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Abstract

Thomas St Serfe, or Sydserff, is a seventeenth-century translator, playwright, and pamphleteer who has received scant academic attention. The majority of his work was printed in Edinburgh in 1661. This essay proposes that St Serfe wrote as a means of reimagining Scotland for the Restoration. As a devoted royalist, St Serfe was keen to move on from the Wars of the Three Kingdoms and return to what he perceived as the order and harmony that existed before. Whilst his writing directs his reader backwards to an older version of Scotland, he also looks outwards and clearly has ambitions for Scotland to become a global trader. This study of St Serfe focuses mainly on two of his most interesting works. Firstly, the *Mercurius Caledonius*, one of the first newspapers written for a Scottish audience. Secondly, 'The prince of Tartaria, his Voyage to Cowper in Fife', a parodic, carnivalesque travel narrative which I argue nonetheless makes a sincere attempt to 'map' Scotland for the Restoration.

Thomas St Serfe¹ is one of Restoration Scotland's most intriguing writers, yet his work has been largely overlooked by literary critics.² Between 1658 and 1669, he produced two translations from French and one from Italian, at least nine diverse and eccentric pamphlets, one of the first newspapers written specifically for a Scottish readership, and a play Samuel Pepys described as 'the most ridiculous, insipid play that ever I saw in my life',³ but which was the first play by a Scot to premier in London and which went on to be staged in Edinburgh.⁴ He also ran Edinburgh's 'Tennis Court Theatre' in the late 1660s, as well as an acting company.⁵ The bulk of his surviving work was printed in 1661 and is preoccupied with the Restoration of the monarchy.

St Serfe was born in Edinburgh in 1624 to Thomas Sydserff and Rachel Byers. His father was the only bishop in Scotland who held his position both before and after the Wars of Three Kingdoms. Sydserff the elder endured several attacks by rioters due to his support for Charles I's introduction of the English-style *Book of*

Common Prayer.⁶ Like his father, St Serfe was fervently royalist. During the wars, he defended the king's cause under the Marquess of Montrose, before living for some time exiled in Paris.⁷ In the late 1650s, he spent a little time in London, before returning home to Edinburgh to set up his newsbook, the *Mercurius Caledonius*.⁸

The *Caledonius* ran for twelve issues; the first is dated 31 December 1660 to 8 January 1661 and the last 22 March 1661 to 28 March 1661.⁹ The first issue begins with the arrival of the High Commissioner, John Middleton, in Scotland and the opening of the first Restoration parliament, with seemingly eyewitness detail of its proceedings. Each edition is structured as follows, with occasional deviation: an editorial introduction, followed by a report on the proceedings of the Scottish parliament, then finally news either copied from English newsbooks or received from correspondents in Britain, Ireland, and Europe. St Serfe's overall concern is with documenting the glory and harmony occasioned by the Restoration in Scotland. The first edition opens with characteristic fervour, 'Our clouds are dissipate, the rays of Royalty, darts from the breasts of Scots-men, not being in the power of the most skillfull Artificers of Treason to stave off our Allegiance'.¹⁰ As a royalist, for St Serfe the Restoration symbolised the return of order following a protracted period of disorder. Although the Scottish parliament declared Charles II King of Great Britain and Ireland immediately after the execution of Charles I in 1649, he was prevented from ruling in Scotland until the English parliament restored him in 1660; from 1652 Scotland was governed as part of Cromwell's Commonwealth.¹¹ The *Caledonius* represents St Serfe's attempt to reassert Scotland's identity as a royalist, sovereign nation. In issue five, he writes how in Perth thistles had overgrown the arms of Cromwell's Protectorate, remarking that, 'There needeth not much Commenting upon this extraordinary Accident: for it is well known, the Thistle is one of the Royall Cognizances of our Crown and Badge of *Scotland*, with this *Impressa Nemo me impune lacesset*: there is not a Cessation of State Miracles, when Vegetables preach and point out to us our Alleagiance'.¹² The symbol of the thistles encapsulates the naturalness of royalism in Scotland; the old order reasserts itself as inevitably as thistles grow. The Latin motto St Serfe quotes is that of the Stuarts, loosely translating as, 'no one attacks me with impunity'. St Serfe is reimagining Scotland for the Restoration as a sovereign and innately royalist state that defends itself effectively.

