

# Ideology and Propaganda in English Civil War News: A Study in Historical Media Discourse Based on the Thomason Tracts

Edward Haig

## **Introduction**

The English civil war that took place during the mid-seventeenth century between King Charles I and his forces, known as the Cavaliers, on the one hand and the Parliament and its forces, the Roundheads, on the other, is one of the most fascinating periods of British history. Unsurprisingly, therefore, its causes, key events, aftermath and long-term significance continue to be a source of much scholarly debate.<sup>1</sup> For a start, the civil war is now generally described as being not one but three separate conflicts: the first (1642 to 1646) and second (1648 to 1649), which were fought between Charles and Parliament and ended with Charles being executed for high treason, and the third (1649 to 1651) in which Charles' son attempted unsuccessfully to regain the crown. It is also now widely recognized that the conflicts encompassed not only England but also Wales and Scotland. And, as a reminder of the fundamentally discursive nature of historiography, even the very term 'civil war' is controversial: whereas earlier Cavalier historians referred to this time as 'the Great Rebellion', in the twentieth-century some scholars argued that its scale and significance justified the name 'revolution'.<sup>2</sup>

From the perspective of media history, the civil war is important as the time when a popular press first emerged to record and report on the dramatic events to an increasingly literate public hungry for news. As such, it goes without saying that a study of the media texts created during the civil war, their production, distribution, consumption and regulation, can provide us with valuable insights into those times. However, such a study has, I believe, another possibly even more valuable contribution to make in helping us understand many of the issues of importance to contemporary media such as propaganda, censorship and press freedom, objectivity and bias, and the impact of new technology. In particular, from my own perspective as a student of ideology in media discourse, the civil war journalistic texts provide a rich source of information about how political ideas are circulated and how language is used to convey ideological messages.

One of the biggest problems in researching historical news media is the ephemeral nature of the texts, which were never intended to survive beyond a

few days after publication. While a certain number of texts have been preserved in various archives, for the most part they are sparsely scattered and relatively difficult to access.<sup>3</sup> However, in the case of the civil war news media, owing to the foresight and assiduity of one man who lived through those tumultuous days, we are uniquely fortunate in having an astonishingly comprehensive archive of such materials to draw on. For an unbroken period of twenty-one years, a London bookseller called George Thomason systematically and with great care amassed a collection of over 22,000 items including pamphlets, manuscripts, broadsides and the prototype newspapers now generally referred to as 'newsbooks'. History owes an enormous debt to this remarkable man who, most regrettably, ended his days in poverty. Following his death this collection eventually found its way after several vicissitudes to the British Museum where they became known as the Thomason Tracts.<sup>4</sup>

One other man who in his own way has made an immense contribution to the study of the civil war period here in Japan is Hiroshi Mizuta, emeritus professor of Nagoya University, member of the Japan Academy and internationally-recognized expert on Adam Smith and the intellectual history of the Enlightenment. Thanks to the dedication and generosity of Professor Mizuta, Nagoya University has a collection of over 7,000 volumes from his personal library.<sup>5</sup> Amongst this immense trove of rare, valuable and sometimes beautiful treasures there is to be found a set of fifty-five small and rather dusty blue and white boxes. Belying their humble appearance, these contain the complete set of microfilms of the Thomason Tracts. Together with Professor Mizuta's personal copy of the two-volume catalogue to the collection compiled in 1908 by George Fortesque, Keeper of Printed Books at the British Museum, this collection offers a superb resource for conducting research on this period.<sup>6</sup>

### **Aims, data and method**

The main aim of this paper, the second in an occasional series on seventeenth-century English news texts, has been to make a preliminary exploration of the potential of this vast collection as a resource for the historical investigation of ideology in media discourse.<sup>7</sup> Inevitably, given the limitations of space here, this has required a drastic degree of selectivity. Accordingly, I have focused on the first year of the first civil war, 1642 (the third year of Thomason's collection), and on the representation during that year of events that occurred in one place, the port town

of Hull (or Kingston-upon-Hull to give it its full name) in East Yorkshire, which was the site during that year of two key moments in the history of the civil war. And for the detailed textual analysis I have had to select just one pamphlet, the very first one which refers to Hull published in January of that year. However, it is intended that other pamphlets and indeed newsbooks from this time will form the basis for subsequent studies in this series.

