An Anatomy of an English Radical Newspaper

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The Moderate (1648-9)

By

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List of Abbreviations

CSPD: *Calendar of State Papers, Domestic Interregnum*
CJ: *Journal of the House of Commons*
Elent: *Mercurius Elenticus*
KWI: *The Kingdomes Weekly Intelligencer*
LJ: *Journal of the House of Lords*
Melanc: *Mercurius Melancholicus*
MI: *The Moderate Intelligencer*
Milit: *Mercurius Militaris*
MM: *The Man in the Moon*
Mo: *The Moderate*
ODNB: *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*
OED: *Oxford English Dictionary*
Pe Di: *A Perfect Diurnall*
Pe Oc: *Perfect Occurrences*
Pol: *Mercurius Politicus*
Prag: *Mercurius Pragmaticvs*
Prag (for King Charls II.): *Mercurius Pragmaticus (for King Charls II.)*
PWA: *The Perfect Weekly Account*

TEXTUAL NOTE

Upper-case and lower-case usages, punctuation, spelling and italicisation have been retained throughout.

INTRODUCTION

> *I heare new news every day, and those ordinary rumors of war, plagues, fires, inundations, thefts, murders, massacres, meteors, comets, spectrums, prodigies, apparitions, of towns taken, cities besieged in France, Germany, Turkey, Persia, Poland, &c., daily musters and preparations, and such like, which these tempestuous times affoord, battels fought, so many men slain, monomachies, shipwracks, piracies, and sea-fights, peace, leagues, stratagems, and fresh alarums. A vast confusion of vows, wishes, actions, edicts, petitions, lawsuits, pleas, laws, proclamations, complaints, grievances are daily brought to our ears. New books everie day, pamphlets, currantoes, stories, whole catalogues of volumes of all sorts, new paradoxes, opinions, schismes, heresies, controversies in philosophie, religion, &c. Now come tidings of weddings, maskings, mummeries, entertainments, jubilies, embassies, tilts and tournaments, trophies, triumphs, revels, sports, playes: Then again, as in a new shifted scene, treasons, cheating tricks, robberies, enormous villanies in all kinds, funerals, burials, death of princes, new discoveries, expeditions; now comicall, then tragicall matters. Today we heare of new Lords and officers created, tomorrow of some great men deposed, and then again of fresh honors conferred […]. Thus I daily hear, and such like, both private and public news, amidst the gallantrie and miserie of the world.*[1]

It is significant that the long preface to Robert Burton's compendious *Anatomy of Melancholy* should include references to the craze for news that had taken over seventeenth-century England. These are remarkably absent from the first edition of the book published in 1621, though. They appeared in the second and subsequent editions, but this extract from the fifth edition, the last that Burton saw through the presses in his lifetime, is an enlarged version of the previous texts. It has a thorough list of news items that were popular with the public in the 1630s. Burton mentions news of all sorts, ranging from natural disasters and prodigies to international news, petitions and announcements. He also drops hints at the way news was communicated. The oral transmission of news was still very much the norm; news was very often passed on by word of mouth. Despite the development of print, the most common form of written news in the seventeenth century was still the manuscript newsletter.[2] However, within three years, between 1621 when the first edition of *The Anatomy of Melancholy* was published, and 1624, when the second edition was

printed, the production and dissemination of printed news had become a thriving business. There was a vogue for such news in Caroline England, in the form of corantos: these were newssheets, originally imported from Holland, which provided readers with foreign news, essentially news of the Thirty Years War that tore Europe asunder between 1618 and 1648. Periodicity and seriality were to characterise corantos, which were supplied in weekly batches. Even if they were not periodical publications, pamphlets also contributed to the diffusion of news stories. In his *Pamphlets and Pamphleteering in Early Modern Britain* Joad Raymond defines early modern pamphlets as cheap booklets–generally produced in quarto format–that engaged with topical religious, political, and social issues. They were part and parcel of the cheap print culture and economy that grew exponentially in the late sixteenth century and throughout the seventeenth century. They were typically used as vehicles for political controversy, and sometimes conveyed sensational news.[3]

Burton's comment on the ever-growing circulation of news was certainly related to the popularity of corantos, the first of which to be printed in London rolled off the presses of one N. B. on 24 September 1621.[4] In his characteristically derisive style, Burton scoffed at this new-fangled fashion to which a great many of his contemporaries had succumbed. He was not the only writer to express a critical view of Englishmen's indulgence in news. In his 1626 play *The Staple of News* Ben Jonson made fun of this habit, as when he had a female character beg the "Register of the Staple", the person in charge of the office for the collection and dissemination of news and gossip: "I would haue Sir, / A *groatsworth* of any *Newes*, I care not what, / To carry downe this *Saturday* to our *Vicar*."[5] Seventeenth-century England's craze for news attracted further criticism in the 1640s when newsbooks invaded the print market. The first of them, entitled *Heads of Severall Proceedings*, appeared on 29 November 1641. It was a sober and non-committal publication which, as its title suggests, reported on the proceedings of the Long Parliament, but it did so at a time when the Irish rebellion and the publication of the Grand Remonstrance were high on the political agenda.[6] Civil War weeklies soon became the targets of satirical pamphlets, such as the royalist penman John Cleveland's *Character of a London Diurnall*, which included many an incisive comment:

> A *Diurnall* is a puny Chronicle, scarce pinfeather'd with the wings of time: It is an History in *Sippets*; the English *Iliads* in a Nut-shell; the *Apocryphal* Parliaments book of *Maccabees* in single sheets. […] The *originall sinner* in this kind was Dutch, *Galliobelgicus* the *Protoplast*; and the *moderne Mercuries* but *Hans-en-Kelders*. […] [The *Legislative Lady*] spawnes the

