



“The counterfeit silly curr”: Money, Politics, and the Forging of Royalist Newspapers during the English Civil War

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☞ THAT THE 1640S SAW THE EMERGENCE of mass popular print culture is now widely acknowledged. The explosion in the market for printed opinion and news—reflecting both an unprecedented interest in politics and disarray in the control over the print industry—ensured that cheap print was profitable. With money to be made and little effective authority to police the presses, however, the situation was also ripe for fakes and forgeries. If the period saw the emergence of something resembling a “public sphere,” then the free market in pamphleteering and propaganda was bedeviled by those interested in literary hijacking. And although Civil War newsbooks have long fascinated scholars,¹ the phenomenon of counterfeit journals is more often recognized by bibliographers than studied by historians.²

One of the most important of these newsbooks was the royalist paper *Mercurius Pragmaticus* (1647–50), as may be measured by the energetic opposition it inspired: one contemporary decried it as “the court jester, the cavalier’s fool, the chief squib-crack, arch pamphlet puppy,” and it even spawned a short-lived title on the Parliamentary

1 J. B. Williams, *A History of English Journalism* (London, 1908); Joseph Frank, *The Beginnings of the English Newspaper, 1620–1660* (Cambridge, Mass., 1961); A. Cotton, “London Newsbooks in the Civil War: Their Political Attitudes and Sources of Information” (D.Phil. diss., Oxford University, 1971); J. Raymond, *The Invention of the Newspaper: English Newsbooks, 1641–1649* (Oxford, 1996); J. Raymond, ed., *News, Newspapers, and Society in Early Modern Britain* (London, 1999); B. Dooley and S. Baron, eds., *The Politics of Information in Early Modern Europe* (London, 2001); J. McElligott, “Propaganda and Censorship: The Underground Royalist Newsbooks, 1647–1650” (Ph.D. diss., Cambridge University, 2000); D. Underdown, “*The Man in the Moon: Loyalty and Libel in Popular Politics, 1640–1660*,” in *A Freeborn People* (Oxford, 1996), 90–111; H. R. Plomer, “An Analysis of the Civil War Newspaper “*Mercurius Civicus*,”” *The Library*, n.s., 6 (1905): 184–207.

2 L. Potter, *Secret Rites and Secret Writing* (Cambridge, 1989), 14; McElligott, “Propaganda and Censorship,” 34–36. See also *Man in the Moon* 17 (8–15 August 1649, E569/14), 146. Citations are to the British Library Thomason Tracts.

side.³ *Pragmaticus* has been scrutinized by those fascinated by the man most commonly recognized to be its author, Marchamont Nedham, and by those for whom its pages provide a trove of historical evidence,⁴ but many have confused Nedham's work with issues produced by interlopers. While some are guided by an instinctive feel for Nedham's style, most are too quick to identify *Pragmaticus* and other similarly titled pamphlets with Nedham.⁵

Considering visual, textual, and contextual evidence, as well as literary style and substantive content, I develop in this article methods for distinguishing rivals of *Pragmaticus* and explaining their agendas. *Pragmaticus* existed in no less than seventeen incarnations lasting between one and sixty-six issues, and at any one moment there could be as many as three rivals vying for readers' attention.⁶ Some were certainly intended to make money, but others, as I argue below, were much more than inferior mimics by men who sought to steal regular readers of a popular and lucrative paper. Increasingly, rival incarnations were sophisticated productions by leading journalists—some apparently involved in *Pragmaticus* at its inception and retaining a proprietary interest in it—that were also occasioned by profound factional divisions within royalist ranks.⁷ Ultimately, the convoluted history of *Pragmaticus* illustrates how rival groups at the court of Charles I sought to use popular print in order to propound rival versions of royalism at a crucial juncture in the 1640s.



To establish the identity and chronology of the various incarnations of *Pragmaticus* it is first necessary to examine bibliographical and visual evidence. Interlopers motivated by

3 *Mercurius Anti-Mercurius* (1648, E438/11), sig. A2; *Mercurius Anti-Pragmaticus*.

4 B. Worden, "Wit in a Roundhead: The Dilemma of Marchamont Nedham," in S. D. Amussen and M. A. Kishlansky, eds., *Political Culture and Cultural Politics in Early Modern England* (Manchester, 1995), 301–37; J. Frank, *Cromwell's Press Agent: A Critical Biography of Marchamont Nedham* (Lanham, Md., 1980), 46–65; D. Underdown, *Pride's Purge* (Oxford, 1971), passim; J. S. A. Adamson, "The English Nobility and the Projected Settlement of 1647," *Historical Journal* 30 (1987): 590, 592, 597, 601, 602.

5 Underdown, *Freeborn People*, 96; Williams, *History*, 93, 111; Frank, *Beginnings*, 139, 162, 193; McElligott, "Propaganda and Censorship," 61, 111; Underdown, *Pride's Purge*, 93, 103, 114–15, 118, 150, 165; B. Worden, *The Rump Parliament, 1648–1653* (Cambridge, 1974), 34, 38–39, 59, 68, 81; S. Kelsey, "The Foundation of the Council of State," in Chris R. Kyle and Jason Peacey, eds., *Parliament at Work: Parliamentary Committees, Political Power, and Public Access in Early Modern England* (Woodbridge, England, 2002), 136; D. Norbrook, *Writing the English Republic* (Cambridge, 2000), 174–75.

6 See the appendix to this article.

7 G. Watson, I. R. Willison, and J. D. Pickles, *New Cambridge Bibliography of English Literature*, 5 vols. (Cambridge, 1974–77), 1:2102, 2105, 2106; R. S. Crane and F. B. Kaye, *A Census of British Newspapers and Periodicals, 1620–1800* (London, 1927), nos. 515, 518, 518a; Frank, *Press Agent*, 46; Frank, *Beginnings*, 139; C. Nelson and M. Seccombe, *British Newspapers and Periodicals, 1641–1700* (New York, 1987); Williams, *History*, 83; McElligott, "Propaganda and Censorship," appendix.

money would have needed to convince readers of their authenticity by mimicking their rival's appearance. For *Pragmaticus* this meant copying the layout of the opening page, with its title, subtitle, date, and issue number, as well as the opening poem and the news coverage that began on the first page. Moreover, it meant mimicking the numbering system, for both issues and pages, and the day and date of appearance. The diction, spelling, typography, and layout had to be imitated throughout. Although the threshold for deception is difficult to establish, an analysis of visual elements sheds light on the motives of the publishers and editors. In the following discussion, I refer to versions 1 through 17 in chronological order of first appearance. For a complete list of titles and dates of publication, see the appendix to this article.

While superficially competent, most of the mimics appear to have suffered from production setbacks. Some were evidently typeset and printed on the cheap (versions 11, 12, 15, 16). One newcomer included a generic title page (version 3), while others failed to copy the precise spelling of titles, the fonts employed, and the appropriate numbering of issues. Some incarnations were unnumbered (versions 11–12), one adopted an erroneous number (version 7), and another made no attempt to imitate its rival apart from the title (version 17), even redesigning the opening page. At least two editors advertised themselves as covering slightly different dates from the expected ones (versions 12, 17). The version that emerged in August 1648 ran to a mere eight pages (version 6) rather than the twelve that the original now occupied (version 1), although in the weeks after version 6 appeared, yet another interloper successfully copied the longer format.⁸ More revealing, perhaps, was the tendency for newcomers to deploy inconsistent printers' signatures,⁹ although certain mountebanks made no attempt to use such signatures to convince readers of their longevity (versions 11, 12, 17). Imposters, in other words, do not appear to have been too careful about mimicking their rivals.

But neither were some longer-running versions of *Pragmaticus* entirely consistent in these ways, as fonts, spelling, and numbering styles changed frequently, reflecting not imposture but perhaps the use of different printers, or discretion on the part of stationers. Inconsistencies in issue numbers, meanwhile, could emerge as particular newsbooks missed editions, and even the original *Pragmaticus* may have confused readers by opting to restart its numbering system after the first twenty-eight issues.¹⁰ It was the

8 The first twelve-page issue was no. 18 and the last was no. 32–33: [*Mercurius*] *Prag[maticus]*. 1.46; *Prag.* 1.60.

9 Although the publishers recognized that imitating their rivals meant using the appropriate printing signatures, they sometimes included an "A" signature by mistake, betraying their novelty. In the newsbooks, signatures were to run A–A4 for the first issue, B–B4 for the second, and so on. *Prag.* 2.1, sigs. B, B2, A3, B4; *Prag.* 5.1, sigs. G, G2, A3, [G4]; *Prag.* 6.1, sigs. T, [T2], A3; *Prag.* 7.1, sigs. F, A2, F3, [F4], G, G2; *Prag.* 8.1, sigs. Ddd, [Dddz], B3.

10 See the appendix to this article.

established version, furthermore, that experimented with a twelve-page edition in July 1648, and six months later redesigned its front page.¹¹ In January 1649, it was the interloper that looked more like the usual *Pragmaticus*, which must have given readers pause as they perused the bookstalls.¹²

Finally, irregularities cannot be correlated with survival. Misnumbered issues and ill-sorted signatures characterized some versions that continued in one guise or another until May 1650 (versions 10 and 14). One “interloper” seemed in fact to distinguish itself deliberately in April 1649, giving his paper a new title, *Mercurius Pragmaticus (For King Charles II)*, and a new numbering system (version 13).¹³ This one was in fact edited by Nedham himself rather than by a “mere” counterfeiter, and its visual style soon provided the model for other editors.¹⁴ Although one of these was in turn plagued by erroneous signatures, it subsequently assumed the position of authority (version 14).¹⁵

Visual clues, therefore, may have offered readers little help in distinguishing between rivals, although the cumulative effect of stylistic differences may have raised suspicions about some versions. Visual inconsistency does not distinguish deliberate innovation from ineptitude. There is therefore no reason to assume that formal imitation was intended to fool customers for financial gain; and it appears that at least some newcomers were primarily interested in something other than money.



Testing this conclusion requires greater understanding of the paper’s various incarnations and analysis of the rhetoric of authenticity, forgery, and counterfeiting that surrounded new versions. Although authorial boasts and accusations are as problematic as they are prevalent, examining the ways in which editors encountered and interacted with rivals yields revealing evidence about editorial motivation.

Preempting the appearance of a rival in November 1647, the editor of *Pragmaticus* warned readers about the imposter, and when the it disappeared after only one issue he launched a blistering attack upon the “silly pamphleteer” who

11 *Prag.* 1.66.

12 *Prag.* 9.1; Frank, *Beginnings*, 193.

13 Frank, *Beginnings*, 194; Worden, “Wit,” 324; *Prag.* 13.1.

14 The editor of version 10 probably altered his style, leading to version 14, and subsequent interlopers followed suit (versions 15–17).