The theoretical and methodological foundation for this study is critical discourse analysis (CDA). This is a textually-oriented approach to language-in-use that combines macro scale theories of sociology with the meso level perspectives of discourse analysis and the micro scale tools of linguistics (in particular, systemic functional linguistics) to investigate the many and various ways in which language and power are interrelated.<sup>8</sup> While much CDA work is concerned with contemporary issues, the approach can equally well be applied to historical contexts and indeed there is one major school of CDA which foregrounds the historical aspect of discourse.<sup>9</sup> Moreover, in recent years a number of scholars working from a CDA perspective have begun investigating civil war media texts, albeit using a quantitative corpus-analysis methodology in contrast to the approach adopted here which emphasizes the close reading of a single text.<sup>10</sup>

### **Historical background**

In this section I can offer no more than a very brief outline of some of the main events which led up to the incident in 1642 that is analysed in this study. In what follows, I shall emphasize those events which are related to the development of the press.

The story of the printed word in Britain begins with William Caxton, who set up his printing press in the neighbourhood of Westminster Abbey in London in 1476. Official recognition of the established standing of this new media form came in 1557 when the Stationers' Company, the guild association of the London printers, received its royal charter. From that time this important body exercised monopoly control over the publishing industry until the start of the eighteenth century. In 1586 the Star Chamber, a court which was used by successive monarchs to enforce policies against powerful nobles, issued a decree limiting the number of printers and censoring their publications. In particular, the decree banned the publication of English news in England, which is why almost the only printed news legally available concerned the European wars, notably the Thirty Years' War that began

in 1618. Thus it was that the first 'coranto' (a printed sheet of 'current' news) in English was published in 1620 by George Vessler in Amsterdam. It had the decidedly unappealing title *The new tydings out of Italie are not yet com*. The following year, the first coranto published in England was produced by Thomas Archer, a London bookseller. He was subsequently imprisoned for publishing without a licence. The earliest surviving English-printed coranto was produced in September of that year by a man who was to become notorious for his many and varied publications, Nathaniel Butter. It was entitled *Corante, or Newes from Italy, Germany, Hungarie, Spaine and France*. In 1622 the first coranto to be regularly produced on a weekly basis was Nicholas Bourne and Thomas Archer's *Weekly Newes, from Italy, Germanie, Hungaria, Bohemia, the Palatinate, France and the Low Countries*.

In 1625 Charles I came to the throne following the death of his father, King James I of England and Ireland (James VI of Scotland). The years from then until his own death on the scaffold in 1649 constitute one of the most important periods in the history of English journalism. The year of Charles' accession saw the first performance of Ben Johnson's play, *The Staple of News*, which satirizes the burgeoning news business in terms that still seem relevant today. In 1632 the Star Chamber officially banned all corantos and newsbooks because of complaints from Austrian and Spanish diplomats that their coverage of the Thirty Years' War was biased. The ban remained in force until 1638 when Butter and Bourne were given a licence to issue newsbooks again. Although they had a monopoly they were in fact very limited in what they could print under the restrictive terms of a Star Chamber decree of the previous year.

The year 1640 is chiefly remembered in England as the year of the Short Parliament, so named because it ended after less than a month having refused to supply the king with the money he wanted to fight the Scots. The dissolution was in part caused by the prominent parliamentarian John Pym, who made a speech in the House of Commons using a script, something which was against parliamentary rules at the time. In fact, his written speech was one of the earliest examples of a new form of political discourse, being addressed as much to the reading public as to his fellow MPs.<sup>11</sup> However, this speech was not printed and published until 1641 when licensing laws collapsed during the political upheavals of that year and, in particular, as a result of the Stationers' Company transferring its allegiance from the king to Parliament.

