From the *Transactions* of the
Bristol and Gloucestershire Archaeological Society

Daniel Defoe, John Oldmixon and the Bristol Riot 0f 1714

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1973, Vol. 92, 145-156

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Daniel Defoe, John Oldmixon and the Bristol Riot of 1714

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THE coronation of George I took place on 20 October 1714. Amid the displays of loyalty and fervour, a few scattered incidents up and down the country served to remind people that Queen Anne was not yet three months dead, and that crypto-Jacobites had occupied important offices in the state up to that very summer. As yet no one knew of the rising of the Old Pretender, which was to be played out in a shabby tragicomic mode the following autumn. But the local disturbances were serious enough to cause some alarm in the new régime. In particular, a serious riot in Bristol occasioned a series of urgent measures and a mood, if not quite of panic, at least of real apprehension. The riot has been described by Latimer and other local historians; here it will be enough to set out the broad course of events.[1]

On the evening of coronation day an assembly was held in the new Customs House to celebrate the occasion. A mob of people, said to consist of colliers and labourers, and allegedly hired for the purpose, gathered in the streets. A report having spread that the dissenters planned to burn the effigy of Dr Sacheverell, that great High Church champion (something that actually did happen elsewhere), the crowd shifted their operations to Tucker Street. Here they attacked a meeting house as well as several private dwellings. In particular they descended on the home of a baker named Stevens, prominent in local affairs. The baker's son, a captain of a West Indian merchantman, shot on the rioters and killed one of their number. Meanwhile, a Quaker named Thomas, making well-intentioned efforts to calm

[1] The account of John Latimer, *The Annals of Bristol in the Eighteenth Century* (n.p., 1893), 107–8, draws on earlier sources, of whom Oldmixon is obviously one. In the Public Record Office a few documents are preserved relating to the affair, including a letter from Lord Townshend, Secretary of State and effective leader of the ministry, to Colonel Joseph Earle, dated 26 October 1714 (SP 44/116). This mentions Earle's letter of 23 October, describing the 'most enormous riott': but unfortunately none of the information obtained by 'examinations' of local people has been traced. The city continued to occasion a good deal of worry in succeeding months, as is apparent from letters by Townshend to the Mayor on 20 January and 10 February 1715. It was necessary to employ 'several extraordinary clerks' to make 52 copies of affidavits taken during the enquiry, at a cost of £13 10*s.*0*d.* (PRO, T 54/23/2).

the situation, was trampled underfoot and crushed to death. After wreaking extensive damage in the neighbourhood, the mob made their way to the Customs House. Here they broke a few windows and caused the ladies at the ball to flee in terror; but by midnight they dispersed without further injury to life or property.

Naturally alarmed by these occurrences, the city corporation asked the government to set up a special commission of assize. Three judges were sent down and arrived in Bristol on 25 November. On their entry they received further affronts to their own person; a large crowd blocked their passage and clamorous support for Sacheverell was again displayed. The trial of certain rioters began on the following day. Unfortunately, from the ministry's point of view, most of the ringleaders had absconded, and only the dregs had been caught. Proceedings began with a charge to the jury by Sir Littleton Powys, and continued for the following three days. Three of the accused were discharged for want of evidence; and though most of the others were convicted for their share in the affray, their punishment (a fine of twenty nobles, i.e. less than seven pounds, and imprisonment for three months) was considered by many to be unduly lenient. Nor were all the legal repercussions of the riot now over. One central figure in the proceedings, Captain Stevens, was accused of murdering one of the rioters, but was acquitted. His father, whose house had borne the brunt of the mob's attack, later brought an action for damages. In September 1715 he was awarded £60 by Judge Powys.[2]

There was widespread interest in these events, and the London press carried fairly extensive reports of both the disturbances and the trial. In addition, at least three pamphlets were issued at the beginning of December. Two of them are palpably from the same hand; and that hand has been identified as belonging to no less than Daniel Defoe. Both are glossed 'very probably' by Defoe in the standard checklist of his works; and *The New Cambridge Bibliography of English Literature* includes them in the entry for Defoe, with a cautious 'perhaps' appended.[3] In this article I shall try to show that

