised by the government, money could be saved, and greater control and wider reach could be achieved. A detailed account of the motivations for this move is given in the inaugural issue of the *Daily Gazetteer*, which replaced them. Obviously, the decision is sold there to the public in the best light, as

(6) owing to the amicable Agreement of several Authors, who having, for many Years past, been embarked in the same Cause, have at length resolved to unite in the same Paper, and by the most extensive Circulation, to publish their faithful Endeavours in Support of the general Interest. [...]
Our readers will have these Benefits from the Nature of this Institution, that the Vindication of publick Authority will be regularly carried on, in one distinct Paper; that the Hands which contribute to this Work, will succeed to each other Day after Day; and that no more than one will require Attention on any particular Day. To this we may add, that whilst we lessen the Charge of our Readers, we increase their Entertainment, and, on the whole, we can have no Cause to doubt their intire Approbation. [...]
THE Cause which we have undertaken is, to vindicate Publick Authority from the rude Insults of base and abusive Pens; to refute the Calumnies; and the injurious Clamours, of factious dishonest Men; to expose the Insincerity of Mock Patriots the little Arts and mean Practices of which they are notoriously guilty, in seducing Mankind, and misleading the People from their Duty to their Destruction [...] (*Daily Gazetteer*, 30 June 1735)

21 | Cf. *Burney Collection*, headnote on *Daily Courant*.

Fusions were, of course, not just politically enforced, but often a result of financial problems of the old publications or of editorial decisions hard to reconstruct for the modern researcher. Anyway, it was generally an advantageous strategy to negate potential failure, and reframe the fusion as success, pointing out explicitly the benefits for readers and advertisers. Ex. 7, from the later 18th century, aptly illustrates this lasting strategy. The comment was published in the last issue of *The World* before it merged with the *Morning Post* into the *Morning Post and Fashionable World*.

(7) To the Readers of both Papers this Union cannot but be deemed desirable, as all the talents and all the resources of both will be found in conjunction to defy every oppressed effort. Their several Correspondences from abroad, centering in one common focus, will form such a combination of wide spreading intelligence, as, perhaps, has never before been offered to the Public.
To Men of Business this Conjunction offers advantages still more important. They will be enabled to avail themselves of advertising in this United Property of Two Papers, both well-received and both well established, at half the expence which they must previously have incurred. The Junction, it is to be added, when completed, will form an amount of sale, which, if it were necessary to avow, would cause the most sanguine of their Rival's to shrink from Competition. Under these circumstances, the Proprietors are not only confident that they shall retain all their several Friends, but that they shall add immediately and considerably to their number. *(World*, 30 June 1794)

In this way, the positive self-image of the newsmakers was preserved and important promotional work for the new project was done. More evidence of this strategy of reframing (potential) failure as success can therefore also be found in the advertisements for new publications arising from old ones which were placed in other newspapers.

Positive self-presentation was boosted even more by newsmakers making reference to the devastating effects of certain circumstances or events, which, nevertheless, did not make them fail, but even improve their products. Thus, Nathaniel Mist, in the first edition of *Mist's Weekly Journal* (the successor of his *Weekly Journal and Saturday's Post*), ironically comments on the changes enforced by the Second Stamp Act (1725), which further increased the newspaper taxes (ex. 8).

(8) As all Men, who have any Thing to do with the Publick, should render a strict Account of their Actions, I therefore, in my last, gave the Reasons why I was obliged to alter the Form and Price of my Journal. Since therefore it has pleased the Wisdom of the Legislature to think, that a considerable Sum of Money may be raised towards paying the Debts of the Nation, by this Paper; I, as a true Britain, and good Protestant, being desirous to ease my Fellow-Subjects of the Burden of some of their Taxes, by these my Labours, am resolved, henceforth, to exert my self in a more than ordinary Manner, towards making this Paper more diverting, as well as instructive, than heretofore, that, by the Sale it may answer all the Purposes design'd, that no Deficiencies may be hereafter found in the Supplies granted for the Year seventeen hundred twenty five; and that, at next Sessions of Parliament, the Tax on Soap, Candles, Leather, or some other Manufacture, which deserves Encouragement more than the Paper Trade, may be taken off, to the great Ease of the middling and poorer Sort of People. (*Mist's Weekly Journal*, 1 May 1725)

4.2 Self-attribution of failure

Rather rarely, newsmakers admitted that the reasons for the failure of their publication lay with themselves. Obviously, this can be related to the fact that "people have an instinctive tendency to deny, distort, ignore, or disassociate themselves from their own failures"[22]. This phenomenon is described in social psychology, within the framework of attribution theory, as self-serving bias. Whereas people typically regard their own achievements as results of their personal skills and efforts, they tend to consider negative outcomes as being caused by other people or external circumstances unforeseeable or beyond their control.[23] This self-serving bias, Shepperd et al. explain, is caused by an interplay of motivational and cognitive aspects, including the strive for self-enhancement and a positive self-presentation, and people's sincere attempts to analyse the situation of failure and arrive at what appear to be objective interpretations.