On Wednesday, 29 September 1641, the first known example of an English 'newsbook' devoted to English news went on sale, somewhere in the neighbourhood of Holborn or Farringdon in London. It was entitled *The Heads of Severall Proceedings in this Present Parliament from the 22 of November, to the 29. 1641. Wherein is contained the substance of severall Letters sent from Ireland, shewing what distresse and misery they are in*<sup>12</sup> *With divers other passages of moment touching the Affaires of these Kingdomes*. It was published by John Thomas and written by Samuel Pecke, 'the first of the patriarchs of English journalism'.<sup>13</sup> Like the great majority of newsbooks, which were a genre of small pamphlets consisting generally of eight pages that developed rapidly from this time, this newsbook was largely just a chronologically ordered account of the proceedings in Parliament. But it represents the start of one of the most dramatic phases in press history. As Martin Conboy remarks, 'Poor printers, who ... had long been excluded by the combination of royal privileges and the restrictions of the Stationers' Company, leapt into the carnival of experimentation, propaganda and disrespect for political opponents. Plagiarism increased as well as all attempted to provide the latest and most complete news for the readers.'<sup>14</sup>

At the start of 1642 the relationship between the king and his parliament was growing rapidly worse and both sides were moving towards civil war. On 3 January a Royalist plot to accuse five leading members of Parliament of high treason was hatched. The following day, Charles went in person to Westminster Hall to arrest them but he was repulsed and the five members fled to the City. To fight a war both sides needed armaments in large quantities and at this time the single largest store of weaponry and gunpowder outside the Tower of London was at Hull, a port on the River Humber in the East Riding of Yorkshire. Accordingly, on 11 January Charles secretly appointed William Cavendish, the Earl of Newcastle, as governor of Hull and despatched one Captain William Legge from London to secure the town for him. However, Parliament was alerted to this scheme and sent Captain John Hotham to do likewise until his father, Sir John Hotham, could take up the post of governor himself, something he did not actually do until mid-March.<sup>15</sup>

Such then was the situation when Hull begins to make its appearance in the newsbooks and pamphlets of the civil war period. The main political, military and media events that occurred during the year may be summarized as follows:

January

- 3 The Five Members of Parliament are accused of high treason.
- 4 Charles attempts to arrest the Five Members in person but is rebuffed.

March

- 19 Charles establishes his court at York (30 miles from Hull).
- 28 The House of Commons suppresses all unlicensed forms of printed news.<sup>16</sup>

April

- 9 Parliament sends petitions to the King asking for the Hull magazine to be removed to the Tower of London.
- 23 Charles goes to Hull but is denied admission by Sir John Hotham.

July

- c4 The first siege of Hull begins.
- 6 Parliament issues an ordinance for raising 2,000 troops to relieve Hull. The garrison at Hull open sluices and breach the banks of the River Humber to flood the land surrounding the town.
- 27 Parliamentary force of 1,500 troops arrives at Hull to aid its defence.
- 28 Royalists abandon the siege of Hull.

August

During this month censorship breaks down and more than a dozen new newsbook titles are published in addition to those published prior to the March clampdown.

- 22 Charles raises his standard at Nottingham.

September

- 2 Parliament issues an ordinance to close the theatres.<sup>17</sup>

October

- 23 Battle of Edgehill, first battle of the civil war. Both sides claim victory.

### Hull in the news

Let us now investigate how the events at Hull during 1642 were represented in the printed pamphlets and newsbooks collected by George Thomason. The total number of pamphlets and of those the number which were concerned either in part or in whole with the events in Hull and also the number of newsbooks collected by Thomason each month during 1642 are shown in Table 1 below.<sup>18</sup> This table should be viewed in relation to the timing of the events that took place at Hull during this period as indicated above.

**Table 1.** *Number of Newsbooks (Nb) and Pamphlets (Pm) in the Thomason Tracts per month during 1642 also showing the number of pamphlets related to Hull.*

	<b>J</b>	<b>F</b>	<b>M</b>	<b>A</b>	<b>M</b>	<b>J</b>	<b>J</b>	<b>A</b>	<b>S</b>	<b>O</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b>Nb</b>	3	6	7	1	1	7	5	14	16	16	10	8	94
<b>Pm</b>	206	162	134	118	122	164	183	229	164	155	148	164	1949
<b>Hull</b>	1	0	0	16	10	0	15	9	5	0	0	1	57

As the table shows, the number of newsbooks collected by Thomason during this year varied considerably from month to month, with the March ban on unlicensed printing apparently having a significant dampening effect in April and May. Since newsbooks generally collected together information from various sources and parts of the country we would not necessarily expect their number to increase specifically in response to events at Hull and, of course, there were other newsworthy events happening during this time, in particular concerning the rebellion in Ireland. As for the pamphlets, these one-off printed items were presumably less easy to suppress but again the numbers clearly fluctuated quite considerably. Those relating to Hull do however show significant increases following the denial of admission to the king in April, an event which gave rise to a so-called ‘pamphlet war’<sup>19</sup> and led eventually to the first siege of Hull in July.