[2] John Evans, *A Chronological Outline of the History of Bristol* (Bristol and London, 1824), 256–7. For George Stevens, linen draper in St Nicholas' Parish, see *The Inhabitants of Bristol in 1696*, ed. Elizabeth Ralph, Mary E. Williams (Bristol, 1968), 135. He was Sheriff in 1698/9, Mayor in 1706/7, and died in 1718: A. B. Beaven, *Bristol Lists* (Bristol, n.d.) 309. Powys (*c.* 1648–1732) became a Baron of the Exchequer in 1695 and a justice of the King's Bench in 1700. He was assisted by Robert Price (1655–1733), and Robert Tracy (1655–1735), each of whom was successively Baron of the Exchequer and judge in the Court of Common Pleas. Oldmixon had a special dislike of Price, going back to events of the 1690s: *History of England* (1735), 126.

[3] J. R. Moore, *A Checklist of the Writings of Daniel Defoe* (Bloomington, 1960), 114: M. E. Novak, 'Daniel Defoe', *The New Cambridge Bibliography of English Literature*, ed. G. Watson (Cambridge, 1971), II, col. 894. The third pamphlet, issued by John Smith in London, has not been available to me: the British Museum copy is apparently mislaid.

it is most unlikely that Defoe had anything to do with these tracts. On the contrary, I shall argue, it was one of Defoe's most persistent critics, the West Country historian John Oldmixon, who composed them. The evidence for this statement comes from three broad areas. (1) Oldmixon's lifelong connections with Bristol and its environs, and his association with people mentioned in the text of these pamphlets. (2) Oldmixon's known activity as a pamphleteer at this precise moment, together with the facts of his journalistic career. (3) Close parallels which can be traced with Oldmixon's coverage of the riots elsewhere, including many direct echoes and verbatim repetition of both tracts. In all three areas, direct comparison is possible with the claims that can be made for Defoe (though these never have been seriously advanced). It will be found, I shall submit, that the case for Oldmixon is immensely stronger in every instance.

The circumstances of publication are as follows. On 2 December the *Evening Post* advertised the appearance of a pamphlet entitled *The Bristol Riot*.[4] According to its title-page, this work provides 'a full and particular account of the riot in general,' as well as 'the whole proceedings relating to the tryal of the rioters'. In fact there is a notable skimpiness with regard to the trial, and the whole work is a hasty and ill-assembled concoction. It seems to have been written in two or possibly three instalments. Professor Moore, who recognises the 'great disorder' of the text, yet contends that 'this is Defoe at his worst as a reporter, but – so far as one can judge from the existing evidence – it is still Defoe'.[5] Alas, the slovenliness of this pamphlet is a minor confirmatory touch in the case for Oldmixon, who was no master of construction and far more given than Defoe to last-minute changes of plan.[6] However, the writer did much better with a second offering, called *A Full and Impartial Account of the Late Disorders in Bristol*, which probably came out within a week of *The Bristol Riot*. Like its predecessor, it was a sixpenny octavo running to thirty-odd pages, and published by J. Roberts at London. There is a good deal of overlap in the contents, but this new account is more shapely and connected, though still far from a model of narrative exposition. Incidentally, *The Bristol Riot* contains a savage attack on Edward Colston.

[4] Moore, *Checklist*, 114, dates publication 4 December.

[5] J. R. Moore, *Daniel Defoe, Citizen of the Modern World* (Chicago, 1958), 171–2.

[6] The extraordinarily broken-backed *Memoirs of William Congreve* (1729) have long been attributed to Oldmixon, although they may well have been written by Giles Jacob. See Pat Rogers, 'The Identity of Charles Wilson', *MLQ* XXXI (1970), 330–44. It is not unknown for Oldmixon to incorporate the same material twice in a given book, for example his *Memoirs of Somers* (1716), discussed in an article, 'The Memoirs of Somers and Wharton: Authorship and Authority in Eighteenth-Century Biography', *Bulletin of the New York Public Library* (forthcoming).

We can now turn to the evidence which would link Defoe and Oldmixon respectively with these pamphlets. I shall review this under the headings already suggested.