Evidence of the self-serving bias can clearly be observed in our data. Predictably, there is not a single case, in which the newsmaker takes full

22 | Cannon/Edmondson (2005), 302.

23 | Shepperd/Malone/Sweeney (2008), 895-896.

responsibility. If the newsmaker admits failure, this is typically combined with face-saving references to external causes of the paper's decay. For example, the editorial voice of the *Freeholder* acknowledges certain personal incapacities in his final edition (18 May 1723), yet not without providing a comprehensive account of the hardships and disadvantages he had suffered from (ex. 9).

(9) The *Design* and *Counsel* were good, but I was the Fool in undertaking to tye the *Bell* about the *Cat's Neck*. There is a *Party* in the World [...] that have betray'd *Wiser* Heads than Mine [...]
As I am not the first Man, who has mistaken an *Ignis Fatuus* for a *true Light*, and been led into the Mire, it is scarce worth my while to condole myself on the Misfortune. [...]
I am fully conscious of my own Disability. This *Journal* set out under the Disadvantage of a troubled Season. [...] (*Freeholder*, 18 May 1723)

Although these disclosures endanger his positive self-image, particularly the image of strength and independence, the newsmaker cleverly manages his self-presentation. He stages himself as a victim, modest and underprivileged, thus fishing for the compassion of his readers (see section 5.2 below for metaphorical representations of the newsmaker as a victim).

4.3 External attribution of failure

As already indicated in the previous section, failure was typically explained by referring to external, uncontrollable factors. Unfavourable circumstances are foregrounded by terms such as *misfortune* (*Freeholder*, 18 May 1723). Terms like *mischief, unfairness and injustice, depredation* and *plunder* (*Grub-street Journal*, 22 December 1737) point at the involvement of opposing forces.

The external reasons for failure claimed by the newsmakers can be grasped in two major scalar dimensions: specificity and personalisation. The degree of specificity varies from very vague allusions to explicit mentions of antagonistic circumstances and agents in the failure process. The degree of personalisation ranges from references to circumstances without or with an implication of responsible parties, via indications of institutions, groups and their representatives, to accusations of specific individuals.

As regards the least personalised attributions, various circumstances are made responsible for failure. There are, as illustrated by ex. 9 above, references to the hard times and tense market conditions, the "Disadvantage of a troubled Season" (*Freeholder*, 18 May 1723). Unfairness and injustice are often pointed out without immediate personal references, as in the case of the *Grub-street Journal* (22 December 1737), which moans about "instances of falshood, folly and frenzy". Censorship is mentioned as a major obstacle, for obvious reasons, often without any specific, personalised references (ex. 10).

(10) [...] when the *Liberty* of a *Subject* or *Writer* is *restrained*, the Consequence must be to languish out the Remains of Life in a slow Decay. (*Freeholder*, 18 May 1723)

Yet, there are also references to specific events such as the introduction of the Stamp Acts, which, as already indicated above, triggered a substantial number of editorial comments (see also ex. 11 below).

On a more personalised level, references to all parties involved in the news production, distribution and consumption processes can be found. Again, the degree of specificity of such mentions varies. Indeed, the material includes few real names, neither in self- nor in other-reference, which can, of course, be related to the dangers of censorship and prosecution. Instead, the use of pseudonyms, abbreviated names and initials prevails. Occasionally, identities behind aliases and abbreviations are disclosed, yet not always explicitly[24]. Apart from that, we find generic person references like "Enemies" (*Freeholder*, 18 May 1723) and a range of metaphors such as "literary pirates" (*Grub-street Journal*, 22 December 1737), to be discussed in more detail in section 5.

Table 1 illustrates the wide range of person references by drawing on a particularly rich instance of editorial metadiscourse published in the *Grub-street Journal*. The *Grub-street Journal*, described by contemporaries as "a newspaper universally condemn'd and yet universally read" (*Weekly*

24 | For example, the *Spectator* reveals: "All the Papers marked with a C, an L, an I, or an O, that is to say, all the Papers which I have distinguished by any Letter in the Name of the Muse CLIO, were given me by the gentleman, of whose Assistance I formerly boasted in the Preface and concluding Leaf of my Tatler." [i.e. Joseph Addison] (*Spectator*, 6 December 1712).

