

## Arthur der Weduwen

### *An unknown early monthly journal of the Netherlands*

Joost Smient and *Den Nederlantse Mercurius* (1665)

#### Abstract

This article examines one of the earliest periodicals published in the Dutch Republic, the hitherto unknown *Nederlantse Mercurius* (1665). Only a single issue of this monthly journal has survived, but its publication history can be enriched considerably thanks to extant newspaper advertisements. This article investigates the *Nederlantse Mercurius* in the context of the growth of the periodical market in the seventeenth century; in the context of the career and family ties of the man responsible for the journal, the Amsterdam printer Joost Otto Smient, a young publisher launching his first independent venture; and in the context of the European news market.

**Keywords:** Dutch Republic; journals; periodicals; seventeenth century

The seventeenth-century Dutch Republic was an innovative centre of serial publishing. As early as 1618, there were two weekly competing newspapers in Amsterdam. Other titles would follow within several years in Arnhem, Delft and Utrecht. The Dutch Republic would also be home to the first newspapers published in the English and French languages (both 1620), while Amsterdam newspapermen played a crucial role in the development of newspaper advertising. By the 1640s, the Dutch Republic was without doubt the most dynamic centre of newspaper publishing in Europe, providing the greatest range of competing titles.<sup>1</sup>

The pioneering role played by Dutch newsmen in the first half of the seventeenth century is now well established. Lesser attention has been paid to the early role of the Dutch in the emergence of periodicals (that is, non-newspaper serials) later in the seventeenth century.<sup>2</sup> The century after 1660 was, throughout Europe, marked by the arrival of numerous journals: scientific, literary,

1 Arthur der Weduwen, *Dutch and Flemish Newspapers of the Seventeenth Century*. 2 vols., Leiden: Brill, 2017.

2 P.J. Buijnsters, *Spectatoriale Geschriften*. Utrecht: Hes, 1991.

cultural and news periodicals that appeared in biannual, quarterly, monthly or fortnightly instalments. In this field, the Dutch market initially played catch-up. The most dynamic centres of periodical publishing would be London and Paris, while the genre would also grow quickly in the vast German literary market. Initially, Dutch publishers happily occupied themselves by providing pirate editions of the Parisian *Journal des Sçavans* and Latin translations of the English *Philosophical Transactions* for the European market.<sup>3</sup>

The Huguenot influx after the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes saw the appearance of many scholarly French-language journals in the Dutch Republic, chiefly in Amsterdam, Rotterdam and The Hague. Review journals like Pierre Bayle's *Nouvelles de la republique des lettres* (1684-1718) and the *Histoire des Ouvrages des Sçavans* (1687-1709) would become leading publications in their own right, read across Europe and eagerly collected.<sup>4</sup> By the early eighteenth century, the French *Journaux des Hollande* were an unmissable part of European scholarly discourse. The Dutch-language periodical market was initially more reticent.<sup>5</sup> The first Dutch review journal in the style of the Huguenot quarterlies was the *Boekzaal van Europe* (1692-1702) of Pieter Rabus.<sup>6</sup> A successful Dutch *Spectator* would not appear until the 1730s, at the same time as Dutch publishers produced many reprints, in French and Dutch, of the original English *Tatler* and *Spectator* of Richard Steele and Joseph Addison. In the later 1690s, two satirical bi-weekly Dutch journals, covering a miscellany of current affairs, science, philosophy and literature, appeared in The Hague and Amsterdam, and although they proved popular, they were not immediately imitated.<sup>7</sup>

By far the most successful Dutch-language periodical was an annual review of current affairs, the *Hollandse Mercurius*. Founded in Haarlem in 1651 by Pieter

3 The *Acta philosophica Societatis Regiae in Anglia* were published in Amsterdam between 1671 and 1681 by Hendrick and Dirck Boom. At least some fifty issues of the *Journal des Sçavans* were reprinted in Amsterdam in the final thirty years of the seventeenth century. See also on the genre more broadly, Noah Moxham, 'Authors, Editors and Newsmongers: Form and Genre in the Philosophical Transactions under Henry Oldenburg', in: Joad Raymond and Noah Moxham (eds.), *News Networks in Early Modern Europe*. Leiden: Brill, 2016, 465-492.

4 Hans Bots, *De Republiek der Letteren. De Europese Intellectuele Wereld, 1500-1760*. Nijmegen: Vantilt, 2018, 169-195; Anne Goldgar, *Impolite Learning: Conduct and Community in the Republic of Letters, 1680-1750*. London: Yale University Press, 1995, 12-114.

5 Inger Leemans and Gert-Jan Johannes, *Worm en donder. Geschiedenis van de Nederlandse literatuur, 1700-1800: de Republiek*. 2nd ed., Amsterdam: Bert Bakker, 2017, 157-190.

6 Hans Bots, *Pieter Rabus en de Boekzaal van Europe, 1692-1702*. Amsterdam: Holland Universiteits Pers, 1974.

7 The *Haegse Mercurius* of Hendrik Doedijns (219 issues between 7 August 1697 and 9 September 1699) and the *Nieuwe Oprechte Haegse Mercur* of Cornelis van Bynkershoek (30 issues between 25 May and 4 September 1699).

Casteleyn, the *Hollandse Mercurius* was published for the better part of four decades as a substantial quarto pamphlet, covering the critical European news stories of the past year. It was largely composed using newspaper reports and pamphlet literature, but also reprinted in full other contemporary documents, letters, orations and proclamations. Its success can be judged from the fact that back issues were frequently reprinted by the Casteleyns, as well as pirated by printers in other cities. Sets of the chronicle can be found in virtually all great Dutch libraries of the age: the *Hollandse Mercurius* was widely regarded as a first draft of history.<sup>8</sup> In the early 1690s, its mantle would be taken over by the Amsterdam *Europische Mercurius*, published first in quarterly, then bi-annual instalments. Other news and current affairs journals would follow in its stead, but although these types of periodicals made up a substantial proportion of the market, they have not been subjected to the same degree of investigation as the learned journals.<sup>9</sup>

The history of periodical publishing in the Netherlands can now be enriched with the identification of one of its earliest titles, the *Nederlantse Mercurius* of 1665. A single issue of this monthly journal has survived in the Herzog August Bibliothek in Wolfenbüttel, and we can also supplement our knowledge of this title thanks to newspaper advertisements. It was produced by a young printer, Joost Otto Smient (1638-1667), whose career has never before been investigated.

Smient's *Nederlantse Mercurius* misses out narrowly in the claim for the title of the oldest Dutch monthly periodical. This was the work of Henricus Hondius of The Hague, who in the early months of 1663 published at least three monthly issues of the *Maendelike Portugeese Mercurius*.<sup>10</sup> This was a direct translation of the first Portuguese news serial, the Lisbon *Mercurio Portuquez*, and so the *Nederlantse Mercurius* does represent the oldest original Dutch monthly

8 Garrelt Verhoeven and Sytze van der Veen, *De Hollandse Mercurius: een Haarlems jaarboek uit de zeventiende eeuw*. Haarlem: Bubb Kuyper, 2011; Andrew Pettegree and Arthur der Weduwen, *The Bookshop of the World. Making and Trading Books in the Dutch Golden Age*. London: Yale University Press, 2019, 360-361.

9 Notable exceptions include the work of Joop Koopmans and Marion Brétéché. See Joop Koopmans, *Early Modern Media and the News in Europe*. Leiden: Brill, 2018; and Marion Brétéché, *Les compagnons de Mercure: Journalisme et politique dans l'Europe de Louis XIV*. Paris: Champ Vallon, 2015.