The returned political structure of 1661 meant that the people of Scotland had to re-evaluate recent history and the part they may have played in the Wars of the Three

Kingdoms. Many Scots had directly or indirectly weakened the royal prerogative by signing the National Covenant and participating in the Bishops' Wars. Following the Restoration of the monarchy, Scotland, always stereotypically royalist, became more royalist than ever.¹³ In the *Caledonius*, St Serfe consciously attempts to ameliorate the image of Scotland by reinterpreting its recent history. Reflecting on his newsbook in a later pamphlet, he describes himself as having 'laboured to vindicate in some measure, my groaning Country'.¹⁴ In the first issue, he reframes Scotland's involvement in the deposition of the monarchy, writing that, 'It's true, though a considerable part of our Nation were the first that transgressed upon their duty, yet they never reached the length of a boundlesse disobedience, for they no sooner discovered the depth of the Treason wherein their rebellious Confederates in *England* would have ensnared them, but they presently faced about to their Allegiance'.¹⁵ St Serfe acknowledges the popularity of the Covenanting movement but downplays the propensity for rebellion that this suggests. He portrays England as not only more seditious than Scotland but as having connived to trick Scotland. In this way, St Serfe uses his newsbook to renegotiate Scotland's image for the Restoration.

Benedict Anderson has argued that literature and particularly newspapers play an integral role in the formation of the nation-state, as newspapers generate a sense of shared experience and simultaneity which help construct an 'imagined community' of countrymen.¹⁶ Of course, St Serfe's newsbook would not have reached the number of readers that modern newspapers do. In by far the most detailed study of the *Caledonius* to date, J. M. Buckroyd concludes that St Serfe's newsbook is directed at 'an elitist and conservative nobility whose reaction to the previous twenty years of Scottish history and its developments was entirely negative and whose determined aim was to get back in the saddle and stay there'.¹⁷ Nevertheless, the *Caledonius* imagines a community as encompassing as the national community described by Anderson, i.e. comprising all social ranks. In issue four, St Serfe describes the effects of the Restoration reverberating through Scottish society:

As our old Laws are renewed, so is likewise our Good honest antient Customs: for Nobility in our streets, are known by brave Retinews of their relations; when, during the Captivity, a Lord was scarcely to be distinguished from a Commoner. Nay, the old Hospitality returns; for that laudable custome of Suppers, which was convenanted out with Rasins and rosted Cheese, is again in fashion: and where before a pevish Nurse would been seen triping

up stares and down stares with a Posset or Berry for the Laird and the Lady,
you shall now see sturdy Jack-men, groaning with the weight of Surloins of
Beef, and Chargers loadened with Capons and Wildefoul.¹⁸

Political reorganisation begets social reorganisation. The ramifications of the Restoration are felt throughout the social stratum, endowing order and stability via visible, performed social hierarchy in the public space of the street. As those at the head of the social hierarchy are restored to their former place, the lower echelons conform, so that they all experience the Restoration and adapt themselves accordingly. Whether or not a sense of ‘simultaneity’ (requisite for Anderson’s imagined community) actually existed for the people of Restoration Scotland, St Serfe imagines such simultaneity, with the nobility at the head. He envisions a community including all citizens of the state of Scotland, primarily addressing the nobility but also seeing members of lower social status as part of the ordered hierarchy.

St Serfe’s play, *Tarugo’s Wiles*, provides a glimpse of how St Serfe saw people from different social ranks engaging with newsbooks like the *Caledonius*. Performed for the first time in London in 1667, the play is largely a translation of the Spanish play *No puede ser* by Agustín Moreto y Cabaña, excepting act three, which is original. Though the play itself takes place in Spain, act three is set in a London-style coffee house, a space that was remarkable in St Serfe’s day in that men of different social rank could sit at the same table and engage in conversation, often over pamphlets and newsbooks.¹⁹ Such mixing might have been at odds with St Serfe’s preference, indicated above, for lords and commoners to be ‘distinguished’ from one another. His stage directions call for ‘Several Customers of all Trades and Professions,’ whose ensuing comical conversation on topics such as astrology and the benefits of drinking coffee eventually centres upon a gazette containing ‘fresh news from all parts.’²⁰ The customers’ conversation is ridiculous, as they take at face value and seriously reflect upon such headlines as ‘The long Wars ’twixt the Ribband-Makers Daughters of *Athens*, and the Bone-lace Weavers of *Lacedemon* shall be determin’d by a Match at Stool-ball in the Fields of *Pharsulia*.’²¹ Eventually the discussion deteriorates into a brawl. It is tempting to extrapolate from this scenario (i.e. the gullibility of the diverse customers coupled with the discord occasioned by their engagement with the newsbook) that St Serfe preferred his newsbooks to be consumed by gentlemen like himself and believed that those of lower social standing might, potentially dangerously, believe anything they read.²²