> *Diurnalls*, and they at *Westminster* take them in Adoption, by the names of *Scoticus, Civicus, Britannicus*. […] You may call them the Kingdomes Anatomy before the weekly Kalender: For such is a *Diurnall*, the day of the moneth, with what weather in the Common-wealth. 'Tis taken for the Pulse of the Body Politique. […] The Country Carryer, when he buyes it for their Vicar, miscalls it the *Urinall*: yet properly enough; For it casts the Water of the State.[7]

Cleveland especially criticised newspapers for being subservient to the Long Parliament and thus feeding readers with state propaganda. He also blamed them for being piecemeal publications–made up of bits and pieces–and, as a result, for featuring material of much lesser value than books should normally include. He remarked disapprovingly that a newsbook–"an History in Sippets"–was far "remov'd from an Annal: For it is of that Extract; onely of the younger House, like a Shrimp to a Lobster".[8] To him, readers who were hungry for genuine knowledge, rather than gossip, could hardly feast on such a skimpy meal. They deserved more than crumbs–the kind of "extracts" that were both provided and sanctioned by the House of Commons; the House of Lords, Cleveland intimated, was not involved in such a degrading practice.

This book will show that Cleveland was not fair with "diurnals", as he called them all, and that news can make for a tasty dish, provided choice ingredients are used. It will study one of the most elusive of Civil War newspapers, *The Moderate*, which appeared at a pivotal time for the British Isles, between June 1648 and September 1649. It was born during the second Civil War, when Charles I was still king, even if his authority had been greatly, irretrievably, challenged, and vanished slightly more than a year later, when England was no longer a monarchy but had become a republic, if one of an oligarchic nature. This, of course, is just a sketchy summary of the events that took place within these thirteen months and which *The Moderate* duly reported on. There was no shortage of news, and readers could gorge themselves on substantial weekly servings.

More than a medical treatise on melancholy, Robert Burton's *Anatomy of Melancholy* is an encyclopaedic book in which the author demonstrates his vast learning and scrutinises the manners of his time. His anatomy clearly has a much wider scope than is suggested by the title. In a light-hearted vein he also examines his contemporaries' vices. Originally, anatomies were medical treatises that described the human body and revealed its insides. They were based upon public dissections that were performed in anatomy theatres. The word "anatomy" as used in book titles came to refer to various sorts of detailed descriptions, many of which– not least during the Civil Wars–had a polemical quality. The purpose of such

books was to lay bare the inner workings of their chosen subjects and present these findings to the readers. In *An Anatomy of Independency*, an anonymous pamphlet that defended Presbyterianism against separatist churches, the author explained that he intended to "make a full discovery of men, and their opinions and ways, that every man appearing in his own colours and livery, may be the better discerned and owned". To do so, as stated on the title page, he would use both an experimental and an argumentative method.[9]

This study of *The Moderate* draws upon early modern anatomies for its title. Specifically, it will explore–dissect, as it were– this Civil War newspaper in an attempt to make sense of its content and, hopefully, to capture its identity. What is meant here by capturing *The Moderate*'s identity is finding out what made it different from other Civil War newsbooks. This implies describing its content and the way the editor organised his material. It also means trying to identify the "editorial line" of the paper–something of an anachronistic term, but a very useful one, all the same, to refer to the way the editor wanted *The Moderate* to be seen, and to define his stance on topical political, social and religious issues. This book proposes a forensic exploration of *The Moderate*. To use a metaphor that combines medical imaging and forensics, it purports to determine the newsbook's DNA sequence as would a cytologist or a forensic pathologist. From seventeenth-century microscopes to state-of-the-art imaging technology, tools for dissecting bodies and looking at organs may have changed, but the aim is still the same: to explore the body in the hope that it has something to reveal about itself as well as about the way it interacts with the outside world. This study has similar objectives, but it will look for clues that can only be textual, and, for that purpose, a Sherlock-type magnifying glass is clearly of greater help than any sort of medical equipment.

This book is a microscopic examination of one Civil War newsbook, albeit not just any newsbook, as *The Moderate* has traditionally been associated with the Leveller movement, a radical political group that promoted a democratic form of government enshrined in a written constitution, and which supported political agitation, notably in the Army, as a means to an end. This study assesses the connection between *The Moderate* and the Levellers, but whether it is called a Leveller newsbook or not, *The Moderate* unquestionably defied the political *status quo*.[10] It is hoped that, when the reader has turned the last page of this book, *The Moderate* will have revealed some of its secrets, so that it becomes clearer where it belongs on the unstable political stage of the late 1640s.

Early modern journalism is not quite uncharted territory, and this study is admittedly not the first contribution to the history of seventeenth-century English weeklies or to their interaction with print culture at large. It owes a huge debt to scholars who have trodden this path before and to those who are still treading it. However, very little has been written on individual newspapers.[11] This book provides an in-depth investigation of the news printed in *The Moderate*. Its aim is not to construct yet another historical narrative of the period, but rather to try and apprehend the essence of this newspaper, seen both as a political publication and a commercial product, and to discover how it interacted with contemporary periodicals, so that a clear picture of the press in 1648–9 emerges.

