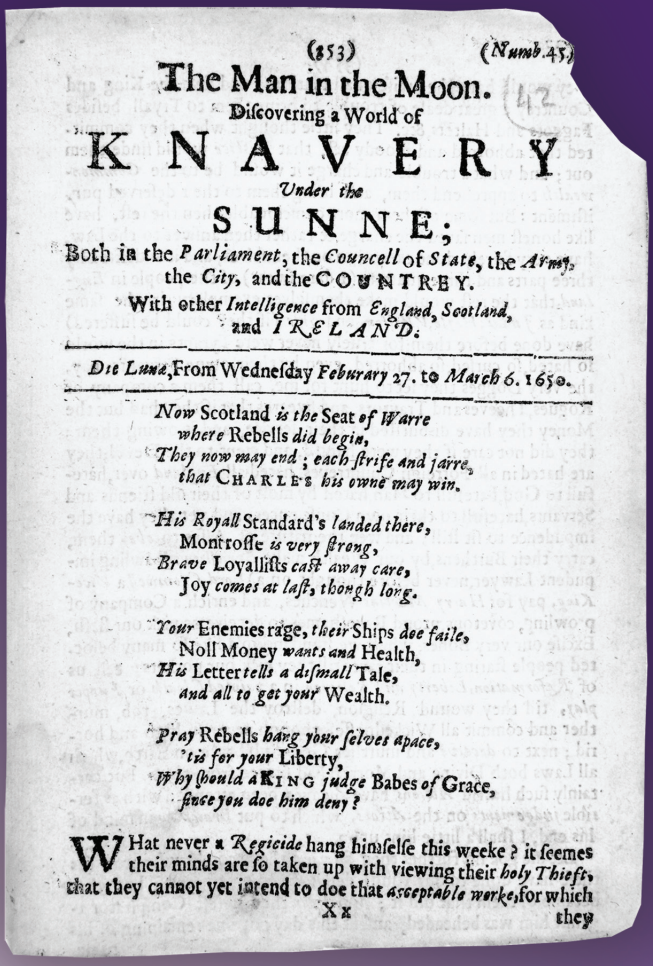
ROYALISM, PRINT AND CENSORSHIP IN REVOLUTIONARY ENGLAND



(853) (Numb. 45.)

The Man in the Moon.

Discovering a World of

KNAVERY

Under the

SUNNE;

Both in the *Parliament*, the *Councell* of *State*, the *Army*, the *City*, and the COUNTREY.

With other *Intelligence* from *England*, *Scotland*, and *IRELAND*.

Die Luna, From Wednesday *Feburary* 27. to *March* 6. 1650.

Now Scotland *is the* Seat *of Warre*
where Rebells *did begin*,
They now may end; *each strife and jarre*,
that CHARLES *his owne may win*.

His Royall Standard's *landed there*,
Montrosse *is very strong*,
Brave Loyallists *cast away care*,
Joy *comes at last*, *though long*.

Your Enemies rage, *their* Ships *doe faile*,
Noll Money *wants and* Health,
His Letter *tells a dismall* Tale,
and all to get your Wealth.

Pray Rebells *hang your selves apace*,
'tis for your Liberty,
Why should a KING *judge* Babes *of* Grace,
since you doe him deny?

WHat never a *Regicide* hang himselfe this weeke? it seemes their minds are so taken up with viewing their *holy Thiefs*, that they cannot yet intend to doe that *acceptable worke*, for which

Xx they

Jason McElligott

STUDIES IN EARLY MODERN CULTURAL,
POLITICAL AND SOCIAL HISTORY

Volume 6

ROYALISM, PRINT AND CENSORSHIP IN REVOLUTIONARY ENGLAND

Studies in Early Modern Cultural, Political and Social History

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ROYALISM, PRINT AND CENSORSHIP IN REVOLUTIONARY ENGLAND

Jason McElligott

THE BOYDELL PRESS

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Jason McElligott
Merton College, Oxford

Abbreviations

Place of publication is London unless otherwise stated.

Add. MS	Additional Manuscript
AEB	*Journal of Analytical and Enumerative Bibliography*
AHR	*American Historical Review*
Anon.	Anonymous
BDBR	R.L. Greaves and R. Zaller (eds), *Biographical Dictionary of British Radicals in the Seventeenth Century*, 3 vols (Brighton, 1982–4)
BIHR	*Bulletin of the Institute of Historical Research*
BL	British Library
BLR	*Bodleian Library Record*
Bod.	Bodleian Library, Oxford
CCISP	O. Ogle *et al.* (eds), *Calendar of the Clarendon State Papers*, 5 vols (1869–1970)
CHB	John Barnard and D.F. McKenzie (eds), *The Cambridge History of the Book, volume IV, 1557–1695* (Cambridge, 2002)
CJ	Commons' Journals
CLRO	Corporation of London Records Office
CP	S.R. Gardiner, *History of the Commonwealth and Protectorate*, 4 vols (1988 edn)
CSPD	*Calendar of State Papers Domestic*
CSPV	*Calendar of State Papers Venetian*
CUL	Cambridge University Library
CW	S.R. Gardiner, *History of the Great Civil War*, 4 vols (1893–8)
DLB 170	J.K. Bracken and Joel Silver (eds), *The British Literary Book Trade, 1475–1700* (Washington, DC, 1990)
DNB	*Dictionary of National Biography*
DWL	Dr Williams's Library, London
EHR	*English Historical Review*
GEC	G.E. Cockayne, *The Complete Peerage*, 13 vols (1910)
HJ	*Historical Journal*
HLQ	*Huntington Library Quarterly*
HLMP	House of Lords Main Papers
HMC	Historical Manuscripts Commission
JBS	*Journal of British Studies*

JMH	*Journal of Modern History*
JPHS	*Journal of the Printing Historical Society*
LJ	Lords' Journals
NHI	T.W. Moody, F.X. Martin and F.J. Byrne (eds), *A new history of Ireland: early modern Ireland, 1534–1691* (Oxford, 1978)
NS	Carolyn Nelson and Matthew Seccombe (eds), *British newspapers and periodicals, 1641–1700: a short-title catalogue of serials printed in England, Scotland, Ireland and British America* (New York, 1987)
OBSPP	*Oxford Bibliographical Society Proceedings and Papers*
Oxford DNB	*Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*
P&P	*Past & Present*
PBSA	*Papers of the Bibliographical Society of America*
POAS	W.J. Cameron (ed.), *Poems on affairs of state: Augustan satirical verse, 1660–1714*, 9 vols (New Haven, CT, 1971)
PROB	Records of the Prerogative Court of Canterbury
SC	Stationers' Company
SCCB	Stationers' Company Court Book
SP	State Papers
TCBS	*Transactions of the Cambridge Bibliographical Society*
TNA	The National Archives, Kew
TRHS	*Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*
TSP	Thomas Birch (ed.), *A collection of the state papers of John Thurloe, Esq.*, 7 vols (1742)