(1) As to Defoe's local connections, it is enough to say that we have positive knowledge of two visits to Bristol, both made in a short space of time in August 1705. He had taken the waters at Bath as a boy, around 1670, and was there during the same trip in 1705. He seems to have been in Somerset with Monmouth's army in 1685, but how close he came to Bristol on that occasion remains doubtful. The story that he retired to the city to escape creditors is nothing more than unsupported legend. On his 1705 visit, he must have established contact with two merchants, Benjamin Coole and (?John) Wraxall, to act as distribution agents for political material.[7] But there is nothing which would extend this connection into the second decade of the century. Professor Moore cites a passage in *The Bristol Riot* in which the author mentions help received from a clergyman who provided 'memoirs' and shared in the writing. Moore's view is that this local information regarding Bristol was later incorporated into Defoe's *Tour thro' the Whole Island of Great Britain*. The difficulty here is that Defoe added his most detailed material on Bristol in an appendix to Volume II of the *Tour* (1725). The additions, which take the history of the city up to 1723, were probably made during the final preparation of this volume, around the spring of 1725. There is nothing in the *Tour* concerning Bristol which Defoe could not have learnt either on his 1705 visit, when he obtained 'an Exact scale of the people, their Trade, and Magistracy', or else at the time of his revision of the *Tour*. If he had had the information supplied by his alleged clergyman friend, he would surely have put it into the first draft of the *Tour* in the summer of 1724, instead of postponing his 'more exact Enquiry into the particular State of the City of *Bristol*' to the Appendix.[8]

With Oldmixon, the situation is altogether different. The member of an old Somerset family, he was brought up in the family of Admiral Blake at Bridgwater. He then went to live with an uncle in London, one of a number of relatives who were engaged in the West Indies trade. Oldmixon himself worked in this branch of mercantile activity during the 1690s. The important thing is that, whereas Defoe's

[7] Information from Moore, *Citizen*, passim, and *The Letters of Daniel Defoe*, ed. G. H. Healey (Oxford, 1955), 110–1, 116.

[8] *A Tour thro' the Whole Island of Great Britain*, ed. G. D. H. Cole (London, 1927), II, 515–7: *Letters*, 111. For the date of composition, see my edition of the *Tour* (Harmondsworth, 1971), 16. The only clergyman mentioned directly in the pamphlets is Mr Gough, of the Tucker Street congregation—evidently Strickland Gough, senior (d. 1718?).

trading had been chiefly concerned with the Lisbon trade, Oldmixon had entered an area of commerce in which the port of Bristol figured very strongly. Moreover, his kinsmen John and Richard Miles were Bristol merchants, active in the Madeira trade, as appears from a reference cited by Professor Minchinton. In actual fact, Oldmixon spent a good deal of time and effort around 1715–17 attempting to get Richard Miles appointed consul for Madeira. He was supported by a large number of merchants including Samuel Ball and Micajah Perry, both of whom had close links with Bristol.[9] We might also note that among the subscribers to Oldmixon's *History of England* (1729) are listed William Barnes, William Chubb, William Gordon, Lawrence Growdon, Samuel Hunt, Thomas Hackett, Michael Pope, William Richards and John Wraxhall, all named as merchants of Bristol.[10] The knowledge of the commercial community displayed by the pamphleteer seems readily explicable in this light. Incidentally, at least two Bristol clergymen were numbered among the subscribers, including the prominent dissenting minister Samuel Ball. There were also doctors, attorneys and booksellers of Bristol listed.[11]

But there are signs of more personal and direct contacts on Oldmixon's part. The writer of the pamphlets went to the trial in company with the under-sheriff, Edward Whiting, and mentions other functionaries with an air of familiarity. Now Oldmixon received help in 1717 on a literary venture from John Romsey, Town Clerk of Bristol between 1688 and 1721 (with a brief supersession by Nathaniel Wade, actually mentioned in *The Bristol Riot*).[12] Romsey was a backer of Woodes Rogers's voyage round the world; and we can be sure that Oldmixon actually knew Rogers – whereas the speculations regarding a meeting between Defoe and 'Crusoe's Captain' are the purest surmise.[13] At the time of the riot, Rogers was in South Africa: but he had already acquired his house in Queen Square. This new quarter of the town was of some relevance to the disturbances, since

[9] W. E. Minchinton, ed., *The Trade of Bristol in the Eighteenth Century* (Bristol, 1957), 141–3: Public Record Office, CO 388/17/137: CO 388/18/30–31: CO 389/25/333–4: SP 79/8. A petition presented to the Commissioners for Trade on 6 September 1715 was signed by Bristol merchants assembled by Oldmixon. For Oldmixon's family, see Pat Rogers, 'Two Notes on John Oldmixon', *Notes & Queries* n.s. XVII (1970), 293–300.