Register 8 July 1732)[25], obviously had a substantial number of opponents to confront at their termination. As the main culprit, it made out one of its competitors, the *Gentleman's Magazine* and its maker Edward Cave (alias Sylvanus Urban), who was accused of imitation, plagiarism, and deceptive practices. Indeed, the successful concept of the *Gentleman's Magazine* was to provide "a digest of texts and extracts from various London newspapers and periodicals"[26], including material from the *Grub-street Journal*. Cave's spheres of control, the *Grub-street Journal* insinuated, extended to the post and stamp offices, and the booksellers.[27] Yet, the newsmakers of the *Grub-street Journal* did not just make their rival papers responsible for their failure, they also did not shy away from blaming the readers (though indirectly), and disappointed correspondents, whose works were not accepted by the paper.

Table 1: Parties accused for failure in the final issues of the Grub-street Journal *(1737)*

Competing papers	"the declension of our Journal, and of all the rest, was oweing to the rise and progress of the *Gentleman's Magazine* [...] The Projector of this Magazine (who, having blown up so many Papers with the powder stolen from them, deserves the name of *Chief Engineer of Grub-street*) [...] our industrious Brother Sylvanus Urban..." (22 December 1737)
Booksellers	[paper was] "continually opposed and depreciated by the generality of Book-sellers, and their hackney Authors" (22 December 1737)
Printers	"our Advertisements...were refused by the printers of other Papers" (22 December 1737)

25 | Cf. *Burney Collection*, headnote on *Grub-street Journal.*

26 | Taavitsainen (2015), 145.

27 | Paradoxically, even the last two issues of the *Grub-street Journal* still contained advertisements for the *Gentleman's Magazine*.

Officials - Post office	"very frequently other Journals were sent from the Post-office, to persons who had given particular order for ours" (22 December 1737)
- Stamp office	"that the Commissioners of the Stamp-office would effectually put a stop to it, by procuring the Pamphlet [of the competitor] to be stamped, as in justice it ought to have been. But we were intirely mistaken" (22 December 1737)
Readers	"That any number of readers of the higher class would give incouragement to the sale of such stolen goods [i.e. the digest of news in the *Gentleman's Magazine*, BB], we could not well imagine. [...] But we were intirely mistaken" (22 December 1737)
Correspondents	"it was frequently a matter of wonder to him [the editor, BB], that they [the correspondents, BB] could so far mistake the design of the Paper, as to imagine that it could give admission to their lewd or profane compositions..." – "some...have abused us for refusing to complie with their desires" (29 December 1737)

Clearly, the self-serving bias interlinks with the 'us vs. them' principle. Thus, newsmakers typically contrast their positive self-presentation with negative other-presentations. For example, in the case of the *Grub-street Journal*, unfavourable characterisations of opponents (see Table 1) are juxtaposed with affirmations of the paper's "own integrity" (29 December 1737). The newsmakers take substantial efforts to polish their own image. They meticulously list accusations made by adversaries and refute them, justifying the criticised procedures "to shew the disparity betwixt their conduct, and ours" (22 December 1737).

Similar attempts to restore the positive self-image can be observed in the last issue of the *Spectator*, where Richard Steele finishes his editorial comment by pointing out the success of "an Edition of the former Volumes of *Spectators*", yet not without being critical about the destructive effect of the First Stamp Act (ex. 11).

(11) above Nine thousand each Book is already sold off, and the Tax on each half Sheet has brought into the Stamp-Office one Week with another above 20 *l.* a Week arising from this single Paper, notwithstanding it at first reduced it to less than have the number that was usually Printed before this Tax was laid. (*Spectator,* 6 December 1712)

As pointed out by Cannon and Edmondson, who deal with failure in modern organisations, successful failure management involves "three distinct but interrelated processes: identifying failure, analyzing failure, and deliberate experimentation".[28] Attempts to pursue these steps are clearly manifested in the metadiscourse found in historical newspapers. Occasionally, the reader is called upon as a witness of these processes (ex. 12).

(12) From all the aforesaid Considerations my Readers may expect that I shall be smarter than before. (*Mist's Weekly Journal*, 1 May 1725)

Indeed, many newsmakers apparently managed to "take advantage of the lessons that failures offer"[29], coping with setbacks and starting anew, when one of their old publications had failed.

5. Metaphorical conceptualisations of failure

The examples used so far have already suggested that editorial metadiscourse negotiating failure shows a distinct preference for similes, metaphors and even complex allegories. This section provides a more in-depth investigation of what the metaphors used reveal about the mindset of contemporary newsmakers.