10 *Maendelike Portugeese Mercurius*. Den Haag: Henricus Hondius, [1663]. The first issue, covering January 1663, survives in the Royal Library in The Hague (KB: 325 C 232.). Issues two and three, covering February and March, survive in the University Library in Ghent (BIB.MEUL.003953 and BIB.MEUL.003954). The Portuguese original is *Mercurio Portuquez, com as novas da Guerra entre Portugal & Castella: comença no principio de anno de 1663*. Lisbon: Henrique Valente Oliveira, 1663-1667.

publication, and a remarkable contribution to the diversification of periodical publishing. This article will delve into the life and career of Joost Smient, and investigate the context and content of his monthly journal. What emerges is an account in which family business and a highly integrated European news market stand central to creative innovation in a new genre of the publishing trade. This was a sector, as the *Hollandse Mercurius* demonstrated, in which substantial rewards could be reaped, but one in which only the successful titles are remembered by scholars today. The periodical trade grew through failure as much as success.

### A young printer makes his way

Joost Otto Smient came from a well-established printing family. His grandfather, Barent Otsz (1585-1647), was one of the principal printers of Amsterdam in the first decades of the seventeenth century, when the city was rapidly developing into the busiest publishing centre of the Dutch Republic.<sup>11</sup> Otsz would spawn a notable printing dynasty in Amsterdam, through his eldest son Otto Barentsz Smient (1614-1689), and in Dordrecht and Gorinchem, through his youngest child, Jan Barentsz Smient (1621-1662).<sup>12</sup> These two branches of the family supported one another, and initially followed a similar path. Their strong Dutch Reformed credentials ensured that they would enjoy a substantial share of the market for Reformed Bibles, Testaments and psalm books. Otto, the most prolific member of the family, was one of the first printers of the States Bible in Amsterdam, as part of a consortium of publishers who would not abide by the monopoly granted to the dominant Van Wouw firm in The Hague.<sup>13</sup>

Whereas his family in Dordrecht and Gorinchem would focus almost exclusively on the Reformed devotional trade, Otto Barentsz Smient was also one of the most prominent publishers of popular Dutch literature, including chivalric tales, school books, plays, farces and songs books. In 1655, his portfolio

11 M.M. Kleerkooper and W.P. van Stockum, *De boekhandel te Amsterdam voornamelijk in de 17e eeuw: biographische en geschiedkundige aantekeningen*. 2 vols., 's-Gravenhage: Nijhoff, 1914-1916, I, 724-725.

12 On Otto Smient see Kleerkooper and Van Stockum, *De boekhandel te Amsterdam*, I, 726-732 and Der Weduwen, *Dutch and Flemish Newspapers*, I, 28-30, 185-186, II, 1160-1164. Otto Smient does not appear in I.H. van Eeghen's magisterial overview of the Amsterdam print trade between 1680 and 1720, despite the fact that his career ran into the 1680s.

13 For a succinct account of the drama surrounding the publication of the States Bible, see Pettegree and Der Weduwen, *Bookshop of the World*, 125-130.



Courante uyt Italien en Duytslant, 1665. Nr. 25.

ITALIEN.

Omen den 30 May. Regens den 3 der een-naems de maert / meet van Duas dan d'elke Gandofo hier wederom vermaert / om den 4 Junij het Jersk Gopocis d'ijghel te verlossen.

VENETIEN den 5 Junij. Het Cosia is een noog-nieuw Minister / herinaden sal sijn van Sijn coninc / in schrift genomen / by wils met eenige Brieven in schrift gheschreyen de Consta- ntiopolen men doet uyt de selve groote dingen te verlaeten.

VRANCKRYCK.

PARYS den 15 Junij. Men gheschiet doer dat Dur de Beaufort / met sijn Schuytsche Schepen / uyt de s'abbdelandische Aer soude bevochten wesen / doch sijn sekerstept.

ENGLAND, &c.

Londen den 15 Junij. Doo de vegen-waerdige veyt-slant van alken sal sijn De lantet ber / i d'elke niet vergeten gelyck in 't s'uyepben van 't selve b' geseit wiet; / maer sal nu Raen op opje n verlienen van den coninc.

Wenen den 6 Junij. De Russische Ambassade / met sijn gewel- dige gemoet sijn uyt Amers aen-ghenomen / en sal haer tot den 8 d'elke verlijpen / als wanneer in dese Stad sijn in-trede sal woen; / de Ducep is aen-gebiedt om haer in de wapenen geeret te houden en te Raen den geseit en megh dien by passeren sal.

Regensburgh den 11 Junij. In Materia Capitulationis meet noch inder selve stil gereset wesen; / hope van een goet s'fiet.

FRANCKRIJCK den 15 Junij. Het Geroffel is admiss / dat een Dattische Couciet met Zweden aen den keur-ness van Zwedenburgh aldaer van den Gouverneur in Xerck vofte genomen sijn; / dit inacht wel niet beel geseit.

HAMBURGH den 16 Junij. In de Zont s'neenige Amersche Goleg-schepen aen-ghenomen. Men heeft hier dapper horeen s'fiet; / by d'elke vergeten maer dat de Qualitades niet de Engelschen aen haeren sijn gemaelt.

NEDERLANDEN.

Uyt het Schip Gelleraut op Telfel / roonden den 15 Junij. Den 13 d'elke sijn wy met de Engelsche s'fiet geseit; / waerint de niet het hiechen van den d'elke is loef s'habden maer haer seer vooj-veeligh; / onsen Amiraet Othman en Kaptayn Raiken was op aenmeeren de horeen waer te horeen; / seer haer oer seer mis- lochten; / geseit gelyc haer aen / eyndelich is den Amiraet s'fiet een wyl door geseit sijn Schip op g'rijpenen.

Uyt Meeden-blick den 8 d'io. Den 15 d'elke sijn de 9 s'fiet uyt geseit Goleg-schepen in Schell weder binnen g'hehoeren; / hebende de Engelsche berges op haer haer jacht gemaekt; / so dat nu onsen 70 Schepen in Xerck sijn; / by geseit so in 't Wile en in de Maes so d'ere nu w'pulle w'eren geseit.

Rotterdam den 8 Junij. Giffren is den Amiraet geseit-kech alhier aen g'hemet en g'ebangen s'fiet; / haer met Jan Chereff, Amiraet van S'fiet uyt de Wloot / met niet groot gemoet van 't 10.

WY een veyt lantck ghelegen hebende in Textel, en siende de Engelle voor onse W'at knonnende doer W'iet niet klaer waren uyt-lopen, synde ewendelick g'ereet, en op Pinxter waren als wy met de Zeeuwe Vloot versterct waren begonnen uyt te lopen, so dat de laatste Schepen Sondagh inorghens ten 4 uren al buyten Gades waren, bleven onw'ent het Lant Kruy;

diversified further, when he secured from the burgomasters of Amsterdam the privilege to publish the *Courante uyt Italien, Duytlandt, &c.*, the oldest Dutch newspaper, published in that city since 1618. In the years after taking over the *Courante*, it seems that Otto focussed predominantly on the business of news. Like many newspapermen, he also produced occasional news broadsheets and pamphlets which appeared alongside his newspaper issues. This evidently took up much of Smient's time, as he was also responsible for the French translation of the *Courante*. The newspaper business brought Smient prestige, but also tribulation. In the later 1650s he faced competition from the dissatisfied heirs of Jan van Hilten, the former publisher of the *Courante*, who had moved to nearby Weesp to set up their own paper. In the early 1660s, when the threat from Weesp was seen off, Otto Smient would be challenged by the *Gazette d'Amsterdam*, a rival French newspaper produced in Amsterdam by Cornelis Jansz Swoll. This conflict rumbled on for the entire decade, and was only resolved in 1673, when Swoll bought out Smient for an annual payment of 200 guilders.