Introduction: Royalism and its Problems

The neglect of royalism

This is a study of a remarkable set of royalist newsbooks produced in London during the late 1640s. Books of weekly printed news – known to contemporaries as newsbooks – had first appeared in London during the turmoil of late 1641.[1] They quickly found a ready audience and by the summer of 1644 there were a dozen titles in production in the capital and at the royalist headquarters in Oxford, catering for a broad range of political and religious positions. Newsbooks became commonplace during the First Civil War but the royalist titles examined in this book were remarkable because they were published between 1647 and 1650 in conditions of strict secrecy in London, a city which was, in effect, under enemy control. This fifth-column of polemicists provided a fascinating, continuous commentary on some of the most momentous events of the century, including the Second Civil War, Pride's Purge, the regicide, and the Cromwellian invasion of Ireland. They also shed light on aspects of popular culture, print-culture, clandestine printing, propaganda, the theory and practice of censorship, gender history, the history of London, as well as the politics and nature of royalism.

In total, more than 530 issues of fifty-one separate titles were published. Many titles survived for only a few weeks, but a number of them appeared regularly over a period of months or even years. Scholars have long been aware of these newsbooks, but until recently they have been entirely overlooked as a historical source.[2] In recent years a number of studies have paid some passing attention to the contents of these underground publications, but we still lack a study of these newsbooks in their own right.[3] How and why were they produced? How were they distributed? Who read them? Who wrote, printed and published them? What were their aims, and what arguments did

1 The classic study of this topic is Joad Raymond, *The invention of the newspaper: English newsbooks, 1641–9* (Oxford, 1996).

2 Hyder E. Rollins, 'Samuel Sheppard and his praise of poets', *Studies in Philology*, xxiv (1927), 509–55, at 523; J.B. Williams, *A history of English journalism to the foundation of the Gazette* (1908); Joseph Frank, *The beginnings of the English newspaper, 1620–60* (Cambridge, MA, 1960).

3 Raymond, *Invention of the newspaper*; David A. O'Hara, *English newsbooks and Irish rebellion, 1641–49* (Dublin, 2006).

they put forward in an attempt to secure these aims? How did the authorities in the capital react to their appearance? How did many of the titles survive for long periods, and how did the authorities, who had struggled to control them for so long, finally suppress them in the early summer of 1650? How important were these newsbooks to the political culture of the period? What do they tell us about the beliefs and motivations of the people who supported the king in the late 1640s? *Royalism, Print and Censorship in Revolutionary England* aims to provide answers to these questions and, in the process, forces us to re-think the nature of political allegiance during the Civil Wars.

The neglect of the royalist newsbooks is surprising. After all, as the British comedian Stephen Fry has wryly noted in *Making History*, a novel about a student embarking upon doctoral research at Cambridge, 'everyone knows how you choose a subject for a . . . thesis in history. You go round the libraries in a fever, looking for a subject that no one else has covered, or at least a subject that hasn't been covered for, say, twenty years and then you bag it. You stake your claim for that one seam. Everyone knows that.'[4] Why, then, if the royalist newsbooks are such a rich historical source, has nobody hitherto staked their claim to them? The simple answer is that the reluctance of scholars to engage with these printed pamphlets results from a more general reluctance to engage with, or take seriously, the royalist cause itself.

Royalism has never been particularly fashionable among historians of the English Civil Wars. We do possess a number of first-class studies of those who were loyal to the monarch,[5] but when one compares this work to the multitude of books and articles on the various parliamentarians and sectaries of the period, one is struck by the great imbalance between the two. Defeat, like familiarity, obviously breeds contempt. James Daly's description of the royalists as 'the whipping boys of English history' may be something of an exaggeration, but it is true to say that Charles's followers have been less fully studied than those who remained with Parliament.[6] The neglect of royalism is unfortunate because we can never hope to unlock the essential characteristics and dynamics of the conflict which engulfed Britain in the 1640s and 1650s until we know far, far more about those men and women from all levels of society who supported the king and thumbed their noses at the Puritans and Roundheads.[7]

4 Stephen Fry, *Making history* (1996), p. 43.

5 Ronald Hutton, *The royalist war effort, 1642–1646*, 2nd edn (1999); David L. Smith, *Constitutional royalism and the search for settlement, c.1640–1649* (Cambridge, 1994); David Underdown, *Royalist conspiracy in England, 1649–1660* (New Haven, CT, 1960).

6 J.W. Daly, 'Could Charles I be trusted? The royalist case 1642–1646', *JBS*, vi, 1 (1966), 23–44, at 23; Smith, *Constitutional royalism*, p. 12; Andrew Lacey, 'The cult of King Charles the Martyr: the rise and fall of a political theology, ca. 1640–1859' (Leicester University Ph.D., 1999), p. vii; Nigel Smith, *Literature and revolution in England, 1640–1660* (New Haven, CT, 1994), p. 100.

7 This point was made as long ago as 1981 by Ronald Hutton in 'The structure of the royalist party, 1642–1646', *HJ*, 24, 3 (1981), 553–69.

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Figure 1. The first page of *Mercurius Pragmaticus*, no. 6, for the week of 19–26 October 1647 (180 x 120 mm). Note the doggerel rhyme, which invariably opened the royalist newsbooks, and the poor condition of the type. This title was printed on thin, cheap, brown paper and the discolouration in this photograph picks up staining within the page itself. Reproduced by kind permission of the Syndics of Cambridge University Library.

Yet the problem is not merely that scholars have neglected the royalists. Arguably the greatest impediment to the study of royalism is that many of those interested in the topic have often displayed a very narrow and uninspiring idea of what merits historical enquiry. There has been too much emphasis on the experience of leading royalists, whether members of the royal family, nobles or senior clergymen. There has also been an inordinate preoccupation with tracing the factional politics of the royalist elite. Until very recently one could have been forgiven for assuming that, apart from Queen Henrietta Maria, there were no female royalists.[8] Royalism is still understood as a strangely English phenomenon long after historians of the parliamentary forces have embraced attempts to understand the Scottish or Irish dimensions to the Civil Wars.