### **Textual analysis of *A True Relation***

The first pamphlet that refers to Hull recorded by Fortesque’s *Catalogue* of the Thomason Tracts has a rather unwieldy title<sup>20</sup>: *A true relation of the apprehension of the Lord Digby, as he was intending his journey and shipped for France, intercepted by Sir John Pennington, vice admiral of his Majesty’s fleet, and by him detained prisoner. With a bloody plot politically intended against the parliament, by certain papists and their adherents. As also the opposition made by the inhabitants of Hull, against a gentleman and his three hundred men sent by the parliament, with their general and free acceptance of the Earl of Newcastle, authorized by his Majesty’s commission to the same effect. As also the store of ammunition wherewith the said town is fortified.* (Henceforth, *A True Relation*). This is listed in the *Catalogue* under the date 10 January 1642.<sup>21</sup>

### **Layout of the title page**

It is helpful to begin the analysis of *A True Relation* by considering the physical

layout of the title page. This is shown schematically in Figure 1 below, on the basis of which a number of points may be noted. First and foremost, comparison with other pamphlets in the Thomason collection confirms that this page may be regarded as a typical example of kind of pamphlets produced at this time in that it displays several characteristic features.

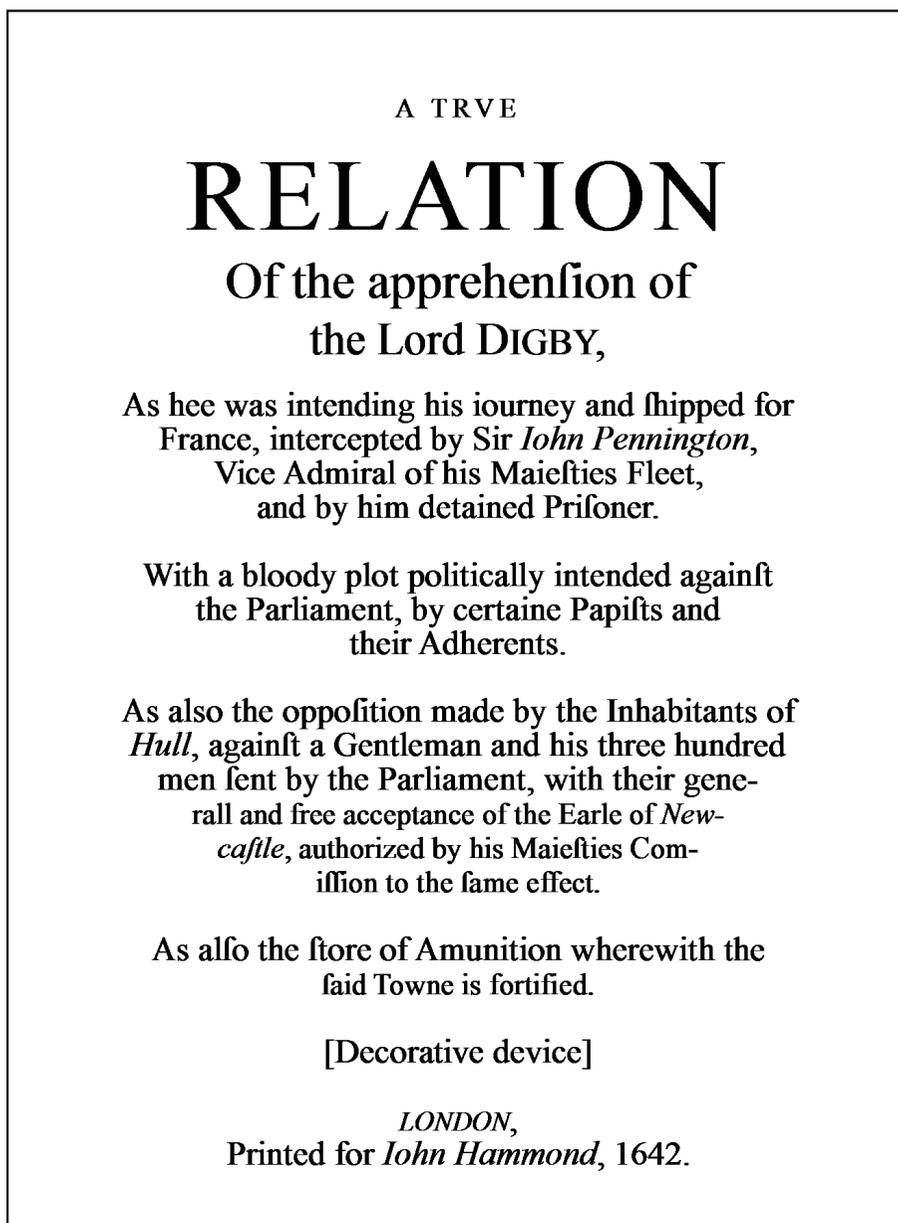


Figure 1. Approximate layout of the title page of *A True Relation*.

The first feature to be noted here is the highlighting in large capitals of a single headline word, something which is seen in many such pamphlets. The highlighted word expressed the category of content. For example, *an ORDINANCE, a REMONSTRANCE, or a LIST of...* The highlighted word was frequently preceded by a descriptive adjective which might function to emphasize the pamphlet's veracity (*A true RELATION, An exact RELATION*), timeliness (*A speedy POST*) or its newsworthiness (*Terrible NEWES, A strange WONDER*). During this time many of the pamphlets in Thomason's collection were petitions from Parliament or others to the king and these are usually headlined with the phrase *The humble PETITION of ...* although it is interesting to note that as relations between king and Parliament deteriorated the word *humble* tended to be dropped.