It was during this troublesome period of Otto Smient's career that his eldest son, Joost Otto Smient (1638-1667) became active in the trade. Joost was destined to follow in his father's footsteps, and is likely to have been apprenticed in the print world.<sup>14</sup> On 3 April 1662, aged 23 years old, he entered the Amsterdam printers' guild, but he does not seem to have set himself up independently. When, on 26 June 1665, he married Elisabeth Lonck of Amsterdam, he was living in the home of his father on the Reguliersbreestraat, 'In the *Nieuwe Druckery* (New Print Shop)'. The same address features on his extant publications, and we know from the documentation accompanying his burial on 7 February 1667 that he was still sharing his father's house at the time of his death.<sup>15</sup>

Despite sharing his father's house, and presumably the press in his print shop, Joost Smient had his own ambitions. He first appears in the trade under his own name when mentioned in an advertisement in the *Ordinaris Dingsdaeghsche Courante*, the Tuesday Amsterdam paper, of 22 March 1661. In this notice, Jan Barentsz Smient (Joost's uncle) and Helmigh van Cappel advertised four new works: a New Testament, a psalm book, and two Bibles, one in octavo and one in folio. At the end, the advertisement mentioned that the folio Bible was also available in Amsterdam with Joost Smient.<sup>16</sup> A year later, in 1662, Joost's first

14 Kleerkooper and Van Stockum, *De boekhandel te Amsterdam*, I, 733. See also Smient's profile on ECARTICO: <http://www.vondel.humanities.uva.nl/ecartico/persons/30045>, last accessed 14 December 2020.

15 Ibidem.

16 *Ordinaris Dingsdaeghsche Courante*, no 12, 22 March 1661.

publications appeared. These included two works by the Amsterdam minister Casparus de Carpentier (1615-1667), and a reprint of a short but popular play by Abraham Bormeester, the *Infidelitas: ofte Ontrouwe dienstmaagt* (Infidelity, or the Disloyal Maidservant).<sup>17</sup> Two other works were published jointly with his father Otto: a substantial theological work by Jacobus Sceperus (1607-1677) and the first parts of a massive folio compilation of the statutes and laws of the city of Amsterdam.<sup>18</sup>

This was all work that fitted snugly into the Smient family's print profile. De Carpentier and Sceperus were stern Reformed ministers, while Bormeester's play was a popular seller.<sup>19</sup> The volume of statutes, the one major publication that the Smients undertook in the 1660s, was undoubtedly the result of Otto Smient's connections with the magistrates as the printer of the *Courante uyt Italien*. Yet these were also all publications that Otto Smient could have taken on alone. The financial relationship between father and son remains ambiguous, and it is not clear whether Joost bought himself into the business, or whether these were essentially works produced by Otto, who was gradually handing the reins to his eldest son, anticipating his own retirement.

After 1662, there is less evidence of Joost Smient's activities. On 8 December 1663 he placed an advertisement in his father's newspaper that he sold 'playing cards and wooden toys'.<sup>20</sup> In 1664, he would publish one more work with his father, a cheap reprint of Arnoldus Montanus's biographies of the princes of Orange, from William I to William III.<sup>21</sup> It is certainly possible that other

17 Casparus de Carpentier, *Den gewitten ofbekeerden Moorman*. Amsterdam: Joost Smient, 1662, 7 sheets in duodecimo. Idem, *Tranen-vloet Jesu Christi over Jerusalems tegenwoordige sonden en toekomende wonden*. Amsterdam: Joost Smient, 1662, 6 sheets in duodecimo. Abraham Bormeester, *Infidelitas: ofte Ontrouwe dienstmaagt*. Amsterdam: Joost Smient, 1662, 2.5 sheets in quarto.

18 Jacobus Sceperus, *Chrysopolipoimeen, dat is Goutsche herder, verdedigende Chrysopolerotum, dat is Goutsche vrager, tegen de drijvingen van Philippus van Limburgh*. Amsterdam: Otto Smient and Joost Smient, 1662, a work of 50 sheets in octavo. *Handvesten, privilegien, octroyen, costumen en wille keuren der stad Amstelredam*. Amsterdam: Otto Smient, Joost Smient and Barent Smient, 1662-1683. The publication history of this great tome is not immediately evident, but it seems that Otto and Joost Smient produced the bulk of this work between 1662 and 1664, and that Otto and his other son Barent produced the final parts between 1670 and 1683. Altogether the work comprises over 370 sheets in folio.

19 On Bormeester's play, see also ECARTICO: <http://www.vondel.humanities.uva.nl/onstage/plays/202>, last accessed 16 March 2021. It was performed twice at the Amsterdam *Schouwburg* in 1662.

20 *Courante uyt Italien en Duytslant, &c.*, no 49, 8 December 1663. This is incidentally the first reference we find to the sale of either playing cards or toys in a newspaper.

21 [Arnoldus Montanus], *Willem de I. Maurits, Frederick Willem de II. en Willem de III. van Nassouw, haer leven en bedrijf*. Amsterdam: Otto Smient and Joost Smient, 1664, 31 sheets in duodecimo. A more expensive edition in 69 sheets in octavo appeared earlier the same year with Arent van den Heuvel and Samuel Imbrechts of Amsterdam.

works were printed by Joost around this time: many of his publications, and those of his father, were short duodecimos, news pamphlets or broadsheets. Many survive today in only a single copy. This is also true of Joost Smient's greatest venture, his monthly periodical. Only the first issue of his *Nederlantse Mercurius* survives, and this is a unique survivor, kept today in the Herzog August Bibliothek in Wolfenbüttel.<sup>22</sup>

Crucial evidence that this was not a one-off issue is provided in newspaper advertisements, one of the most valuable sources to identify early modern books that are no longer extant today.<sup>23</sup> To Dutch publishers of the seventeenth century, these advertisements were a helpful form of publicity, useful to entice potential customers, and to communicate with colleagues in the trade, many of whom stocked the Amsterdam newspapers.<sup>24</sup> To Joost Smient, placing a series of advertisements was essential to the successful launch of his new venture. Understandably, he advertised his periodical in his father's *Courante uyt Italien*. The oldest extant advertisement appeared on 14 March 1665:

In Amsterdam, Joost Otto Smient, living at the house of his father Otto Barentsz Smient, has published this last week *Den Nederlantse Mercurius*, which narrates briefly what noteworthy events have occurred in Europe month by month, this being the description of the first month, January 1665. There is currently in preparation the history of the month of February, and it will thus be continued each month. These [issues] will all be sent to the booksellers who receive the newspapers, so that the other booksellers know where to acquire these.<sup>25</sup>

22 *Den Nederlantsche Mercurius. Welcke kortelick verhaelt, wat van Maend tot Maend in Europa gedenkwaerdigh is voor gevallen, 1665. Ianuarius*. Amsterdam: Joost Smient, [1665], HAB Wolfenbüttel: Xd 8° 1435.1.