There are many valuable, reasonably recent, macroscopic studies of the Civil War press. Though it was published over fifty years ago and includes occasional errors, Joseph Frank's *The Beginnings of the English Newspaper 1620–1660* is still a very useful survey. Another precious source of information on the subject is A. N. B. Cotton's unpublished thesis "London Newsbooks in the Civil War: Their Political Attitudes and Sources of Information".[12] Joad Raymond's *Invention of the Newspaper* is a pioneering work that combines history and literary criticism. His later books shed further light on the transformation of the circulation of news into a lucrative trade that fashioned public opinion.[13] In some of their books he and Jason Peacey explore the relationship between the success of Civil War newsbooks and the growth of print culture; Raymond draws upon the Habermasian theory of the development of a public sphere in early modern England to show how print culture shaped public opinion.[14] Jason McElligott's *Royalism, Print and Censorship in Revolutionary England* focuses on royalist print in the Civil Wars, including newspapers, and demonstrates that print need not be an agent of change and revolution but may also serve social stability; to the extent that it called for the restoration of political and social order it can be associated with conservative politics.[15] McElligott's book broke new ground as it addressed a hitherto neglected aspect of Civil War politics and print culture. A recent development in the study of seventeenth-century newsbooks concerns the transnational migration of news. A number of studies have been published that attempt to map out European news networks.[16] This book owes a great deal to all of these as a close and minute reading of a periodical like *The Moderate* is best achieved with reference to its immediate as well as remote environment. Like all its parliamentary rivals, *The Moderate* was primarily concerned with domestic politics, especially at a time of great political unrest. Like its competitors on Parliament's side, it was the butt of jokes in some royalist

mercuries. *The Moderate* did not live in isolation but competed with other newspapers, politically and commercially, which is why surveys of the Civil War press are extremely helpful. It included international news, although the provision of such news was not constant. Studies of European news networks are of invaluable help to try and understand why *The Moderate* was interested in foreign news and how it dealt with it. In turn, exploring the way it handled such news contributes to a better appreciation of this newsbook while enriching the study of news networks. To take up the medical metaphor used above, *The Moderate* may be compared to an organ and the news that it includes may be likened to cells. These cells interact with one another as they do with cells in other organs–other newspapers–, and organs themselves engage with other organs, as they communicate with and respond to the body they are part of. Their physiological environment both impacts on them and is influenced by them. This book will look at *The Moderate* as an organ that is made up of cells (or news items) and relates to a body (its political, social, cultural and commercial environment); it will study how this organ develops, and how it responds and adjusts to the presence of other organs and to the demands of the body.

A few precautionary principles should be taken before embarking on the dissection of *The Moderate*. One of these has to do with naming things. The lexicon of seventeenth-century news-writing differs significantly from our modern terminology. Any successful exploration of *The Moderate* cannot dispense with adequate terminological tools. The generic term "newsbook" was used to refer to Civil War weeklies, especially those that sided with Parliament, because these books of news had the shape of pamphlets–which typically consisted of two or more sheets folded into quarto pages and stitched together.[17] Unlike corantos, which were larger in size, newsbooks adopted the pamphlet form, and the word "pamphlet" was frequently employed to refer to them. They were also called "diurnals", "occurrences" or "intelligencers", as these words were often used in newspaper titles. Royalist weeklies were known as "mercuries", for many of them had the word "Mercurius" in their titles, as in *Mercurius Aulicus*, the first Civil War royalist paper, or *Mercurius Pragmaticvs*, one of the major royalist newssheets of the late 1640s. They were named after "Mercury", the winged messenger of Roman gods. In this book, the words "newsbook", "newspaper", "newssheet", "weekly" and "periodical" are used interchangeably to avoid repetition; "mercury" is used only to designate royalist newspapers.

Another lexical problem concerns the writer of a newsbook. It was the word "author", not "editor", that was commonly used in the seventeenth

century. In modern-day journalism the editor is a member of a team, and the writing of news relies on collaborative work. It is not clear how newspapers were put together in the early modern era, but they seem to have been the exclusive property of their writers. Hence, authors denounced the many attempts to steal their newsbook titles as thefts and sometimes claimed redress, as was precisely the case with the author of *The Moderate Intelligencer* who had been robbed of his title by the *Moderate* writer.[18] To launch a newsbook, a writer typically teamed up with a printer who could also be a bookseller. This study uses the words "author", "writer" and "editor" interchangeably, so as to avoid repetition, especially because the *Moderate* author's identity is uncertain and cannot be called by a name that was not clearly his.

In the same way as an organ is made up of cells, *The Moderate* comprised different kinds of news items, ranging from editorials and petitions to newsletters and advertisements, to name but a few of them. There were no clear-cut sections, but any reader of this newsbook would have recognised the various items that it included. These cells–or items–are anatomised separately, but without losing sight of the organ to which they pertained or of the body with which *The Moderate* interacted. The first chapter of this book looks at the commercial environment of *The Moderate*. It presents the Civil War news market and discusses the birth of *The Moderate*. The second chapter examines what *The Moderate* has especially won fame and acclaim for–its editorials. It shows how these composite pieces of writing developed over time, and underlines common motifs as well as echoes between them. It expatiates on their content and reflects on their political orientation. The third chapter studies petitions, an important ingredient of Civil War newspapers. It proposes a typology of these petitions and explains what purpose their printing in *The Moderate* served. It owes a debt to studies of the dissemination of early modern petitions, not least Jason Peacey's *Print and Public Politics in the English Revolution*.[19] Chapter Four deals with international news: it describes the circulation and collection of foreign news; it shows why *The Moderate* printed this type of news and how it handled this material, and presents these items. A specific section addresses news from France, as some of it was sensitive material, considering the political turmoil that both England and France were in in the late 1640s. The fifth chapter zeroes in on specific events that made the news in the British Isles and were reported on in *The Moderate* in the form of newsletters. These reports especially described sieges, battles and other military operations. Reportage on news from Scotland and Ireland is also discussed as it provides interesting insights into the identity of *The Moderate*. Chapter Six looks at domestic