As pointed out in the seminal work by Lakoff and Johnson, metaphors are much more than rhetorical figures, shaping "the way we think" and thus being vital "in defining our everyday realities".[30] Metaphors are defined here, in the light of cognitive linguistics, as involving a source concept and a target concept in a particular mapping scope, which provides the base of comparison. From the source concept, not only individual

28 | Cannon/Edmondson (2005), 300.

29 | Ibid.

30 | Lakoff/Johnson (1980), 3.

properties, "but the structure, the internal relations or the logic of a whole cognitive model" are transferred to the target concept.[31] Additionally, metaphors do not just work through the comparison of similarities and dissimilarities of the concepts, but also through hiding particular elements from the discussion.[32]

Metaphors can thus be considered as "manifestations of particular ideologies and world views"[33], and "as framing devices to shape wider opinion".[34] In our case, this means that the readership is inclined to view failure through the specific metaphorical lens of the newsmaker, which gives salience to particular facets and enforces particular interpretations of the affairs.[35]

Looking at the metaphors in our data, we find evidence of elementary root analogies such as SUCCESS IS UP, FAILURE IS DOWN[36], which draws on orientational schemata resting on basic bodily experiences.[37] This spatial conceptualisation of failure is aptly illustrated by the quote provided in the title of this paper, which furthermore indicates a processual perspective of "rise, progress and declension" (*Grub-street Journal*, 22 December 1737). This orientational metaphor[38] is so fundamental in nature that it has, for example, also been found quite typical of modern business discourse.[39]

The generic concept that the negotiations of failure in 18th-century newspapers draw on most heavily is the PERSON concept. As visualised in Fig. 1, it is embedded in the basic conceptualisation of the news sector (inflicted by censorship and competition) as a DANGEROUS PLACE. Both these major metaphorical domains encourage various layers of partly overlapping metaphors, most centrally the victimisation of newspapers/newsmakers, which are discussed and illustrated below.

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31 | Ungerer/Schmid (2006), 119.

32 | Cf. Tourish/Hargie (2012), 1048 and Goatly (2011), 2.

33 | Cf. Smith/Eisenberg (1987), 369.

34 | Tourish/Hargie (2012), 1046.

35 | Cf. Entman (2004), 5.

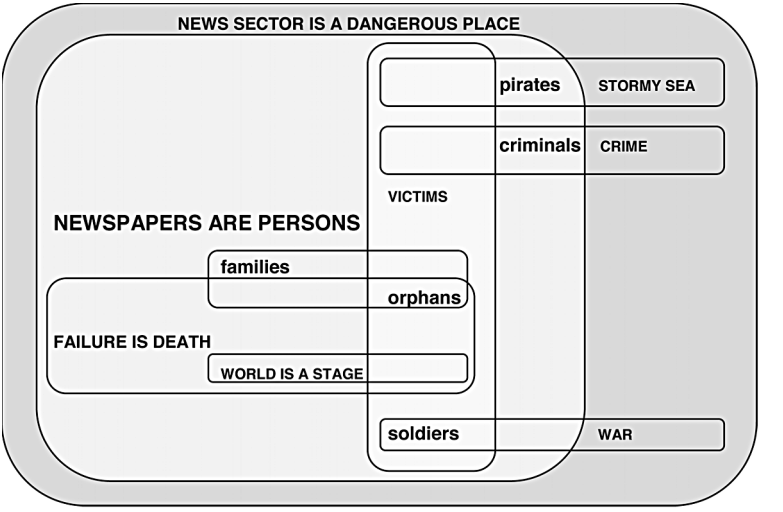
36 | Following the conventions of cognitive linguistics, cognitive metaphors are marked by small caps in this paper.

37 | Goatly (2011), 49, and Ungerer/Schmid (2006), 119.

38 | Lakoff/Johnson (1980),14.

39 | Partington (1998), 112.

Figure 1: Major metaphorical conceptualisations observed in negotiations of failure in 18th-century editorial metadiscourse



5.1 Personification

Personification "allows us to comprehend a wide variety of experiences with nonhuman entities in terms of human motivations, characteristics, and activities".[40] Thus, it does not come as a surprise that the generic metaphor A COMPANY IS A PERSON[41] has long been in widespread use and belongs, for example, to the recurring metaphors in modern business journalism.[42]

What is special about the personification of early English newspapers is that it was often reinforced by the titles of the papers – person references of various kinds – and their reporting style. As is well-known, "[t]he editor or 'author' of an early periodical usually wrote as if he were that journal's voice".[43] The newsmakers embodied the *Plain Dealer*, the *Examiner* or the *Spectator*, and with those names, specific approaches to news presentation were implied. This setup helped to establish an air of immediacy and thus

40 | Lakoff/Johnson (1980), 33.