15 In the second issue, the signatures started from “E” to be in line with the fifth issue of Nedham’s paper, but the sign of the continuity between this and version 10 was the existence of signature Ttt2, the printer apparently forgetting momentarily that his title had changed. Issue 53 of version 10 (for the week 1–8 May) bore signatures Rrr–Rrr4v, and since signature S was not used, because it resembled the number 5, issue 54 would have borne signatures Ttt–Ttt4v; *Prag.* 10.11; *Prag.* 14.2, sigs. E, Ttt2, E3.

boasts himself to be *Pragmaticus*, and dresses himself in the same garb, according to his weak endeavour, but comes far short, either of an ape or monkey, in the art of imitation.... if I have any more of his doings, out come their names, and so I shall deliver them into the hands of the tormentors at Westminster.¹⁶

On other occasions readers were given no such warning, but most editors attacked imposters soon after their emergence. In January 1648, readers were told that “there’s a counterfeit piece of nonsense walk’t abroad last week with my name on it,” while in May they were implored to “kick away the counterfeit silly curr, which goes about barking in my name, and let me have elbow room to swing the members, and set them packing.”¹⁷ Sometimes, editors only responded after an interloper had appeared in consecutive weeks. In December this same editor exclaimed: “what, another three-half-penny counterfeit? Once a quarter it is my luck to be troubled with one vermine or other, that usurp my name and title-page to face out his nonsense for a week or two, and then he vanishes.”¹⁸ Complaining of the emergence of a rival in May 1649, another editor claimed, “it hath still been my fortune to be troubled once a quarter at least with one piece of nonsensical ribaldry or other out-faced with my title, pretending to be *Pragmaticus*.”¹⁹

Such claims of authenticity and allegations of forgery were rarely straightforward, however. Interloping editors might stress that they were legitimate and that their paper dated from September 1647, when *Pragmaticus* began.²⁰ One new arrival bemoaned the appearance of two competitors, saying that while it was “no wonder imposters are impudent in this brazen age,” yet it was “strange a man should be quite blank baffled out of his Christian name.” The editor wondered whether it was possible “for one brain pan to hold three inventions and not crack? I had thought I had really felt, heard and understood myself to be a substantive, till two pronoun adjectives the last week leand upon my title.”²¹ Another newcomer asked whether readers thought that “old Prag. had been struck dumb as a dung cart.”²² During the war of words between two rivals in August 1648, both editors were accused of being fraudulent. Nedham, the established editor, told readers that “there was a counterfeit Prag. abroad last week and I am informed will be this week,” and insisted on his own authenticity by saying that it was “almost twelve months

16 *Prag.* 1.9, sig. I4v; *Prag.* 1.12, sigs. M–Mv. Spellings in quotations from the newsbooks have been modernized for clarity.

17 *Prag.* 1.19, sigs. T–Tv; *Prag.* 1.36, sig. H.

18 *Prag.* 1.65, sig. Eee. See also: *Prag.* 14.21, sig. Aa.

19 *Prag.* 10.10, sigs. Qqq–Qqqv.

20 *Prag.* 3.2, sig. K; *Prag.* 9.3, sig. Hhhv.

21 *Prag.* 12.1, sigs. A–Av.

22 *Prag.* 15.1, sig. M.

since I first set pen to paper.”²³ His new rival claimed to be “written by the first and true author of this mercury.”²⁴ This provoked Nedham to attack the “impudent preface” of a “counterfeit rascall,” and to plead with readers to “kick him aside if he peep abroad again.”²⁵ The newcomer again insisted that he was “the first and true author of this mercury,” and the war of words continued.²⁶

New editors who admitted their novelty typically professed a long-standing connection with the paper, and with earlier incarnations. Some claimed to have been “routed” by “Parliament beagles.”²⁷ Others claimed to have been preoccupied by other matters, employed on the king’s business, or usurped by rival royalists.²⁸ Authors could identify themselves with specific past incarnations of the paper by means of subtle references to material previously published,²⁹ and they sometimes made claims to the authorship of particular editions.³⁰ Perhaps most interesting are the comments revealing the depth of animosity between writers who were nominally fighting for the same cause. In February 1649, therefore, one author berated his rival as “a railing buffleheaded calf of the Essex breed that hath counterfeited my name.”³¹

Readers of *Pragmaticus* were confronted, then, by a series of claims and counter-claims regarding the authenticity of different versions. These readers had probably begun to treat such statements with extreme caution, and some claims were probably intended to cover the paper trails of counterfeiters. Other claims to authenticity were clearly genuine, and yet others, while initially false, introduced durable runs. Furthermore, the claims of those who professed to have been connected with *Pragmaticus* itself sometimes proved to have substance. These sorts of statements, revealing tensions within royalist ranks, might be considered as too damaging to have been anything other than true.

23 *Prag.* 1.48, sigs. Y, X2v.

24 *Prag.* 6.2, sig. Y.

25 *Prag.* 1.49, sig. Aa.

26 *Prag.* 6.3, sigs. Z–Zv; *Prag.* 1.50, sig. Cc; *Prag.* 6.4, sigs. A–Av.

27 *Prag.* 10.1, sig. Gggv.

28 *Prag.* 11.1, sigs. A–Av; *Prag.* 6.2, sig. Y; *Prag.* 17.1, sigs. A–Av.

29 The author of version 14 referred readers to statements made by him in version 10: *Prag.* 14.1, sig. Dv; *Prag.* 10.9, sigs. Pppv–Ppp2v.

30 One editor who emerged in April 1649 said that “this is the second part to the same tune” that he sought to “crack the lousie pretender that hath liquor’d his noddle this last quarter upon my reputation,” and that “here comes old Prag. himself, new mounted and arm’d with paper squibs.” He also told readers to “take notice, the last Prag. of the 1st part ended num. 41”: *Prag.* 13.1, sigs. A–Av, A4v.

31 *Prag.* 10.1, sig. Gggv.



The incarnations of *Pragmaticus* can also be distinguished by their linguistic traits and substantive content—the quality of the news coverage and the sophistication of the political comment and analysis as well as the prose. This evidence assists not only in distinguishing competing versions of *Pragmaticus* and establishing their lifespans but also in making editorial attributions. This in turn sheds light on the motivation of the sponsors.

Analysis of Nedham's poetical history, published in 1661 and comprising the verses that opened his issues of *Pragmaticus*, helps to identify the issues for which he was responsible.³² But the publication is also recognizable through its association with detailed intelligence, especially of parliamentary debates and committee meetings.³³ Nedham regularly boasted about his ability to obtain such information, which at times extended to precise numbers of peers attending the Lords.³⁴ Moreover, he typically displayed a sophisticated political understanding, identifying the most powerful grandees, their clients, and the ways in which they manipulated Parliament.³⁵ This was famously mixed with acid humor, which led critics to attribute "more wit than honesty" to *Pragmaticus*, pronouncing it "the wittiest knave of the whole crew" of royalist journalists.³⁶ This was frequently demonstrable in Nedham's scurrilous gossip and in his well-informed and malicious pen-portraits.³⁷ Nedham fully understood the need to "tickle and charm the more vulgar phantasies, who little regard truths in a grave and serious garb."³⁸ His style was part of his signature. He was also readily identified by his favorite targets, such as his old rival William Prynne; Sir Thomas Wroth, whom he variously described as Edmund Prideaux's "fool" or "monkey"; and Sir Henry, or rather "Sir Whimsey," Mildmay.³⁹

32 [M. Nedham], *A Short History of the English Rebellion* (London, 1661; in W. Oldys, ed., *The Harleian Miscellany*, 10 vols. [London, 1808–13], 2:521–33). This consists of the poems from the title pages of *Prag.* 1.1–66.

33 *Prag.* 1.5, p. 37; *Prag.* 1.13, sig. N4v; *Prag.* 1.46, sig. S3v; *Prag.* 1.47, sig. T3v; *Prag.* 1.48, sigs. Yv–Y2; *Prag.* 1.49, sigs. Aav–Aa2, Aa4v; *Prag.* 1.50, sig. Ccv; *Prag.* 1.56, sig. Ppv; *Prag.* 1.57, sig. Rrv; *Prag.* 1.59, sigs. Yy–Yy2v; *Prag.* 1.62, sig. Bbb2; *Prag.* 1.63, sigs. Ccc2–2v.

34 *Prag.* 1.12, sig. Mv; *Prag.* 1.14, sig. Ov; *Prag.* 1.49, sigs. Aa–Aav, Aa4v; *Prag.* 1.64; *Prag.* 1.65, Eee2–2v; *Prag.* 1.66, sig. Fff3v.

35 *Prag.* 1.6, sigs. F2v, F4v; *Prag.* 1.19, sigs. T2–T2v; *Prag.* 1.33, sigs. E–E2; *Prag.* 1.36, sig. H3; *Prag.* 1.38, sig. K4v; *Prag.* 1.40, sig. Mv; *Prag.* 1.42, sig. O2v, O3; *Prag.* 1.43, sig. Pv; *Prag.* 1.44, sig. Q4; *Prag.* 1.45, sigs. R3–R4; *Prag.* 1.46, sig. S; *Prag.* 1.47, sigs. Tv, T2v; *Prag.* 1.48, sigs. Y3r–v; *Prag.* 1.51, sig. Eev; *Prag.* 1.64, sigs. Ddd, Ddd3.

36 *Prag.* 1.9, sigs. Iv–I2; *Mercurius Anti-Mercurius* ([London, 4 April 1648], E438/11), sig. A2.

37 *Prag.* 1.39, sigs. Lv–L3; *Prag.* 1.40, sigs. Mv–M4; *Prag.* 1.11, sigs. L2, L3; *Prag.* 1.9, sigs. I4, I4v; *Prag.* 1.47, sig. T3.

38 *Prag.* 1.29, sigs. A–Av. This phrase was echoed in Nedham's later prospectus for *Mercurius Politicus*: PRO, SP 46/95, fols. 281–2.

39 *Prag.* 1.7, sig. G2v; *Prag.* 1.13, sig. N4v; *Prag.* 1.18, sigs. S2–S2v; *Prag.* 1.21, sig. X4; *Prag.* 1.29, sig. A2; *Prag.* 1.32, sig. D3v; *Prag.* 1.62, sig. Bbb2; *Prag.* 1.63, sig. Ccc2v; *Prag.* 1.64, sig. Ddd2v; *Prag.* 1.65, sig. Eee3; *Prag.* 1.25, sig. A4.

Nedham's early rivals were stylistically undistinguished, which contributed to their rapid disappearance at the time and makes it easier to identify them now. His first competitor, an uninspiring royalist tirade, lacked both news and style. Nedham's paper was crammed with news, analysis, and comment, including a stinging attack upon leading Parliamentary radicals as well as detailed information about recent events at Westminster and the subtle politics underlying them.⁴⁰ Clearly it was Nedham's paper that alone survived the following week.⁴¹ The next interloper displayed more political knowledge but could not match Nedham's ability to obtain texts of seized correspondence, his profound understanding of machinations at Westminster, or his literary polish. Once again, it is clear that the sophisticated assault upon the Parliamentary grandees that appeared the following week was Nedham's.⁴² The rival that emerged in January 1648 offered improved understanding of Westminster politics and of the subtlety of Independent politicians, but Nedham's fascination with William Prynne, along with other stylistic features, marked his version.⁴³ In the following weeks, superior analysis of political events and of the shifting positions of individual grandees once again demonstrates Nedham's staying power.⁴⁴ The paper that emerged in May 1648 offered yet further sophistication in its analysis of parliamentary politics and of the power of particular grandees, but it could not equal Nedham's insight into the Independents' attempts to placate Presbyterians in the City of London.⁴⁵ The imposter that appeared in September, meanwhile, was little more than a royalist organ lacking in news, especially about proceedings in Parliament.⁴⁶

The competitors that emerged during the second half of 1648, however, were far more sophisticated. August's incarnation emulated Nedham's criticism of individuals and offered fascinating evidence of financial corruption and electoral bribery but offered no direct quotation of parliamentary debates and struggled to fill its pages.⁴⁷ The paper that emerged in December 1648 offered intriguing analysis of the attitude of leading grandees toward the Newport Treaty but, unlike Nedham's, interspersed news and comment with verses.⁴⁸ Neither new version, moreover, could match the standard of analysis or the verbal virtuosity of Nedham's paper. In addition to his perceptive treatment of political corruption in general, Nedham offered unrivaled coverage of the

40 *Prag.* 2.1; *Prag.* 1.2, sigs. B2v, B3.

41 *Prag.* 1.3.

42 *Prag.* 3.2, sigs. K–K4v; *Prag.* 1.9, sigs. I–I4v; *Prag.* 1.11, sigs. L–Lv, L3; *Prag.* 1.12, sig. Mv.

43 *Prag.* 4.1, sigs. Sv, S2; *Prag.* 1.18, sigs. S2–S2v.

44 *Prag.* 1.19, sigs. T2–T2v.

45 *Prag.* 5.1, sig. Gv; *Prag.* 1.35, sig. Gv.

46 *Prag.* 7.1.

47 *Prag.* 6.2, sigs. Y3v–Y4, Z; *Prag.* 6.3, sigs. Z3v–Z4; *Prag.* 6.4, sigs. A4–A4v, B2v. For Nedham's analysis of debates: *Prag.* 1.48, sigs. Yv–Y2, Y3–Y3v, X2v; *Prag.* 1.49, sigs. Aav–Aaz.