[10] *History of England* (1729), XVII–XXI. Another subscriber, not designated a merchant, was Nathaniel Wraxhall, doubtless the man who had been sheriff in 1723–4 and warden of the Merchant Venturers a year previously. He died in 1731, aged 44. See Evans, p. 356. Pope is possibly the sheriff of that name in 1734 (Evans, 263).

[11] On Ball (1663–1730) there is information in Dr Williams's Library. It may be added that at least fifty dissenting ministers subscribed to the *History* in 1729. The 1735 list includes '*Mr* Thomas Cadell *of* Bristol, *Bookseller*', additionally. A bookseller is mentioned in the text of *The Bristol Riot*, 8, but in a hostile vein because of his Tory sympathies. The writer evidently distrusted the current sheriffs, Henry Swymmer (d. 1732) and John Beecher (d. 1743). See Beaven, 309.

[12] Edinburgh University Library, MS Lai. II/423/181.

the mob had invaded a ball held at the Customs House which had been erected there in 1709–11.[14] Rogers cannot have been an informant but a member of his family conceivably could. A further point to observe is that Oldmixon himself entered the Customs service within two years, as collector for Bridgwater; he regularly sent information to his Bristol opposite number, Jacob Reynardson. Interestingly enough, it was commonly Jacobite activity which prompted concerted action, as in the year 1719.[15] But apart from this official connection, we know that Oldmixon met Joseph Addison at the Hot Springs, near Clifton, in the autumn of 1718; we learn in a book Oldmixon published in 1716 of an encounter with an Irish peer at Bath; and a work of 1711 tells us that he had been 'three or four months at a time' at Bath.[16] He did not return to live permanently in Somerset until 1716, but all the signs are that he preserved contact with this region from boyhood onwards.

These facts, useful as they are, afford circumstantial evidence only. The text of the pamphlets is more directly illuminating. One clear instance occurs in *The Bristol Riot*, where the author twice mentions a High Church parson called Thompson, who 'outdid even *Sacheverel* himself, in crying up Arbitrary Power'. Thompson was made Dean of Bristol, having once been sent to Newgate after a public apology to Parliament for an inflammatory sermon. Now the sermon dates from 1679; Thompson was Dean for only a year, and had been dead thirty years. Defoe, so far as I know, never once refers in his works to this fairly obscure figure. Oldmixon does, in his *History* of 1729, and he mentions the same episodes as the pamphleteer. Moreover, we have a clue as to the reason: Oldmixon calls Thompson 'a noisy, insolent, ignorant Priest, I take the more liberty with him because I knew him . . .'[17] Another Bristol worthy mentioned is the famous William Penn. It is possible that Moore considered the reference as a sign of Defoe's hand, for we know that the two men came into contact in 1703. But Oldmixon also knew Penn, who furnished

[13] Bryan Little, *Crusoe's Captain* (London, 1960), 45. For Oldmixon's acquaintance with Woodes Rogers, see his *British Empire in America* (2nd edn, 1741), II, 437 (misprinted 773).

[14] Evans, 253–5: Little, 22–3, 172–3.

[15] For Oldmixon's work as Customs collector and informant on Jacobite doings, see Pat Rogers, 'John Oldmixon in Bridgwater, 1716–30', *Proceedings of the Somersetshire Archaeological and Natural History Society*, CXIII (1969), 86–98. Oldmixon was engaged throughout this period on a history of Somerset — *History* (1729), 287.

[16] *History* (1735), 662 (for dating, cf. *The Letters of Joseph Addison*, ed. W. Graham (Oxford, 1941), 402 n.1): *Memoirs of Ireland* (1716), 215: *History of Addresses* (1709–11), II, 85. Oldmixon in his youth knew the one-time bishop of Bath and Wells, Peter Mews: *History* (1729), 690, 704. He was at Bath in 1690 (ibid., 729).