There has also been little or no attempt to apply the methodology of cultural history to the study of royalists, except in the context of high culture and entertainment.[9] A study of royalism below the level of the elite, let alone a social history of loyalism, has never been attempted because many scholars in the field share the late Gerald Aylmer's scepticism as to the validity of research into royalism among lower social groupings.[10] It is true that there has been a good deal of recent work on royalist literature, but even here, with a few honourable exceptions, there has been a tendency to concentrate on a small range of topics: the *Eikon Basilike* itself, or canonical authors and poets with connections to the royal court, or other prominent loyalists.[11] Malcolm Smuts has written that the lack of work done on royalism means that it is impossible to make useful generalizations about the nature of the phenomenon.[12] This is only partly true; the problem is the relative lack of research in the field *and* the surprisingly limited and limiting nature of much of the work that has been done.

Royalism, Print and Censorship in Revolutionary England cannot plug all of the gaps in our knowledge of royalism – it focuses on a relatively small group of people in London during a short period of less than three years – but it is intended to sketch a way of approaching the topic which may be of benefit to other scholars. At one level this book is simply an account of a hitherto unexamined aspect of the Civil Wars, the underground royalist newsbooks produced during the late 1640s. Yet it endeavours to use these flimsy,

8 Hero Chalmers, *Royalist women writers 1650–1689* (Oxford, 2004); de Groot, 'Gorgeous Gorgons: Royalist women', ch. 5 of his *Royalist identities* (2004); de Groot, 'Royalist women', and Claire Walker, 'Loyal and dutiful subjects: English nuns and Stuart politics', in James Daybell (ed.), *Women and politics in early modern England, 1450–1700* (Aldershot, 2006).

9 R. Malcolm Smuts, *Culture and power in England, 1585–1685* (1999).

10 G.E. Aylmer, 'Collective mentalities in mid-seventeenth century England: II. Royalist attitudes', *TRHS*, 5th ser., 37 (1987), 29.

11 See, for example, the disproportionate emphasis on the poet Henry Vaughan in Robert Wilcher's *The writing of royalism, 1628–1660* (Cambridge, 2001).

12 Smuts, *Culture and power*, pp. 116–18, 137.

ephemeral sheets of paper to say something new about the very nature of royalism and political allegiance itself. It argues strongly against the still widely accepted dichotomy between a forward-looking, proto-democratic parliamentarianism and a quasi-feudal, absolutist, elitist and reactionary royalism.[13] It also insists upon rejecting the all too convenient dichotomies within royalism between 'absolutists' and 'constitutionalists'. The realities of politics and polemic were too complicated, nuanced and textured to allow for such simple and simplistic polarities. We shall see that royalism in the late 1640s was a much more socially variegated and heterogeneous creed than has previously been described. It could (and did) attract men and women from a variety of social, cultural and religious backgrounds. It was not a world-view which was predestined to go down to defeat. Perhaps the most significant feature of the newsbooks examined in this study is the evidence they provide of a vibrant, pugnacious royalism, committed to the need to win public opinion and, at least initially, confident of so doing.

Contemporaries used the nouns 'cavalier', 'royalist' or 'loyalist' to describe those who sided with the Stuarts during the 1640s and 1650s. The term 'cavalier' carried negative connotations of drunkenness, ill-discipline and ungodliness, and was repudiated by all but a small clique of young, pugnacious swordsmen.[14] The foreign root of the word 'royalist' – 'roi' is the French word for 'king' – and the fact that it was first coined by William Prynne seem to have ensured that most supporters of the king referred to themselves more often as 'loyalists' than 'royalists'. David Smith has defined the difference between royalism and loyalism in the following way: 'the obedience of the royalist was to the king's person, the loyalist's was to his office and authority'.[15] This is a convenient division, yet it is one of the themes of this book that the intellectual consistency and clear-cut polarities favoured by many historians do not accurately describe the muddled and often confusing politics of the period. We should be wary of convenient polarities. Those who wrote these newsbooks in support of the king in the late 1640s tended to describe themselves as 'loyalists' but they did use the terms 'royalist' and 'loyalist' as synonyms. Indeed, the leading royalist title, *Mercurius Pragmaticus*, was adamant that his comrades formed the 'Royall, Loyall party', while another writer appealed to all those with 'honest, royall, and loyall hearts' to stand up for the king.[16] In general, *Royalism, Print and Censorship in Revolutionary England* adopts the common, modern usage of 'royalist' and 'royalism',

13 Alan Shepard, ' "O seditious Citizen of the Physicall Common-wealth!" Harvey's royalism and his autopsy of Old Parr', *University of Toronto Quarterly*, 65, 3 (1996), 483, 485, 488; de Groot, *Royalist identities*, p. 23.

14 Edward Symmons, *A Vindication of King Charles: Or, A Loyal Subjects Duty* [1647], sig. B4v.

15 Smith, *Constitutional royalism*, p. 319.

16 *Pragmaticus*, no. 18B, 11–18 Jan. 1648, sig. 4v; *Elenticus*, no. 2, 22–29 April 1650, sig. 1r.

although the term 'loyalist' is often used as a synonym in order to avoid unnecessary and unsightful repetition on the printed page.

Royalism, Print and Censorship in Revolutionary England challenges our preconceptions of what it meant to be a royalist/loyalist. It abandons *prescriptive* definitions of royalism – what people must have thought or believed in order to qualify as royalists – in favour of a *descriptive* definition which examines what actual royalists thought, believed or argued.