St Serfe would have been well aware of the potential for newsbooks to cause controversy. After just twelve issues, the *Caledonius* seems to have been suppressed by the crown, probably, as Buckroyd has argued, for being too extreme in its anti-Covenanter stance, which could have been divisive in such delicate political times.²³ It seems there was intervention from someone of authority as early as issue five. This issue begins with the motto 'ne quid falsi dicere audeas, ne quid veri non', meaning 'to assert no falsehood and hide no truth', then, in the newsbook itself, St Serfe explains that henceforth he will only be able to adhere strictly to the first part of the motto, i.e. to assert no falsehood.²⁴ The remaining issues of the *Caledonius* increasingly sideline Scottish news, focusing on news from abroad, which was less controversial.²⁵ That St Serfe produced eight issues after being restricted in this way suggests that he believed that foreign news was pertinent to his local readership. The purpose of transmitting foreign news to a Scottish readership may have been to encourage that readership, particularly the Scottish nobility, to imagine Scotland in relation to the foreign, and thereby to encourage greater involvement in global trade. Issue nine of the *Caledonius* expresses such globalising ambitions for Scotland. St Serfe writes that the best way for 'the Interest of Nation' to be advanced is through global trade and the establishment of 'a Company of Merchant Adventurers.'²⁶ These adventurers, writes St Serfe, 'be the laborious Gardeners which make our own Land yeeld what the earth produceth in other parts: They are those who by their industry claspeth Islands to Continents, and tacketh Country to Country.'²⁷ St Serfe clearly aspires to a globalised economy for Scotland. He warns that 'these happinesses are not to be expected, unless we be governed by the example of our Neighbour Nation, whose flourishing condition may be attributed to the right ordering their Societies; which if once were done, then the younger Brethren of our Gentry might be encouraged rather to merchandize with their Patrimonies, then to be buried in the Ditch of some Forreign Kings frontier Garrison.'²⁸ Since the fifteenth century, Scottish mercenaries had served in armies from France, Scandinavia, Bohemia and the Low Countries. Whilst 'our Neighbour Nation,' i.e. England, were trading effectively throughout Asia, with some transatlantic success, through much of the seventeenth century 'Scotland's trading patterns remained stubbornly conservative, centred around the North Sea, using tried and tested routes and markets.'²⁹ It is telling that St Serfe attributes England's greater success to the English gentry having achieved 'the right ordering their Societies': they are organised in centripetal fashion with the common goal of trading in the name of England. In his newsbook, St Serfe seeks to arouse in

Scotland the kind of unity of ambition that he has observed in England. He does so by reimagining Scotland according to the historical moment of the Restoration, both processing recent history according to the new (old) regime and looking ahead to Scotland's future in an increasingly globalised Europe.

‘THE PRINCE OF TARTARIA, HIS VOYAGE TO COWPER IN FIFE’

St Serfe continues to reimagine Scotland for the Restoration in his eight-page pamphlet ‘The prince of Tartaria, his Voyage to Cowper in Fife’. Printed in Edinburgh in 1661, ‘The prince of Tartaria’ reverses the premise of the travel writing that proliferated in the seventeenth century. Whereas in the majority of these narratives Europeans travel to far-away places, St Serfe’s parody of the genre describes the imagined journey taken by a Tartarian prince through Fife, where he and his retinue attend the Cupar horse races.³⁰

The predominant feature of ‘The prince of Tartaria’ is its humour, which is in the vein of medieval and renaissance carnivalesque. According to Mikhail Bakhtin, carnival laughter is universal; everyone can be and is the butt of the joke, which itself is produced through the description of grotesque bodily functions (i.e. eating, drinking, defecating, and behaving sexually), comic crownings and uncrownings, and laughter for laughter’s sake.³¹ Crucially, though, carnival humour serves a purpose; by presenting *le monde à l’envers*, the laughter provides a release from serious or official discourse.³² In ‘The prince of Tartaria’, St Serfe employs carnival laughter in order to celebrate the Restoration and liberate readers from the seriousness of the wars. The opening lines of the pamphlet establish the festive tone:

It was about that time in the morning when the mortals of this side of the *Æquinocial* Line, are accustomed to Satisfie their *Gusto* in refreshing *Nature* by frequent Oscitation and Pandiculation to their Members; Surfeit with toil, and Disgorging from their Nauseating Ventricle by Eructation, the Crudity’s Engendered there through their painful and Laborious Carousing; and what is wanting that way, their roaring *Borborygius* declareth by another in a very sensible way of breathing [...]³³

St Serfe refers to all ‘mortals’ resident in the northern hemisphere. All ranks of society are within the jurisdiction of the laughter. He describes the body in the earthiest

of terms – yawning, stretching, burping, and farting. Latinate words were then, as now, associated with serious intellectualism. To describe grotesque bodily acts in such terms exposes the illusory nature of such high-mindedness and the ease with which it can be subverted.