41 | Cf. Ungerer/Schmid (2006), 258.

42 | Partington (2006), 269.

43 | Downie/Corns (1993), 5.

contributed to what modern Critical Discourse Analysis refers to as 'synthetic personalisation'.[44]

As even acknowledged by some of the newsmakers themselves, such personifications conveniently allowed newsmakers to hide behind their narrative persona: "It is much more difficult to converse with the World in a real than a personated Character" (*Spectator*, 6 December 1712). Obviously, this was a particularly important benefit at times of extensive censorship.

Given the particular state of the newspapers in questions, the notion of FAILURE IS DEATH clearly offers itself as a most fruitful metaphorical domain, which is embraced by the newsmakers in comprehensive and creative ways. This is vividly illustrated by the following extracts from the last issue of the *Freeholder* (ex. 13).

(13) THE Advance of the Season, and the Crowd of Papers that incumber the Town, and make the Tables of our Coffee-Houses look like the Counters of a Pamphlet Shop, perswade me that it is high Time *My Paper* should *die*: Let its Enemies, therefore exult in Triumph, and cry in their Transports, *The* FREEHOLDER *is now no more*. It has been *dead* sometime in its political Capacity [...]
However, though I drop the Character of the FREEHOLDER for the present, I do not abdicate my future Claim [...]
I say this by way of Caution, that though I give out my self to be *dead*, the World may not depend upon the truth of it [...]" (*Freeholder*, 18 May 1723)

Here, the newspaper is personified throughout the editorial metacomment, however, the identity of the resulting persona is not consistent. At the beginning, there is still a clear division of the newspaper and the editor's voice. The newsmaker first simply assigns human qualities to the publication ("My Paper should die") as typically done in personification. Next, he even emphasises the fictitious nature of the newspaper's voice, emphasising his power over it ("I drop the Character of the FREEHOLDER"[45]). However, towards the end of the metadiscursive passage, there is a shift in viewpoint. There, the newsmaker takes a first-person perspective

44 | Fairclough (2001).

45 | This example includes another conceptualisation of failure as DOWN.

("though I give out my self to be dead"), thus blurring the differentiation indicated before, and he suggests that, similar to Pythagoras who feigned death and returned to life, he might return to the public. The concepts of feigned death and post-mortem messages (as in the next example) help the newsmakers to preserve their voices, enabling them (without violating the logic of the metaphor) to comment on the discontinuance of their publication and leave open the chance to start a new project.

Within the realm of the DEATH metaphor, political criticism and the newsmaker's editorial legacy could elegantly be presented in the form of a will, as in the case of ex. 14, which is metaphorically so rich that only selected aspects can be highlighted here. It is taken from the first edition of *Fog's Weekly Journal*, the successor of *Mist's Weekly Journal*. *Fog's Weekly Journal* was officially published by Charles Molloy after Nathaniel Mist had to flee to France in 1728 to escape prosecution for publishing the 'Persian Letter', a (barely) allegorically disguised attack on the ministry.[46] Yet, in fact, Mist ran the paper "by remote control" from France.[47] The pun in the changed title is quite straightforward.

(14) Dear Cousin FOG,

THE Occasion of my present Address to you, is to acquaint you, that I was lately seiz'd with an Apoplectick Fit, of which I instantly died: However, you need not be startled at receiving a Letter from the other World, for you may perceive it does not smell of Brimstone, by which you will conjecture, that it comes from the Temperate Side of Elysium. I was so suddenly snatch'd off, that I had not Time to make my Will, therefore I have been oblig'd to do it since. It is no strange Thing in your World for a Man to make his Will after his Death: – A thorough-paced Attorney will tell you there is nothing easier in the whole Course of Practice.

Amongst all my Relations, I have cast my Eyes on You to be my Heir, and the Executor of my last Will and Testament [...]

I think it is necessary to say something of our Family, that the World may know who we are. --- The *Mists* and *Fogs* (Time out of Mind) have

46 | Cf. *Burney Collection*, headnote on *The weekly journal: or Saturday's post, with freshest advices foreign and domestick*.

47 | Clarke (2010), 67; cf. also Conboy (2010), 44.