Other typical features of layout shown by this pamphlet include the centring of all the text on the page; the physical division of the text into paragraphs, albeit with much grammatical conjunction – generally additive (*With a bloody plot ..., As also...*) – linking the paragraphs; the use of a mixture of font sizes, even within a single paragraph; and the use of italics to emphasize key words such as the names of people and places. The decorative device used here is another characteristic feature of many pamphlets. In this case, it is a symmetrical repeating woodcut pattern resembling foliage that spans the middle third of the page and extends down to the equivalent of three lines of text. Similar decorations were sometimes used as borders (as this one could have been) around the whole page. One kind of decoration that does not appear here is the illuminated capital letter at the beginning of a text. This could sometimes be very elaborate and figurative and extend downwards for eleven lines of text or more.

Finally, at the bottom of the page, we find the place and date (at least the year) of publication and the publisher's name. The historian's task would be vastly simplified if the month and day of publication were included but in the majority of the pamphlets they are not.

### **Textual structure**

The importance of textual structure in 'monothematic' hard news texts (those which only deal with one main topic) in such publications as corantos and newsbooks has been well demonstrated by Nicholas Brownlees, who draws directly on leading CDA scholar Teun van Dijk's model of the textual structure of twentieth-century news discourse.<sup>22</sup> Brownlees notes that such texts display

a variety of structures amongst which an earlier more neutral, factual style contrasted with a later more ideological commentary style. Although Brownless did not consider the polythematic format of pamphlets such as the one being considered here, his work provides a useful backdrop for the present study.

In considering the title page of *A True Relation*, we may begin by recalling Folke Dahl's observation in relation to the corantos and newsbooks of this period that the title pages 'strange as it may seem, are to be regarded as more or less detailed indexes of the contents'.<sup>23</sup> I do not consider this to be particularly strange, if one considers how the words written on the cover pages of modern magazines, for example, likewise allude to the content. Nor when one considers that these pamphlets would have been pinned up on boards or posts outside the booksellers shops so that their inner pages were not available for browsing as in the contemporary Japanese *tachiyomi* style. But be that as it may, Dahl's observation certainly holds in the case of *A True Relation* where the order of items here does indeed largely correspond to the actual contents. There is just one rather notable exception: on the bottom half of the last page there has been added a ten-line single stanza poem that is not alluded to on the title page.

