At the battle of Worcester on 3 September 1651, Charles II's army was crushed and he was subsequently forced to flee to avoid capture. Shortly afterwards, rumours started spreading that James Hind, highway robber and a soldier in the royalist army, had helped the king escape. When Hind was captured in London on 9 November 1651, the public interest in him turned him into a cause célèbre: his arrest was mentioned by six newsbooks in November and by more in the subsequent months.\footnote{A Perfect Account, 5–12 November 1651, p. 360; Mercurius Politicus, 6–12 November 1651, p. 1204; Several Proceedings in Parliament, 6–13 November 1651, p. 1712; Perfect Diurnall, 10–17 November 1651, p. 1464; The weekly Intelligencer, 11–18 November, p. 346; The faithfull Scout, 7–14 November, p. 336. All newsbooks and pamphlets mentioned in this chapter have been accessed through Early English Books Online (eebo), http://eebo.chadwyck.com.} In the next three months, Hind's story – how he turned from highway robbery to fighting for the king in Ireland and Scotland, and even meeting the king in person – as well as his behaviour during imprisonment, was narrated in 13 short pamphlets about him. All these addressed and sustained an interest in Hind's fate; he was tried in three different courts of law before finally being executed in Worcester in September 1652, almost a year after his arrest.\footnote{Barbara White, “Hind, James (bap. 1616, d. 1652)” in Lawrence Goldman (ed.), Oxford Dictionary of National Biography, online ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press), http://www.oxforddnb.com.ezproxy.york.ac.uk/view/article/13340 (accessed 27 September 2012).}

In recent years there has been a lot of scholarly interest in the emergence of a public sphere in the mid-seventeenth century, in dialogue with Jürgen Habermas's definition of it as a slightly later, and decisively bourgeois, phenomenon.\footnote{Jürgen Habermas, The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1989); Alexandra Halasz, The Marketplace of Print: Pamphlets and the Public Sphere in Early Modern England (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1997); David Zaret, Origins of Democratic Culture: Printing, Petitions, and the Public Sphere in Early-Modern England (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000); Joad Raymond, Pamphlets and Pamphleteering in Early Modern Britain (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 2003).} The public sphere offered by a number of influential revisionist
accounts came into existence with the explosion of printed materials in the 1640s, or more accurately with the shift in print production from bigger volumes to smaller, cheaper items: usually pamphlets, newsbooks, and petitions. Cheap print interacted with the shifting political climate of the Civil Wars and the Interregnum, commenting upon and influencing events, and thus becoming an essential part of the increasingly public dialogue about political issues. This opening up of political issues to a broader public was not an unprecedented phenomenon, but before the 1640s such appeals to a broader public had been limited to specific instances or “pamphlet moments.”

The renewed interest in cheap print as a factor in the formation of public opinion has yet to provoke a similar interest in crime pamphlets; thus, in *The Oxford History of Popular Print Culture* – which treats various genres of cheap printed material with an emphasis on the 1640s – crime pamphlets are referred to, but not analysed as a distinct category. This is probably due to a residual unease about the appropriate characterization of crime pamphlets, whose contents occupy an uneasy ground between news pamphlets, chapbooks, and romances. Due to their combination of stereotyped stories and topical references, and their status as commercial products that cash in on sensational events, they are viewed by most scholars as heavily fictionalized accounts of urban depravity or highway derring-do. Even though there have been good analyses of the propagandist use of crime pamphlets in the late-sixteenth and early-seventeenth centuries, either by the state or particular interest groups, the 1640s and 50s lack any similar treatment. Despite the proliferating interest in pamphlets, petitions, and newsbooks, and their potential to engage with

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6 Raymond (ed.), *The Oxford History of Popular Print Culture*.