It defines a royalist as somebody who, by thought or deed, identified himself or herself as a supporter of the king's cause and was accepted as such by other individuals who so defined themselves.[17] As we shall see in subsequent chapters, these royalists could (and did) hold a wide variety of political or theological opinions but they were united by a concern to see the Stuarts return to power on their own terms or, failing that, the best possible terms available. This definition of royalism is admittedly broad, but is not so broad as to be meaningless. It has the benefit of allowing us to consider how individuals viewed themselves, and how they were viewed by their contemporaries. In contrast to more traditional definitions of royalism which emphasize the willingness of an individual to fight,[18] it forces us to take note of the vast number of people who supported one side or the other without ever actually taking up arms. It also allows us to realize that not every expression of antipathy to Parliament or sympathy for the plight of the king is evidence of royalism. The members of the New Model Army who advocated a temporary alliance with the supporters of the king in 1647 were not royalists.[19] They never defined themselves as such and were anxious to secure the return of the king to power on the best possible terms for themselves. For the same reasons it is clear that the Scottish army which invaded England on Charles I's behest in 1648 was not a royalist army.[20] Neither did the Catholic

17 I am grateful to Dr Gary Edmond of the University of New South Wales for our discussions on legal definitions of identity and allegiance. Australian law, he has assured me, defines an aborigine not as a person with a particular set of physical characteristics, blood type or genetic inheritance. Instead, an aborigine is simply somebody who defines themselves as an aborigine and is accepted as such by others who so define themselves. I have borrowed this definition. Perceptive readers will note the similarity of my definition of royalism – the stress on subjective rather than supposedly objective criteria – to the definition of race crimes in the MacPherson Report into the murder of Stephen Lawrence. MacPherson provides no prescriptive definition of a race crime; all crimes which the victim believes to have been racially motivated must be treated as such by the police. See the recommendations of *The Stephen Lawrence Inquiry: Report of an inquiry by Sir William MacPherson of Cluny* (February 1999). I make no apologies for borrowing from such sources when trying to construct a model of royalist identity.

18 James Loxley, *Royalism and poetry in the English Civil Wars: the drawn sword* (Basingstoke, 1997).

19 Michael Mendle, 'Putney's pronouns: identity and indemnity in the great debate', in Mendle (ed.), *The Putney Debates of 1647: the army, the Levellers, and the English state* (Cambridge, 2001), pp. 125–47.

20 David Stevenson, 'A revolutionary regime and the press: the Scottish Covenanters and their printers, 1638–51', *The Library*, 6th ser., 7 (1985), 315–37, at 332.

Confederates of Ireland become royalists when they formed alliances with Ormond and his men.[21] There was no such thing as 'Leveller royalism',[22] and it should also be clear that occasional expressions of sympathy for the personal plight of Charles I by a number of pro-parliamentary writers in the months before the regicide are not evidence of royalism.[23]

'Doing' book history and print-culture

In addition to re-thinking and re-defining the nature of royalism, *Royalism, Print and Censorship in Revolutionary England* challenges us to reconsider the ways in which we 'do' book history and print-culture. Print has always been seen as a radical, destabilizing force: an agent of social change, innovation and revolution.[24] By contrast, this book seeks to demonstrate how lively, vibrant and exciting the use of print as an agent of social stability and cohesion could be. Indeed, it is tempting to suggest that Charles I's ability to call on the writers described in this book meant that, at least for a short period, he, like the devil in the old proverb, had the best tunes.[25] In the same way that the neglect of royalists and the disproportionate emphasis on the parliamentarians has impaired our knowledge of the Civil Wars in general, we can never hope to understand the role played by print in the conflict until we know much more about how the royalists approached and used this medium of communication. This book is also intended as a contribution to a much-needed future study of the use of print by social and religious conservatives across the early-modern period.[26]

Royalism, Print and Censorship in Revolutionary England also seeks to rescue the history of print in the 1640s and 1650s from a pernicious methodology which is unduly preoccupied with the minutiae of the factional politics of Parliament. Politics during the Civil Wars consisted of more than votes and intrigues carried on behind closed doors in Westminster, and books and pamphlets were more than simply tools for politicians. One cannot simply assume that print reflects the interests of great men and that one can read

21 David Scott, *Politics and war in the three Stuart kingdoms, 1637–49* (Basingstoke, 2004), pp. 182–3.
22 Andrew Sharp, 'The Levellers and the end of Charles I', in Jason Peacey (ed.), *The regicides and the execution of Charles I* (2001), pp. 181–201.
23 Frank, *Beginnings of the English newspaper*, pp. 121, 124; F.S. Siebert, *Freedom of the press in England, 1476–1776* (Urbana, IL, 1965), p. 215.
24 The classic statement of this position is Elizabeth Eisenstein's *The printing press as an agent of change*, 2 vols (Cambridge, 1979).
25 Jason McElligott, 'Stabilizing and destabilizing Britain in the 1680s', in McElligott (ed.), *Fear, exclusion and revolution: Roger Morrice and Britain in the 1680s* (Aldershot, 2006), pp. 9–10.
26 See also Ann Hughes, *Gangraena and the struggle for the English Revolution* (Oxford, 2004).

their thoughts and true interests across a range of cheap books and pamphlets, as we shall see in Chapters 4 and 5.[27] This is particularly true because much of this approach has been based upon the highly dubious practice of attributing anonymous pamphlets to well-known political theorists. This will be discussed at length in Chapter 4, but it is important to emphasize here that the unseemly marriage of book history and Namierite political biography is not a fruitful union.

The key argument of this book is that to properly understand these royalist newsbooks – and, indeed, all printed items from the period – it is vital to relate them to a sociology of power, to the realities of what was happening in society. There is a tendency in much of the burgeoning literature on Civil War print-culture to divorce words from their context, and to analyse (and perhaps over-analyse) those words in isolation from the society in which they were produced and circulated. We must never lose sight of the fact that the Civil Wars were much more than 'text-based' conflicts.[28] Among the multitude of words written during these tumultuous years in Britain it is possible to find snippets of information or rumours to support almost any position or argument. Unless one constantly thinks of a sociology of power, and what is possible or feasible within that framework, it is too easy to take isolated words and phrases out of context. It is a contention of Chapter 7 that this overly text-based approach to print-culture has been facilitated by the injudicious use of cross-disciplinary approaches.

Royalism, Print and Censorship in Revolutionary England argues that one cannot apply the methodologies of intellectual history or political thought to pamphlet culture. Those who look for intellectual clarity and consistency of thought in these sources will be sorely disappointed. The sole aim of the polemicist is to convince his audience. There is no requirement for him to be intellectually consistent, honest or logical over a period of time. In fact, such a requirement might conceivably hinder the deployment of ideas best suited to winning an argument. Our authors were not limited to one part of the broad spectrum of royalist political ideas. They found it possible, and even desirable, to inhabit different parts of this spectrum at different times. There are few, if any, references to learned sources in the royalist newsbooks. The authors preferred to use arguments which appealed to the hearts rather than the heads of their readers. This was not a weakness of these titles, it was their great strength.

[27] See, for example, Jason Peacey, *Politicians and pamphleteers: propaganda during the English Civil Wars and Interregnum* (Aldershot, 2004).
[28] de Groot, *Royalist identities*, p. 32.