This poem is entitled *The Copy of a writing produced and presented to the Parliament* and takes the form of a veiled threat about a plot. It is undersigned with *Farewell I. P.*<sup>24</sup> At first glance, this poem, for that is what it undoubtedly is despite the curiously generic description of it as a 'writing', seems to do little but stoke the fears of readers regarding the numerous real and imagined plots, Popish and otherwise, that were constantly being discussed in the media at the time.<sup>25</sup> It almost seems as though it were simply added to fill up the empty space, perhaps just prior to printing. However, it is not the only poem in the pamphlet because the report of the Papist plot alluded to on the cover as the second item in the pamphlet and which appears on the fourth page is also written in verse. Under the title *The Papist plot against the Parliament*, this poem consists of thirty-two lines forming a single stanza, visually distinctive in being non-right-justified (like the final page's poem but unlike all the prose sections of this pamphlet) and which, in a testament to the printer's skill, extends exactly down to the bottom line of the third page. The details of the plot and how it was successfully foiled are described in the following lines from the central portion of the poem (lines 11 to 24).

Thus was't contriv'd: Many demy Blades<sup>26</sup>  
Amongst their brave Papifticall Comrades,  
Advanc'd to Westminfter, with Pistols, Swords,  
Their Armes compleat, and many braving words,  
Ha[l]berts provided for to cut and hew  
Such as they meant should bid the world adieu.  
Our best of men that purpos'd good, they evill  
Provided as if seconds for the Divell.  
Thrufting the Officers from off their place,  
Abusing others, thinking to deface  
The forme of government: But God be prais'd,  
Their plot's defaced, and our fortunes rais'd  
By their defeating; Had they had the word,  
We muft have suffred or by fire or sword.

Vivid though this description might be, and very indicative of the period's discourse in its use of religious imagery, from the perspective of modern journalism it is sorely lacking in details. There is no indication of when the events occurred, how exactly and by whom the attack was defeated or who the first person narrator was. Interestingly, however, immediately following on from these lines, the poem continues thus:

A Letter since produc'd to th' house of Commons,  
Which shewes their private and conjoined summons,  
Is afterwards inferted, looke and view,  
It is not halfe so dissmall as tis true.

The phrase 'afterwards inserted' refers to the 'writing' poem appended at the end of this pamphlet. As such, then, this rather goes against the idea that the latter was a late space-filling addition. Indeed, it means that the two poems ought to be seen as forming a linked pair, rather in the way that contemporary newspapers often catch the reader's attention by beginning a story on the front page which is then continued less prominently on an inner page. In this case, one feels some admiration for the author and publisher in working this rather clever bit of seventeenth-century 'clickbait' into the body of their poem, exploiting the curiosity gap by providing just enough information to readers, with the added exhortation to 'looke and view', to make them want to find out more. This sort of inter-textual linkage provides a good illustration of the importance of not analysing texts in isolation from their contexts and in particular their co-texts but rather of seeing

them as closely interconnected with their discursal ecosystem.

One further point of interest that should be noted here is that the pamphlet has the word *false* written in Thomason's hand on the title page, just below the word 'Lord' in the fourth line. Such marginalia are not infrequent amongst the Tracts and often provide insights into the events described and Thomason's reactions to them. As such, we may note in more general terms that mass mediated texts have always been appropriated by consumers in various ways as Talbot has recognized in her emphasis on the interactive nature of our experience of media products.<sup>27</sup>

Turning now to the main topic of the pamphlet's 'true relation', the person being referred to is Lord George Digby (1612–1677), the ambitious and mercurial second Earl of Bristol and a Royalist member of the House of Lords. Around this time he had been in considerable danger of losing his liberty following his involvement in the plan to arrest the so-called 'Five Members' of Parliament for high treason. On 14 January he had attended a Royalist recruiting muster at Kingston-upon-Thames for which the House of Lords accused *him* of high treason, which is the reason why at this time he had been attempting to flee to Holland. While it may be reasonable to assume that Thomason's 'false' comment refers to Digby, it is not clear precisely what it means. While there is evidence that Digby was for some time detained aboard Pennington's ship as the text states, it also seems that Pennington, a fellow Royalist, actually helped Digby to flee and Thomason may have been aware of this.<sup>28</sup> At all events, Digby quickly made his way to Holland where he joined Queen Henrietta Maria, wife of Charles, to assist her efforts to support the Royalist preparations for war. He subsequently returned to England, disguised as a Frenchman, to attend Charles at York, but on the voyage back to Holland he was apprehended and taken to Hull. After revealing his identity to the governor, Sir John Hotham, he persuaded the latter to allow him to escape. On a later visit to Hull he endeavoured without success to bring off a plot to persuade Hotham to surrender Hull to the king.