48 *Prag.* 8.1, sigs. Dddv–Ddd2v.

politics of Pride's Purge.⁴⁹ He also developed uniquely withering terms for parliamentary procedures and personalities. He talked of the "hocasses" and "pocasses" of the Derby House Committee, otherwise known as the "pack't committee of jugglers" and the "cabinet of the faction." Indeed, analysis of the role of "packt" committees became a regular feature of Nedham's writing, as did the term STATE—invariably capitalized—to describe what he characterized as the regime at Westminster. "Knack" referred to new ideas and parliamentary orders.⁵⁰ Nedham's perspicacity betrays him every time and explains his longevity in a field of imitators. It also permits confident attribution of his work and clarification of his position on the issues with which he was associated.⁵¹

Superior quality, however, cannot always be correlated with Nedham's triumphs. It did not cause the disappearance in December 1648 of a rival, who was apparently arrested by Parliament,⁵² nor could it prevent the demise of Nedham's paper in January 1649, when it was replaced by another rival. When these two versions went head to head, Nedham offered the usual level of detail from Westminster—the numbers of peers in attendance, and subtle shifts in their individual positions on the trial of Charles I⁵³—while his competitor filled his pages with poetry rather than news and directed crude tirades at soft targets.⁵⁴ This glaring contrast between the two papers indicates that it was Nedham's rival that survived into January and February, bile and bad rhymes notwithstanding, at a crucial juncture in the fate of the king.⁵⁵ Other evidence confirms that Nedham was forced into hiding in January 1649, and at that point devoted his attention to private newsletters for royalist grandees.⁵⁶

Nedham's successor was no mere hack, but probably George Wharton, an established royalist author. One edition of the new *Pragmaticus* was identical to an issue of *Mercurius Elencticus*, the paper with which Wharton was associated, and the disappearance of this incarnation of *Pragmaticus* coincided with Wharton's arrest in early

49 *Prag.* 1.52, sig. Gg2v; *Prag.* 1.65, sigs. Eee3r–v, Eee4.

50 *Prag.* 1.7, sig. G2v; *Prag.* 1.33, sig. E2; *Prag.* 1.37, sig. I4; *Prag.* 1.42, sig. O2; *Prag.* 1.45, sigs. R3, R3v; *Prag.* 1.47, sigs. Tv, T2v; *Prag.* 1.48, sigs. Y3–Y3v; *Prag.* 1.51, sigs. Eev, Ee3, Ee4v; *Prag.* 1.56, sigs. Pp3, Pp4; *Prag.* 1.57, sigs. Rrv, Ssv; *Prag.* 1.60, sigs. Zzv, Zz4v; *Prag.* 1.63, sig. Ccc4.

51 We can also clarify his positions by correlating the brief gaps in Nedham's serial publications with manuscript letters that he sent to leading royalists. These were first issued during Nedham's absence from the press in early December, and he came close to admitting his authorship of the version of the paper then unavailable by noting: "I am so much the larger upon these particulars for your satisfaction in regard no Prag[maticus] will be abroad this week"; Bodl., MS. Clarendon 34, fols. 7v–8v, 12–13v, 17. See Jason Peacey, "Marchamont Nedham and the Lawrans Letters," *Bodleian Library Record* 17 (2000): 24–35.

52 *Perfect Occurrences* 108 (18–25 January 1649, E527/11), sig. Ppppp.

53 *Prag.* 1.66, sig. Fff3v.

54 *Prag.* 9.1; Frank, *Beginnings*, 162.

55 *Prag.* 9.2; *Prag.* 9.3; *Prag.* 9.4; *Prag.* 9.6; *Prag.* 9.7.

56 See D. Gardiner, *The Oxinden and Peyton Letters* (London, 1937), 146–49; Bodl., MS. Clarendon 34, fols. 72, 88r–v.

March 1649.⁵⁷ Moreover, Wharton began to mimic Nedham's idiosyncratic style, with claims that "all is devoured up by these state-caterpillars," who "play hocus-pocus tricks with the deluded commons."⁵⁸ This more vivid style was also apparent in the version of *Pragmaticus* that appeared in late February 1649. This author claimed that his rival could be identified "by his barren wit, and the emptiness of his sheet," and his access to intelligence and his elaborate phraseology reinforce the impression that this publication, whose author claimed recently to have been "routed," was a revival of the incarnation of *Pragmaticus* that had been forced to close in late December because of the attentions of the Parliamentary authorities.⁵⁹ This impersonator was also likely a leading royalist writer, Samuel Sheppard, whose favorite targets, such as Henry Walker, and epithets for the new regime (the "cannibal cut-throats at Westminster") differed noticeably from those of Nedham.⁶⁰

The stylistic competition of interloping editors did not always produce very impressive results.⁶¹ Indeed, Nedham's return to the press in April emphasized the gulf in both intelligence and style that still separated him from other editors.⁶² Nedham's renewed presence was evident from familiar linguistic traits as well as striking new metaphors. He developed a language to describe the Republican seal, which he likened to "a stamp or print, after the Dutch model of butter boxes."⁶³ Nedham's new incarnation of course attended to the role and power of the Council of State, the "engine" that had become "the stage of Independent tyranny," and that was "made on purpose to wreck tender conscience and liberty, a meer device to gull the commons and cramp the petty toes of the republic in the dark."⁶⁴ Once again, from early May 1649 Nedham's version⁶⁵ was distinguishable from its rival, and by more than just its novel title.⁶⁶

57 *Prag.* 9.7 was the same as *Mercurius Elencticus* 69 (21–28 February 1649, E545/19), as revealed by the editor of the version of *Pragmaticus* that succeeded this issue; *Prag.* 10.1. For Wharton's arrest, see the *DNB*.

58 *Prag.* 9.6, sig. Lll2.

59 *Prag.* 10.1, sigs. Ggg–Gggv.

60 *Ibid.*; *Prag.* 10.4, sig. Kkk3; *Prag.* 10.9, sig. Pppv. Frank was sufficiently impressed by its quality to profess that it was part of the "presumably authentic series"; Frank, *Beginnings*, 193. For Sheppard's role, see H. E. Rollins, "Samuel Sheppard and His Praise of Poets," *Studies in Philology* 24 (1927): 524–25.

61 One of the short-lived incarnations that appeared in April 1649 was a lackluster effort, sufficiently lacking in news and insight that it had to reprint entire letters in order to fill space; *Prag.* 12.1, sig. Av.

62 The authorities certainly realized as much, and it was Nedham's reappearance that provoked the regime at Westminster to issue an order, on 26 April 1649, for the arrest of the authors of *Pragmaticus*; Raymond, *Invention*, 70; Frank, *Beginnings*, 194; *Calendar of State Papers Domestic, 1649–50*, 530. Ten days earlier they had ordered the arrest of Samuel Sheppard; *CSPD 1649–50*, 529.

63 *Prag.* 13.1, sig. A2v; *Prag.* 13.2, sig. B2; *Prag.* 13.4, sigs. D3, D4; *Prag.* 13.5, sig. Ev; *Prag.* 13.7, sigs. G2v–G3, G4v; *Prag.* 13.8, sigs. H, Hv, H3v, H4; *Prag.* 13.9, sigs. I, I2v–I3; *Prag.* 13.10, sigs. Kv, K3, K4; *Prag.* 13.6, sig. F3.

64 Nedham also mocked the presence on the Council of four peers: "Salisbury the stout, Pembroke the witty, Denbigh the chaste and Mulgrave the pretty"; *Prag.* 13.1, sig. Av.

65 *Prag.* 13.3.

66 *Prag.* 10.11.

Nedham's return provided a spur to his rival. Sheppard now altered the appearance and name of his version, and also improved the paper's quality enough that the two rivals were easily confused (versions 13 and 14).⁶⁷ He now wrote with a much more vivid style, not least in expressing his defiance over the "state beagles and bloodhounds." He claimed that these were "set to hunt drie foot after me, and are still hot upon the scent, but their noses fail them." He also claimed to have

several avenues, gaps, salli-ports, private tents to shelter in, whereby I can give rebels the slip, and keep myself secure in, despite of all their Machiavellian necromancers, their armed mermidions and jannisaries who troop up and down like swarms of infernal locusts laying snares for to catch loyalty.⁶⁸

Sheppard explicitly adopted Nedham's language of "hocus-pocus," from this point no longer useful to distinguish the two versions.⁶⁹ Both used the term "butter-print" to dismiss the Commonwealth's new great seal,⁷⁰ and Nedham's rival now wrote of "knacks," which subsequently became *his* trademark.⁷¹ More importantly, he began to imitate Nedham's way with character assassination by pen-portrait.⁷² In late May 1649, offering details about honorary Oxford degrees, Sheppard highlighted "Sir Dumpling Waller, the fatted calf, Ingoldsby that Tercel of a gentleman, Harrison the pert attorney's clerk, [and] Adjut. Gen. Sedascue the butterbox," as well as "Row the Anabaptist, Okey the tailor, and Hewson the cobbler."⁷³ On this occasion, his account was essentially as astute, and as diverting, as that provided by Nedham.⁷⁴

These two papers were more easily confused, therefore, than any previous rivals. They can be distinguished by the attentive reader, however, because Sheppard made cross-references to other editions clearly identifiable as his.⁷⁵ Moreover, stylistic differences remained, and Nedham's rival used the convention of substituting blank spaces

67 Frank, *Beginnings*, 194.

68 *Prag.* 14.2, sig. Ev.

69 *Prag.* 14.2, sig. E4. Indeed, the term gradually became a commonplace of royalist literature and was employed by later incarnations of *Pragmaticus*; *Prag.* 16.1, sig. O4v.

70 *Prag.* 13.9, sig. I2v; *Prag.* 14.4, sig. G4; *Prag.* 14.6, sig. I3.

71 *Prag.* 10.11, sig. Rrr3v; *Prag.* 14.11, sigs. O–O4v; *Prag.* 14.8, sig. L2v.

72 For Nedham: *Prag.* 13.4, sig. D4v; *Prag.* 13.8, sigs. Hv, H3, H4; *Prag.* 1.63, sig. Ccc2v; *Prag.* 1.64, sig. Ddd; *Prag.* 13.9, sig. Iv.

73 *Prag.* 14.2, sig. Ev; *Prag.* 14.3, sig. F2v.

74 *Prag.* 13.6, sig. F4.

75 In the edition for 5–12 June, therefore, the author asked his readers to "remember I told you that when they had quelled the Levellers you should hear no more of that choosing a new and equal Parliament"; *Prag.* 14.5, sig. H3v. See *Prag.* 14.1, sig. D2.

for sensitive words and expletives (as had version 10, which disappeared in early May).⁷⁶ Sheppard also pursued different targets, such as the Parliamentarian journalist Henry Walker.⁷⁷ More importantly, Nedham continued to display superior sarcasm and wit.⁷⁸ The two papers can also be distinguished on more substantive grounds, Nedham boasting about his access to Westminster that his eyes could “penetrate the walls of all their committee chambers, and be present at all their clancular meetings.”⁷⁹ He certainly offered the best source of news regarding Commons proceedings.⁸⁰ Nedham also received reliable and early intelligence about the murder of Isaac Dorislaus at The Hague, offered readers an extended report on Hugh Peter’s visit to John Lilburne in the Tower, and obtained impressive information about individual M.P.s such as William Pierrepont and Henry Darley.⁸¹ Nedham’s analysis of the Council of State, and his conceit that its members were the “jugglers” to the “supreme puppets” in the House of Commons, compared favorably with his rival’s rudimentary attacks upon the “counsell of cut-throats.”⁸² Such differences, moreover, confirm that it was Nedham’s paper that ceased with his arrest at the end of June 1649,⁸³ leaving Sheppard with a near monopoly for the following year. It was Sheppard’s name that was now linked with *Pragmaticus* by contemporaries, and his arrest in May 1650 coincided with the paper’s final issue.⁸⁴

Stylistic and qualitative differences also confirm that more than one hand was involved in one of the versions of the paper. As mentioned above, the original *Pragmaticus* grew to twelve pages in July 1648 and retained that format until mid-November.⁸⁵ For much of this time the last four pages were written separately and printed by another

76 *Prag.* 14.7, sig. K3; *Prag.* 10.10, sig. Qqq; *Prag.* 14.8, sigs. L, Lv.