[17] *The Bristol Riot*, 9–10: *History* (1729), 654. There is a reference to Thompson in *The Justice and Necessity of Impeaching the Clergy* (1715), 31; but Moore's ascription of the work to Defoe (*Checklist*, 116–117) is distinctly controvertible.

him with help for his *British Empire in America* (1708).[18] Finally, there is an allusion at the start of *The Bristol Riot* to 'my Friend Mr *Legg*, who is Keeper of *Newgate* [the Bristol Newgate gaol]'. No connection is recorded between Defoe and anyone of this name. But Oldmixon's own sister had married Richard Legg, a rope-maker of Bristol, in 1682. It may well be that 'friend' is a genteel evasion for relative.[19]

(2) If we now turn to the position regarding Defoe and Oldmixon as pamphleteers, it is important to note that James Roberts issued both tracts, and is indeed mentioned in the text of one. Subsequently Roberts was to publish many of Defoe's works; but at this date his imprint had appeared on none of the accepted canon. His usual publisher was John Baker, who issued ten separate items by Defoe in the course of 1713. Now the situation is precisely the opposite in Oldmixon's case. Between September 1714 and December 1716 at least fourteen books by Oldmixon bore Roberts' name on the title-page. In the first six months of the new reign, as many works involving this author-publisher collaboration made their appearance. In December 1714 there can be no doubt that Oldmixon, not Defoe, was house-author for this firm. It may be added that Roberts's predecessor at the shop in Warwick Lane had been Mrs Ann Baldwin, for whom Oldmixon had written at least eight books (and a journal) in the period 1711–13. One of the leading properties Roberts had taken over (either as stock or as good will) had been the services of the prolific Oldmixon.

At one point in *The Bristol Riot*, there is a reference to Dr Sacheverell's fears lest the *Flying Post* should reveal his contacts with known Papists. Now this could suggest the hand of Defoe, since he had some 'occasional' connection with the journal – the epithet is Professor Moore's. However, he was in deep trouble with the authorities following a libellous paragraph in the issue for 19 August 1714, and would be soft-pedalling. Moreover, his brief had been to 'take off the Virulence and Rage' of the paper: he always 'Declin'd Medling with home Matters'.[20] These facts would make it highly improbable that he would make a special journey to Bristol to report the trial for the *Flying Post*. On the other hand Oldmixon was a specialist on West Country politics; he was associated with the *Flying Post* for a number

[18] *The Bristol Riot*, 11–12: see *Letters*, 7–9: *Tour*, ed. Cole, II, 517: *British Empire in America* (1708), I, x– see also 1741 edn., I, 312.

[19] *The Bristol Riot*, 2: for the marriage between Hannah Oldmixon and Richard Legge, see 'Two Notes on John Oldmixon', 296, n. 25. For the Legg family in St Thomas' parish in 1696, see Ralph, Williams, 215.

[20] Moore, *Checklist*, 233: *Letters*, 446.

of years, up to 1728; his account of the coronation day riots in his *History* (1735) seems to have been written with the *Flying Post* before him; and he had more inclination than Defoe to puff this journal. Specifically, an attack on Oldmixon in Mist's *Weekly Journal* in 1718, very likely written by Defoe, describes him as 'Intelligencer-General for [Bridgwater] of that Writer to celebrated Fame and Veracity the Flying Post . . .'[21] Oldmixon cannot have been a regular correspondent in 1714, when he was still based in London; but his local knowledge would make him a suitable man for a special assignment.

(3) The major body of evidence concerns parallels with other accounts by Oldmixon. Moore cites a reference to the riots in one of Defoe's contemporary pamphlets, *The Pernicious Consequences of the Clergy's Intermedling with Affairs of State*.[22] But brief allusions were commonplace at this period: one occurs at the end of *A Letter to the Free-Holders of Great Britain* (1715), and another in Oldmixon's *Memoirs of North-Britain* (1715).[23] Much more significant are the detailed similarities which exist between the riot pamphlets on the one hand and Oldmixon's work on the other. One sustained parallel can be detected, and in addition a whole series of minute correspondences exist in phrasing and allusion with half a dozen books by Oldmixon. One striking case may be instanced. The author of *The Bristol Riot* compares the 'huzzas' of the High Church mob to those which greeted James Naylor, the Quaker of old, when he entered Bristol. This episode is described in Oldmixon's *History* fifteen years later, where the writer mentions discussions he has had regarding Naylor with eminent Quakers such as Penn and Thomas Elwood. The latter died in 1713, which indicates that Oldmixon had already interested himself in Naylor.[24] There is no evidence I can trace that Defoe had even heard of Naylor.