This style of festive humour presides over the narrative, leaving little room for seriousness. As they journey through the east of Scotland, the prince and his retinue are ‘confidently’ informed by locals that Neptune is often seen ‘boiling Lobstars, and Crabs at *Christmass* Eve and with no other fire, than the heat of the Sun, though situate in the 56 degree of Latitude’; they meet a group of ladies who ‘Jyrtd us with the Odoriferous flavour of Sketbroth, which occasioned us to hasten to the Towns end’; they come upon a wedding at which the music is supplied by ‘a Charming cluttering of two Beef ribs and a Hauks Bell’ and which ends, ‘hymænia hour being nigh,’ when ‘the Bride begun to grin and claw her Elbow’.³⁴ When the prince’s fleet of three thousand gondolas is conquered by a ‘keckling Militia’ of birds, the author reflects how these birds now ‘certainly are vapouring in their Gowns, spacious turbants and tyara’s’.³⁵ Like Bakhtin’s carnival humour, St Serfe’s laughter is designed to be regenerative, to liberate readers from the prevailing mood of the time, and to draw life ‘out of its *usual* rut’.³⁶ St Serfe was keen to move on from the serious discourse of the wars, the Covenanters, and the invasion of Scotland by Cromwell’s army. However, where Bakhtin finds that renaissance and medieval carnival laughter imagined an egalitarian utopia, St Serfe draws on this potential of carnival laughter to imagine a royalist utopia.³⁷ He makes use of the rhetorical power of carnival laughter to subvert seriousness and provide a sense of release, but his laughter is always inscribed with the desire to reassert the hierarchy that comes with the Restoration of the monarchy and the return from exile of royalist nobility.³⁸

It is significant that the action of ‘The prince of Tartaria’ is organised around and terminates in the annual horse race at Cupar with its attendant festivities. We learn early on that the reason for the prince’s journey through Scotland is to attend the race; he has read about it in the *Caledonius*, which in reality does advertise the Cupar horse race in several issues.³⁹ Horse races were popular in early modern Scotland. Such times of folk festivity, according to Bakhtin, could be an equalising, levelling phenomenon, when ‘all were considered equal [...] a special form of free and familiar contact reigned among people who were usually divided by the barriers of caste, property, profession, and age’.⁴⁰ The festivities at the end of ‘The

prince of Tartaria' describe a sense of conviviality. However, this is within the order of social hierarchy. Before the race begins, the area undergoes a kind of ceremonial consecration, 'the Court fenced in the Right Honourable the Lord Provost's name and all ceremonies duely performed'.⁴¹ This is in line with John Burnett's description of early-modern horse-racing. Burnett has explained how 'before they began, the burgh court was *fenced* – declared open with temporary laws in force – in the name of the Lord Provost, in the manner of a fair, and the Lord Provost gave a cup for the second race'.⁴² As such, the festivities take place within a space that is consecrated by social hierarchy. The 1661 race itself had a special significance in that during the Interregnum the annual horse races that had played a central role in Scottish culture since the reign of James VI were suspended.⁴³ The reinstatement of these annual horse races therefore symbolised the renaissance of the old order, of a sovereign, royalist Scotland. Advertisements for scheduled races pepper the 1661 writings of St Serfe. Almost without exception, these races are described with reference to their cessation under Cromwell's rule. Indeed, the Cupar races are reported in this way, 'The famous Horse Course of Couper *in Fyfe, which by the iniquity of the times, hath been so long buried to the great dissatisfaction of our Nobility and Gentry, is to be run, conform to the institution, upon the second Tuesday of April*'.⁴⁴ The return of the races is symbolic of the end of the perceived chaos of the Interregnum and is welcomed as such by St Serfe. The carnival laughter and festivity of the 'The prince of Tartaria' is, therefore, regenerative in the sense that the narrative is directed towards the royalist space of the horse race that is its final image, its utopia.