23 Arthur der Weduwen, 'Lost and found. On the trail of the forgotten literature of the Dutch Golden Age', in: *Jaarboek voor Nederlandse Boekgeschiedenis* 27 (2020), 45-65.

24 Arthur der Weduwen and Andrew Pettegree, *The Dutch Republic and the Birth of Modern Advertising*. Leiden: Brill, 2020; and, for the full text of thousands of advertisements, our *News, Business and Public Information. Advertisements and Announcements in Dutch and Flemish Newspapers, 1620-1675*. Leiden: Brill, 2020; see also Arthur der Weduwen, 'Booksellers, newspaper advertisements and a national market for print in the seventeenth-century Dutch Republic', in: Shanti Graheli (ed.), *Buying and Selling. The Business of Books in Early Modern Europe*. Leiden: Brill, 2019, 420-447.

25 *Courante uyt Italien, Duytslandt, &c.*, no 11, 14 March 1665. 'T'Amsterdam by Joost Otto Smient, woonende ten huysse van sijn vader Otto Barentsz Smient is van de weeck uyt ghegeven Den Nederlantse Mercurius, welcke kortelick verhaelt wat van maend tot maend in Europa gedenkwaerdig is voor-gevallen, sijnde dit de beschrijvinghe van de eerste maend January 1665. is nu onder-handen de geschiedenis van de maend February, en sal so maendlijck vervolgt worden. Deselve sullen



laack/daer men ber-  
 3 alrede seggen daer  
 en komen / sullen in  
 3 na Texel en so in  
 ndeur Verhulft is met  
 3 belopen na Cessel/om  
 cael Jan Evertsz. met  
 / weert met meerder ge-  
 3 icht; 3 anders werde  
 3 ghegheken worden.  
 dagheit toe/so dat alle  
 3 den. Alle Compagnye  
 3 Secuse Compagnye  
 3 den/en des noot sijnde  
 Dozlogs Schepen upt  
 3 te werden: sullen op't

den meer gemonstert / so dat alle Schepen in't kort bol-  
 3 men sullen bemant wesen en dat sander Crommel slaen/  
 3 de toe-loop is soo groot dat het te verwonderen is/en de  
 3 Kapiteyns seer heurigh om met hjaef Dolch in See te  
 3 gaen. De Kapers rusten haer mede seer sterck toe / en  
 3 sullen soo van dese Stadt als andere Plaetsen in't kort  
 3 een groot getal in See komen/boven die al upt sijn.

**T** Amsterdam by looft Otto Smient, woonende ten huysse van  
 3 sijn Vader Otto Barentsz. Smient is van de werck upt ghege-  
 3 ven Den Nederlantse Mercurius, welke kortelick verhaelt wat van  
 3 maend tot maend in Europa gedenekwaerdig is vooz-geballen/  
 3 sijnde dit de beschijvinghe van de eerste maend January 1665. is  
 3 nu onder-handen de geschiedenisse van de maend February/en sal  
 3 so maendlijck verholgt worden. Dese sullen continnelijck ges-  
 3 fonden worden aen die Boeck-verkopers daer de Couranten aen  
 3 gesonden worden/al waer de andere Boeck-verkopers die sullen  
 3 konnen bekomen.

van de Bomen en Planten van de *Hortus Medicus*.  
 3 ab Amsterdam/willen verhopen de Bomen/krupden en Bollen van de Hortus Medicus.  
 3 r / laten sich binden in de Hortus Medicus vooz; op den 27 April 1665. vooz; de middagh ten  
 3 us is te bekomen tot Amsterdam / ten Huysse van Johannes van Ravesteyn, Stads Drucker.  
 3 Lepden by Salomon Wagenaer. Tot Harderwijck by Aert Wouterz Paick, Tot Fran-  
 3 ken by Jochem Frilingh. Tot Franckfoort/in de Boeck-winkel van Johannes van Ravesteyn,  
 3 binnen der Stede Leerdam, is van meninge aen de meest daer vooz; biedende te verkoopen een  
 3 met 3 paar Steenen / reffens een seer bequaca: Huys / Schuer / Kerck en Drallinge vooz; de  
 3 aen den anderen gelegen binnen de vooz; Stede in de kortre Kerck-straet: waer van de ver-  
 3 schieden/op den 1 April toe-komende 1665. Nieuwe-stijl/binnen der vooz; Stede. Doch die  
 3 toe-behoren / als mede het Huys en vooz;der gebolgh upt dit hant begeert te kopen / die konnen

Figure 2. The first advertisement for the *Nederlantse Mercurius*, placed in the *Courante uyt Italien* of 14 March 1665. State Archive, Oldenburg

The text is revealing on multiple fronts. It clearly establishes that this is a monthly journal; it advertises the first issue, and announces the next instalment for February. It also indicates that Joost made use of his father's network of booksellers who stocked the *Courante* for the distribution of his periodical. This was Joost's project, but it was one undertaken within the safety of the family network.

Given the poor survival of the *Courante uyt Italien* and the other Amsterdam newspapers for 1665, it is uncertain how many advertisements Joost placed throughout the year. What is certain is that a fortnight after his first announcement, on 28 March, he advertised that the second issue, covering February, was now available, 'similar to the review of January published earlier'.<sup>26</sup> The

continne[n]lijck [sic] gesonden worden aen die boeck-verkopers daer de couranten aen gesonden worden, al waer de andere boeck-verkopers die sullen konnen bekomen.'

26 *Courante uyt Italien, Duytslandt, &c.*, no 13, 28 March 1665.

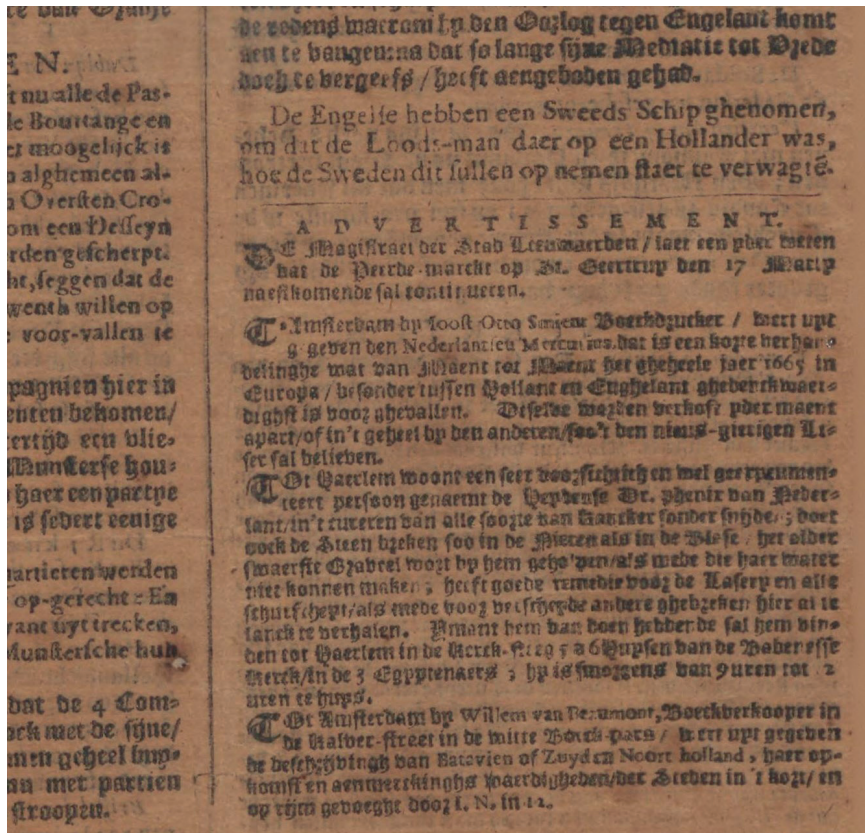


Figure 3. The final advertisement for the *Nederlantse Mercurius*, placed in the *Courante uyt Italien* of 30 January 1666. Persmuseum, Amsterdam

final extant advertisement by Joost appeared on 30 January 1666, when Joost announced that the entire *Nederlantse Mercurius* was now available for the year 1665, month by month:

In Amsterdam, the printer Joost Otto Smient has published the *Nederlantse Mercurius*, that is, a brief account of what took place in Europe from month to month for the duration of the entire year 1665, especially the noteworthy occurrences that took place between Holland and England. The same is sold in monthly parts, or as one complete whole, whatever will please the curious reader.<sup>27</sup>

27 *Courante uyt Italien, Duytslandt, &c.*, no 5, 30 January 1666. 'TAmsterdam by Joost Otto Smient boekdrucker, wert uyt gegeven den Nederlantsen Mercurius, dat is een korte verhandelinghe wat

This advertisement provides crucial evidence that Joost Smient continued to publish the *Nederlantse Mercurius* for the entirety of 1665, and that at the end of the year he offered the twelve issues gathered together as an annual chronicle. What is striking too is that Smient did not announce that the venture would continue in 1666. There is other evidence that he was still active as printer: in December 1665 he published a broadsheet on a local flood, written by the minister Petrus de Lange, and in February or early March 1666 he produced a translation of the English declaration of war on France, after France had entered the Second Anglo-Dutch War on the side of the Dutch Republic.<sup>28</sup> These news publications are the last surviving works of Joost Smient, and there are no further clues from other sources that he published anything else before his death in February 1667.

### *Den Nederlantse Mercurius*

The newspaper advertisements provide valuable evidence of the publication history of Smient's monthly periodical, but they suggest tantalisingly little about the content. Smient stated that his journal covered all European affairs, highlighting in his final advertisement that it was especially useful as a record of the occurrences of the Second Anglo-Dutch War, which had begun in March 1665. It is only thanks to the happy survival of the first issue of the *Nederlantse Mercurius* that we have a sense of the scope of the journal.<sup>29</sup> What becomes clear is that the monthly periodicity of the venture may have been novel in the Dutch Republic, but that its style and content was heavily indebted to broader European newspaper culture. The journal was filled with

van maent tot maent het gheheele jaer 1665 in Europa, besonder tussen Hollant en Enghelant ghedenckwaerdighst is voor ghevalen. Deselve worden verkost yder maent apart, of in't geheel by den anderen, soo't den nieuws-gierigen leser sal believen.'

28 Petrus de Lange, *Gods slaende roede over Holland, in het senden van een groote water-noot; waer door veel dijcken in-gebroken, veel menschen en beesten aldaer sijn verdroncken, tussen den 5 en 6 December, anno 1665*. Amsterdam: Joost Otto Smient, [1665], Leiden UB: THYSPF 7921. *Declaratie van sijn Majesteyt van Groot-Britanien tegens de Franssen Koninck, in het aen seggen van den Oorlog*. Amsterdam: Joost Smient, 1666, KB The Hague: Pfl 9259.

29 The survival of the issue is perhaps not entirely fortuitous: the Herzog August Bibliothek has an extremely good collection of Dutch newspapers, broadsheets and pamphlets from the 1650s and 1660s, a period when Dutch agents like Lieuwe van Aitzema despatched regular consignments of recent publications from the Dutch Republic to Duke August the Younger in Wolfenbüttel. See Marika Keblusek, *Boeken in de Hofstad. Haagse boekcultuur in de Gouden Eeuw*. Hilversum: Verloren, 1997, 252-265.



traditional political, courtly and military news, organised in short paragraphs. These bulletins, in the best newspaper tradition, were designed to inform the reader of the latest noteworthy events, rather than explain or analyse them. The intended audience was expected to be sufficiently initiated in the customs and affairs of European states to make sense of the reports.

The first issue of the *Nederlantse Mercurius* deviates considerably from the normal appearance of a Dutch newspaper. Most newspapers appeared in a distinctive half-sheet folio of two pages, printed front to back in two columns. Smient's periodical is an octavo pamphlet of one and a half sheets of paper (twenty-four pages), signed A8 B4. It is a relatively short and rather simple pamphlet, without much decoration or complex typography. The title-page states:

Den | Nederlansche | Mercurius. |Welcke kortelick verhaelt, wat van| Maend  
tot Maend in Europa gedenk-|waerdigh is voor gevallen,| 1665. | Ianuarius.

The title and sub-title mirror those used in the advertisements, but Smient changed the spelling to *Nederlansche* instead of *Nederlantse*. It can still be assumed that the newspaper advertisement, as was common, was composed from the model of the title-page of the issue.

A woodcut depicting the Roman God Mercury, the only illustrative feature in the periodical, sits directly below the title, and above a rather skewiff imprint, stating: 'At Amsterdam, printed by Joost Otto Smient, at the Reguliersbreestraat'.<sup>30</sup> The Mercury was critical to the appeal of the journal: it was a ubiquitous emblem, used throughout Europe in the titles of newspapers, incidental news pamphlets and journals. In the Dutch Republic, the use of the term *Mercurius* was rather more circumscribed. The most successful newspapers all eschewed the use of the word, but it was adopted repeatedly by the controversial newsman Gerard Lodewijk van der Macht for his series of newspapers printed in The Hague and Utrecht. Van der Macht was still active in the mid-1660s as a publisher of two Utrecht papers, including the bi-weekly *Mercurius*; yet by the time of his final suspension from publishing, in 1669, the term was used in the Dutch Republic exclusively to signify a news journal or chronicle, rather than a newspaper.<sup>31</sup>

30 'T'Amsterdam, ghedruckt by loost Otto Smient, op de Reguliers Bree-straet.'

31 Der Weduwen, *Dutch and Flemish Newspapers*, I, 34-41. Arthur der Weduwen, 'Fear and Loathing in Weesp. Personal and political networks in the Dutch print world', in: Graeme Kemp and Alexander Wilkinson (eds.), *Negotiating Conflict and Controversy in the Early Modern Book World*. Leiden: Brill, 2019, 88-106: 98-106.



Figure 4. The title-page of the first and only surviving issue of the *Nederlantse Mercurius*. The scroll in the right hand of the God Mercury reads 'Sine Mora' (Without Delay). Herzog August Bibliothek, Wolfenbüttel

These linguistic distinctions mattered in the news market, and it is striking that most of Van der Macht's newspapers appeared as quarto pamphlets, instead of folio sheets, reinforcing the association between the term 'Mercurius' and pamphlet news. Yet we should not look to Van der Macht directly for the source of Smient's inspiration, but beyond the borders of the Netherlands, as Joost Smient reflected in the preface for the first issue of his *Nederlantse Mercurius*. The verso of the title-page was entirely given over to this appeal to the reader:

To the reader.

