
The invention of a paper calculated for general instruction and entertainment, abounding in elegant literature, appearing periodically, and forming a whole under an assumed name and character, is, without doubt, to be ascribed to this country, and confers on it no small degree of honour. *The Tatler* presented to Europe in 1709 the first legitimate model. Some years previous indeed to the publication of this work there had appeared several political, controversial, and theological periodical papers, the offspring of faction and polemics, insulated, devoid of character, unity, or sound literature, and which seem to have been founded, with scarcely an improvement, upon the common newspapers of the day. As early as the reigns of James and Charles the First, these vehicles of political information became known, and probably owe their origin to the Dutch, as in Carew’s *Survey of Cornwall*, page 126, published in 1602, the *Mercurius Gallo-belgicus*, a Dutch newspaper, is mentioned. This example was speedily followed by successive English *Mercuries*, which appeared under the titles of *Mercurius Aulicus*, *Rusticus*, *Civicus*, *Publicus*, *Politicus*, &c. multiplying during the prevalence of the civil war when party and prejudice were at their height. These were succeeded in 1679 by the *Observator* of L’Estrange, a periodical paper, written with the view of defending the King and his Court against the charge of Popery. It reached three volumes folio, and was dropped in 1687. Near seventeen years elapsed before another attempt was made on a similar plan, the *Rehearsal* of Charles Lesley [sic] commencing only in 1704. They were published at first once, afterwards twice a week, for the space of seven years, were written in the form of dialogue, and were entirely confined to the state of public affairs. Contemporary with this production of Lesley came forward, under a periodical dress, and of a kind far superior to any thing which had hitherto appeared, the *Review* of Daniel De Foe, a man of undoubted genius, and who, deviating from the accustomed route, had chalked out a new path for himself. The first number of this paper was printed on the nineteenth of February, 1704, in quarto, and was repeated every Saturday and Tuesday until March, 1705, when, from the encouragement it received, Thursday was added to the former days of publication, and thus it continued to visit the public thrice a week until its termination in May, 1713, forming, at its decease, nine thick volumes in quarto. The chief topics were, as usual, news foreign and domestic, and politics; to these, however, were added the various concerns of trade; and to render the undertaking more palatable and popular, he, with much judgement, instituted what he termed, perhaps with no great propriety, a “Scandal Club,” and whose amusement it was to agitate questions in divinity, morals, war, language, poetry, love, marriage, &c. The introduction of this Club, and the subjects of its discussion, it is obvious, approximate the *Review* much nearer than any preceding work to our first classical model. Yet borne down by the rude mass of temporary and uninteresting matter, defective in unity of design and delineation of character, it appears, notwithstanding its more varied form, to have sunk into oblivion; and perhaps in the present day, as a late biographer has conjectured, a complete set of De Foe’s *Reviews* is no longer in existence.