A sense of utopic order and harmony is pressed home in the final summation of the races, that 'all these sportful recreations were carried on by a most pleasant harmony, and a behaviour free of all contests and contradictions, that as I Learned the Mute *Caledonius* who was appointed there as a Judge, had this remark, that he had heard many Cracks and no Oaths, save in one inconsiderable *Remonstator* Piper of the Land of *Whigemeria*'.⁴⁵ The revelry is described as harmonious because it symbolises the Restoration, which creates the conditions of order requisite for conviviality and merriment. The harmony itself is contingent on the precedence of laughter over seriousness, of 'Cracks' over 'Oaths'. A crack in this context is a quadruple entendre, meaning the riders' whips, jokes, flatulence, and (as is evident elsewhere in St Serfe's writing) sex.⁴⁶ Likewise, 'oath' is a double entendre, meaning both profanity and serious statement. The detractor 'of the Land of *Whigemeria*,

who is responsible for the only oaths, is a whiggamore, i.e. a Covenanter who was against the Engagement with King Charles I and so, in St Serfe's eyes, the worst kind of Covenanter. In the context of the royalist utopia, the whiggamore is an outcast, transformed into a mere figure of fun, whose profane seriousness is drowned out by the laughing and flirting of the crowd.

Although 'The prince of Tartaria' is a carnivalesque narrative, in which laughter for laughter's sake abounds, running through the text is St Serfe's sincere desire to reimagine Scotland according to his royalist worldview. Correspondingly, whereas the pamphlet is a parody of contemporary travel literature, St Serfe nevertheless draws on the rhetorical power of the genre, and its attendant tropes and devices, in order to reimagine Scotland for the Restoration. As the prince and his retinue travel through Fife, the narrator draws comparisons between the landscape and towns of the east coast of Scotland and various locations in Europe and beyond. This device, of describing foreign lands by comparing them with places familiar to the reader, is common to much seventeenth-century travel writing, such as William Lithgow's *Rare Adventures and Paineiful Peregrinations*. As Lithgow travels across Europe, he compares the landscape and customs with those that are local to the reader. According to Lithgow, the fortress of Carabusa in Crete is 'not unlike to the Castle of *Dunbertan*, which standeth at the mouth of *Clyd*.'⁴⁷ Whilst St Serfe imitates this topos in parody, this kind of dialogical mapping is, nonetheless, important to St Serfe's textual cartography of Scotland Restored. Especially telling is his description of Kinghorn as 'a place for its Situation not unlike that of *Lisbon* as to the Valeys and Hills Circumjacent, but indeed the *Indian* Adventurers Buildings there come short of the Palaces of Bait gatherers here.'⁴⁸ St Serfe is cracking a joke but, nonetheless, highlighting the economic insularity of Fife by comparing it with Portugal. Certainly, there are traces here of the globalising ambition expressed in the *Caledonius*. The reference to the locations of Lisbon and Kinghorn is particularly telling. Much like Portugal, Scotland has vast coastal areas. The people of both Kinghorn and Lisbon depend on seafaring for their livelihood. However, there is clearly a vast discrepancy in the wealth and prestige of the occupations of bait-gathering and of adventuring, as is indicated in the ironic designation of the homes of bait-gatherers as palaces. Whilst Portugal is engaged in ventures with remote corners of the earth, Scotland is gathering bait. The laughter works to make such discrepancies of ambition absurd, thereby encouraging a broadening of Restored Scotland's horizons.

Early-modern travel writing has been described by William H. Sherman as representing an attempt to 'put the world on paper for the new print marketplace at home'. He argues that 'the number of new titles published (and old titles reprinted) during the early-modern period suggests that there was a significant audience for travel writing, eager to hear news of the wider world and to reflect on England's place in it'.⁴⁹ Travel writers in this period can be seen as textual cartographers, mapping their experiences of the foreign in relation to the local and vice versa. As such, they map not only the country visited but also their homeland. The foreign is seen through the eyes of the familiar and the familiar through the eyes of the foreign. 'The prince of Tartaria' is predicated on an inversion of the norms of early-modern travel writing. Whereas readers were accustomed to reading of the travels of Europeans to far-flung places, in St Serfe's pamphlet the eponymous prince has travelled across continents to come to Scotland. The dialogue between familiar and foreign, self and other, is pivotal to the early-modern imagination of national space; St Serfe adapts the format of travel writing in order to imagine Scotland's engagement in such dialogue. Crucially, this dialogue between familiar and foreign is not free-flowing, but fixed.⁵⁰ In the same way, the dialogue with foreignness in St Serfe's parodic travel narrative is always anchored by his world-view, particularly his ideas of how Scotland is and how it should be.