Other topics taken up elsewhere by Oldmixon are the insolence of the Kingswood colliers;[25] the malign influence of the Lord Lieutenant, the Duke of Beaufort; the virtues of Lord Chancellor Cowper, whom Oldmixon had several times addressed in adulatory vein;[26] the attack on 'the *Staff*' (Defoe was still clinging to the Earl of Oxford's lost cause); the follies of Arthur Bedford; and the 'Butchery' of Jeffreys and the Western Assizes – Oldmixon's invariable word for that

[21] Mist's *Weekly Journal*, 26 July 1718. Defoe's authorship is argued for in an article I have prepared for the press, 'Defoe in Mist's *Weekly Journal*'.

[22] Moore, *Checklist*, 114.

[23] *A Letter to the Free-Holders*, 24: *Memoirs of North-Britain*, 186.

[24] *The Bristol Riot*, 18: *History* (1729), 415.

[25] *The Bristol Riot*, 5: *History* (1735), 804.

[26] *The Bristol Riot*, 27: for Oldmixon's relations with Cowper, see Pat Rogers, 'Oldmixon and a Translation of Boileau', *Revue de Littérature Comparée*, XLIII (1969), 509–13.

episode when, as so often, he reverts to this trauma of his Somerset boyhood.[27] The attack on Edward Colston in the earlier pamphlet is not paralleled directly,[28] but its overall methods – e.g. its linkage of Colston's nonjuring sympathies and his allegedly immoral life – follow the usual pattern of character assassination employed against high Tories.

It is in the treatment of Dr Sacheverell, the incendiary preacher, that more positive evidence begins to show itself. The author of *The Bristol Riot* displays a keen interest in Sacheverell's career and antecedents, something Oldmixon often alluded to, Defoe rarely if ever. The pamphleteer remarks that those 'who made use of [Sacheverell] for their own wicked Purposes thought him, as the Staff owns, a Man of no Worth, and indeed had he the least Grain of Sense, he would never have done their vile Drudgery . . .' Compare Oldmixon's statement of twenty years later regarding 'an Insensibility that one would hardly think the poorest Portion of Understanding and Honesty, cou'd be susceptible of, he rather glory'd in, than was abash'd, rather rejoic'd in, than lamented, the Mischiefs [the Bristol mob] did in his Name'.[29] Incidentally, 'drudgery' is a favourite term of Oldmixon's, used at least half a dozen times of Defoe's own work on behalf of 'the Staff', Robert Harley. The author of *The Bristol Riot* further observes, '*Sacheverell* of *Holborn* was son of one of *Marlborough*, and he the son of Mr *Sacheverel*, an honest *Presbyterian Parson* of *Wincaunton* in this County . . .' Compare the account of Oldmixon, himself bred a Somerset presbyterian:

> *Henry Sacheverel*, whom we are treating of, was Grandson of Mr *John Sacheverel*, the Presbyterian Minister of *Wincaunton* in *Somersetshire* . . . His Father . . . became Minister at St. *Peter's* Church, a small Living in *Marlborough*, where he dy'd . . .

As for the suffix 'of Holborn', it is enough to note that Oldmixon was a parishioner of Sacheverell's at St. Andrew's, Holborn, and referred with disgust to himself as an unwilling 'Neighbour' of the doctor.[30]

A whole series of verbatim parallels can be found between both pamphlets and the text of Oldmixon's *History* of 1735. The likeness appears in Oldmixon's brief account of the riot itself, which might have been drawn from the *Flying Post* of 28 October, but for the tell-

[27] *Account*, 17: for one example among many of Oldmixon's use of 'butchery' applied to Jeffreys, see *History* (1735), 54.

[28] *The Bristol Riot*, 4, 'Mr *C* – –' is clearly Colston, who was a member of the Loyal Society so strongly reviled by Oldmixon (Evans, 253–60).

[29] *The Bristol Riot*, 16: *History* (1735), 583.