news that was not specifically provided in the form of newsletters regarding the political settlement of the kingdom in the autumn and winter of 1648–9 and Leveller activism in the spring and summer of 1649. It shows what the printing and the processing of these news items reveal about *The Moderate*. It also presents announcements and advertisements, in particular ads for books, and explains why there is more to these seemingly insignificant items than meets the eye. The conclusion rounds off the exploration of *The Moderate* by discussing its connection to the Leveller movement. The association between *The Moderate* and the Levellers has not gone unchallenged, and recent studies of early modern periodicals and of the Levellers tend to be more cautious about referring to *The Moderate* as a Leveller newspaper. This book proposes to go one step further as it connects *The Moderate* with a radical scene that is not limited to the Levellers, crucial though their role was in resisting authority and in promoting ideas that defied political norms. It is hoped that the dissection of *The Moderate* and of its snippets of news as is attempted here contributes to a better understanding of the business and the politics of news in seventeenth-century England.

CHAPTER ONE

THE MODERATE AND THE CIVIL WAR PRESS

When *The Moderate* appeared in June 1648 the news market was bustling and thriving, and teeming with periodicals of all sorts. This chapter will first look at the news market in 1648–9; it will then discuss the reasons for *The Moderate*'s birth and address the vexed issue of editorship. Before taking a look at *The Moderate*'s rival publications it is worth mentioning a few technical and material details about it. It ran to sixty-six numbers, from 22 June 1648 to 25 September 1649, thus supplying its readers with news for fifteen months. These were not just any months, but an eventful period of time, what with the second Civil War, the purge of Parliament, the trial and execution of King Charles, the abolition of monarchy and the establishment of the Commonwealth, and the Irish campaign, not to mention radical agitation inside and outside the Army. *The Moderate* thus witnessed and accompanied a sea-change in the shape of British politics.

That politics permeated its pages is clear, but one should not forget that *The Moderate* was also a commercial product, like other Civil War weeklies and like modern-day newspapers. News became a commodity in the seventeenth century; according to Habermas, it was integral to "the early capitalist commercial system".[1] Some of the questions that arise regarding the contemporary press and other news media as a money-making industry are also germane to seventeenth-century newspapers: did *The Moderate* sell well? How successful was it? How much money did its editor make from it? Answers may not come easy, though. What we know almost for a fact is that it cost one penny, this being the average price of newsbooks in the 1640s.

If we want to assess how much money it brought its editor, we need to know what its print-run was. Without solid evidence, only educated guesses can be made. Frank gives 500 copies as the average print-run of newsbooks, although he admits that quantities varied between 250 and 1000. These estimates are based on cost-effectiveness and composition speeds. Cotton provides lower figures, with a maximum print-run of 850. Raymond challenges these figures, suggesting that more copies were probably printed in ten hours than Cotton argues and that, even though

"there was no such thing as an average newsbook", 1,000 for a successful paper was probably a conservative estimate; he considers the maximum number to have been close to 1,250.[2]

As will be shown in later chapters, *The Moderate* was presumably read in the Army; it was occasionally mentioned in newsletters. This possibly testifies to its popularity. It started off as a twelve-page publication but, when it adopted a new numeration and pagination, its size was reduced to eight pages, that of the standard newspaper; and then with number 19, published on 21 November, it grew again to the respectable size of twelve pages. It printed international news again after three months or so without it. It is not known whether its price increased or whether higher sales helped to cover the cost of the extra amount of paper. Bearing all this in mind, it may be argued that *The Moderate* was not a runaway success but that its popularity increased over time

Success did not necessarily entail much bigger sales and more money for the editor at the end of the day. This is not to say that it did not sell well but many of its readers did not buy it. Like other periodicals, it was often passed on to correspondents through the post, so that there is a discrepancy between print-runs and the actual number of readers. In addition, newsbooks were commonly read out, typically to an illiterate and uneducated audience, and even printed news could be transmitted orally. Customer sales, provided they can be measured with unerring accuracy, do not help to determine how extensively newsbooks circulated or how wide their audiences were. It is likely that those who had *The Moderate* read out to them outnumbered its readers, and that those who read it outnumbered those who purchased it. This was probably the case of other newspapers. All of them vied for readers in a highly volatile and competitive market.

The market for news in 1648–9

The sheer number of periodicals that were on the market in 1648–9 is an apt illustration of the high demand for newsbooks. It also shows that competition between them was bound to be stiff. In those momentous fifteen months when *The Moderate* was printed, readers could choose from a wide array of periodicals that expressed various opinions. Some of them supported Parliament while others were royalist publications. Some of them were long-running weeklies while others were ephemerals that lasted for a few weeks and, sometimes, even disappeared after the first issue. It is impossible to say why they did not survive their first number; they were not meant to be one-offs, though, as they featured numeration and pagination, like other newspapers. There were also single-issue

newsbooks that went out of the market once the issue had been settled or was no longer in the spotlight.

It is worth taking a closer look at parliamentarian newspapers, for whose readers *The Moderate* probably competed, at least when it entered the news market. There were five established newsbooks. The oldest was *A Perfect Diurnall of Some Passages in Parliament*. It was born in September 1642 but, following the 14 June 1643 Ordinance for the Regulation of Printing, it reappeared as a new series with a new numeration. Its editor, Samuel Pecke, was reputed to be a middle-of-the-road journalist who kept clear of religious and political controversies, although he was critical of Presbyterian activity and Presbyterian heresiographers accused him of harbouring Independent views. *A Perfect Diurnall* was a successful weekly; it ran to sixteen pages in 1649 and included a significant number of advertisements, which brought its author extra money.