In 'The prince of Tartaria', St Serfe engages Scotland in a dialogue with an imagined otherness to encourage his readers to see Scotland from a fresh perspective (i.e. his). This imagined otherness is a recurring feature in his 1661 pamphlets. 'Bourlasque news from the Antipodes' reports the session of an imagined Antipodean cabal whose debates on religion clearly pertain to those raging in St Serfe's contemporary Scotland. St Serfe literally turns contemporary Scotland upside down, inventing an obverse discourse in order to engage with the established discourses of his day and to ridicule those with whom he disagrees. His second known translation, of Cyrano de Bergerac's *L'Autre Monde ou les états et empires de la Lune*, is predicated on the notion that 'the Moon is a World like this, and by which ours is interchangeably beleaved a Moon'.⁵¹ The text seeks to push the boundaries of the reader's imagination by depicting the obverse point of view. Edward W. Lanius has described Bergerac's writing as, 'reversing the ordinary relationship of things, comparing, making new associations and projecting a new view [...] Cyrano upsets the accepted perspective and frees the imagination to see in a wholly new manner'.⁵² Similarly, by engaging in

play with opposite perspectives, St Serfe seeks to reinvent Scotland for the Restoration on his terms, in its pre-Covenant mould, yet modern and trading globally. His work sheds light on how texts interacted with ideas of nationhood at a point in Scotland's history when the world had been turned upside down several times over. Though many questions remain regarding the life and career of St Serfe, it is hoped that this study begins to answer, or at the very least pose, some of them.

Notes

- 1 Although Thomas St Serfe was born Synserff (a variant spelling of Sydserff), he is always St Serfe in print. As such, it seems appropriate to use St Serfe in a discussion of his writing, in much the same way one would refer to Christopher Murray Grieve as Hugh MacDiarmid.
- 2 To date, the only dedicated study of St Serfe's newsbook is J. M. Buckroyd's excellent and much-referenced essay 'Mercurius Caledonius and its immediate successors, 1661', *The Scottish Historical Review* 54 (1975), pp. 11–21, p. 20. His play has figured more frequently, though usually as one of a number of examples. See for instance Ian Brown, 'Public and Private Performance: 1650–1800' in *The Edinburgh Companion to Scottish Drama* ed. by Ian Brown (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2007), pp. 22–40, p. 26; Bill Findlay, 'Beginnings to 1700' in *A History of Scottish Theatre* ed. by Bill Findlay (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1998), pp. 1–79, pp. 68–71; 'Thomas Sydserf, *Tarugo's Wiles: or, The Coffee-House. A Comedy* (1668)' in *Eighteenth-Century Coffee-House Culture* vol. 3 ed. by Markman Ellis (London: Pickering & Chatto, 2006), pp. 43–107; and Adrienne Scullion, "'Forget Scotland': Plays by Scots on the London Stage 1667–1715', *Comparative Drama* (1997) 31, pp. 105–28.
- 3 Samuel Pepys, *The Diary of Samuel Pepys: a new and complete transcription* vol. VIII ed. by Robert Latham and William Matthews (Bungay: The Chaucer Press, 1974), p. 481. It should be noted that Pepys used exactly the same words to describe a performance of Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream*.
- 4 St Serfe's translations consist of Melchior de Marmet, *Entertainments of the cours: or, Academical conversations* (London: T.C., 1658); Savinien de Cyrano de Bergerac, *ΣΕΔΗΝΡΧΛΑ, or, The government of the world in the moon a comical history* (London: 1659); and Girolamo Brusoni, *Arnaldo, or, The injur'd lover: An Excellent new Romance* (London: Thomas Dring, 1660). His play, *Tarugo's Wiles: or, the Coffee-House* (London: J. Cottrel, 1668), is partly a translation of Agustín Moreto y Cabaña's *No puede ser*. His pamphlets include 'The Work Goes Bonnelly on.' (Edinburgh: 1661); 'Variety of News for all Pallats, As Certainities, Probabilities, &c.' (Edinburgh: 1661); and 'The Remarkable Propheesies in order to the Present Times' (Edinburgh: 1665).
- 5 Brown, 'Public and Private Performance: 1650–1800', p. 26.
- 6 Sharon Adams, 'Thomas Sydserff', 23 September 2004, doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/26866 [accessed 6.3.18].
- 7 William B. D. D. Turnbull, *Miscellany of the Abbotsford Club* (Edinburgh: 1835), p. 87.