[30] *The Bristol Riot*, 17: *History* (1735), 429. Both writers mention the rude treatment administered to Sacheverell's grandfather at Wincanton. For Sacheverell as a 'neighbour', see *History* (1735), 752.

tale phrase 'abandon'd, perjur'd Wretch', filched directly from *The Bristol Riot*.[31] However, it is only when we reach Oldmixon's description of the trial, a couple of pages later, that the similarities crowd in upon us. Not only is Oldmixon's detailed chronicle of events more or less identical with that of *A Full and Impartial Account*; his phrasing is often virtually indistinguishable. For example, both pamphlets have it of the rioters that 'their Cry was *Sacheverel* and *O*--, and D--n all Foreigners'. Likewise Oldmixon; 'The Cry of the Rioters was, *Sacheverell* and *Ormond*; *D--n all Foreign Governments*.' Other cries mentioned by the pamphleteers are 'Down with the Roundheads' and '*A Cheverell*,' amalgamated by Oldmixon as the mob's 'usual Cry'. The author of the *Account* terms the rioters 'the Scum of the Rabble': Oldmixon uses precisely these words. All three texts have 'staunch' as an epithet for High Churchmen; a cant term of the day, but a particular favourite with Oldmixon. The *Account* reports that Judge Powys delivered a 'reasonable, just and bold Charge' to the jury; Oldmixon says simply 'a just and bold Charge'. Other minor verbal correspondences can be found. It is important to note that these similarities are not attributable to a common source in Abel Boyer's *Political State*, though Oldmixon does cite Boyer directly in one or two other parts of his narrative.[32]

Now it might be that Oldmixon was simply copying from the work of another. Bearing in mind his close links with Roberts and the *Flying Post*, not to mention Bristol, it would seem likely that he would have been aware if Defoe had made a special journey to the West Country to report the trial – and his perpetual dislike of Defoe forbad him ever to cite the other's work in this mild and neutral fashion. Besides, there are at least three points at which he fills out the pamphlet account with material of his own. Supposing Defoe or some third person to be responsible for the pamphlets, this would mean that Oldmixon went to these twenty-year old ephemerae for his main narrative, whilst retaining enough lively memories of the events and leading participants to be able to eke out the account in detail. This is surely a most unlikely set of assumptions.

The first passage refers to a sermon delivered before the charge to the jury. In the *Account* we are told that 'Mr Coopy, a Reverend Divine of the Neighbouring County, made a very pious Sermon, proper to the Occasion', after which some of the text is cited. Oldmixon is rather fuller: 'Mr *Coopy*, Minister of *Wraxhall* in *Somersetshire*,

[31] *History* (1735), 579: *The Bristol Riot*, 18.

[32] *The Bristol Riot* and *Account*, passim: *History* (1735), 582–3. For other parallels, see *Remarks on a late Libel* (1715), 254.

whose Conversation with Mr [John] *Trenchard*, the modern *Cato*, had by no means tainted him with Antimonarchical Principles preach'd before [the Judges], and very justly distinguish'd between the true Church of *England*, and that of which *Sacheverell* and his Mob, had declar'd themselves Champions'. Samuel Coopey is by no means a well-known figure in church history. Oldmixon's familiarity with his career can be explained by the fact that Coopey came into possession of the manor of Hutton, near Weston-super-Mare, in which parish Oldmixon's own family estate lay. He certainly used to visit the place after his return to Bridgwater in 1716, though whether he knew anything of Coopey in 1714 is speculative.[33]

A little later in the *History* comes mention of a rioter, 'one *John Pine*, who, during the *Harleian* Administration, had distinguish'd himself by his Insolence to Protestant Dissenters'. This expands upon the *Account*'s reference to John Pyne [*sic*], as a 'Tool' of the 'Staff' and his ministers.[34] Following this in the pamphlet, we are told of 'H--t', a member of the High Church 'Loyal Society', who was forced to stand down from his place near the bench on the intervention of a local worthy, 'Colonel E--'. This man 'called himself' a merchant but, by implication, was a fellow of little account. All this is made explicit by Oldmixon, who fills out more than the blanks in the names:

> While [Pine] was upon Trial, one *Hart*, a Tobacco Merchant, and a Member of the *Loyal Society*, thrusting himself forward near the Judges, to give Countenance to the Prisoners at the Bar, Colonel *Earl* told him *he was one of the Ringleaders of the Mob, and ought not be where he stood* . . .