As it is clear that in this year 1665, there will take place in various states of Europe the most remarkable things, some have taken the decision to compose and publish the same [news] under the titles of *Engelsche Mercurius* in London, *Noordsche Mercurius* in Hamburg and others in other states; and as our Netherlands will bring forth no less news and wondrous events as other kingdoms and states, we have decided to publish this, our *Mercurius*, with the promise to continue this from month to month, and year to year, without doubting that its readers will find much enjoyment therein, and will use the same for the [future] recording of history.

Farewell.<sup>32</sup>

Smient framed his *Nederlantse Mercurius* first of all within the context of contemporary affairs. The Second Anglo-Dutch War had not yet erupted, but it was widely expected amongst the Dutch public; as Smient predicted, it would lead to intensive news coverage, in the Netherlands and further afield. Smient suggested here that his journal would appear 'year to year', an ambition which, judging by his advertisement of January 1666, proved over-optimistic. Most revealing is the reference to other *Mercurius* journals published elsewhere in Europe. The first cited by Smient, the *Engelsche Mercurius*, is otherwise unknown.<sup>33</sup> It is unlikely to be a reference to the London *Mercurius Publicus*,

32 *Den Nederlansche Mercurius*, [2]. 'Aen den Leser. Alsoo in verscheyde Rijcken van Europa dit jaer 1665 veel Remarcabels staet te gebeuren, so is by eenige voor genome[n] de selve in 't kort aen te teykenen en uyt te geven, onder de Name van Engelsche Mercurius tot Londen, Noordsche Mercurius tot Hamburgh, als mede in andere Rijcken; Doch alsoo ons Nederland niet min nieuws en wonders sal teelen, als andere Koning-rijcken en Staten, soo hebben wy oock, dese onse Mercurius believen voort te brengen, met belofte van Maent tot Maent en Jaer tot Jaer daer inne te continueeren, niet twijfelende of de Lesers sullen hier contentement in vinden, en de selve tot verversinge der verleden geschiedenissen gebruycken. Vaert wel.'

33 It is not listed in Carolyn Nelson and Matthew Seccombe, *British newspapers and periodicals, 1641-1700*. New York: Modern Language Association of America, 1987, and I have been unable to find out any further information about this periodical.



## *Aen den Leser.*

**A**lfoo in verscheyde Rijcken van Europa dit jaer 1665 veel Remarcabels staet te gebeuren, so is by eenige voor genomē de selve in 't kort aen te teyckenen en uyt te geven, onder de Name van *Engelsche Mercurius* tot Londen, *Noordsche Mercurius* tot Hamburgh, als mede in andere Rijcken; Doch alsoo ons Nederland niet min nieuws en wonders sal teelen, als andere Koning-rijcken en Staten, soo hebben wy oock, dese onse *Mercurius* believen voort te brengen, met belofte, van Maent tot Maent en Jaer tot Jaer daer inne te continueeren, niet twijfelende of de *Lesers* sullen hier contentement in vinden, en de selve tot vervarfinge der verleden geschiedenissen gebruycken.



*Vaert wel.*

16 80 1435. 1

Figure 5. The preface to the reader. Herzog August Bibliothek, Wolfenbüttel

Henry Muddiman's newspaper, which had ceased publication in 1663, and had been replaced by Roger L'Estrange's weekly papers, *The Intelligencer* and *The Newes*. These would, in 1665, give way to the *London Gazette*, the licensed paper of state. If there was a monthly *English Mercury* around 1665, it is unlikely to have appeared for long, given the strict supervision of the English news market in the Restoration period.<sup>34</sup>

In contrast, the German *Nordischer Mercurius* of Hamburg is well known. It was launched in 1664 by the printer Georg Greflinger, appearing initially as a bi-weekly newspaper. In 1665, it became a monthly journal, before reverting back to a twice-weekly paper in 1666. It was by all accounts a successful paper, published until 1730; between 1672 and 1691 it was even published four times a week.<sup>35</sup> The *Nordischer Mercurius* was very clearly Joost Smient's principal source of inspiration. Smient copied faithfully the woodcut of the Mercury on the title-page of the *Nordischer Mercurius*, so accurately indeed that one may presume that Smient's woodcut was produced by an artist who had a copy of the *Nordischer Mercurius* to hand. Smient's sub-title was also a direct translation of the sub-title of the Hamburg title ('Welcher furtslich erzahlet was von monat zu monat in Europa denckwurdig geschehen sen'). The only notable deviation from the Hamburg journal was the fact that Smient did not copy Greflinger's habit to open the first issue of the year with a brief reflection, in several lines of verse, on the state of each European region reported on.

The similarity in appearance of the *Nederlantse Mercurius* to the *Nordischer Mercurius* is striking, but it does prompt the question when Smient decided to publish his venture. After all, Greflinger's Hamburg journal only became a monthly journal in January 1665; before that it had been a bi-weekly newspaper. It is certainly possible that Smient received a copy of the monthly journal in early or mid-February 1665, as the postal connections between Hamburg and Amsterdam were highly reliable. Given that Joost Smient did not publish the January issue of the *Nederlantse Mercurius* until the middle of March, he would have had plenty of time to copy the news from the *Nordischer Mercurius*.

To what extent can we say that Smient did copy and translate the news from the Hamburg monthly? After the preface, Smient's *Nederlantse Mercurius* of January is comprised of twenty-two pages of news summaries, presented under

34 James Sutherland, *The Restoration newspaper and its development*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986.

35 Else Bogel and Elger Blühm, *Die Deutschen Zeitungen des 17. Jahrhunderts*. 3 vols., Bremen: Schünemann Universitätsverlag, 1971, and München: Nachtrag, 1985, I, 180-185, II, 195-203, III, 113, 266. Surviving issues can be accessed digitally via the University Library of Bremen: <https://brema.suub.uni-bremen.de/zeitungen17/periodical/titleinfo/967576y>, last accessed 4 January 2021.

geographical headers: France, Spain, the Holy Roman Empire, England, Italy, Poland, Portugal, the Nordic Kingdoms (meaning Denmark and Sweden) and the Low Countries. These geographical headers mirrored closely those used in the Dutch newspapers of the 1660s. Abraham Casteleyn of Haarlem had been the first to popularise these geographical divisions in his *Oprechte Haerlemse Courant* in the 1650s, and the Amsterdam newsmen, including Otto Barentsz Smient, quickly adopted this model. What is striking is the order that Joost Smient arranged them in. Despite rearranging their news geographically, the newspaper publishers tended to place the oldest news first: thus Italy and Spain usually came first, followed sometimes by Poland, Prussia and Scandinavia, then France, England, the Holy Roman Empire and the Low Countries.

Greflinger also used this system of organisation for his *Nordischer Mercurius*, but the order and the length of his news summaries differed substantially from those of Smient.

**Table 1. The order and length of the news summaries in the January 1665 issues of the *Nederlantse Mercurius* and the *Nordischer Mercurius***

Smient – <i>Nederlantse Mercurius</i>		Greflinger – <i>Nordischer Mercurius</i>	
Headers	Page range	Headers	Page range
France	3-8	Germany and Hungary	6-10
Spain	8-10	Italy	11-13
Holy Roman Empire	10-12	Spain	13-14
England	12-14	France	15-18
Italy	15-17	England	18-19
Poland	17-18	Nordic Kingdoms	20
Portugal	18	Portugal	20
Nordic Kingdoms	18-19	Poland	20-21
Low Countries	19-24	Netherlands	21-22

The substantial differences in the organisation and length of the respective news summaries make clear that Smient was not copying the Hamburg journal in its entirety. He rightly considered that his Dutch audience would have different priorities. The most striking differences are indeed in the length of the Dutch and German sections in both journals: news from or about the Netherlands makes up about a third of Smient's journal, with only two pages devoted to the entire Holy Roman Empire, while in Greflinger's journal, it is German news that makes up the largest section, and Dutch news is represented by a page and a half at the end.