The Kingdomes Weekly Intelligencer, another long-standing parliamentarian newsbook, was first printed in January 1643. If moderation was just characteristic of it as it was of *A Perfect Diurnall*, its editor, whose identity is uncertain, seemed to incline towards Presbyterianism. Occasional editorials and asides in the autumn of 1648 were written in support of the Treaty of Newport between the King and Parliament, which the Presbyterian faction wanted to push through but which the Independents resisted. However, when the Independents had ousted pro-Treaty MPs and taken over the reins of the country *The Kingdomes Weekly Intelligencer* was careful not to antagonise the Rump or the Council of State, and its coverage of events was just as low-key as possible.[3]

Perfect Occurrences was born in January 1644. Its author, Henry Walker, expressed sympathy for Independents, praised the Army in the autumn of 1648 and generally trod a careful path as he provided factual news, like most of his parliamentary rivals. When in one number of the spring of 1649 he printed a summary of the Leveller *Agreement of the People,* he listed it as one of many news items, without any editorial comment. At the end of the same issue he included this notice: "These Occurrences I have collected according to an Order of Parliament appointing me to do it, and no other sheet of news this day published is drawn up by any such Authority."[4] He clearly did not want to be seen as departing from the government line, hence his non-committal approach to news.

Another established parliamentary newsbook was *The Perfect Weekly Account*. It first appeared as *The Weekly Account* in 1643, changed its title to *The Perfect Weekly Account* in May 1647, vanished in January 1648

and made a comeback two months later. It was edited by Daniel Border who, like many of his competitors, adopted a cautious attitude to journalism, avoiding controversy and sticking to a factual presentation of news.

The last major parliamentarian periodical was *The Moderate Intelligencer*. It played a significant role as *The Moderate* started off as a counterfeit of this long-running paper, which is why its name will appear throughout this study. John Dillingham, its editor, was a tailor before turning to journalism. He began to include editorials in 1645 and purveyed foreign news almost right from the outset. *The Moderate* was to retain the format and the layout of *The Moderate Intelligencer*, but it adopted a radically different political stance, as will be shown later. Dillingham was a middle-of-the-road journalist who skilfully navigated between Presbyterians and Independents by paying lip service to both. He was hostile to the Levellers, but his coverage of news was mostly non-controversial.

These newsbooks have been labelled as "dull" and "impersonal" because of their neutrality, and their authors have been described as "uninspired journalists" who were "simply doing [their] job".[5] They sometimes offered "balanced analys[es]", which is all the praise that has been bestowed on them.[6] Perhaps they have been given too harsh a treatment, but it is true that most of them were not remarkable publications as they did not print sensitive content. They certainly paled in comparison with *The Moderate*, a fine example of militant journalism, or polemical newspapers like royalist mercuries.

Newcomers among parliamentary weeklies that appeared in 1648–9 and lasted for a number of weeks did not cut much more of an impressive figure. *The Kingdomes Faithfull Scout* (January – October 1649), edited by Daniel Border, the author of *The Perfect Weekly Account*, and *The Impartiall Intelligencer* (February – June 1649) included factual news while *A Perfect Summary of Exact Passages of Parliament* (January – October 1649) featured short editorials, but these toed the official line, as this extract shows: "The happiness of a *Nation* consists in the *Wisdome* of its Governours. But the childishness of a King, brings Desolation to a *Kingdom*. For prevention whereof, our Wise *Senators* in *Parliament*, have most *judiciously* taken care for the safety, and settlement of a happy *Nation* in this *Common-wealth*."[7] *A Modest Narrative of Intelligence* (April – September 1649) entered the market after a second postal service had been set up as a complement of the Tuesday post. It was printed every Saturday to supply readers with official news, as its editor pointed out in his programmatic statement, adding that he would "not meddle with Forraign News, that being most exactly communicated on Thursdays,

unlesse of immediate relation to us".[8] This was an acknowledgement of *The Moderate Intelligencer*, which was printed on Thursdays, as an unquestionable authority on international news. In keeping with state propaganda *A Modest Narrative of Intelligence* included regular attacks on radicals of all hues, mostly the Levellers but also the Diggers. The suppression of the Levellers after the mutinies of the spring of 1649 led its editor to "leave them and not renew [his] acquaintance [with them]".[9] Apart from the odd harmless quip aimed at the enemies of the Commonwealth, parliamentary newspapers took pains not to overstep the mark so that they did not risk facing a publication ban.

Royalist mercuries did not have such qualms for the simple reason that they were unlicensed periodicals. There was a risk, of course, that they might be arrested and their presses seized, but they were generally good at evading the censors. Royalist newspapers were typically eight-page quartos, whose price varied between one and two pence. Print-runs are not known. Jason McElligott suggests that short-lived titles may not have exceeded the minimum figure of 250 copies while established mercuries probably ran to 1,000 copies. But then again, he insists that there was no consistent print-run, and that fluctuations due to the availability of paper and ink, to the confidence or distress of authors and to the efficiency of censorship characterised royalist journalism.[10] *The Moderate* was not in direct competition with royalist papers, but, like parliamentarian newsbooks, it was often the butt of their criticism. Mercuries were political pieces of writing, and were all satirical in tone. They were used as paper bullets in a war that was not limited to the battlefield.