77 *Prag.* 14.9, sig. M4; *Prag.* 14.11, sig. O3; *Prag.* 14.16, sig. T4. This author was probably responsible for Merc. *Pragmaticus*, *A Most Pithy Exhortation Delivered in an Eloquent Oration to the Watry Generation* ([London, 7 May] 1649, E554/3).

78 *Prag.* 13.5, sig. Ev.

79 *Prag.* 13.6, sig. F3v.

80 *Prag.* 13.4, sig. D3; *Prag.* 13.8, sig. H2v.

81 *Prag.* 13.4, sig. D3v; *Prag.* 13.7, sigs. Gv–G2v; *Prag.* 13.4, D4v.

82 *Prag.* 13.4, D3v–4; *Prag.* 13.9, sig. I2v–I3; *Prag.* 14.4, sig. G2.

83 The Council had ordered his detention for his role on the paper, and although Nedham remained defiant for a week and boasted of his ability to evade capture, the issue of 26 June proved to be a last hurrah. See *CSPD 1649–50*, 537; Gardiner, ed., *Oxinden and Peyton Letters*, 160–61; BL, Add. MS. 28003, fol. 205; *Perfect Occurrences* 129 (15–22 June 1649, E530/44), 1121; *A Modest Narrative* 12 (16–23 June 1649, E561/7), 96; *The Moderate* 50 (19–26 June 1649, E561/19), sig. Dddv; *Prag.* 13.10, sigs. K–Kv; Worden, “Wit,” 325; Subsequently, on 23 June, John Milton was ordered to examine the papers of *Pragmaticus*; *CSPD 1649–50*, 204. Nedham petitioned for relief in July 1649 and escaped from prison in August 1649, but did not return to journalism until he began to work for the Republic in 1650; PRO, SP 46/95, fol. 151; *Great Britaines Paine-full Messenger* 1 (9–16 August 1649, E569/18), 6–7.

84 *Prag.* 14.8, sigs. L, Lv; *The Metropolitan Nuncio* 3 (6–13 June 1649, E560/3), sig. Av; *CSPD 1649–50*, 529; *CSPD 1650*, 143. On 13 July 1649 the Council of State passed an order to arrest Francis Heldersham and Martha Harrison for printing and publishing *Pragmaticus*, probably Sheppard’s edition; *CSPD 1649–50*, 541.

85 As noted above, the first twelve-page issue was no. 18 and the last was no. 32–33; *Prag.* 1.46; *Prag.* 1.60.

stationer (sometimes on slightly larger paper), and stitched to a part apparently issued solely by Nedham prior to publication.⁸⁶ At times Nedham's coeditor was evidently responsible for entire issues, which included verses that Nedham would, in 1661, decline to reprint. While these longer issues contained intelligence from Westminster and quotations from the Commons, they also contained astrological material, which Nedham never used, and this may betray Wharton's influence.⁸⁷ Nedham clearly returned to the paper in early October, when his characteristic locutions of "pocasses," "knacks," and "packt committees" and his discussions of the "states of Derby House" reappeared.⁸⁸ During this especially convoluted period, the paper disappeared for a week in early November, returning in mid-November with a double edition, once again with Nedham as one of two authors.⁸⁹ By the third week of November, the paper had returned to its old format of eight pages, with Nedham apparently the sole author.⁹⁰

Exploring the literary style and substantive content of the many issues of *Pragmaticus* helps to sort out the apparent confusion of multiple versions and "counterfeit" issues. This analysis in turn points to important aspects of the counterfeiting phenomenon. While some versions were short-lived and of distinctly inferior quality, and can be designated counterfeits, others were of higher quality and proved not just long-lasting but also capable of supplanting their rivals, and ought to be regarded rather as usurpers. Over time it became increasingly difficult to decipher rhetorical claims regarding authenticity and authorship, and to distinguish between rival publications that were imitating one another's appearance, prose style, and substantive content.⁹¹ This,

86 *Prag.* 1.46; *Prag.* 1.47.

87 *Prag.* 1.52; *Prag.* 1.53, li2v, li3, li4v; *Prag.* 1.54. In 1660, Nedham would omit the poem that opened issue 1.54.

88 *Prag.* 1.56, sigs. Pp, Pp3, Pp3v, Pp4, Pp4v; *Prag.* 1.57, sigs. Rrv, Ssv. Although he may not have contributed to issue 30, the following week saw a return to the pattern of two authors (one of them Nedham) and two printers: *Prag.* 1.58; *Prag.* 1.59.

89 *Prag.* 1.60, sigs. Zzv, Zz4v.

90 *Prag.* 1.61. Nedham was also responsible for a work in reply to Army Remonstrance; *Prag.* 1.62, sigs. Bbbv, Bbb2, Bbb4v; *Merc. Pragmaticus, A Plea for the King and Kingdom, By Way of Answer to the Late Remonstrance of the Army* ([30 November] 1648, E474/2); *Prag.* 1.63, sigs. Cccv, Ccc2, Ccc2v, Ccc4.

91 Unfortunately, while contemporary readers of *Pragmaticus* can be identified, evidence of readers struggling to identify counterfeits and interlopers is rare. The bookseller George Thomason was able to distinguish between the November 1647 interloper (version 3) and "ye right" *Pragmaticus*; *Prag.* 1.9. One journalist noted the appearance of two versions in November 1647 and said: "What? Hath incubus begot a son? All hail Pragmaticus junior, heir apparent to thy father's fopperies, his tipstaffe and drinking dish": *Merc. Anti-Pragmaticus* 5 (11–18 November 1647, E416/7), sigs. Fr–v. Later, this same author claimed that readers had been fooled by another imposter (version 4), saying that "the poor man is in great perplexity and his brains are almost dropped down into his heels. . . for you must know that his trade had like to have been spoiled the last week save one, a fellow having laid a plot to undo him, put forth a book in his name, which so tickled the itching fancies of the royal party that they swore it was Prag. his masterpiece, when alas the poor soul had no hand in it": *Merc. Anti-Pragmaticus* 19 (27 January–3 February 1648, E425/13), 2.

together with evidence that such papers were written by leading royalist pen-men whose rivalry was sometimes acrimonious, necessitates a more considered approach to the dynamic of *Pragmaticus* and to the motivations of its various editors.



The emergence of more sophisticated interlopers coincided with the involvement of men who were members of royal circles rather than literary entrepreneurs or Grub Street hacks—particularly Wharton and Sheppard. Evidence of collaboration also suggests that the claims of editors to have been involved in earlier versions of *Pragmaticus* may have been legitimate—even the possibility that *Pragmaticus* was initially produced by a team that subsequently splintered.

In the separate, rival versions of the paper, political differences can be detected almost from the outset, not least over the Scots. One early interloper was probably motivated by unease at Nedham’s development of *Pragmaticus* into a strongly anti-Scottish and anti-Presbyterian paper.⁹² Its author considered that “the Scot, I think, will prove the [more] honest of the two [factions] for though he sold his master, yet he’s very loath to have him crucified.”⁹³ He subsequently commented that

honest Jocky takes notice of the king’s being forced from Holdenby and his just cause of flight from Hampton for preservation of his life, and makes bold to tell them, that the kingdom of Scotland is highly concerned in the safety of His Majesties person.... God a mercy bonny Scot, all loyal subjects give thee thanks for this, and of thy judgement, and will engage with thee for the same.⁹⁴

Royalist concern over Nedham’s hostility toward the Scots and a possible Presbyterian church settlement naturally grew after the signing of the Engagement in December 1647. Nedham’s refusal to tone his sentiments down, unlike other royalist authors, meant flying in the face of prevailing royal policy and doubtless encouraged the appearance of a new pro-Scottish rival.⁹⁵ The latter noted that the Scots were now loyal to the king and advised readers to recognize the poison “hid in the gilded pills” offered by

92 *Prag.* 1.1, sig. Av; *Prag.* 1.7, sig. G2v; *Prag.* 1.8, sig. H2v; *Prag.* 1.11, sig. L4. This explains the appearance of his most notable Parliamentary opponent, who was hostile to the Independents and supportive of the arch-Presbyterian William Prynne; *Merc. Anti-Pragmaticus* 1 (12–19 October 1647, E411/10), 2–3; *Merc. Anti-Pragmaticus* 4 (4–11 November 1647, E414/2), 4.

93 *Prag.* 3.2, sig. K3.

94 *Prag.* 3.3, sig. L3.

95 For Nedham’s views, see *Prag.* 1.18, sig. Sv; *Prag.* 1.15, sig. Pv. *Elencticus* had certainly shifted its policy toward the Scots: *Merc. Elencticus* 6 (29 December 1647–5 January 1648, E421/34), 43; *Merc. Elencticus* 16 (8–15 March 1648, E432/11), 126; *Merc. Elencticus* 17 (15–22 March 1648, E433/14), 132; *Merc. Elencticus* 18 (22–29 March 1648, E434/1), 136; *Merc. Elencticus* 28 (31 May–7 June 1648, E446/16), 217.

the Independents.⁹⁶ Nedham survived this challenge, however, and remained a distinctive royalist voice in subsequent weeks. He derided the notion that the Scots were genuinely interested in helping the king, saying that they would “put a slur on us in the after game, in labouring to foist their presbytery.” He also recommended his *Good English*, which expressed the fear that the alliance with the Scots would usher in an unacceptable church settlement, and urged that the king ought rather “close with the Independent party.”⁹⁷ Nedham mocked the Scots as “babes of grace,” “babes of election,” and “jockies of Presbytery,” with their “new knacks of kirk discipline,” and he was probably responsible for *The Manifold Practises and Attempts of the Hamiltons*, published under the name “Pragmaticus” in June 1648.⁹⁸ His political position, and his provocative language, may have prompted another challenger in May 1648, whose editor was distinctly pro-Scottish.⁹⁹ The content of subsequent versions of *Pragmaticus* suggests that their appearance reflected similar dissatisfaction with Nedham’s views. During the summer of 1648 he continued to express hostility toward the Presbyterians and the duke of Hamilton and to advertise tracts by himself and others that developed anti-Scottish themes.¹⁰⁰ Rivals that emerged in August and September, on the other hand, continued to place faith in the fidelity of the Scots.¹⁰¹

Aside from the Scots, there were other grounds for contesting Nedham, not least the Levellers. While Nedham was hostile to their ideas, he admired Lilburne’s stance in the face of persecution, his attacks on Cromwell, and his opposition to the Scots, and he agreed with Lilburne’s analysis of parliamentary politics in late 1647. As a result, he was perceived to be a close ally of the Leveller leader.¹⁰² Nedham’s rival was sufficiently

96 Prag. 4.1, sig. S2.

97 Prag. 1.20, sig. V3v; Prag. 1.27, sigs. C–Cv; Prag. 1.28, sigs. Dv–D2; Prag. 1.30, sig. B4; Prag. 1.31, sig. C2; Prag. 1.34, sigs. F–Fv; Prag. 1.33, sig. E4v; Prag. 1.35, sig. Gv; *Good English: Or Certain Reasons Pointing out the Safest Way of Settlement in this Kingdom* ([London, 8 May] 1648, E441/10), 6–7.

98 Prag. 1.35, sig. Gv; Prag. 1.38, sigs. Kv, K2, K4; Prag. 1.41, sig. N3v; Prag. 1.42, sig. Ov, O2; *The Manifold Practises and Attempts of the Hamiltons* ([6 June] 1648, E446/4). This led to a reply, *The Lier Laid Open in a Letter* ([11 July] 1648, E451/44). Nedham may also have been the “Pragmaticus” who penned *Reverend Alderman Atkins* ([14 June] 1648, E447/12). He also recommended to readers a work “coming forth in print” that appears to have been his own: Prag. 1.42, sig. O4v; *A Letter to the Earl of Manchester* ([5 July] 1648, E451/6).