Propaganda, censorship and the state

Some readers may balk at the use of the term 'propaganda' throughout this book.[29] Joad Raymond has recently argued that 'propaganda' is too blunt and too loaded a term to be of any use in the seventeenth century.[30] He is right to be wary, as 'propaganda' has too often been invoked in a simplistic way without any understanding of the problems associated with its use, or any attempt to define what exactly is understood by the term.[31] Early-modern Britain had no word directly equivalent to the modern concept of propaganda, which, as defined by the *Oxford English Dictionary*, involves a 'systematic scheme, or concerted movement for the propagation of a particular doctrine or practice'. To modern ears it also implies a cynical manipulation and misrepresentation of the facts. However, the word 'propaganda' was only known to early-modern Britons in relation to the *Sacra Congregatio de Propaganda Fide*, the 'Sacred Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith', founded in 1622 by the Roman Catholic Church to propagate counter-Reformation doctrine. In other words, 'propaganda' was only used during the Civil Wars (and long after) to describe a particular foreign body charged with the propagation of religious doctrine or practice. To use the modern sense of the word in relation to an earlier period, therefore, runs the risk of anachronism.[32] Raymond has suggested that the words 'intelligence', 'information' and 'news' are more accurate and less problematic than the loaded and potentially anachronistic 'propaganda'. Others are more comfortable with the word 'rhetoric', a classically derived means of persuasion and influencing individual judgements.[33]

None of these alternative terms are without their problems. Mark Knights has noted that rhetoric was an oral skill which placed a premium on rational arguments and was designed to influence a particular, limited and known audience.[34] As we shall see again and again in this book, the raucous, gratuitously offensive and deliberately anti-intellectual prose of the royalist newsbooks was as far removed from the world of rhetorical oratory as it was

29 *OED*.

30 Joad Raymond, 'Introduction', in Joad Raymond (ed.), *News networks in seventeenth-century Britain and Europe* (Abingdon, 2006), pp. 1–13.

31 A prime example is afforded by J.P.D. Cooper's *Propaganda and the Tudor state: political culture in the West Country* (Oxford, 2003).

32 *OED*; Raymond, 'Introduction', in *News networks*; Kevin Sharpe, *Remapping early-modern England: the culture of seventeenth-century politics* (Cambridge, 2000), pp. 435–6.

33 For an introduction to this literature see the sources listed in Mark Knights, *Representation and misrepresentation in later Stuart Britain. Partisanship and political culture* (Oxford, 2005), pp. 210–12.

34 Knights, *Representation and misrepresentation*, pp. 210–14, 236.

possible to be.[35] 'Intelligence' implies an access to privileged or restricted information which, as we shall also see, was almost entirely lacking from the royalist newsbooks. There was little, if any, hard 'news' in most of these titles; more often than not they are filled with comments or reflections upon events which were widely known to the public because they had been reported elsewhere. They read less like books of 'news' or newspapers than the works of pugnacious and opinionated newspaper columnists. Neither is it clear that the main attraction of the newsbooks was that they provided 'information'. There was certainly 'information' in these titles, but the quantity, quality and reliability of it varied from title to title and from week to week. Furthermore, it is often impossible to disentangle the jumble of information, misinformation and disinformation within the royalist newsbooks, a confusing state of affairs which was undoubtedly the result of deliberate decisions by the men who wrote these titles.

All historical enquiry involves, by its very nature, an element of anachronism. For example, nobody in Restoration London knew that the plague of 1665 was caused by rats which carried fleas infected by the bacterium 'Yersinia pestis'. Is it, therefore, anachronistic to refer to, or study, the effect of this bacterium on the population of the capital? Nobody in the early-modern era would have understood a concept such as 'mental health'. Does this fact mean that there can never be a scholarly study of mental illness during the period? If all historical enquiry involves an element of anachronism, then the most that we can do is hope that our particular anachronisms enhance rather than retard our understanding of the past. We need to guard vigilantly against any tendency to see only the continuities (or the perceived continuities) with our own age, and to ignore all of the differences and discontinuities. Yet no matter how careful one is not to map the present onto the past, one cannot ignore a number of striking characteristics of the royalist newsbooks. They simplified the world into black and white, good and evil; they discredited their opponents with crude smears and parodies; they manipulated the consensus values of the target audience to their own ends; they presented their viewpoint as if it were the unanimous opinion of all right-thinking people; and they orchestrated the constant repetition of the same simple and simplistic messages in a variety of different permutations and combinations. These devices have been described by modern scholars as some of the key elements of propaganda.[36]

The royalists of the 1640s also had a striking understanding of what one might call 'news management' techniques. They knew how to exaggerate the successes of the king's armies, and to minimize those of their opponents. They held back or denied damaging information, only to admit it and mini-

[35] In order to avoid unnecessary repetition in the text, I have, however, occasionally used the word 'rhetoric' in a loose, almost colloquial, sense unknown to classical scholars or historians of political thought.

[36] Andrew Pettegree, *Reformation and the culture of persuasion* (Cambridge, 2005), p. 184.

mize its importance when it was no longer of immediate relevance to events. For example, throughout July and August 1648 they vehemently denied the stories in the pamphlets and newsbooks loyal to Parliament which claimed that royalist troops had set fire to the suburbs of Colchester. When they finally admitted the veracity of the stories in September – notably only *after* the fall of the city to the New Model – they were at pains to minimize the conflagration as the actions of a few lowly soldiers carried out without the knowledge of their commanding officers.[37] Another striking example of this tactic is afforded by the royalist denial for several weeks in September and October 1649 that the Irish town of Drogheda had fallen to Cromwell. When they finally admitted Cromwell's success they were at pains to – falsely – claim that an enormous number of Cromwellians had died in the storming of the town. One royalist even went so far as to claim that Cromwell's penis had been destroyed by a bullet as he entered Drogheda, making it a hollow victory indeed.

Above all else, the royalists had a concept of the manufacture and planting of stories to increase one's reputation, impune that of one's enemies, prepare the public for certain events, or test their mood.[38] They understood that news items could be placed in the press in order to see which way the wind was blowing and 'feel how the pulses of the People beat', although they always claimed that only their enemies engaged in such disreputable actions.[39] Not to use the term 'propaganda' in the context of a tightly organized campaign to propagate a political agenda which relied on a mixture of information and misinformation is both overly fastidious and risks impeding our understanding of the phenomenon under investigation.[40]

Some readers may object to the use of the term 'censorship' in relation to

37 *Pragmaticus*, no. 29, 29 Aug.–5 Sept. 1648, sig. 4r.