> been very considerable in *Lincolnshire*, where they had a strong Influence, the greatest part of the Country being under their Command [.] The Family of the *Mists* is extinct in me; but I thought it necessary to say thus much of our Ancestry, that you who are now the Representative of both Families, may the better know how to support our Character and imitate our Example, since I desire that you will succeed me in the publick Character of a Writer, which Character I have many years maintain'd to the great Entertainment, and Edification of my Countrymen. [...]
>
> You will have an Advantage over all your Cotemporaries, of receiving frequent Intelligence from this World of ours, for none of the Writers of the other Side, have any Correspondence with that Part of Elysium, which is the Retreat of Heroes.—
>
> *(Fog's Weekly Journal*, 28 Sept 1728)

This comment, in an epistolary format, draws on a range of metaphorical sources, most notably the FAMILY concept. Mist manufactures a detailed picture of family relationships between the Mists and the Fogs. In the context of the DEATH metaphor, the succeeding editor is conceptualised as his heir, responsible for the execution of his will. In other newspapers, similar metaphorical constructions additionally evoke the image of the readers as 'orphans' left behind (eg. *Freeholder*, 18 May 1723).

In addition to the legal framework constructed, religious allusions are made. Again, this is not uncommon, and can also be found in other editorial metacomments.[48] What is special here is the somewhat unusual connection of "brimstone" and "Elysium". Whereas "the smell of brimstone" unmistakably transports a reference to hell fire (which might not be surprising, given the background of Nathaniel Mist as a committed Jacobite), the notion of "the Temperate Side of Elysium" constitutes a shift to the Greek mythological conceptualisation of afterlife.[49] Mist thus places himself in the company of Gods and heroes; he pictures himself as enjoying his afterlife in the Elysian fields (and even pursuing his professional

48 | For example, the editorial voice of the *Freeholder* claims: "I believe I may be indulg'd in *not confessing my Sins* in the Administration of this Journal" (*Freeholder*, 18 May 1723).

49 | Felton (2010), 92-93.

vocation from there). A more profound positive self-presentation than this is hardly possible.

Death, we learn from the letter, came suddenly and was a consequence of sickness, an "Apoplectick Fit". Such HEALTH metaphors are, again, quite conventional and still in common use in reference to the state of businesses today.[50] In the case of our editorial metadiscourse, they provide the newsmakers with a further chance to disguise their criticism of the destructive effects of censorship under a metaphorical veil.

The DEATH metaphor triggers further metaphorical conceptualisations on subordinate levels. For example, various newsmakers make use of the WORLD IS A STAGE metaphor, another highly conventionalised metaphor (ex. 15, 16).

(15) "it is high time for the *Spectator* himself to go off the stage. [...]" (*Spectator*, 6 December 1712)
(16) "a Man, when he is going off from the Stage of the World, is taken Notice of by his last dying Words." (*Freeholder*, 18 May 1723)

Obviously, this conceptualisation only works out when framed by the NEWSPAPER IS A PERSON metaphor, and evokes elements such as the famous dying speeches, used here (in ex. 16) to justify the editorial metadiscourse.

However, there are also less negatively connotated metaphorical constructions. For instance, the FAMILY concept is used without the DEATH component in ex. 17, taken from the last issue of the Tory essay paper *The Plain Dealer*. As many of its contemporaries, this paper relied heavily on an inventory of fictional characters, compiled by the author *cum* editor, Aaron Hill. Most importantly, there is the "Plain Dealer" himself, a certain Edward Blunt, a 63-year old bachelor, and Martha Amble, his female counterpart.[51]

(17) No longer ago than Yesterday Morning, there was nothing farther from my Thoughts than the Discontinuance of my Weekly Labours: But, about an Hour before Dinner, all my Purposes received new Co-

50 | Cf. Partington (2006), 118.

51 | Wilputte (2008).

> lours; and, I am, now, no longer what I *was,* before this short Billet metamorphos'd me.
>
> *Dear Slavy,*
>
> AT length, I have determin'd, to be only yours, for ever, and, in Gratitude for all those, scarce deserv'd, fine Things, your Letter of last Week, oblig'd me with, I will say after you, next Saturday Morning, whatever Words you wish most ardently to hear me answer in.—But this is absolutely, upon *Condition,* that you put an End, immediately, to your *Plain-Dealing.* It is the most odious Quality you have, and, you know, I could never bear it.—I have given you, perhaps, too short a Warning; but you must do as well as you can: For, pray Heaven I hold in the Mind, if you take me not in the present Humour, of
>
> *Your* Mistress, one Day more, *and then, alas! your Servant,*
>
> MARTHA AMBLE.
>
> IT would be unreasonable for any of my *Christian* Readers to expect a better Excuse than This, for my taking Leave of them, so abruptly.
>
> *(Plain Dealer,* 7 May 1725)

Projecting marriage as a reason for discontinuing the paper is clearly more original than the DEATH and HEALTH metaphors found elsewhere. Of course, the linguistic and historical contexts suggest other than romantic reasons for this step. For example, the final issue contains a taunting poem on Sir Robert Walpole, which the newsmaker introduces with the comment: "Where the Subject is a MINISTER of STATE, The fittest Person to treat of it, must be one, who *ceases to be a* PLAIN DEALER". Additionally, it might not be a coincidence that the *Plain Dealer* ceased publication just after the Second Stamp Act had raised the taxes again.