99 Prag. 5.1, sig. A3.

100 Prag. 1.47, sig. T4v; Prag. 1.50, sig. Dd2v. These works included *The History of the King’s Majesties Affairs in Scotland Under the Conduct of the Most Honourable James, Marquess of Montrose* (London, [5 August] 1648, E456/34); Lionel Gatford, *Englands Complaint* (London, [31 August] 1648, E461/27); J. B. C., *A Venice Looking-Glasse* (1648, E525/19), 16. The latter commented that the Scots were not to be trusted in their professions of support for the king, since they were “the most pernicious enemies that ever this nation had” (p. 16).

101 Prag. 6.3, sigs. Z3v–Z4v; Prag. 7.1.

102 Prag. 1.1, sig. A3; Prag. 1.7, sig. G4; Prag. 1.9, sig. I3–I3v; Prag. 1.3, sigs. C3v, C4v; Prag. 1.6, sig. F4v. See also Prag. 1.19, sigs. T4–T4v; Prag. 1.12, sig. M3; Prag. 1.31, sigs. Cv, C2. On the personal link between Nedham and Lilburne, see *Merc. Anti-Pragmaticus* 1, pp. 2–5, 8; Jason Peacey, “John Lilburne and the Long Parliament,” *Historical Journal* 43 (2000): 628–29, 635, 640.

hostile to Lilburne to produce *The Levellers Levell'd* under the name “Pragmaticus,” a work from which Nedham strenuously sought to distance himself.¹⁰³ Moreover, many royalists were probably concerned by Nedham’s attitude toward the negotiations at Newport between the parliamentary Independents and the king. As such talks began in August, Nedham’s rival detected a plot to remove Charles and argued that the treaty was a mere pretense on the part of the Parliamentarian grandees—albeit on the somewhat dubious basis of Henry Marten’s opposition to a negotiated settlement.¹⁰⁴ Nedham, on the other hand, believed the treaty to be genuine, and even that Viscount Saye was truthful in indicating his support for the talks.¹⁰⁵

Nedham’s brand of royalism—unsurprisingly, reminiscent of his Parliamentarian past—provides the grounds for understanding the motivation of his rivals. It is also apparent that such rivals did not stop at instigating new versions of *Pragmaticus* but also sought to usurp his position on his own paper. It seems clear, therefore, that the longer editions of *Pragmaticus* produced in the second half of 1648, and the introduction of outside writers, reflected factional political tensions. The immediate result was that Nedham did not control the whole text of each issue, and it appears that his rivals sought to take over the paper entirely. That this was inspired by factional politics is evident from the dramatic changes in the paper’s editorial position. *Pragmaticus* suddenly lurched toward a pro-Scottish line, its author saying that the Hamiltonians were “the only stilts of the regal interest in that kingdom” and seeking to counteract the accusations made against Hamilton himself.¹⁰⁶ Furthermore, portions of the text added to Nedham’s paper occasionally indulged in overt criticism of key royalist actors, such as John Ashburnham and William Legge, who were perceived to be too close to the Independents at Westminster.¹⁰⁷ During this period, the paper also turned against the Levellers, whom Nedham had continued to support with praise for “honest John.”¹⁰⁸ It also reversed Nedham’s optimistic attitude toward the Newport treaty.¹⁰⁹ Precisely how he regained control of *Pragmaticus* is unclear, but when he did so he immediately reversed such changes and guided the paper through a complete about-face.¹¹⁰

103 Merc. *Pragmaticus*, *The Levellers Levell'd* ([3 December] 1647, E419/4)]; *Prag*. 1.12, sig. Mv. Frank assumed that Nedham wrote this book; Frank, *Press Agent*, 50.

104 *Prag*. 6.2; *Prag*. 6.3, sig. Z3; *Prag*. 6.4, sig. A2v. In this, its author echoed the views of *Mercurius Elencticus*: Merc. *Elencticus* 40 (23–30 August 1648, E461/20), 322; Merc. *Elencticus* 41 (30 August–6 September 1648, E462/17), sig. Rr4v; Merc. *Elencticus* 45 (27 September–4 October 1648, E465/33), sig. Xx2; Merc. *Elencticus* 47 (11–18 October 1648, E468/14), 384–85.

105 *Prag*. 1.50, sig. Ccv.

106 *Prag*. 1.55, sigs. Nn2v, Nn3r–v.

107 *Prag*. 1.51, sig. Ff2.

108 *Prag*. 1.54, sig. Mm2v; *Prag*. 1.55, sig. Oo2v; *Prag*. 1.56, sig. Qqv. The author quoted anti-Leveller pamphlets such as Paul Knell’s, *A Looking-Glasse for Levellers* (London, [4 October] 1648, E465/30). On Nedham’s support for Lilburne before this takeover bid, see *Prag*. 1.47, sig. T4v.

109 *Prag*. 1.59, sig. YY2v.

110 *Prag*. 1.56, sigs. Pp, Pp3, Pp3v, Pp4, Pp4v.

After this brief and ultimately abortive attempt to eject Nedham from *Pragmaticus*, his opponents reverted to rival editions in order to undermine his influence. By late 1648 the most pressing cause of disagreement within royalist ranks concerned the fate of the king. Nedham's rival predicted the death of Charles and dismissed hopes of successful negotiations, which it argued had always been intended merely as a means of responding to the "cry of the people."¹¹¹ In some of Nedham's most intriguing analysis—which historians have only recently begun to take seriously—he stressed that the grandees planned to have a "duke of Venice" rather than a royal martyr and that they sought to banish the Scottish and Presbyterian interest, which he provocatively claimed was "hated by the royalists."¹¹² Such views also marked the final issue of Nedham's paper in January 1649, which insisted that the king would not be killed

if he will do as they would have him; that is yield up his crown and dignity, send the church a-begging, part with his negative voice, root up the fundamentals of Parliament, establish a perpetual state junto, or senate after the Venetian model, wherein none but the grandee brethren shall be admitted, and content himself with a share among them, as a duke, or Lord President, then he shall be bug-bear'd no longer with public trial and execution, but brought to London to help to damn the only remaining enemies, Presbyterians and Levellers.

The only hope Nedham offered to his fellow royalists was that the king might remain prisoner and escape execution, because "divers of the leading men are known to be so rational, that it is absurd to imagine, they should voluntarily throw away that main advantage, ... the possession of the king's person."¹¹³ Plans for a trial and talk of the king's execution and replacement by the duke of Gloucester were intended merely "to fright him down, with the fear of death, to their own terms." Although Nedham took seriously the possibility that the king would not plead and that he would consequently be sentenced, he insisted that Parliament would "work upon him with threats of death every moment, in hope to bend him to their own cue, which seems to be the only design upon His Majesty, by this accursed mockery of trial and execution."¹¹⁴ Subtle and thought

111 *Prag.* 8.1, sig. Dddv. Such skepticism about the likelihood of accommodation between king and Parliament was echoed in *Mercurius Elencticus: Merc. Elencticus* 51 (8–15 November 1648, E472/8), 293–94; *Merc. Elencticus* 54 (29 November–6 December 1648, E475/22), sigs. Ggg, Gggv, Ggg2; *Merc. Elencticus* 55 (5–12 December 1648, E476/4), sig. Hhh4v; *Merc. Elencticus* 57 (19–26 December 1648, E477/31), sig. Kkk4.

112 *Prag.* 1.65, sig. Eeev. Once again, this analysis matched Nedham's letters, forwarded to Hyde by Lawrans, dated 18 and 25 December; Bodl., MS. Clarendon 34, fols. 12–13v, 17. See S. R. Gardiner, *History of the Great Civil War*, 4 vols. (London, 1987), 4:285–86; Underdown, *Pride's Purge*, 168.

113 *Prag.* 1.66, sig. Fffv; Bodl., MS. Clarendon 34, fols. 17v–18, 72v.

114 *Prag.* 1.66, sig. Fff3.

provoking as such analysis was, it was an approach few royalists could countenance—let alone allow to be published in the weeks before the trial. This was why Nedham’s voice needed to be drowned out by less sophisticated observers.

Nedham was nothing if not indefatigable, however, and his return to the press in April 1649 helped to ensure that *Pragmaticus* remained a focal point for profound rivalry.¹¹⁵ This is evident from the claim by one editor that a competitor peddled “absurdities” that had “scandalized the candid innocency and integrity of the royal cause, which needs not gross lies, nor empty flourishes to vindicate or illustrate it.”¹¹⁶ While at this point there was far greater substantive agreement among the various editors of *Pragmaticus*, John Lilburne provoked more conflict (see Amos Tubb’s essay in this volume). The editor Nedham opposed considered Lilburne to be a “knave,” albeit one who was a useful opponent of Cromwell and a welcome sign of divisions.¹¹⁷ Nevertheless, shortly before Nedham’s return this editor called Lilburne a “fool,” a “traiterous rebel,” and “that mortar-piece of rebellion.”¹¹⁸ Another editor in the spring of 1649 referred to Lilburne and his “pestiferous comrades,” and in the following July another journalist claimed that the Levellers would “breviat the laws into libels, convert the ecclesiastical canons into blasphemous conjurations, metamorphise monarchy into mousehole and turn a whole kingdom arse upward.”¹¹⁹ One of the papers that emerged briefly in April contained more favorable comments about Lilburne, and Nedham himself described Lilburne as “honest” and “gallant,” proposing that his views were misunderstood. The Levellers, Nedham argued, did not aim at “levelling of mens” estates, but at the “new state tyranny,” and they stood

for an equal interest in freedom against the present tyranny, and are so much the more tolerable in that a little experience will teach them, that a just monarch is the best guardian of public liberty, besides the passage is very quick and easy from a popular government to a well-regulated monarchy.¹²⁰

Lilburne was said to face a trial “upon a new trick of treason against laws unknown,” and Nedham complimented the Leveller women on the way that “their tongues pelted hail shot against the members as they passed to and fro.”¹²¹ Nedham’s leading rival later

115 *Prag.* 13.1.

116 *Prag.* 11.1, sigs. A–Av.

117 *Prag.* 10.2, sigs. Hhh3–3v, Hhh4v; *Prag.* 10.3, sig. Iii3v; *Prag.* 10.5, sigs. Lll2, Lll2v; *Prag.* 10.6, sigs. Mmm3r–v; *Prag.* 10.7, sig. Nnn3; *Prag.* 10.8, sigs. Ooov–2, Ooo3v.

118 *Prag.* 10.9, sig. Ppp2v.

119 *Prag.* 12.1, sig. Av; *Prag.* 16.1, sig. O4.

120 *Prag.* 11.1, sigs. Av, A3v; *Prag.* 13.1, sigs. A3v–4.

121 *Prag.* 13.2, sigs. Bv, B4, B4v.

adopted a less hostile attitude toward Lilburne, although he offered the Levellers advice rather than positive support: “leave petitioning, draw your swords, and try for your freedoms, dispute them to the chins in blood, rather than lose your champion Lilburne, and with him your liberties forever.”¹²² In a later guise, this author repeated such advice: “I always told you petitioning would not avail anything, it must either be blows or nothing that must carry the design.”¹²³ Nevertheless, the difference between his attitude to the Levellers and Nedham’s was probably more style than substance. While he rather dismissively referred to them as the “sea-green-boys,” Nedham consistently referred to “gallant John” and his allies.¹²⁴ The prevailing royalist mood, however, acknowledged the usefulness of the Levellers, although dissenting voices were still heard later in the year.¹²⁵

On other issues of royalist tactics there appears to have been more agreement. Nedham may have dismayed some royalists with the stridency of his response to the assassination of Isaac Dorislaus. Noting that another of the Rump’s ambassadors, Walter Strickland, had evaded an assassin, Nedham said: “’twas well he missed, and I hope, as acts of this nature are not handsome, so no more will be practised upon any of the brethren.” His opposition, more theological than political in its terms, however, was based upon the idea that “by such courses, to send to the devil his due before his time, is to rob God of his honour.”¹²⁶ Nedham and his rival agreed that the royalists should not “compound” with the new government, Nedham scorning “to please those cavalier babies, whose ambition it is to sit at home and pick their fingers, and drink healths in the behalf of his Majesty.”¹²⁷ And they now shared disapproval of the Scots, although this was to be expected, given their treatment of Charles II. One editor in April 1649 opposed relying upon the “sophistical” Scots, recommending an appeal to France and Savoy.¹²⁸ Nedham predicted that Charles II “will never agree with the Scot Presbyter Independents, but will be able to make up his own interest there in a parliamentary way.”¹²⁹ In May, Nedham’s main rival opposed such a deal with the Scots, saying, “it is no part of my creed that his Majesty will become Presbyter, since if he come in upon that score all his friends will be undone, and himself enslaved as well as the kingdom.”¹³⁰ Another editor

122 *Prag.* 10.10, sigs. Qqq2v–3.