Incidentally, it is tempting to speculate upon the relationship between Digby and the printer of this pamphlet, John Hammond. Was Hammond perhaps in the pay of Digby's enemies? A suggestion that this might be the case is found in an entry in the Journal of the House of Lords for 25 January 1642 where it was reported "That a scandalous and false Pamphlet was printed and published, of a supposed Treason at Sherborne, the Earl of Bristol's House<sup>29</sup>; and that the Printer's Name is John Hamond [*sic*]:" The House ordered that Hammond be sent for.<sup>30</sup> It is notable that

the report uses the same word, 'false', to describe that pamphlet that Thomason penned on the cover of this one.

### Depiction of events at Hull

Having given an overall account of the layout and composition of this pamphlet, let us now turn to the section that relates specifically to Hull. This begins on the fifth page of the pamphlet, immediately following the Papist plot poem about the 'demy Blades' and covers two and a half pages, ending near the middle of the last page just above the shorter 'writing' poem. Along the top margin of the first page is a decorative border of an abstract floral pattern. Below that, the title is given as: *A relation of the entertainment given to the Gentleman sent by the Parliament to be governour of Hull*. Below this and above the main text comes a sentence, much like a lead paragraph in a modern news report, set off by italics and centering, that reads: *With his garrison of three hundred men, and their opposing the same, as also their willing acceptance of my Lord of Newcastle, sent with a Commisision from his Maiesty*. The main text is as follows.

Vpon the tenth day of Ianuary laft paft, a Gentleman authorized by the Parliament to undertake the government and vigilant care of the Towne of *Hull*, with three hundred able men for that purpofe, fet forward in their journey towards the County of Yorke: where arrived, the inhabitants of the faid Town denied him entrance within the walles, notwithstanding hee produced the command from the Honorable Houfe of Parliament to that effect.<sup>31</sup> But after fome time spent in mature confideration, they admitted him, but not his men, alledging that the Fort being his Maiefties, he having there alfo a Magazine<sup>32</sup>, the power and cuftody thereof ought not to bee conferd and delivered over unto any, without his Maieftief special commiffion authorizing fome Noble and well knowne Common-wealths-man by it, otherwise they were not bound, neither would they deliver it up to any; but if he pleased to view their Amunition, Magazine, and what ftrengh they had to defend it, he fhould and make no queftion but hee fhould find both it and them fufficient and able enough to withftand any firraigne force or enemy in defence and fafeguard of the fame.

Thus answered, hee deprrted, and came to London, fince when the Earle of Newcastle authorized by his Maiefties commiffion, and attended with a traine of five hundred affiftants, was generally and joyfully received of the inhabitants, where he hath fupplied his Maiefties Magazens and Block-houfes (where it was wanting) with powder, fhot, bullets, both for Canon

and Musket, : hee hath also mounted the peeces of Ordnances, raifed platformes, rectified all defaults, whether in carriages or Field-peeces, and is now continually re-edifying and adding to the fortifications formerly built there, his endeavours, and so generally thought for the good of this Kingdome, that wee daily with a greater multiplication of such loyall subiects. He is a man so generally fraught with vertue, and so indultrious in the effectation of his present commiffion, that neither being mis-led to vice, nor losing opportunity for the proceeding in his importunate affairs, that he may be a paterne of emulation for hereafter times.

The text continues with a paragraph giving details of the various cannons and other ordnance at Hull followed by one more praising Newcastle before concluding with the single italicised word, *Amen*.

It goes without saying that for most modern readers the first question likely to occur to them upon reading this text is who the ‘Gentleman authorized by the Parliament’ might be. It seems curious that his name is not recorded here although perhaps the author (or printer) was concerned about giving undue offence to Parliament about the failure of one of their men. In fact, the gentleman in question was Captain John Hotham, son of Sir John Hotham. Since they play such a prominent role in Hull’s civil war history, a brief digression into the careers of the Hothams may now be warranted. Sir John was the scion of a prominent Yorkshire landowning family. He was a soldier who had fought in the continental wars, returning to England in 1621. He was MP for the town of Beverley (six miles from Hull) three times during that decade. In 1628 he was appointed governor of Hull. However, the king replaced him in 1639 with Captain William Legge, who was charged with setting up the magazine there. As we have already seen though, Parliament re-appointed Hotham to the governorship in January 1642 thereby initiating the most momentous year in Hull’s history.