While personification is clearly the most prominent metaphorical conceptualisation, the attractive principle of animacy is also taken up in ANIMAL and (less frequently) in PLANT metaphors. One of these is illustrated in ex. 18, where the *Grub-street Journal* complains about its competitor *The Bee,* exploiting the paper's title in puns, similes and metaphorical references to its makers.

(18) [*The Bee*] ought to have been entitled *The Drone's Collection*: a very short and proper description of a Magazine, the compilers of which live like drones, upon the pillaged labours of the ingenious and in-

> dustrious [...] having buzz'd and humm'd about in a wretched and expensive manner (*Grub Street Journal*, 22 December 1737)

5.2 Victimisation

As pointed out in section 4.2, the attribution of failure to external circumstances appears to be deeply rooted in people's psyche. Thus, some strategies of negotiating failure have stayed remarkably stable. For example, Tourish and Hargie observed in a study on bankers' post-crisis communication strategies after the financial crisis in 2008 that among the four major, interrelated defence strategies was their presentation as "passive observers when confronted by market forces beyond human agency", "as victims", and " as penitent learners, rather than pedagogues".[52] While evidence for the latter strategy is scarce in my data[53], the former two are vividly manifested in the editorial metadiscourse. There is an overarching conceptualisation of newsmakers/newspapers as passive observers or victims of opposing forces of various kinds. Zeitgeist is reflected in the choice of metaphors characterising the NEWS SECTOR AS A DANGEROUS PLACE of competition and censorship.

The notion of the STORMY SEA can, of course, be considered a classical metaphorical resource. In the 18th century, at a time of naval power and exploration, the conceptualisation of the newspaper as a BOAT IN A STORMY SEA, tossed about by uncontrollable forces, proved a fruitful picture (cf. ex. 19).

(19) When the Weather is too boisterous, little Boats cannot live upon the Sea. I know my Vessel to be too weak to buffet the Storms of Power; and the Sky is not serene enough, to induce me not to make the Porte. (*Freeholder*, 18 May 1723)

Another recurring conceptualisation suggested that COMPETITION IS CRIME and competitors are criminals. It triggered different metaphorical realisations (e.g. as piracy, theft, plunder, and fraud), and generally relied

52 | Tourish/Hargie (2012), 1052-1054.

53 | But see this example: "For my own Part, I sit down with this Lesson, that [...]" (*Freeholder*, 18 May 1723).

on the basic notion that IDEAS [NEWS] ARE COMMODITIES.[54] The prominence of such metaphors of unlawful dispossession can be explained by the fact that, at that time, news was still scarce and newsmakers often fell back on material from other newspapers to fill their pages, in what Black called a "scissors and paste" technique.[55]

With the notion of PIRACY, as displayed in references to the "piratical traffic" and "piratical adventures" of "Literary Pirates", i.e. the paper's competitors (*Grub-street Journal*, 22 December 1737), newsmakers stayed in the naval domain. Everyday life associations are evoked in metaphorical representations of the copying of news items, but also innovative practices of news writing, as stolen utilitarian goods. Ex. 20 compares the practice of digesting news from other papers employed by the *Gentleman's Magazine* to the activities of petty criminals trying to disguise their theft.

(20) [...] as stolen linen, handkerchiefs, &c. are rendered the fitter for sale, by taking out the mark of the owner's name (*Grub-street Journal*, 22 December 1737)

The allegedly bad quality of competitors' newswriting is also compared to stolen or spoiled food items, thus drawing on the basic conceptualisation IDEAS [NEWS] ARE FOOD[56], as illustrated by the detailed simile in ex. (21). Here, the newsmakers of the *Grub-street Journal* defend themselves against their rivals' complaints about the journal's smear campaigns. While their news is characterised as fake without any substance, the competitors are pictured as deceitful street hawkers. Again, the us vs. them contrast is reinforced by explicit mentions of the newsmakers' own positive qualities.