In other respects, it seems that Smient did translate some of Greflinger's content. Half of the Polish, Portuguese and Nordic news in the *Nederlantse Mercurius* is identical to that in the *Nordischer Mercurius*; so are substantial elements of the French, Italian, English and German news. Consider the following paragraph, found under the header of France, on page 5 in Smient's journal, and on page 17 in Greflinger's journal:

Tot Toulon begon een geweldige pest te graseeren, soo dat de voor-naemste burgers beraemden de stad te verlaten, maer sijn noch op aen-maninghe van sommige uyt de magistrate binnen gebleven.<sup>36</sup>

Zu Toulon entstundte solche pest, dass die burger resolvirten die stadt zu verlassen, wurden aber endlich von einigen grossen dahin gehalten, daselbst zu verbleiben.<sup>37</sup>

It is possible that there is some coincidental overlap between the news reports provided in the two journals, and that Smient and Greflinger shared the same sources. Given how closely Smient imitated the *Nordischer Mercurius* in other respects, it seems more likely that, at least for his first issue, Smient relied to a large extent on copy from the Hamburg journal. Altogether, Smient's first issue contains just over 5,000 words in news content; Greflinger's issue contains less, because of a lengthier preface and the opening verse, with some 3,600 words of reports. Reading the two issues side by side, it is probable that Smient lifted at least a third of his news content from Greflinger's journal.

It should be remembered that copying reports from other news publications was the bread and butter of a newsman in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.<sup>38</sup> This was not an unscrupulous business practice, but a tried and tested method of assembling as reliable as possible a digest of news from around the continent. The best news publishers paid a range of international correspondents for news reports, but all news publishers subscribed to an assortment of international newspapers and journals, which were read closely

36 *Den Nederlansche Mercurius*, 5. 'In Toulon a great pestilence began to rage, so that many foremost citizens considered to leave the city, but ultimately they remained, encouraged by some of the magistrates.'

37 *Nordischer Mercurius*, January 1665. Hamburg: Georg Greflinger, [1665], 17. 'In Toulon there emerged pestilence, so great that many citizens resolved to leave the city, but in the end they stayed, encouraged by some of the most notable citizens.'

38 Der Weduwen, *Dutch and Flenish Newspapers*, I, 62-71.



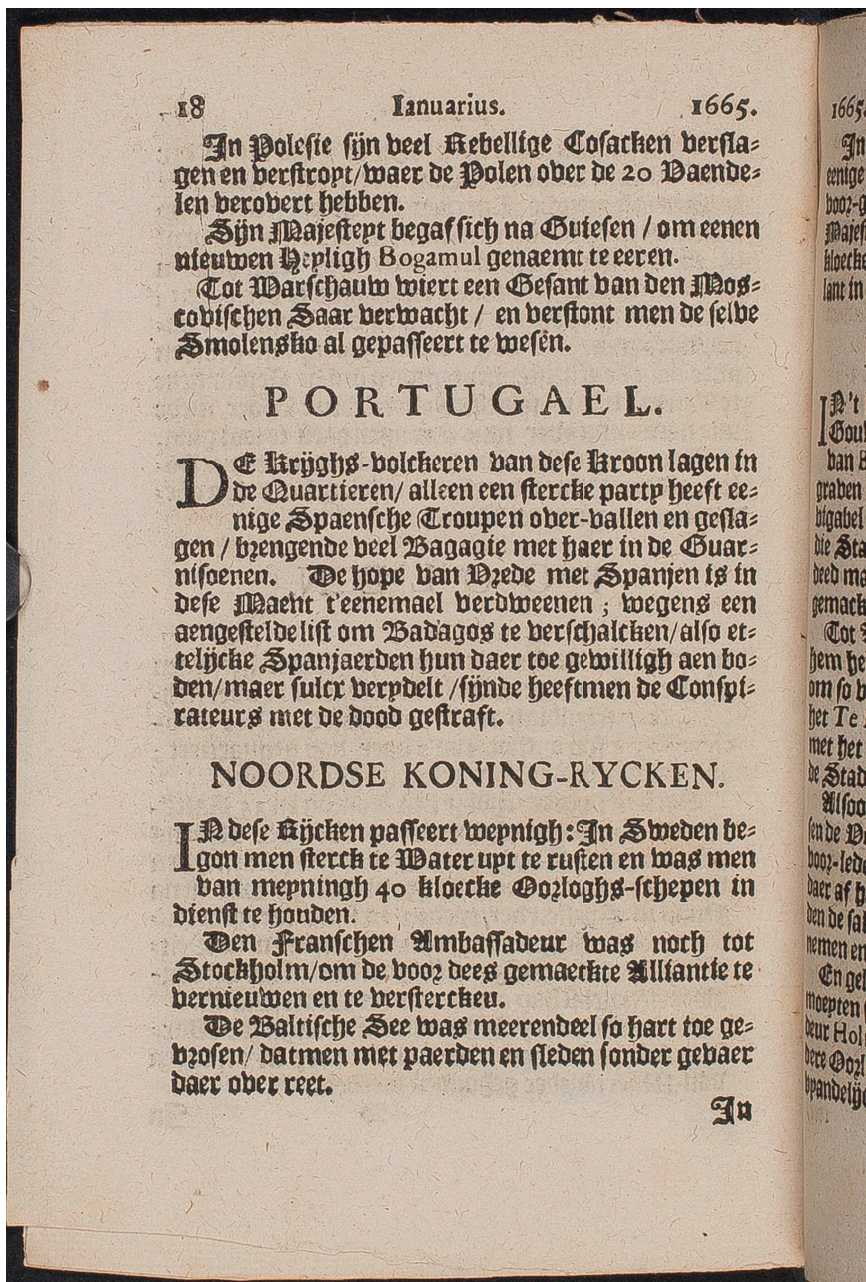


Figure 6. A typical page of the *Nederlantse Mercurius*: these sections, covering Portugal and the Nordic Kingdoms, were almost entirely lifted from the *Nordischer Mercurius*. Herzog August Bibliothek, Wolfenbüttel

for potential content. The well-paid correspondents would also have been expected to read many newspapers, and indeed collate news from their pages.

We can presume that, aside from Greflinger's *Nordischer Mercurius*, Joost Smient made liberal use of the news network of his father Otto Smient. Sadly, this will have to remain an assumption, as only five issues of Otto Smient's *Courante uyt Italien* survive for 1665, none published in January. The other Amsterdam newspapers also survive poorly, with a handful of issues each, and although we have most issues of the bi-weekly *Oprechte Haerlemse Courant* for 1665, we have only a single issue from January. It is noteworthy that the generous space afforded to French, Spanish and Italian news in the *Nederlantse Mercurius* bears resemblance to Otto Smient's *Courante uyt Italien*, which often had lengthy reports from these regions, and shorter reports from the Holy Roman Empire.<sup>39</sup>

Joost Smient's reliance on the newspaper style was ultimately a weakness. He preserved the tone of reporting of the newspapers but was not able to supplement it with additional analysis. The monthly periodicity of the journal allowed Smient to be more discerning in his content than a newspaper publisher, who had to produce one, two or more issues each week. This might have been to Smient's advantage, but newspaper readers were fully aware that the reports they read in the newspapers might not be immediately verified. A monthly journal imposed new standards: readers expected a judicious selection of material in 5,000 words, incorporating the most important news stories whilst avoiding some of the wild rumours that inevitability crept into the newspaper columns. This was a tough prospect, and it is unlikely that Joost Smient lived up to these expectations. In clinging too closely to his father's model of publication, he limited the potential audience for his *Nederlantse Mercurius*: why would a newspaper subscriber, who received one or two weekly issues of 3,000 words of news, also buy a monthly journal of only 5,000 words, when the content of the two forms overlapped almost entirely?