38 *Bellicus*, no. 11, 4–11 April 1648, p. 3; *Elencticus*, no. 48, 18–25 Oct. 1648, p. 391; *Parliament-Kite*, no. 15, 24–31 Aug. 1648, p. 91; *Man in the Moon*, no. 22, 12–19 Sept. 1649, 182; *Parliaments Scrich-Owle*, no. 2, [7 July] 1648, p. 9; *Pragmaticus*, no. 4, 18–25 April 1648, sig. 4v; *Pragmaticus*, no. 10B, 19–26 June 1649, sig. 3r; *Fidelicus*, no. 1, 17–24 Aug. [1648], sig. 2r.

39 The striking image of 'paper kites' being flown to test which way the wind was blowing can be found in *Pragmaticus*, no. 36, 1–8 Jan. 1649 [i.e. 1650], sig. 3r–v, and again in no. 51, 23–30 April 1650, sig. 2r. The equally intriguing description of the press being used to take the pulse of the people is in *Pragmaticus*, no. 41, 9–16 Jan. 1649, sig. 3v–4r. Here *Pragmaticus* referred to the spoken word from the pulpit as the 'diastole' part of the pulse. This implies that the printed word fulfilled the systolic role of the cardiac cycle. The extended metaphor that sermons and printed words formed the heartbeat of the rebel beast is arresting.

40 Knights, *Representation and misrepresentation*, pp. 213–14. Andrew Pettegree suggests that 'polemic' implies a dialogue, a two-way process. Propaganda lacks that quality of interchange. It is one-sided, a systematic attempt to propagate a particular opinion or doctrine (see Pettegree, *Reformation and the culture of persuasion*, p. 183). In the course of this book I do not draw this distinction. I use the terms 'propaganda' and 'polemic' interchangeably solely to prevent repetition.

the seventeenth century. As was the case with 'propaganda', the word 'censorship' was unknown to the society analysed in this book, and to modern eyes it is often associated with modern dictatorships such as Communist Russia or Nazi Germany. It seems to imply a developed, monopolistic and totalitarian state completely unlike any locus of power in early-modern England. On the other hand, there were pre-publication *censors* in Tudor and Stuart Britain who could *censure* items of which they disapproved. As we shall see, the control of print became a central concern of state during the 1640s. One must, as always, be aware of ignoring discontinuities between modern and early-modern censorship in favour of the superficial similarities. It would be crass to try to revive the historiography which until thirty years or so ago could liken the Stationers' Company – the trade guild responsible for overseeing the smooth running of the book trade in early-modern England – to the brutal, murderous thugs of the Gestapo. Yet it is a central claim of the second half of this book that recent attempts to minimize the nature and effectiveness of censorship in early-modern Britain have created a profoundly distorted picture of that society, one which has hampered the development of a satisfactory model for the relationship of the state to the printed word. The 'censorship' described in this book is a nuanced and textured process which takes on board some of the most important recent work on the press but allows us to describe the conditions under which the state could (and did) exert its will over the press.

The 'state' invoked in this book consists of a series of overlapping coercive bodies which generated records which could provide precedents for legal proceedings. This state was not solely a coercive body at the apex of society, however. The maintenance of law, order and social stability was underpinned, as Mark Goldie and others have shown, by a widely diffused 'unacknowledged republic' of men who held local positions of civic and religious responsibility and power. The early-modern British state relied to a surprising degree on the active participation of unpaid, part-time or local officials who were often drawn from outside the ranks of the elite.[41] Again, it is important to be aware of the differences between early-modern and modern states, but it is at least equally important to acknowledge that there is a striking gulf between the work of scholars who have traced the increasing power and reach of the early-modern state and those who deny the ability or inclination of the state to impose repressive conditions upon the populace.

[41] Mark Goldie, 'The unacknowledged republic: office-holding in early modern England', in Tim Harris (ed.), *The politics of the excluded, c.1500–1850* (Basingstoke, 2001), pp. 153–94.

1

Royalists and Polemic in the 1640s

The development of royalist propaganda

Charles I has traditionally been seen as a proud, haughty and aloof man unconcerned with the need to court public opinion.[1] He has often been portrayed, both consciously and unconsciously, as an arrogant, foppish snob, a devotee of courtly masques, fawning verse, extravagant architecture and opulent art who thumbed his nose at the increasingly obvious need to use the printing press to explain his controversial policies to his subjects during the first decade and a half of his reign. It is somewhat surprising that both his admirers and detractors have fashioned such broadly similar images of the king, although they have of course differed as to whether his interests, preoccupations and personality should be commended or condemned. In recent years we have come to realize that this image of Charles's relationship with his subjects is a caricature, a skilfully created image which captures something of the truth but distorts it beyond all reason while ignoring other important facets of his character. It is certainly true that Charles was personally shy and that, like many people in this situation, he sometimes seemed to others to be rude, arrogant or disagreeable. It is also true that he was a connoisseur of the finer things in life and that he enjoyed the process of buying and amassing an admirable collection of art.[2] It is also undeniable that these interests created a great deal of suspicion among the 'hotter sort' of Charles's subjects.

It would, however, be inaccurate to claim that Charles did not understand the need to appeal to his people. Even during the Personal Rule, the eleven-year period when Charles was supposedly at his most removed from his subjects, the king regularly communicated with the political nation by long-established modes of communication such as royal proclamations and the 'tuning of the pulpits' by the prescription of prayers and homilies in the 10,000 or so parish churches throughout England and Wales. It is also necessary to note that on a number of occasions during the first three or four years of his reign Charles did explain a number of his policies in print. Indeed in

1 David L. Smith, *Constitutional royalism and the search for settlement, c.1640–1649* (Cambridge, 1994), p. 325.
2 Jerry Brotton, *The sale of the late king's goods. Charles I and his art collection* (2006).