123 *Prag.* 14.2, sig. Tttv; *Prag.* 14.1, sig. D2v. See *Prag.* 10.9, sig. Ppp4. This comment, incidentally, reinforces the point made earlier about the connection between this edition of the paper and the earlier incarnation, as he refers his readers back to comments made in mid-April.

124 *Prag.* 14.2, sig. E4v; *Prag.* 14.6, sig. I2; *Prag.* 14.9, sigs. Mv–M2; *Prag.* 13.4, sig. D3v.

125 *Prag.* 14.18, sig. X4v. For the dissenting voice, see *Prag.* 17.1, sig. A2.

126 *Prag.* 13.4, sig. D3v.

127 *Prag.* 13.2, sig. B3. For Nedham’s rival, see *Prag.* 14.4, sig. Gv.

128 *Prag.* 12.1, sigs. A3–A3v.

129 *Prag.* 13.3, sig. C4v. See also *Prag.* 13.7, sigs. G3v–G4; M. Nedham, *Digitus Dei: or God’s Justice Upon Treachery and Treason, Exemplified in the Life and Death of the Late James Duke of Hamilton* (London, [4 April] 1649, E550/6).

130 *Prag.* 14.3, sigs. F4–F4v; *Prag.* 14.16.

advised readers to “take a prospective and you may discern a great blazing star in the North that portends fire and faggot for our sacreligious sectaries. Jockey threatens to bind all the blewbonnets to their good behaviour with the strong cart-rope of the covenant.”¹³¹

Agreement on major policy issues did not indicate that peace had broken out between rival editors, however. Indeed, the summer of 1649 witnessed outbursts of profound hostility from Nedham’s rival, and this bitter animosity took a more personal direction, apparently fueled by Nedham’s Parliamentary past. When Nedham re-emerged in May 1649, Sheppard raised this explicitly, saying that he was “a man so full stufft with rebellion,” and “a pure turncoat” who sought to “blind peoples” eyes from seeing his rebellion . . . by characterising himself in the frontspiece with the ancient loyal title of *Pragmaticus*.” He also promised that if Nedham’s paper persisted, he should “expect a full discovery to be made of his roguery, for I neither can, nor will permit such a k—— (to abuse the ears of loyalty and honesty) who hath had so great a share in murdering majesty.”¹³² In a later guise, this author renewed the threat to expose Nedham with a “friendly admonition”:

I once told him if he did persist in his course of scribbling I would make a discovery of him, and leave him to the fury of the tormentors, since when I have had patience a fortnight, expecting he would forbear, by reason I gave him so fair a warning, and now the second time I’ll give him a caution and wish him to depart in peace.¹³³

Again, the editor displayed awareness of, and willingness to expose, Nedham’s Parliamentary past:

[I]f yet this now council be rejected, then let him know I have a key that will unlock the private cabinet of his heart, and lay open what he now is, and formerly was; for were he a true royalist I could forgive him, and would rather do myself an injury than hurt him. But he being a turncoat and inveterate enemy to the late king (as might appear by his high treason (often written but once especially) against him at sight whereof the very Parliament rebels themselves blusht with shame, and for that fault imprisoned him and put him to silence) I cannot with a safe conscience suffer him as a rival in title with me.¹³⁴

131 *Prag.* 16.1, sig. O2v; *Prag.* 15.1, sigs. M2v–M3.

132 *Prag.* 10.10, sigs. Qqq–Qqqv, Qqq4v.

133 *Prag.* 14.1, sig. Dv.

134 *Prag.* 14.1, sig. Dv.

He subsequently renewed his attack, portraying his rival as a traitor whose “heart will not let his tongue lye, for treason and lies are broached in his first lines of his last week’s book, where he says the king flies, or runs away.”¹³⁵ This startling willingness on the part of royalist authors to attack a fellow traveler by exposing his Parliamentary past was also evident in September, when another editor claimed that an earlier version had been usurped by Nedham, who was described as “an impious hand that formerly writ *Britannicus* and a Hue and Cry against the king.”¹³⁶ Such hostility toward Nedham on the part of some royalists may provide the context for his later claim that he was betrayed to the Parliamentary authorities in June 1649, although the story of his arrest attests to his abiding links with at least some royalists, since he was apparently seized while at dinner with “a company of gallants” that included one of Charles II’s agents.¹³⁷

Scrutiny of the various versions of *Pragmaticus* reveals that their authors held conflicting views on royalist policy and tactics. Nedham’s distinctive and provocative royalist counsel suggests that some of his rivals were motivated by hostility to his views and by a desire to outline a contrasting vision. It certainly seems to be the case that such publishing rivalry emerged most forcefully at crucial moments in the course of the late 1640s, and at times when Nedham’s views were most out of tune with prevailing opinion and least easy to stomach by his fellow royalists.

Thus, the proliferation of newsbooks often placed under the umbrella of “counterfeiting” likely resulted from several interrelated agendas. Perhaps motivated by a desire to reclaim a title to which they felt some attachment, to reach out to Nedham’s readers, and to undermine his livelihood, various editors instigated rival incarnations of his paper and even sought to oust him from his own version. Their hostility toward him was based not just upon his quirky views about royalist policy but also upon personal animosity and a refusal to forgive him for his Parliamentary past. Analyzing the various incarnations of *Pragmaticus* suggests the possibility that political differences motivated the authors of even the most insubstantial versions of the paper. If money was a motive, it may perhaps have been a weapon in this war of opinion.

The contrasting political positions of the various editors and their papers also suggest that they may have been directly representing the views of factional interests and specific grandees. Little is known about the personal connections of Samuel Sheppard, but John Cleveland was a former advocate general of the royalist garrison at Newark, and George Wharton had been paymaster of the Oxford garrison as well as a captain of horse.¹³⁸ More intriguing, however, is Nedham. While his opinions were not shared by

135 *Prag.* 14.4, sig. G4v.

136 *Prag.* 17.1, sigs. A–Av.

137 *Perfect Occurrences* 129 (15–22 June 1649, E530/44), 1121; *A Modest Narrative* 12 (16–23 June 1649, E561/7), 96; *The Moderate* 50 (19–26 June 1649, E561/19), sig. Dddv.

138 *DNB*; Rollins, “Samuel Sheppard,” 524–25.

the majority of royalist journalists, they were far from idiosyncratic, and he certainly reflected the views of at least some prominent royalists, such as Sir Edward Hyde and Sir Edward Nicholas, not least over the Scots. Hyde told the earl of Holland in the first week of February 1648 that “the Scots, unless they are strictly treated with, are not to be trusted,” and that the king ought not make any compromise on religion.¹³⁹ Nedham was one of Hyde’s correspondents, of course, and was probably the author of a letter to him in April 1648 expressing the opinion that Hamilton was “not now acting your king’s interest, but his own, and pursuing the old design of his family,” advocating a royalist-Independent alliance.¹⁴⁰ Such connections suggest that the complex history of *Pragmaticus* reflected the machinations of royalist factions, whose grandees sought to secure control of powerful propaganda weapons with which to fight their battles against one another as much as against Parliament.



“Counterfeiting” has generally been described in terms of commercial motivation, the lure of profits to be made by assuming the name of a successful paper. This probably explains the appearance of some versions of *Pragmaticus*, not least because the press legislation of 1647, and the attempt to close down *Pragmaticus*, had doubled its price and increased the profits to be made.¹⁴¹ Nedham’s second rival clearly sought to steal customers by appearing on the streets ahead of the authentic edition, and it seems likely that short-lived, poorly produced versions that offered little intelligence and insight were intended to make money.¹⁴² Some versions may have been prompted by a desire to step into the shoes of an editor who was facing difficulties with the Parliamentary authorities. When Nedham’s paper was briefly “routed by the mirmydions” of Parliament,¹⁴³ one of his fellow royalists may have seized an opportunity. There is certainly rhetorical evidence to support such conclusions. Nedham said of an early rival that he had assumed the name *Pragmaticus* “to make his trash vendible,” and to “feed himself upon another man’s reputation.”¹⁴⁴ Another editor claimed that a rival paper was

139 O. Ogle et al, *Calendar of the Clarendon State Papers*, 5 vols. (Oxford, 1872–1970), 1:411.

140 Bodl., MS. Clarendon 31, fol. 56v; *Calendar of the Clarendon State Papers*, 1:419. Of an alliance with the Independents, this writer said: “touching which I am now sending a piece to the press written in the same method with *The Case of the Kingdom*, which I published the last year, proving the necessity of it by reason.” This almost certainly refers to *Good English* and seems to prove Nedham’s authorship of that tract, *Pragmaticus*, and *The Case of the Kingdom*. I am grateful to Dr. David Scott for drawing this letter to my attention.

141 *Journals of the House of Commons* (London, 1742), 5:335, 371; Claydon House, Buckinghamshire, Verney Papers, Reel 8 (BL, M636/8), unfol.: Roger Burgoyne to Sir Ralph Verney, 14 October 1647; Frank, *Press Agent*, 56.

142 *Prag.* 3.1.

143 *Prag.* 1.63, sig. Cccv.

144 *Prag.* 1.12, sigs. M–Mv.

no other but *Philo-monarchicus* which came out the week before, and by reason the author found that people would not be gulled by such nonsense, thinking that so well known a title as *Pragmaticus* might further the sale of his barren-witted pamphlet (or rather bundle of forged lies) he hath it seems changed his note and shows himself to be some bumbast ballad maker.¹⁴⁵

This writer later suggested that the superficial typographical similarities between two rival editions resulted from deliberate attempts to confuse customers in bookshops and at bookstalls.¹⁴⁶ Such comments need to be treated with care, of course, as they were likely part of the rivalry they describe.

The newsbooks of course appeared for a range of reasons. It is only by submitting issues of *Pragmaticus* to rhetorical, visual, stylistic, qualitative, and political examination that it becomes possible to identify with any certainty the paper's different incarnations, and to attempt to assess the purposes behind each. I have tried to suggest that the rhetoric of authenticity and forgery that was so prevalent in incarnations of *Pragmaticus* reveals the bitterness of the rivalry between authors who were nominally fighting for the same cause. When an editor did acknowledge the novelty of his version, it was typically in the interest of reclaiming, on political grounds, a title with which he had a prior connection. Clear political differences are apparent between rival versions, which often appeared at crucial political junctures to assert particular strands of royalism. Perhaps the most intriguing motivation was the need to undermine Nedham, with his strident brand of anti-Scottish and anti-Presbyterian royalism, which favored an alliance between the king and the political Independents and was even sympathetic toward Lilburne and the Levellers. The close links between Nedham and Sir Edward Hyde's circle suggest the importance that political leaders attached to obtaining a printed voice for their particular faction. Ultimately, analysis of *Pragmaticus* reveals the seriousness of the divisions between royalist factions, both personal and political, and the extent to which the purpose of the paper was to fight battles within royalism as much as the war against Parliament and the Republic.

HISTORY OF PARLIAMENT, LONDON

Appendix begins overleaf.

145 *Prag.* 10.10, sigs. Qqq–Qqqv. The writer is referring here to *Mercurius Philo-Monarchicus* 1 (10–17 April 1649, E550/27), which may well have been written by the same hand as version 11 of *Pragmaticus*.