(21) Suppose we were standing at the bow-window at the Pegasus, and saw an Inmate of Grub-street driving ginger-bread in a wheel-barrow, and oratorically advertising and puffing the excellency of it; which, tho' adorned with curious figures and flowers, and with letters in gold, (like a book finely bound, letter'd, and gilt) we certainly knew, either to be stolen, or to be composed of worthless and ob-

54 | Cf. Lakoff/Johnson (1980), 47.

55 | Black (1992), 14.

56 | Cf. Lakoff/Johnson (1980), 46 and Goatly (2011), 49.

> noxious ingredients, which at best could yield no nourishment, and might probably occasion some distemper; would it be any instance of malice and ill nature, to give the audience a true information, and to advise them to preserve their money and their health? Nay, would it not be an evident instance of benevolence and good nature towards them; tho' the Ginger-bread-maker and seller would no doubt loudly complain of it as ill-natured and malicious?" (*Grub-street Journal*, 29 December 1737)

A third forceful conceptualisation found in the material is the notion that the news sector is a battlefield where hazardous wars are being fought. Nathaniel Mist, the proficient user of metaphors, used this metaphorical source domain of WAR, when he commented on the changed publication conditions of *Mist's Weekly Journal*, which had to appear in reduced form after the introduction of the Second Stamp Act (ex. 22).

(22) while I look on my self in this new Dress, the Gracefulness of my Figure seems to suffer some Diminution from the Change: Methinks I look like some veteran Soldier, who, by the Misfortunes of War, had lost a leg and an Arm in the Service of his Country. – Yet I comfort my self with this Reflection, that tho' this Mutilation impairs the Beauty of such, they are look'd upon with more Respect. Upon which Consideration I am resolved, that if, for the Good of my Country, it should be resolved, by any future Act, to cut me off another Limb and oblige me to appear in half the Quantity of Paper in which I am now seen, I shall not quit the Field; [...]
I shall never be able to draw up a great Army, and fight a pitch'd Battle within the Compass of this small Paper (*Mist's Weekly Journal*, 1 May 1725)

This metadiscourse provides a rich metaphorical conceptualisation of the editorial persona, representing the newspaper, as a soldier who – despite having suffered from the hardships and harms of war – is a successful survivor, not to be stopped by the mutilations inflicted on him. As also shown in many of the previous examples, the metaphorical domains exploited tend to overlap, allowing for enriched metaphorical conceptualisations of causes and consequences of (potential) failure.

Conclusion

18th-century newsmakers did not shy away from commenting on the discontinuance of their publication projects, particularly in their last issues, but also in the inaugural editions of follow-up publications. Yet, as this investigation of editorial metadiscourse in early English newspapers has shown, they did not necessarily admit failure. In order to preserve a positive self-image, strategies of denying or reframing failure were applied, which even sold potential failure as success to the public, claiming, for example, that the new papers resulting from the relaunch or fusions of old ones promised improved news coverage and wider audiences.

The self-serving bias, described in modern social psychology, helps us to understand how failure – if it was acknowledged – was negotiated. Instead of admitting personal mistakes, newsmakers typically made external factors responsible for ceasing publication. References to such external causes were manifold and varied in their degrees of precision (from very vague to highly explicit) and personalisation (from relating to general conditions to pinpointing individual opponents).

A closer look at the figurative language employed in negotiations of failure reveals that – just as the self-serving bias – basic metaphorical conceptualisations appear to have stayed remarkably stable over time. However, their particular realisations indicate contemporary specifics. Thus, there was, for instance, ample evidence of the COMPANY IS A PERSON metaphor which is still in frequent use in business journalism today. However, what made its use special and allowed for rich, multi-layered exploitations of the concept in early English news discourse, is the presence of an editorial persona, which was very common in 18th-century newspapers, as indicated by the person references that frequently served as their titles. The presence of these often fictitious, well-developed editorial personae representing the newspaper opened up further layers of metaphorical domains, most notably (for obvious reasons) the DEATH metaphor, which could be exploited in much breadth and depth. The dangers of the news sector – such as competition and censorship – were, for example conceptualised in NAVAL, CRIME and WAR metaphors. Newsmakers, and this is a link to modern conceptualisations of business failure again, predominantly took the position of passive observers of uncontrollable circumstances or victims of opposing forces.

The analysis of editorial metadiscourse opens up an interesting perspective on strategies and metaphors of negotiating of failure in early English newspapers. Yet, as indicated in the discussion, these can only be appreciated by considering the socio-historical contexts and social psychological phenomena. Thus, this paper underlines once more the necessity of interdisciplinary approaches, which deserve further promotion in future research.

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