- 8 Describing London in the late 1660s, James Fraser notes the presence of ‘Thomas Sidserfe, sone to Bishop Sidserfe, the one onely surviving prelat in Scotland,’ *Chronicles of the Frasers: The Wardlaw Manuscript Entitled “Polichronicon Seu Policratica Temporum, or, The True Genealogy of the Frasers.” 916–1674* (Edinburgh: Univeristy Press, 1905), p. 427.
- 9 The complete *Mercurius Caledonius* is available online at mercuriuscaledonius.wordpress.com ed. by Kevin Gallagher [accessed 8.6.2018].
- 10 Thomas St Serfe, *Mercurius Caledonius* issue 1 (Edinburgh: 1661), p. 1.
- 11 Clare Jackson, *Restoration Scotland, 1660–1690: Royalist Politics, Religion and Ideas* (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2003), p. 1.
- 12 *Mercurius Caledonius* issue 5 (Edinburgh: 1661), p. 12.
- 13 Jackson, p. 1.
- 14 See St Serfe, ‘Edinburghs Joy For His Majesties Coronation in England.’ (Edinburgh: 1661), p. 2.
- 15 *Mercurius Caledonius* issue 1, p. 8.
- 16 Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London & New York: Verso, 1983), p. 37.
- 17 Buckroyd, p. 20.
- 18 *Mercurius Caledonius* issue 4 (Edinburgh: 1661), pp. 1–2.
- 19 Markman Ellis, *The Coffee-House: A Cultural History* (London: Orion Books, 2004), p. 59, pp. 68–74.
- 20 *Tarugo’s Wiles: or, the Coffee-House*, p. 17, p. 24–28.
- 21 *Ibid*, p. 24.
- 22 See Juan A Prieto-Pablos, ‘Coffee-houses and Restoration Drama’ in *Theatre and Culture in Early Modern England, 1650–1737: From Leviathan to Licensing Act* ed. by Catie Gill (Farnham: Ashgate, 2010), pp. 51–74.
- 23 Buckroyd, p. 21.
- 24 *Mercurius Caledonius* issue 5, p. 1.
- 25 In one pamphlet, St Serfe refers to the censorship of the *Mercurius* with some bitterness, when a fictive Antipodean parliament decrees, ‘*That there be a Padlock on the Pen, and a Gage in the mouth of MERCURIUS CALEDONIUS*’, ‘Bourlasque news from the Antipodes’ (Edinburgh: 1661), p. 4.
- 26 *Mercurius Caledonius* issue 9, p. 1.
- 27 *Ibid*, p. 1.
- 28 *Ibid*, p. 2.
- 29 Ian D. Whyte, ‘1500–1770s’ in *The Oxford Companion to Scottish History* ed. by Michael Lynch (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), pp. 197–98, p. 197. Although England was already engaged in transatlantic slave trade and colonisation in the Americas, at this point Asian trade was still their main focus, Bernadette Andrea, ‘Persia, Tartaria, and Pamphilia’ in *The English Renaissance, Orientalism, and the Idea of Asia* ed. by Debra Johanyak and Walter S. H. Lim (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), pp. 23–50, p. 25. St Serfe also seems primarily interested in ‘Old World’ trade; he lists the riches to be enjoyed as a result of trade as being ‘Spices from the Indies, Gums from Egypt, Catholick Liquor from the Canaries, Christian Claret from France, Silks from the Levant, Flax and Iron from the Baltick Seas’, *Mercurius Caledonius* issue 9, p. 1. For further examination of Scottish ambitions of global trade and expansion in the seventeenth century, see Michael Fry, *The Scottish Empire* (Edinburgh: Tuckwell Press, 2001), pp. 19–31.