146 *Prag.* 14.1, sig. Dv.

Appendix

References are from the Thomason Collection in the British Library, where available, and from C. Nelson and M. Seccombe, *British Newspapers and Periodicals, 1641–1700* (New York, 1987). Some of the punctuation in the titles has not been retained.

VERSION 1:

Marchamont Nedham (with Samuel Sheppard, George Wharton, and John Cleveland?)

- 1.1 *Mercurius Pragmaticvs* Num. 1 (14–21 Sept. 1647) E407/39, 369.101
- 1.2 *Mercurius Pragmaticvs* Num. 2 (21–28 Sept. 1647) E409/8, 369.102A
- 1.3 *Mercurius Pragmaticvs* Num. 3 (28 Sept.–6 Oct. 1647) E410/4, 369.103
- 1.4 *Mercurius Pragmaticus* Num. 4 (5–12 Oct. 1647) E410/19, 369.104
- 1.5 *Mercvrius Pragmaticus* Num. 5 (12–19 Oct. 1647) E411/8, 369.105
- 1.6 *Mercvrius Pragmaticus* Num. 6 (19–26 Oct. 1647) E411/23, 369.106
- 1.7 *Mercvrius Pragmaticus* Num. 7 (26 Oct.–2 Nov. 1647) E412/16, 369.107
- 1.8 *Mercvrius Pragmaticus* Num. 8 (2–9 Nov. 1647) E413/8, 369.108
- 1.9 *Mercvrius Pragmaticus* Num. 9 (9–16 Nov. 1647) E414/15, 369.109A
- 1.10 *Mercvsivs Pragmaticus* Num. 10 (16–23 Nov. 1647) E416/26, 369.110A
- 1.11 *Mercvrius Pragmaticus* Num. 11 (23–30 Nov. 1647) E417/20, 369.111A
- 1.12 *Mercvrius Pragmaticus* Num. 12 (30 Nov.–7 Dec. 1647) E419/12, 369.112
- 1.13 *Mercvrius Pragmaticus* Num. 13 (7–14 Dec. 1647) E419/22, 369.113
- 1.14 *Mercvrius Pragmaticus* Num. 14 (14–21 Dec. 1647) E421/1, 369.114
- 1.15 *Mercvrius Pragmaticus* Num. 15 (21–28 Dec. 1647) E421/15, 369.115
- 1.16 *Mercvrius Pragmaticus* Num. 16 (28 Dec.–4 Jan. 1648) E421/29, 369.116
- 1.17 *Mercurius Pragmaticvs* Num. 17 (4–11 Jan. 1648) E422/17, 369.117
- 1.18 *Mercvrius Pragmaticus* Num. 18 (11–18 Jan. 1648) E423/2, 369.118A
- 1.19 *Mercvrius Pragmaticus* Num. 19 (18–25 Jan. 1648) E423/21, 369.119
- 1.20 *Mercvrius Pragmaticus* Num. 20 (25 Jan.–1 Feb. 1648) E424/7, 369.120
- 1.21 *Mercvrius Pragmaticus* Numb. 21 (1–8 Feb. 1648) E426/6, 369.121
- 1.22 *Mercvrius Pragmaticus* Numb. 22 (8–15 Feb. 1648) E427/7, 369.122
- 1.23 *Mercvrius Pragmaticus* Num. 23 (15–22 Feb. 1648) E428/9, 369.123
- 1.24 *Mercvrius Pragmaticus* Num. 24 (22–29 Feb. 1648) E429/12, 369.124
- 1.25 *Mercurius Pragmaticvs* Num. 25 (29 Feb.–7 Mar. 1648) E431/5, 369.125
- 1.26 *Mercurius Pragmaticvs* Num. 26 (7–14 Mar. 1648) E432/3, 369.126
- 1.27 *Mercvrius Pragmaticus* Num. 27 (14–21 Mar. 1648) E433/4, 369.127
- 1.28 *Mercvrius Pragmaticus* Num. 28 (21–28 Mar. 1648) E433/28, 369.128
- 1.29 *Mercvrius Pragmaticus* Num. 1 (28 Mar.–4 Apr. 1648) E434/17, 369.201
- 1.30 *Mercvrius Pragmaticus* Num. 2 (4–11 Apr. 1648) E435/12, 369.202
- 1.31 *Mercurius Pragmaticvs* Numb. 3 (11–18 Apr. 1648) E435/42, 369.203
- 1.32 *Mercurius Pragmaticvs* Numb. 4 (18–25 Apr. 1648) E437/4, 369.204

- 1.33 *Mercurius Pragmaticvs* Numb. 5 (25 Apr.–2 May 1648) E437/31, 369.205
 1.34 *Mercurius Pragmaticvs* Numb. 6 (5–9 May 1648) E441/11, 369.206
 1.35 *Mercurius Pragmaticvs* Numb. 7 (9–16 May 1648) E442/16, 369.207A
 1.36 *Mercurius Pragmaticvs* Numb. 8 (16–23 May 1648) E443/37, 369.208
 1.37 *Mercurius Pragmaticvs* Numb. 9 (23–30 May 1648) E445/21, 369.209
 1.38 *Mercurius Pragmaticvs* Numb. 10 (30 May–6 June 1648) 369.210
 1.39 *Mercurius Pragmaticvs* Numb. 11 (6–13 June 1648) E447/5, 369.211
 1.40 *Mercurius Pragmaticvs* Numb. 12 (13–20 June 1648) E448/17, 369.212
 1.41 *Mercurius Pragmaticvs* Numb. 13 (20–27 June 1648) 369.213
 1.42 *Mercurius Pragmaticvs* Numb. 14 (27 June–4 July 1648) E450/27, 369.214
 1.43 *Mercurius Pragmaticvs* Numb. 15 (4–11 July 1648) E451/42, 369.215
 1.44 *Mercurius Pragmaticvs* Numb. 16 (11–18 July 1648) E453/11, 369.216
 1.45 *Mercurius Pragmaticvs* Numb. 17 (18–25 July 1648) E454/4, 369.217
 1.46 *Mercurius Pragmaticvs* Numb. 18 (25 July–1 Aug. 1648) E456/7, 369.218
 1.47 *Mercurius Pragmaticvs* Numb. 19 (1–8 Aug. 1648) E457/11, 369.219A
 1.48 *Mercurius Pragmaticvs* Numb. 20 (8–15 Aug. 1648) E458/25, 369.220A
 1.49 *Mercurius Pragmaticvs* Numb. 21 (15–22 Aug. 1648) E460/21, 369.221A
 1.50 *Mercurius Pragmaticvs* Numb. 22 (22–29 Aug. 1648) E461/17, 369.222A
 1.51 *Mercurius Pragmaticvs* Numb. 23 (29 Aug.–5 Sept. 1648) E462/8, 369.223
 1.52 *Mercurius Pragmaticvs* Numb. 24 (5–12 Sept. 1648) E462/34, 369.224
 1.53 *Mercurius Pragmaticvs* Numb. 25 (12–19 Sept. 1648) E464/12, 369.225
 1.54 *Mercurius Pragmaticvs* Numb. 26 (19–26 Sept. 1648) E464/45, 369.226
 1.55 *Mercurius Pragmaticvs* Numb. 27 (26 Sept.–3 Oct. 1648) E465/19, 369.227
 1.56 *Mercurius Pragmaticvs* Numb. 28 (3–10 Sept. 1648) E466/11, 369.228
 1.57 *Mercurius Pragmaticvs* Numb. 29 (10–17 Oct. 1648) E467/38, 369.229
 1.58 *Mercurius Pragmaticvs* Numb. 30 (17–24 Oct. 1648) E468/37, 369.230
 1.59 *Mercurius Pragmaticvs* Numb. 31 (24–31 Oct. 1648) E469/10, 369.231
 1.60 *Mercurius Pragmaticvs* Numb. 32/33 (31 Oct.–14 Nov. 1648) E470/33, 369.232
 1.61 *Mercurius Pragmaticvs* Numb. 34 (14–21 Nov. 1648) E473/7, 369.234
 1.62 *Mercurius Pragmaticvs* Numb. 35 (21–28 Nov. 1648) E473/35, 369.235
 1.63 *Mercurius Pragmaticvs* Numb. 36/37 (5–12 Dec. 1648) E476/2, 369.236
 1.64 *Mercurius Pragmaticvs* Numb. 38 (12–19 Dec. 1648) E476/35, 369.238A
 1.65 *Mercurius Pragmaticvs* Numb. 39 (19–26 Dec. 1648) E477/30, 369.239
 1.66 *Mercurius Pragmaticus* Nu. 40/41 (26 Dec. 1648–9 Jan. 1649) E537/20, 369.240B

VERSION 2

- 2.1 *Mercurius Pragmaticvs* Num. 2 (21–28 Sept. 1647) E409/5, 369.102B

VERSION 3

- 3.1 *Mercvrius Pragmaticus* Numb. 9 (9–16 Nov. 1647) E414/16, 369.109B
 3.2 *Mercurius Pragmaticvs* Num. 10 (16–22 Nov. 1647) E416/19, 369.110B
 3.3 *Mercvrius Pragmaticvs* Num. 11 (23–30 Nov. 1647) E417/21, 369.111B

VERSION 4

- 4.1 *Mercurius Pragmaticvs* Num. 18 (11–18 Jan. 1648) E423/1, 369.118B

VERSION 5

- 5.1 *Mercurius Pragmaticvs* Numb. 7 (9–16 May 1648) E442/15, 369.207B

VERSION 6

- 6.1 *Mercvrius Pragmaticvs* Numb. 19 (1–8 Aug. 1648) E457/12, 369.219B
 6.2 *Mercvrius Pragmaticvs* Numb. 20 (8–15 Aug. 1648) E458/24, 369.220B
 6.3 *Mercurius Pragmaticvs* Numb. 21 (15–22 Aug. 1648) 369.221B
 6.4 *Mercurius Pragmaticvs* Numb. 22 (22–29 Aug. 1648) 369.222B

VERSION 7

- 7.1 *Mercurius Pragmaticus* Numb. 23 (5–12 Sept. 1648) E462/33, 369.224B

VERSION 8

- 8.1 *Mercurius Pragmaticvs* Numb. 38 (12–19 Dec. 1648) 369.238B
 8.2 *Mercurius Pragmaticvs* Numb. 39 (19–26 Dec. 1648) 369.239B

VERSION 9

George Wharton?

- 9.1 *Mercvrius Pragmaticus* Numb. 40 (26 Dec. 1648–9 Jan. 1649) 369.240A
 9.2 *Mercvrius Pragmaticus* Numb. 41 (9–16 Jan. 1649) E538/18, 369.241
 9.3 *Mercvrius Pragmaticus* Numb. 42 (16–30 Jan. 1649) E540/15, 369.242
 9.4 *Mercvrius Pragmaticus* Numb. 43 (30 Jan.–6 Feb. 1649) 369.243
 9.5 *Mercvrius Pragmaticus* Numb. 44 (6–13 Feb. 1649) 369.244
 9.6 *Mercvrius Pragmaticus* Numb. 45 (13–20 Feb. 1649) E544/9, 369.245
 9.7 *Mercvrius Pragmaticus* Numb. 46 (20–27 Feb. 1649) E545/16, 369.246A

VERSION 10

Samuel Sheppard?