And so on.[35] Short of reprinting the tracts entire, along with a substantial portion of Oldmixon's *History*, it is impossible to demonstrate the relationship that exists between them. These three instances, nevertheless, show that Oldmixon was able to supply many items of information additional to his 'sources', if that is what they were.

Only one explanation accords easily with all these facts. This would indicate that Oldmixon was author of two pamphlets, having been sent down to Bristol for the trial by Roberts, the *Flying Post* or both. In writing his later account, he drew freely on his own pamphlets (as was, demonstrably, his habit), but also supplemented them with further particulars drawn from his knowledge. He possesses

[33] *Account*, 19: *History*, 583. On Coopy (b. 1685/6), Rector of Wraxall 1711–50, Canon of Wells, see Foster's *Alumni Oxonienses*, (Oxford, 1891), 1, 326. For a visit by Oldmixon to his paternal estate at the time of a Jacobite scare in 1719, see PRO, SP 35/16/16 (1); for its mortgaging, see Somerset Record Office, DD/SAS/C/77, Bundle 9.

[34] *Account*, 21: *History*, 583.

[35] *Account*, 22: *History*, 583. For the arrest of William Hart on suspicion of Jacobite activity at the time of the 1715 rising, see Evans, 257: for his career as a merchant up till his death in 1755, see Minchinton, 7*n*. He was unsuccessful Tory candidate for Bristol in the elections of 1722 and 1727.

abundantly stronger claims than does Defoe in each of the three areas examined. His connections with the district were far closer and more numerous than those of Defoe, which are tenuous and ill-supported. His known dealings with the mercantile community and the dissenting ministry of Bristol are specially relevant. Moreover, his family ties with the Leggs of Bristol constitute a significant clue. In the second place, Oldmixon (unlike Defoe) can be proved to have carried out extensive work for Roberts at this *precise* period. He may or may not have been writing for the *Flying Post*; Defoe assuredly was not, except possibly for occasional halfhearted attempts to mute its voice. Further, we know that Oldmixon kept a specially close watch on Jacobite activity in the western counties; he sent a detailed report of a not dissimilar affray in Bridgwater to the ministry, seven years later.[36] Against this, it is evident from the *Tour* that Defoe was not well up on the affairs of Bristol when he wrote of the city in 1724.

Finally, the elaborate chain of parallels between these two pamphlets and Oldmixon's *History* would be striking by itself. But it is reinforced by other things: echoes of Oldmixon's own pamphlets of the period, and signs of firsthand knowledge to eke out the contemporary accounts. Here, the acquaintance Oldmixon shows with Coopey and Hart is especially noteworthy. This is in violent contrast to the situation as it concerns Defoe. Here we have nothing more than a bare mention in a single work, with no verbal parallels and no indication of personal interest.

To say that this analysis shows Oldmixon to be the chronicler of the Bristol riots with absolute finality might be intemperate. But it does surely make him beyond comparison the likeliest candidate: nothing precludes the attribution, and a very large body of evidence supports it. And Defoe, in effect, is dislodged, pleasant though it would be to breathe life into the Bristol legend.[37] If anyone wishes to include *The Bristol Riot* and the *Account* in any future list of his works, it will be necessary to summon up an argument and marshal some evidence. But where they will come from, I can scarcely imagine.

[36] See 'John Oldmixon in Bridgwater', 92–97. There is evidence in the *History* (1735), 611–2, that Oldmixon was well informed on Jacobite doings both in Bristol and along the Somerset coast at the time of the rebellion in 1715 — or at least that he considered himself so. Defoe exhibited no interest whatsoever in these matters.

[37] For the unreliability of Mrs Damaris Daniel, who was responsible for a story linking Defoe and Alexander Selkirk, see Little, 166–7. She was the daughter of Nathaniel Wade, mentioned in *The Bristol Riot*, 5, and complimented by Oldmixon as 'the most eminent Council in the City of *Bristol*', *History of Addresses*, 1, 82. Now it is relevant that in 1696 Wade's clerk was none other than Richard Legg (Ralph, Williams, p. 100): since Wade was steward of the sheriff's court, it is not improbable that he would have some interest in the appointment of a prison gaoler. This would forge yet another link between Oldmixon and the Bristol law-enforcement authorities — a group whom the pamphleteer is conspicuously anxious to commend.