1627 he went so far as to flirt with the idea of issuing an explanation for the decision to embark upon the disastrous military expedition to the French Isle de Rhé. Charles and his ministers laboured over a written public apology for the campaign and the king even examined the final version of the proposed text, but it was ultimately decided not to proceed with such an innovative explanation of royal policies. It was not that Charles was unable or unwilling to communicate with his subjects; he was aware of the need to project images of his power and influence but he came to believe that print – a potentially divisive and misleading medium often associated with a coarse, cheap or earthy way of speaking – could not and should not play a central part in that strategy.[3]

In hindsight one could argue that Charles's reluctance during the first half of his reign to use print as a weapon of the crown was a serious mistake which allowed the Puritans to sow insidious and highly damaging ideas about his alleged absolutist and popish inclinations. Yet it would have been strange of Charles to have embraced innovative technologies and modes of communication during the 1630s. His realm was peaceful and prosperous. There were no abnormal tensions in the body politic, and, as far as he was concerned, he was not embarking upon any striking new policies which would have necessitated the use of new ways of addressing his subjects. Nobody could have had the faintest inkling that within a few years Britain would descend into internecine civil war and that books and pamphlets would be an important weapon of his opponents in rallying the country against him. Print, as we shall see in this book, was a weapon of parties and factions. Why should the uncontested king of a united polity have placed any great store on having an arsenal of 'paper bullets'? How could Charles have used print to fix a constitution, a monarchy and a state which before the Scottish Rebellion of the late 1630s was not broken? The traditional methods of royal communication used by Charles before the Scottish crisis were, quite simply, entirely adequate and appropriate.

The great irony of this situation is that, although Charles was often accused by his enemies of admiring the French model of absolutist government, he was simply not interested in emulating the Gallic fondness for printed propaganda. The Bourbon monarchy in France had long appreciated

[3] Richard Cust, 'News and politics in early seventeenth-century England', *P&P*, 112 (1986), 60–90; Thomas Cogswell, 'The politics of propaganda: Charles I and the people in the 1620s', *JBS*, 29 (1990), 187–215; Richard Cust, 'Was there an alternative to the Personal Rule? Charles I, the Privy Council and the Parliament of 1629', *History*, 90, 299 (July 2005), 330–52; Richard Cust, *Charles I: a political life* (Harlow, 2005), pp. 38–9, 43–4, 166–71, 300–1, 313–14; Mark Kishlansky, 'Charles I: a case of mistaken identity', *P&P*, 189 (Nov. 2005), 41–80; G.E. Gorman, 'A Laudian attempt to "tune the pulpit": Peter Heylyn and his sermon against the Feoffees for the Purchase of Impropriations', *Journal of Religious History*, 8 (1975), 333–49; Johann Sommerville, *Royalists and patriots: politics and ideology in England, 1603–1640*, 2nd edn (1999), pp. 37, 49, 108, 112, 119, 120–2; Kevin Sharpe, *The personal rule of Charles I* (New Haven, CT, 1992), pp. 647–53.

the potential usefulness of print to the state. The conflict of 1614–17 between the Duc de Condé and the royal government was transformed from the realm of internal palace politics to a national crisis by the fact that both sides used print to appeal to the populace at large. About 75 per cent of the 1,200 or so pamphlets produced in France during this bitter conflict were published by the supporters of royal government. The French state became even more prolific in its use of the press under Cardinal Richelieu, a politician who believed that a ruler could do more through manipulating public opinion than through the use of armies. His professionalized propaganda machine was an important tool in the complex process of French state-building and bureaucratic centralization which accelerated over the course of the seventeenth century. Richelieu's establishment in 1632 of the first ever officially-controlled newspaper, the *Gazette de France*, and the survival of this title under various secretaries of state until it expired at the time of the French Revolution, demonstrate the importance which the French state attached to the control and dissemination of printed information. It is the presence of severe strains in French society and the absence of such conflicts in Britain which explain the respective attitudes of the Bourbons and the Stuarts to print in the years before 1640.[4]

In England it was the opponents of Charles's religious and political policies who were the most daring and innovative in their use of the printing press, largely because parish pulpits and other established avenues of communication were closed to them. The most extreme opponents of the English crown were forced to publish their material in the Netherlands but these men and women constituted nothing more than a tiny fringe of the Puritan movement. The vast majority of those who opposed Charles's policies remained in England and most of their printing was done on home soil. The number of printed oppositional works increased in direct proportion to the growing influence of Laud's supporters over church and state, and the dichotomy between the royal rejection of print during the king's Personal Rule and the oppositional embrace of this medium is striking. It is necessary to appreciate, however, that the recourse to print was a sign of the weakness of the king's opponents during the 1630s.

The MPs who sat together in Parliament in 1640 were united in their determination to force the king to work with them in future, but there was no way to force Charles to accede to their demands, unless pressure could be brought to bear on him from other quarters. This is why during the course of 1641 Parliament began to use print to explain its actions and appeal to the people, or, perhaps more accurately, to a section of the politically engaged electorate. This tactic was not without its problems; it laid MPs open to charges of rabble-rousing and facilitating or encouraging the serious distur-

4 Jeffrey K. Sawyer, *Printed poison: pamphlet propaganda, faction politics, and the public sphere in seventeenth-century France* (Berkeley, CA, 1990), *passim*; Joseph Klaits, *Printed propaganda under Louis XIV* (Princeton, NJ, 1972).

bances which occurred on the streets of London in the two years before the outbreak of civil war. Indeed, the use of print by Parliament played an important part in splitting the hitherto united opposition to the king and facilitating the formation of a royalist party committed to law, order and stability. Sir Edward Dering was not alone in his objection to the fact that Parliament had begun to 'remonstrate downward' and was telling 'stories to the people'.[5]

Yet print did allow MPs to appeal for support to the people 'out of doors' and helped to create a powerful dynamic which placed Charles and his new-found supporters on the defensive. The books and pamphlets printed in support of Parliament during these years can be divided into two broad categories: a relatively small number of officially sanctioned items printed by order of the House of Commons, and a greater number of unofficial or semi-official publications to which the House turned a blind eye because they put the case for those opposed to the king. Parliament was not interested in freedom of the press *per se*; its idea of liberty involved freedom to publish its own arguments and the right to punish its opponents.[6] The policy of using the press to appeal to an audience beyond the confines of the debating chambers at Westminster was to have momentous, unforeseen consequences because Parliament could never hope to control or set the agenda for every book or pamphlet published in the chaotic months before the outbreak of war.