- 10.1 *Mercvrius Pragmaticvs* Numb. 43 (20–27 Feb. 1649) E545/15, 369.246B
 10.2 *Mercvrius Pragmaticvs* Numb. 44 (27 Feb.–5 Mar. 1649) E546/4, 369.246C
 10.3 *Mercvrius Pragmaticvs* Numb. 45 (6–13 Mar. 1649) E546/18, 369.246D
 10.4 *Mercurius Pragmaticus* Numb. 46 (13–20 Mar. 1649) E548/3, 369.246E

- 10.5 *Mercurius Pragmaticus* Numb. 47 (20–27 Mar. 1649) E548/22, 369.247
- 10.6 *Mercurius Pragmaticvs* Numb. 48 (27 Mar.–3 Apr. 1649) E549/13, 369.248
- 10.7 *Mercurius Pragmaticvs* Numb. 49 (3–10 Apr. 1649) E550/13, 369.249
- 10.8 *Mercurius Pragmaticvs* Numb. 50 (10–17 Apr. 1649) E550/32, 369.250
- 10.9 *Mercurius Pragmaticvs* Numb. 51 (17–24 Apr. 1649) E551/19, 369.251A
- 10.10 *Mercurius Pragmaticvs* Numb. 52 (24 Apr.–1 May 1649) E552/16, 369.252A
- 10.11 *Mercurius Pragmaticvs* Numb. 53 (1–8 May 1649) E554/17, 369.253

VERSION 11

- 11.1 *Mercurius Pragmaticvs* Num [] (17–24 Apr. 1649) E551/12, 369.251B

VERSION 12

- 12.1 *Mercurius Pragmaticvs* Num [] (23–30 Apr. 1649) E552/12, 369.252B

VERSION 13

Marchamont Nedham

- 13.1 *Mercurius Pragmaticus* (For King Charles II) 2 pars Num. 1 (17–24 Apr. 1649)
E551/15, 370.01
- 13.2 *Mercurius Pragmaticus* (For King Charles II) 2 pars Num. 2 (24 Apr.–1 May 1649)
E552/15, 370.02
- 13.3 *Mercurius Pragmaticus* (For King Charls II) 2 pars Num. 3 (1–8 May 1649)
E554/12, 370.03
- 13.4 *Mercurius Pragmaticus* (For King Charls II) 2 pars Num. 4 (8–15 May 1649)
E555/14, 370.04B
- 13.5 *Mercurius Pragmaticus* For King Charls II Pars 2 Numb. 5 (15–22 May 1649)
E556/5, 370.05B
- 13.6 *Mercurius Pragmaticus* For King Charls II Pars 2 Numb. 6 (22–29 May 1649)
E556/30, 370.06B
- 13.7 *Mercurius Pragmaticus* For King Charls II Pars 2 Numb. 7 (29 May–5 June 1649)
E558/20, 370.07B
- 13.8 *Mercurius Pragmaticus* (For King Charls II) 2 pars Num. 8 (5–12 June 1649)
E559/14, 370.08B
- 13.9 *Mercurius Pragmaticus* For King Charls II Pars 2 Numb. 9 (12–19 June 1649)
E560/19, 370.09B
- 13.10 *Mercurius Pragmaticus* (For King Charls II) 2 pars Num. 10 (19–26 June 1649)
E561/16, 370.10B

VERSION 14:

Samuel Sheppard? Continuation of version 10.

- 14.1 *Mercurius Pragmaticus* (For King Charles II) 2 pars Num. 4 (8–15 May 1649)
E555/13, 370.04A
- 14.2 *Mercurius Pragmaticus* (For King Charles II) 2 pars Num. 5 (15–22 May 1649)
E556/4, 370.05A
- 14.3 *Mercurius Pragmaticus* (For King Charls II) 2 pars Num. 6 (22–29 May 1649)
E556/25, 370.06A
- 14.4 *Mercurius Pragmaticus* (For King Charls II) Part 2 Numb. 7 (29 May–5 June 1649)
E558/18, 370.07A
- 14.5 *Mercurius Pragmaticus* (For King Charls II) Part 2 Nu. 8 (5–12 June 1649)
E559/13, 370.08A
- 14.6 *Mercurius Pragmaticus* (For King Charls II) Pars 2 Nu. 9 (12–19 June 1649)
E560/20, 370.09A
- 14.7 *Mercurius Pragmaticus* (For King Charls II) Part 2 Nu. 10 (19–26 June 1649)
E561/17, 370.10A
- 14.8 *Mercurius Pragmaticus* (For King Charls II) Part 2 Nu. 11 (26 June–3 July 1649)
E562/21, 370.11
- 14.9 *Mercurius Pragmaticus* (For King Charls II) Part 2 Nu. 12 (3–10 July 1649)
E563/12, 370.12A
- 14.10 *Mercurius Pragmaticus* (For King Charls II) Part 2 Nu. 13 (10–17 July 1649)
E565/9, 370.13
- 14.11 *Mercurius Pragmaticus* (For King Charls II) Part 2 Nu. 14 (17–24 July 1649)
E565/21, 370.14A
- 14.12 *Mercurius Pragmaticus* (For King Charls II) Part 2 Nu. 15 (24–31 July 1649)
E566/15, 370.15
- 14.13 *Mercurius Pragmaticus* (For King Charls II) Part 2 Nu. 16 (31 July–7 Aug. 1649)
E568/7, 370/16
- 14.14 *Mercurius Pragmaticus* (For King Charls II) Part 2 Nu. 17 (7–14 Aug. 1649)
E569/7, 370.17
- 14.15 *Mercurius Pragmaticus* (For King Charls II) Part 2 Nu. 18 (14–21 Aug. 1649)
E571/8, 370.18
- 14.16 *Mercurius Pragmaticus* (For King Charls II) Part 2 Nu. 19 (21–28 Aug. 1649)
E571/30, 370.19
- 14.17 *Mercurius Pragmaticus* (For King Charls II) Part 2 Nu. 20 (28 Aug.–4 Sept. 1649)
E572/18, 370.20
- 14.18 *Mercurius Pragmaticus* (For King Charls II) Part 2 Nu. 21 (4–11 Sept. 1649)
E573/9, 370.21
- 14.19 *Mercurius Pragmaticus* (For King Charls II) Part 2 Nu. 22 (11–18 Sept. 1649)
E574/1, 370.22

- 14.20 *Mercurius Pragmaticus* (For King Charls II) Part 2 Nu. 23 (18–25 Sept. 1649)
E574/21, 370.23
- 14.21 *Mercurius Pragmaticus* (For King Charls II) Part 2 Nu. 24 (25 Sept.–2 Oct. 1649)
E575/3, 370.24
- 14.22 *Mercurius Pragmaticus* (For King Charls II) Part 2 Nu. 25 (9–16 Oct. 1649)
E575/20, 370.25
- 14.23 *Mercurius Pragmaticus* (For King Charls II) Part 2 Nu. 26 (16–23 Oct. 1649)
E575/28, 370.26
- 14.24 *Mercurius Pragmaticus* (For King Charls II) Part 2 Nu. 27 (23–30 Oct. 1649)
E575/40, 370.27
- 14.25 *Mercurius Pragmaticus* (For King Charls II) Part 2 Nu. 28 (30 Oct.–6 Nov. 1649)
E578/4, 370.28
- 14.26 *Mercurius Pragmaticus* (For King Charls II) Part 2 Nu. 29 (13–20 Nov. 1649)
370.29
- 14.27 *Mercurius Pragmaticus* (For King Charls II) Part 2 Nu. 30 (20–27 Nov. 1649)
370.30
- 14.28 *Mercurius Pragmaticus* (For King Charls II) Part 2 Nu. 31 (27 Nov.–4 Dec. 1649)
E584/10, 370.31
- 14.29 *Mercurius Pragmaticus* (For King Charls II) Part 2 Nu. 32 (4–11 Dec. 1649)
lost?
- 14.30 *Mercurius Pragmaticus* (For King Charls II) Part 2 Nu. 33 (11–18 Dec. 1649)
E585/3, 370.33
- 14.31 *Mercurius Pragmaticus* (For King Charls II) Part 2 Nu. 34 (18–25 Dec. 1649)
370.34
- 14.32 *Mercurius Pragmaticus* (For King Charls II) Part 2 Nu. 35 (25 Dec. 1649–1 Jan. 1650)
E587/8, 370.35
- 14.33 *Mercurius Pragmaticus* (For King Charls II) Part 2 Nu. 36 (1–8 Jan. 1650)
E589/5, 370.36
- 14.34 *Mercurius Pragmaticus* (For King Charls II) Part 2 Nu. 37 (8–15 Jan. 1650)
E589/12, 370.37
- 14.35 *Mercurius Pragmaticus* (For King Charls II) Part 2 Nu. 38 (15–22 Jan. 1650)
370.38
- 14.36 *Mercurius Pragmaticus* (For King Charls II) Part 2 Nu. 39 (22–29 Jan. 1650)
E590/6, 370.39
- 14.37 *Mercurius Pragmaticus* (For King Charls II) Part 2 Nu. 40 (29 Jan.–5 Feb. 1650)
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- 14.38 *Mercurius Pragmaticus* (For King Charls II) Part 2 Nu. 41 (5–12 Feb. 1650)
E592/12, 370.41
- 14.39 *Mercurius Pragmaticus* (For King Charls II) Part 2 Nu. 42 (12–19 Feb. 1650)
E593/15, 370.42

- 14.40 *Mercurius Pragmaticus (For King Charls II)* Part 2 Nu. 43 (19–26 Feb. 1650)
E594/7, 370.43
- 14.41 *Mercurius Pragmaticus (For King Charls II)* Part 2 Nu. 44 (26 Feb.–5 Mar. 1650)
E594/17, 370.44
- 14.42 *Mercurius Pragmaticus (For King Charls II)* Part 2 Nu. 45 (5–12 Mar. 1650)
E594/24, 370.45
- 14.43 *Mercurius Pragmaticus (For King Charls II)* Part 2 Nu. 46 (12–19 Mar. 1650)
E595/8, 370.46
- 14.44 *Mercurius Pragmaticus (For King Charls II)* Part 2 Nu. 47 (19–26 Mar. 1650)
E596/12, 370.47
- 14.45 *Mercurius Pragmaticus (For King Charls II)* Part 2 Nu. 48 (2–9 Apr. 1650)
E597/15, 370.48
- 14.46 *Mercurius Pragmaticus (For King Charls II)* Part 2 Nu. 49 (9–16 Apr. 1650)
E598/5, 370.49
- 14.47 *Mercurius Pragmaticus (For King Charls II)* Part 2 Nu. 50 (16–23 Apr. 1650)
E598/15, 370.50
- 14.48 *Mercurius Pragmaticus (For King Charls II)* Part 2 Nu. 51 (23–30 Apr. 1650)
E599/5, 370.51
- 14.49 *Mercurius Pragmaticus (For King Charls II)* Part 2 Nu. 52 (30 Apr.–7 May 1650)
E600/6, 370.52
- 14.50 *Mercurius Pragmaticus (For King Charls II)* Part 2 Nu. 53 (7–14 May 1650)
E601/2, 370.53
- 14.51 *Mercurius Pragmaticus (For King Charls II)* Part 2 Nu. 54 (14–21 May 1650)
E601/10, 370.54
- 14.52 *Mercurius Pragmaticus (For King Charls II)* Part 2 Nu. 55 (21–28 May 1650)
E602/15, 370.55

VERSION 15

- 15.1 *Mercurius Pragmaticus For King Charls II* Pars 2 Numb. 12 (3–10 July 1649)
370.12B

VERSION 16

- 16.1 *Mercurius Pragmaticus For King Charls II* Pars 2 Numb 14 (17–24 July 1649)
370.14B

VERSION 17

- 17.1 *Mercurius Pragmaticus For King Charls II* Numb. 1 (10–17 Sept. 1649)
E573/25, 371.1
- 17.2 *Mercurius Pragmaticus For King Charls II* Numb. 2 (17–24 Sept. 1649)
E574/20, 371.2

 **Abstract**

Jason Peacey explores and redefines the phenomenon of counterfeiting among the royalist newsbooks of the late 1640s by looking in detail at *Mercurius Pragmaticus* (1647–50), which scholars have usually associated with a single editor, Marchamont Nedham. He develops thematic, stylistic, and formal criteria for distinguishing seventeen separate versions of that title in those three years (listed in an appendix, with their dates of publication and probable editors). He argues that “counterfeiting” was not commercially motivated piracy but reflected political disagreement among the royalists, and that “interlopers” apparently initiating new versions often had legitimate ties with prior incarnations of the publication. Peacey suggests that a group of editors may have founded the publication, parting ways in the highly contested arena of the late 1640s.