In 1648–9, the "royalist trinity"[11] that dominated the market comprised *Mercurius Melancholicus*, *Mercurius Pragmaticvs* and *Mercurius Elenticus*. Apart from their satirical thrust, they were recognisable because they featured four-quatrain ballad-like poems on the first page and poetic lines interspersed with news elsewhere. *Melancholicus* was the first of the three to appear on the market, in September 1647. It ceased publication in November 1648. Later issues were filled with invective and attacks on parliamentarian newsbook writers. *Pragmaticvs* ran from September 1647 to May 1649. It was edited by Marchamont Nedham, a professional news writer who kept switching allegiance. He resigned his editorship in January 1649 and came back in April with *Mercurius Pragmaticus, (for King Charls II.)*, which he edited until the summer, when he was captured and jailed, but the weekly continued without him. The third major royalist newspaper was *Mercurius Elenticus*; it appeared in November 1647 and was edited by George Wharton, an astrologer. Publication ceased in January 1649 with the regicide and resumed in May for another six

months. Like its rivals, it was venomous and vituperative, and railed at Cromwell and at the Army Grandees. The high tide of royalist journalism was the spring and summer of 1648 as the second Civil War raged. Mercuries should be seen as weapons meant to complement those used by royalist troops in battle. They must have been popular, if the number of counterfeits that sneaked into the market is anything to go by. The trial and execution of Charles I dealt a serious blow to them from which they partly recovered; they came back with sharper pens.

One that was especially harsh was *The Man in the Moon*. It was born in April 1649 and lasted until June 1650. Its presumed editor, John Crouch, enjoyed taunting Commonwealth officials. It especially featured vitriolic tirades against Cromwell, but other leaders were not spared either. It has often been criticised for its smutty jokes and scatological remarks but its editor's *bons mots* are arguably to be tasted with relish.[12] Not all royalist mercuries survived that long. Many of those that appeared in 1648–9 vanished after a few numbers, sometimes after one single issue. Ephemerals, indeed, were a hallmark of Civil War journalism. A thorough study of these periodicals is needed that would highlight the paradox of still-born or short-lived newspapers devised as numbered and paginated serial publications. Raymond argues that "editors internalised" the principle of ephemeral[ity]".[13] While this may have been the case for some of them, commercial constraints and political repression probably forced others out of the news market. Most ephemerals were royalist mercuries. At the time when *The Moderate* was in print, no less than nineteen of them appeared on the market; the second Civil War, between June and August 1648, and, to a lesser extent, the months that followed the establishment of the Commonwealth and witnessed mounting opposition to it, between April and September 1649, were propitious times for them. Thus, *Mercurius Domesticus*, *Mercurius Psitacus*, *The Parliament-Kite*, *The Parliament Scrich-Owle*, *The Parliaments Vulture*, *The Royall Divrnall*, *Mercurius Anglicus*, *Mercurius Aquaticus*, *Mercurius Fidelicus*, *The Parliament-Porter* and a short-lived revived *Mercurius Aulicus* joined the fray in the summer of 1648 and did not pull any punches when it came to attacking parliamentary leaders. The spring and summer of 1649 saw the resurrection of the three major mercuries of 1647–*Elenticus*, *Melancholicus* and *Pragmaticvs*–, as well as the arrival of a few ephemerals–*Mercurius Philo-Monarchicus*, *Mercurius Carolinus* and *Mercurius Aulicus (For King Charls II)*. Some royalist ephemerals revolved around one specific topic and only lasted for a few weeks. *The Colchester Spie*, for example, made a point of providing news from the siege of Colchester "against state propaganda".[14] It vanished after three numbers, possibly due to the

surrender of Colchester. *Mercurius Hybernicus*, which did not survive its first number in early September 1649, was mostly concerned about Irish news.

The other side of the political divide also produced ephemerals, if fewer than the royalists. These were diverse and served different purposes. *Continued Heads of Perfect Passages in Parliament* (April–May 1649) and *A Tuedaies Journall of Perfect Passages in Parliament* (July–August 1649), edited by Henry Walker, the author of *Perfect Occurrences*, printed factual news and were neutral in tone. To that extent they resembled established newsbooks. *Mercurius Republicus* (May 1649) and *The Modest Mercury* (June 1649) were polemical newspapers with an antiroyalist bent; so was *The Armies Modest Intelligencer* (January–February 1649), which also included Leveller motifs. In all likelihood, it catered for an Army readership. Other ephemerals that sided with Parliament may be called "anti-mercuries". Not only did they attack the royalists but they also lashed out at their newspapers. *Mercurius Censorius* (June 1648), *Hermes Stratjcus* (August 1648) and the well-named *Mercurius Anti-Mercurius* (September–October 1648) offered confutations of royalist weeklies; like their royalist adversaries, they often used satire as a weapon. There even appeared a revived *Mercurius Brittanicus*, as in the days when *Mercurius Britanicus*–with a different spelling, though–fought a long paper war with the royalist *Mercurius Aulicus*. Its enemy was Nedham's *Mercurius Pragmaticus, (for King Charls II.*).

Those were the different kinds of antiroyalist ephemerals that entered the market in 1648–9. Although another one, *Mercurius Pacificus* (May 1649), did not survive its second number, it deserves a mention because it affected neutrality but was in fact a pro-Commonwealth, antiradical publication. Its editor professed pacifism as he stated in the first issue: "I shall endeavour therefore in all my Writings, not to exasperate any Party, but rather study to quench these Coals which threaten Ruine, and destruction to the Commonwealth."[15] It is not difficult to understand what its editor meant by the "Coals which threaten[ed]" the Commonwealth at the very time when Leveller-inspired mutinies were affecting the Army. Radical agitation was at its height, and was publicised as well as fostered by petitions and pamphlets. Newsbooks like *The Moderate* also contributed to the dissemination of radical views, as will be amply shown later, but it had a direct rival in the person of *Mercurius Militaris*, which was especially intended for New Model Army soldiers and junior officers. There seems to have been a market for radical weeklies in 1648–9, and that certainly was a new development.