One of the consequences of Parliament's use of print was that it forced Charles and his advisers to reassess the ambivalence to the medium which they inherited from the era of the Personal Rule. The king and his advisers were slow to embrace the new realities and not best qualified by experience or temperament to engage in printed rhetoric or polemic. Charles's lack of personal warmth or charm were distinct disadvantages for those determined to write news, propaganda or polemic on his behalf. The efforts to explain royal policy during the Bishops' Wars of the late 1630s were at best ineffectual and, at worst, counter-productive. The handful of royal proclamations issued during these years were no match for the pamphlets in support of the Covenanters which circulated freely in Scotland and England.[7] Even as the

5 Smith, *Constitutional royalism*, p. 84.

6 Michael Mendle, 'Grub Street and Parliament at the beginning of the English Revolution', in J.D. Popkin (ed.), *Media and revolution* (Lexington, KY, 1995), pp. 31–47, and 'De facto freedom, de facto authority: press and parliament, 1640–43', *HJ*, 38 (1995), 307–32.

7 David Stevenson, 'A revolutionary regime and the press: the Scottish Covenanters and their printers, 1638–51', *The Library*, 6th ser., 7 (1985), 315–37; E.S. Cope, 'The king's declaration concerning the dissolution of the Short Parliament of 1640: an unsuccessful attempt at public relations', *HLQ*, 40 (1977), 325–31; Ethan H. Shagan, 'Constructing discord: ideology, propaganda and the English responses to the Irish Rebellion of 1641', *JBS*, 36 (1997), 4–34, at 30–2. Cf. Mark Kishlansky, 'A lesson in loyalty: Charles I and the Short Parliament', in Jason McElligott and David L. Smith (eds), *Royalists and royalism during the English Civil Wars* (Cambridge, 2007), fns 35–9.

Long Parliament began to appeal to the public out-of-doors, a number of leading loyalists were still sceptical of the utility or desirability of engaging in a form of communication which would implicitly, if not explicitly, appeal for the support of those outside the traditional governing classes. There had been no need for the king to appeal to his subjects in print during the 1630s, when he had been a king in command of a prosperous and peaceful kingdom. By 1641, however, he was merely the leader of a party who was quickly losing control of the country, and part of the reason for this loss of control was that Parliament had the advantage in terms of both the number and the quality of books and pamphlets published in defence of its actions. This situation began to change during 1642 as the king attracted an increasing number of adherents with experience of, and familiarity with, print. In the year before the outbreak of military hostilities the royalists began for the first time to address themselves not to Parliament but to the king's subjects.[8] The defection of the skilled polemicist Edward Hyde from the benches of the Commons to the side of the king was an important milestone in the development of this newly invigorated royalist polemic.[9]

The royalists operated a number of printing presses across the country during the First Civil War, but the centre of their propaganda effort was at Oxford. Between 1642 and 1646 a variety of writers in the city produced more than 800 titles in a variety of formats and genres including sermons, royal proclamations, theological tracts, poetic works, satiric, railing pamphlets, and popular songs, catches and ballads.[10] There was evidently some form of agreement among the royalist leaders that in order to reach as wide a section of their potential audience as possible it was necessary to provide time on the city's printing presses for as many different types of books, pamphlets and ballads as possible. In truth we know little about the most basic features of this propaganda effort. There has been surprisingly little work done on this topic, and that which has been conducted is often hamstrung by a rather simplistic, monolithic notion of royalism as a fixed and unchanging ideology of the elite which was divided between mutually antagonistic 'constitutionalists' and 'absolutists'.

There is little, if any, sense in the literature on royalism during the First Civil War that it was a rich, variegated and complex collection of attitudes and positions which might not be adequately described in terms of simple polarities. In the light of the arguments presented in subsequent chapters of this book concerning the nature of political allegiance, it will be necessary to question the conventional depiction of royalist propaganda at Oxford as the

8 This change is easily discerned by browsing the titles published in 1641 and 1642 contained in W.J. Rawles (ed.), *A hand-list of the contents of the seventeen volumes of miscellaneous pamphlets in the Home Office Library* (Calstock, 2003), pp. 1–55.

9 Brian Wormald, *Clarendon: politics, historiography and religion, 1640–1660* (Cambridge, 1976), pp. 66–70.

10 Falconer Madan, *Oxford books, 1641–1650* (Oxford, 1912), pp. 172–430.

preserve of a victorious absolutist political and religious programme which had triumphed over a more moderate and reasonable constitutionalism.[11] It is not entirely clear that the 'absolutists' and 'constitutionalists' described by historians are anything other than two small parts (or even points) of a broad and shifting spectrum of political and religious opinions, an argument which we shall examine in some detail in Chapter 4. In fact, it is tempting to suggest that royal absolutists of the 1640s are akin to the monsters under the bed which frightened us as young children; we imagined for so long that a host of fearsome and dangerous creatures lurked in that dark space that when we finally summoned the courage to investigate, we could not but be disappointed at the few inconsequential creepy-crawlies which scurried away at the first sign of light.[12]

In propaganda terms at least, almost every royalist was a constitutional royalist, as that term has been defined by David L. Smith. Who could not be for law, order, the ancient liberties of the subject and the Church 'as by law established', especially if the criteria for admission to that Church could be loosely defined and interpreted? If there is a sense in which 'absolutists' were almost as rare as hen's teeth, then perhaps the danger implicit in 'constitutional royalism' is that the criteria for membership of the club are so broad and general – so commonplace – that the term encompasses almost everyone on the royalist side. We need then to be open to, and aware of, the broad range of political and religious opinions, strategies and tactics which could be encompassed *within* the mainstream of 'constitutional royalism'.

Scholars need to examine the reality of what was published at Oxford during these years without the distorting lens of anachronistic assumptions as to what royalism must have been or should have been. Jerome de Groot's recent attempt to ask what royalism wanted to be and what images it projected of itself is interesting and suggestive, but ultimately unsatisfactory.[13] There is no substitute for a clear exposition of what royalism actually was, a process which both necessitates and leads to a more nuanced and textured understanding of allegiance than we have hitherto employed. This is not a book about the propaganda produced at Oxford during the First Civil War, but the discussion in subsequent chapters of royalism, political allegiance and print during the late 1640s does provide a model of how one might approach a history of royalist polemic during the first half of the decade.

It is necessary at this point to sketch some of the details concerning the production of newsbooks in Oxford. This is not because newsbooks were the only items of interest published during these years. One might look at any

11 P.W. Thomas, *Sir John Berkenhead, 1617–1679* (Oxford, 1969), *passim*; Jerome de Groot, *Royalist identities* (2004), pp. 50–3, 59.
12 One such creature is described by Linda Levy Peck in her 'Beyond the pale: John Cusack and the language of absolutism in early Stuart Britain', *HJ*, 41 (1998), 121–49.
13 de Groot, *Royalist identities*, *passim*.