- 30 The nationality of the prince is almost certainly a play on the actual presence at the 1661 Cupar races of a Tartarian horse, ridden by a 'a Waywood of Polonia', i.e. a Polish dignitary, 'come to this Nation, to congratulate our happy Restoration', *Mercurius Caledonius* issue nine, pp. 4–5. In the British early-modern imagination, the borders of Tartaria were somewhat loosely defined. Broadly speaking, Tartaria stretched from modern-day China into the eastern edges Europe. As Walter S. H. Lim has shown, perceptions of such Asian spaces were often heavily influenced by the imagination's removal of 'distinctions between nations, peoples, and cultures so that origins can get confused, geographical homelands become unfocused', 'The English Renaissance, Orientalism, and the Idea of Asia – Framing the Issues' in Johanyak and Lim, *The English Renaissance, Orientalism, and the Idea of Asia*, pp. 1–21, p. 6. Lim goes on to argue that Asian culture, in the English Renaissance imagination, serves as a 'powerful metaphor for the cultural alterity against which England measures itself to arrive at a sense of its own cultural and national identity', p. 7. St Serfe was well-educated and -travelled, with an interest in global politics, as clearly demonstrated by his newspaper project. Nevertheless, to a large extent, the specificities of the Tartarian's nationality are brushed over in 'The prince of Tartaria', figuring primarily to provide a foil for the local culture of Scotland, a foreignness troped for the sake of creating humorous culture clashes and to cast fresh light on local culture. Further investigation into the nature of Scottish ideas of Tartaria and especially what texts might have informed St Serfe's rendering of the prince is necessary in order to discover the precise significance of the prince's nationality to the text. For an exposition of how Tartarian culture is represented in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century English literature, see Bernadette Andrea, 'Persia, Tartaria, and Pamphilia' in *The English Renaissance, Orientalism, and the Idea of Asia*, pp. 23–50.
- 31 Mikhail Bakhtin, *Rabelais and His World* trans. by Hélène Iswolsky (Bloomington, Indiana University Press: 1984), p. 303, p. 11, p. 208. Rabelais' influence on St Serfe has yet to be investigated thoroughly. St Serfe was certainly familiar with Rabelais' writing, to which he refers in 'The Remarkable Prophecies', p. 2.
- 32 Bakhtin, *Rabelais and His World*, p. 43.
- 33 St Serfe, 'The prince of Tartaria, his Voyage to Cowper in Fife' (Edinburgh: 1661), p. 1.
- 34 *Ibid.*, p. 4, p. 5, p. 7.
- 35 *Ibid.*, p. 1.
- 36 Mikhail Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics* ed. and trans. by R. W. Rotsel (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984), p. 122.
- 37 Bakhtin, *Rabelais and His World*, p. 10.
- 38 Indeed, whether the medieval and Renaissance humour described by Bakhtin was itself egalitarian is highly debatable. For further discussion of the limitations of Bakhtin's theory, see Alastair Renfrew, 'Brief Encounters, Long Farewells: Bakhtin and Scottish Literature', *International Journal of Scottish Literature*, issue 1 (2006) www.ijsl.stir.ac.uk/issue1/Renfrew.pdf.
- 39 *Mercurius Caledonius*, issue 11 (Edinburgh: 1661), p. 4. That folk festivity and horse racing have gone hand-in-hand in Scotland can be seen from Robert Fergusson's *Leith Races* in *The Christ's Kirk Tradition: Scots Poems of Folk Festivity* ed. by Allan H. MacLaine (Aberdeen: Association for Scottish Literary Studies, 1996), pp. 85–90. This poem focuses primarily on the jocular atmosphere that surrounds the races, which suggests that the event, in Fergusson's time of the mid to late eighteenth century at least, was as much about the party as it was about the races themselves, though Fergusson takes a more satirical attitude to the festivity than St Serfe does in 'The prince of Tartaria'.

- 40 Bakhtin, *Rabelais and His World*, p. 10.
- 41 'The prince of Tartaria', p. 7.
- 42 John Burnett, 'The Sites and Landscapes of Horse Racing in Scotland before 1860', *The Sports Historian* 18:1 (1998), pp. 55–75, p. 61.
- 43 Burnett, p. 56.
- 44 *Mercurius Caledonius* issue 9, p. 4. For further investigation into the development of horse racing in Scotland and how participation in the races intersected with social rank, see Eila Williamson, 'Horse-racing in Scotland in the Sixteenth and earlier Seventeenth Centuries: Peebles and Beyond' in *Review of Scottish Culture* 14 (2002), pp. 31–42.
- 45 The prince of Tartaria', p. 8.
- 46 For example, St Serfe 'The Remarkable Prophecies', p. 1.
- 47 William Lithgow, *A most delectable and true discourse of an admired and painefull Peregrination from Scotland, to the most Famous Kingdomes in Europe, Asia and Africa* (London: 1623), p. 47.
- 48 'The prince of Tartaria', p. 4.
- 49 William H. Sherman, 'Stirrings and searchings (1500–1720)' in *The Cambridge Companion to Travel Writing* ed. by Peter Hulme and Tim Youngs (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), pp. 17–36, p. 19.
- 50 See, for instance, Theo van Heijnsbergen, 'William Lithgow's "Fierce Castalian Veine": Travel Writing and the Re-Location of Identity' in *The Apparelling of Truth: Literature and Literary Culture in the Reign of James VI: A Festschrift for Roderick J. Lyall* ed. by Kevin J. McGinley and Nicola Royan (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2010), pp. 223–40.
- 51 Savinien de Cyrano de Bergerac, *ΣΕΔΗΝΡΧΛΑ, or, The government of the world in the moon; a comical history*, trans. by Thomas St Serfe (London: 1659), Br.
- 52 Edward W. Lanius, *Cyrano de Bergerac and the Universe of the Imagination* (Geneva: Libraire Droz, 1967), p. 30.

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