Mercurius Militaris or the Armies Scout was an unlicensed newspaper edited by John Harris. It had two lives: it was first printed in October and November 1648 and lasted for five weeks, and was revived as *Mercurius Militaris, or the People's Scout* for three weeks in April and May 1649. It was a militant paper that lent its voice to the people and undertook to defend their freedoms. This is how its editor justified the publication of the first issue:

> This is the first cast of my office, and yet I doubt its acceptance; it may be most will say, What have we to do with a War-like Scout ith' midst of a Treaty for Peace? […] But stay a while, suppose the sword hath done drinking blood, would you then never here [*sic*] more news of the Army? do you think their game is playd when the field is won? […] Now their lives are secured they are to attend their Work, which we may all remember, was, To set the People Free. This therefore shall be my part to tell you of their Councels and Designs, as well in their Juncto's with the Grandees, as in their Councels of War; and you shall judge whether they Levell right at Freedome.[16]

It was originally an antimonarchical weekly but, after it had been revived, it acted as a gadfly, making life difficult for those who had supposedly betrayed the people. Its editor opened the first issue of the revived version with a diatribe against Commonwealth leaders that royalist mercuries would certainly have approved of:

> Well I must then – though I cannot but be sorry, that those who stile themselves the Saints, and by the reputation of their many prayers, good exercises, and fair pretences have dissolved all the Authority of the Nation into themselves, should not have, now as they imagine they are above their Affairs, so much honesty as was requisite to give that pen rest, which would take more delight in finding them faithfull unto the Power they have assumed, then to commit to the world their imposturismes and Tyrannies. […] I hope I may without giving offence to those who truly fear god, Anatomize these counterfeits, these wolves in lambs cloathing.[17]

If in the autumn series the editor enjoyed "anatomising" and castigating royalist mercuries, not least *Pragmaticvs* and *Elenticus*, in the spring series he reserved his bitterest attacks for the Rump Parliament and Commonwealth leaders, whom he excoriated for sending the Levellers to prison.

In his study of the Leveller movement John Rees provides an apt description of the presumed readers of *Mercurius Militaris*: "In *Mercurius Militaris* we hear most clearly echoing down the centuries the voice of the troopers, apprentices and small masters, the 'well affected' and radical

preachers, the mercury women and the poor of the counties, who looked to the Levellers."[18] This newspaper presented itself as the voice of the people and expressed radical ideas.[19] So did *The Moderate*, although this was not quite clear from the beginning. The circumstances of its birth certainly make for a compelling story.

The birth of *The Moderate*

This exploration of *The Moderate* will begin with a description of the conundrum linked to its birth. This newsbook has been assumed to have come to life as a result of a commercial intrigue and also conjectured to have been the outcome of a political manoeuvre. But who produced it and why this person did so is not known and will likely always remain a mystery, as there is very little solid evidence. The only certainty we have is that John Dillingham, the author of the long-running newsbook *The Moderate Intelligencer*, was robbed of his title in June 1648. The usurper retained the pagination, numeration, date of publication, as well as the layout of the original periodical. He collaborated with Robert White, the printer of the forged title. It was not the first time that a Civil War newspaper had had to compete with a counterfeit *alter ego* but such replicas did not usually make it to the second or third number. Unlike *The Moderate* none of them developed into full-blown publications with a distinct identity.[20]

The counterfeit number appeared on Thursday 22 June 1648. Judging from subsequent issues, it was probably numbered 170, like the original, but it is missing. It seems that Dillingham did not know that his title had been counterfeited. Should we assume that the usurper had stated his intentions in the missing number as many editors did when they produced a new publication? For example, Dillingham outlined his objectives and his attitude to news-writing in the first issue of his *Moderate Intelligencer*:

> The *Treaties* between His Majestie of *England*, His Parliaments of *England*, and *Scotland*, not succeeding this winter, gives [*sic*] full and cleare demonstration, that the Warre is like to be prosecuted; give leave to a new Title, with the renewing the Warre, which represent an extra weekly, of such things as come to knowledge, and are fit for publike view: If in this, partialitie be declined, it is in the opinion of the wisest, the way most faire, commendable, and acceptable, to narrate things; as for any thing which relates not to Warre, either in the Counsell, or active part, it shall be declined, or rarely, if at any time toucht; and having premised thus much, the Narration comes to be delivered: which shall ever be according to

> intelligence, and without invectives; and in regard this is a new businesse, it will not be amisse to looke back 3 or 4 dayes.[21]

In fact, what the editor did with these expository words was little more than paraphrase the full title of the newsbook: *The Moderate Intelligencer: Impartially Communicating Martiall Affaires to the KINGDOME of ENGLAND*. He intended to feed his readers mostly with military news to be delivered with as little partisanship and as much moderation as possible, which back in 1645 meant, that he would refrain from taking sides with either camp, the royalists or the parliamentarians. Impartiality, however, did not entail absolute neutrality or a lack of concern for the affairs of the country. Dillingham made no pretence at hiding his approval of the Uxbridge Treaty: "The Treaty at Vxbridge broke up *re infecta*: which is a very sad thing, there being so much to be desired as the suddaine ending of Civill war, the great cancker of a State."[22] Thus, behind the professed objectivity of his rendering of facts there lay an editorial line based on moderation which, after three years of a devastating war, must have found an echo with potential readers.