The only indication of what one might describe as original journalism that appeared in the *Nederlantse Mercurius* featured under the lengthy header of the Netherlands. Here Smient included descriptions of a number of recent resolutions issued by the States General in preparation for the war with England. These lengthy ordinances did not often find a place in the newspapers; but then again, Smient's audience would have been informed about these ordinances already thanks to town criers and printed broadsheets, which were exhibited all over town. The oncoming war with England undoubtedly provided a wealth

39 Ibidem, I, 185-186.



1665.

Ianuarius.

19

In Denemarcken was by den Engelfen Gesant eenige tijd gehandelt om nader upt-beydinghe van vooz-gemaecte Tractaet; maer echter nam die Majesteit vooz de Vereentghde Provincien/ met 10 kloecke Oozloghs-schepen wanneer sy met Engellant in den Oozlogh quamen / te assisteeren.

## NEDERLANDEN.

In't begin van dese Maent is Castel Rodrigo Gouverneur van de Spaensche Nederlanden van Brussel na Brugge verreyft / om de nieuwe gegraven Waert te besichtigen / en bebont de selve Davigabel vooz Schepen van 8 a 9 boeten; waer toe die Stad een extraordinaris Groot-hoofd of Kapedeed maken / op dat de groote Schepen daer wel en gemakelijck mochten aen komen.

Tot Antwerpen quam den Viador Generael / by hem hebbende den Soon van den Prins van Ligne, om so voozts na Engellant te gaen; Men songh daer het Te Deum Laudamus in de Cathedrale Kercke / met het luden van de groote kilock / ter oorzake dat de Stad nu geheel van de pest-siechte bezyjt was.

Alsoo de geruchten van een heftige Oozlogh tusen de Vereentghde Nederlanden en Engellant / in't vooz-leden jaer dapper gestropt wierden en d'effecten daer af haer oock rebelijck getoont hebben / soo wierden de saken in dit jaer soo langhs soo erger / dooz het nemen en op bzingen van veel weerlose Schepen.

En gelijck d'Engelsche d'eerste aen-bangers van moepten sijn geweest / soo in Guinee dooz Commandeur Holmes, als ontrent haer eppen kust dooz andere Oozloghs-schepen / soo hebbense oock de eerste bypandelijcke Actie / aen d'Hollandische Smirnische

B 2

Bloot

Figure 7. Smient's most original contribution was presented in the long section of news from the Netherlands, featuring a digest of many recent States General resolutions. Herzog August Bibliothek, Wolfenbüttel

of news to cover, but Smient was not alone in the market. The middle years of the 1660s was actually the busiest period of the seventeenth-century Dutch newspaper trade, with competing titles in Amsterdam, Haarlem, Utrecht, The Hague, Rotterdam and Weesp, and at least twelve Dutch issues published on five days of the week.<sup>40</sup> In many ways these papers were better equipped than the *Nederlantse Mercurius* to provide good coverage of the war. In a naval conflict, news arrived on a daily basis with every new incoming ship; this suited the publication schedule of the newspapers much better than that of a monthly journal.

At the other end of the market, Joost Smient was in competition with the well-established annual chronicle, the *Hollandse Mercurius*. Smient marketed the collected issues of his journal as a historical record of the events of the year, but in this respect they could not compete with the *Hollandse Mercurius*, which consisted of material gathered at the end of the year, when the relative significance of the year's events could be more accurately assessed. The *Hollandse Mercurius* also contextualised the news content with narrative analysis, tying together news stories that were unconnected in the newspapers when they were first reported. The addition of fold-out engravings, and the greater scholarly respectability of the quarto format, ensured the widespread success of the *Hollandse Mercurius*. It is striking that little of the content of the January issue of the *Nederlantse Mercurius* was included in the Haarlem chronicle.<sup>41</sup> Joost Smient, working away in his father's newspaper print shop, was so closely embedded in the world of current affairs that there was little place for analytical hindsight.

## A Pioneer Before His Time

It is possible that the first issue of the *Nederlantse Mercurius* was an aberration, a hasty issue produced by Smient largely in imitation of the *Nordischer Mercurius*, and that the other issues of 1665 improved in quality. There is also still a chance that the *Nederlantse Mercurius* continued publication in 1666, even if Joost Smient did not mention so in his advertisement of 30 January 1666. It does seem highly probable that the monthly journal disappeared after

40 Arthur der Weduwen, 'Competition, choice and diversity in the newspaper trade of the Golden Age', in: *The Early Modern Low Countries* 2, No. 1 (2018), 7-23.

41 *Hollandsche Mercurius, behelzende de gedenckweerdigste voorvallen in't jaer 1665. binnen christenryck*. Haarlem: Pieter Casteleyn, 1666.

Joost Smient's death in February 1667. His widow married a broker, Johannes Tol, and left the printing business. Otto Smient was still embroiled in tough competition with a local rival in the newspaper trade. He clung on as publisher of the Amsterdam newspaper when it was transformed into the *Amsterdamsche Courante* in 1670, and published it until 1682, aided by his youngest son, Barent Otto Smient (1651-1693). Even if the *Nederlantse Mercurius* still survived into 1667, it is unlikely to have found a new publisher within the family. Although the Smients seemed to have worked as a tight family unit, the journal was decisively Joost Smient's venture. He would not have been able to publish a newspaper of his own, but had he lived, he might have hoped to inherit the privilege of the paper as his father's successor. To diversify the family portfolio and to prove his own worth as printer of news, the *Nederlantse Mercurius* appeared a suitable medium.

It is also clear that the early history of periodicals is a truly international story. Smient was inspired by Georg Greflinger's *Nordischer Mercurius*, and by other news journals, including an unknown English venture, and possibly the *Mercurio Portuguez* of Lisbon, that might have come to his attention via Henricus Hondius of The Hague. In 1666, a monthly Danish journal would appear in Copenhagen, *Den Danske Mercurius*, which presented the news in verse. The 1660s were a critical period in the invention of the periodical, but marked more by failure than triumph. Smient's great inspiration, Greflinger's *Nordischer Mercurius*, reverted back to a bi-weekly newspaper in 1666, and found much more success in that format. European readers would have to wait for the quick-witted and highly topical Spectators of the early eighteenth century, to show the genre of periodical publishing a way into successful commentary of current affairs.

Nevertheless, these international experiments with new forms of serial news do show a market actively seeking new ways to serve the news-reading public. Some would succeed, and others would not, but those that fizzled and expired should not for that reason be ignored. This creative experimentation is a recurrent feature of all periods of media change, right down to our own digital age. The media giants of our own time would not have found their way to influence and prosperity without other innovations that did not meet the tests of market appeal and durability. Joost Smient takes his place among those who tried, but ultimately failed, to find a formula for news delivery that the public wanted.

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