We do not know whether the usurper of *The Moderate Intelligencer* made his intentions clear in the counterfeit number. If he did, this assumption would bolster the theory that John Mabbott, the state censor and alleged editor of *The Moderate*, had refused to licence Dillingham's *Moderate Intelligencer* in order to teach him a political lesson. But a more probable option was that the forger did not write a programmatic statement to make sure that he would not be identified and could continue printing his newspaper *incognito* and, thus, make money off Dillingham's back. The writing of news was a profitable business, at least in the short run; long-term profitability could not be guaranteed, though. So there is every reason to believe that the birth of *The Moderate* was the result of a commercial intrigue, but this claim is not incompatible with a political rationale.

What evidence is available to us? At the end of number 171, the week following the forgery, John Dillingham staked his claim to what he considered was his property, by inserting this comment: "This is the true *Moderate Intelligencer*."[23] His claim was bolstered by an order of the House of Lords compelling Mabbott to license the title:

> Upon reading the Petition of John Dillingham; shewing 'That the Licenser hath this last Week refused to license the Petitioner's Book, called *The Moderate Intelligencer*,' and hath licensed another Man's Book by the same Title: It is Ordered, that the Licenser, Mr Mabbott, shall license the

> Petitioner's Book for time to come, and none other by that Name; or else shew Cause to the contrary to this House on Tuesday Next.[24]

The second issue of the alternative periodical had an address to the reader on its front page which acknowledged the order of the House of Lords: "Reader, In obedience to the Order of the House of Lords, dated the 26 of June, 1648. I have laid down my former Title of *Moderate Intelligencer*, and do now go by another, viz. *The Moderate*."[25] The name may have been changed, if only slightly, as the editor dropped no more than one word, but the initial numeration and pagination were retained and the day of publication remained unchanged.[26] So did the layout, making both periodicals virtually indistinguishable, except for the fact that *The Moderate* was printed by Robert White while Dillingham turned to another printer, Robert Leybourn, for his *Moderate Intelligencer*.

The forgery that Dillingham had been the victim of prompted him to insert this address in the next two issues: "The Reader is desired to take notice that the Author of the *Moderate Intelligencer*, both title and matter, hath left that Printer which he formerly used; and he that now Prints the true *Moderate Intelligencer* is *Robert Leybourn*, not *Robert White*, the Lords having allowed the Author, and not the former Printer to use the Title."[27] The editor of *The Moderate* was none the wiser for his subterfuge, and he bent over backwards to authenticate his periodical by assuring his readers that it was genuine,[28] and then by changing its physical aspect, so that it would not look the same as *The Moderate Intelligencer*. Indeed, in the same week that number 174 of the *Moderate Intelligencer* was published, still bearing the warning "This is the true *Moderate Intelligencer*",[29] *The Moderate* made a fresh start, with a new numeration and pagination, a reduced size from twelve to eight pages and a different day of publication, which was changed from Thursday to Tuesday. This is how the editor justified the last two changes:

> Reader, I am desired by many to change my day from Thursday to Tuesday, because the Kingdom hath much wanted a satisfactory sheet to send that day by the Post into the severall parts thereof; which I have consented unto, for the better Information of all. And because it should not be too voluminous, I have reduced it into one sheet.[30]

Should we take the editor's word for it? Tuesdays were hardly without news, with the publication of a licensed newsbook, *The Kingdomes Weekly Intelligencer*, together with the short-lived parliamentarian newspaper *Mercurius Britanicus Alive Again*, in time for them to leave London by the evening post. The editor of the revamped *Moderate* may have thought that

rival periodicals were not "satisfactory" newssheets but he is much more likely to have made this move in order to boost sales. With the Tuesday postal service he could sell his weekly in the provinces and tap a new market there.

What are we to make of the address topping the first number of the new series of *The Moderate*, then, regarded by J. B. Williams as an "unjust and untruthful statement"?[31] The avowed reasons for changing the day of publication and reducing the size of the newsbook concealed what is more likely to have been an unsuccessful commercial venture. As Brailford argued, *The Moderate* had probably got off to an uncertain start; as a result, its editor and printer found it expedient to save money by cutting down its size, given that paper was an expensive commodity at the time, mostly imported from the European continent.[32] Thus, the Tuesday *Moderate* was leaner, probably due to poor sales. But its editor kept his commercial venture going and did his best to present his paper as a serious alternative to *The Moderate Intelligencer*. *The Moderate* retained some of the features of its rival, in particular foreign news, in spite of its reduced size.

This ploy seemed to work because, two weeks later, Dillingham felt it necessary to insert a statement to certify that his Thursday newsbook was the true *Moderate Intelligencer*. Whether *The Moderate* had begun to dent its rival's sales or whether Dillingham feared it might in the end is of course anybody's guess, but its editor may have won a battle, if not the whole war. *The Moderate* was the first to reach the provinces and may have been starting to impose itself as the genuine *Moderate Intelligencer*, in which case Dillingham would have been anxious to nip such a commercial manoeuvre in the bud. It was therefore no coincidence that two numbers of the latter newssheet had this warning: "It being by many not known, whether the first and true *Moderate Intelligencer* comes abroad, *Thursdayes* or *Tuesdayes*, this certifies, the first and true *Moderate Intelligencer* comes out on *Thursdayes*, not on *Tuesdayes*."[33] This did not deter the editor of *The Moderate* from making a further case for authenticity, claiming until late August that his was the true *Moderate Intelligencer*. Ironically, *The Moderate* began to cut a different figure with the printing of editorials, which were to crown virtually every issue and give the newsbook its distinct character. These began with the sixth number published on 22 August. *The Moderate Intelligencer* had been running short editorials for two weeks, implicitly calling for compromise and the appeasement of passions as a way out of the civil war. Thus, after an abstract, even obscure, introductory paragraph, the editorial in the issue of *The Moderate Intelligencer* published the week before *The Moderate*