There is no denying the significance of the events at Hull in the year 1642 for the country as a whole. It has often been observed that if Charles had succeeded in gaining control of Hull at this time, with its vast magazine, redoubtable fortifications and strategically useful port, the whole course of the civil war might have been very different. For a start, either the first battle of the war, the Battle of Edgehill, would not have been fought or it would have resulted in an outright victory for the Royalists rather than an inconclusive draw. As it was, Hotham did gain control of the town and for the next eight months Hull became the smoldering

powder keg at the heart of the confrontation between king and Parliament. The most dramatic and symbolic event occurred on 23 April when the king came in person from York, where he had established his court, to Hull to command Sir John Hotham to open the gates of the town. Hotham refused and the much chagrined king responded the next day by declaring him guilty of high treason. Following that, in May, Parliament removed the armaments to the safety of the Tower of London. Despite this, the Royalists laid siege to the town, not once but twice, first in July and again between September and October of the following year, but on both occasions they failed to break through the town's formidable defences.<sup>33</sup>

Gradually, though, during the course of 1642, and for a number of complexly interconnected reasons, Hotham's power began to wane. First, as noted above, he conspired with Lord Digby to surrender the town but this plan was foiled by the unexpected arrival of Parliamentary reinforcements. These were under the command of Sir John Meldrum who had been ordered to take over as governor because Parliament was beginning to doubt Hotham's loyalty. The following spring, both Hotham and his son became embroiled in another plot with the Earl of Newcastle to turn Hull over to the Royalists. In June, when this plot failed Hotham managed to escape, but was soon captured and taken with his son to the Tower of London. His son was executed on 1 January 1645 and he himself one day later.

Returning now to the text about Hull we can note a number of inaccuracies in it. Firstly, it was not the 10th but the 11th of January when both Captain Hotham and Captain Legge left London for Yorkshire. Secondly, Hotham was not granted admission to the town at this time. And thirdly, neither, once he had arrived from the north, was the Earl of Newcastle. Needless to say, the earl did not strengthen the town's fortification in the manner described either. So all in all, although it follows the conventional forms of news reporting current at that time, it appears at first glance that this report was not so much a genuine new report but a piece of Royalist propaganda presumably intended to embolden supporters and discourage their Parliamentary opponents. Such being the case, it might mean that Thomason's *false* refers not specifically to the news about Lord Digby but to the pamphlet as a whole. It is a tribute perhaps to his conscientiousness in collecting everything he could lay his hands on that he did not simply throw this kind of material away.

### Whose propaganda?

Finally, it just remains to say a few words regarding the ideological position reflected in this pamphlet. Assuming on the basis of the above analysis that it is a work of propaganda, on whose behalf was it created? That is to say, is the above ascription of it as 'Royalist' entirely accurate here? At this stage in the run up to war there was in England a great deal of mixed sentiment amongst the citizenry. Although there were those openly declaring for either king or Parliament, there were many more who were undecided. In particular, even those who sided with Parliament tended to still regard the king as innocent of blame and simply the victim of 'injudicious council' of a more or less overtly Catholic nature. Indeed, if there was one thing that did tend to unite people it was the fear of Catholic plots and I think it is this fact which forms the key for understanding the pamphlet's overall ideological position.

The main item in this pamphlet, about the apprehension of Lord Digby by Sir John Pennington, begins as follows:

NEver since GOD had frst beene pleased to shew his mercies towards us,  
was it knowne, that pernicious and nefarious offenders againft his Church  
and elect, have escaped unpunished.

It continues in a similar vein for ten more lines and I would argue that this functions to position the reader to view Digby from a religious perspective in an unfavourable light. When Digby is first mentioned, against this background, it is in the following terms:

The Lord *Digby* whose iudicious understanding, if well applied, might have  
both much advantaged, and also extended to the setting of a generall and  
unaccomplished peace in this kingdome, proving a delinquent, and flying  
the iust iudgement and censure of the Parliament againft him,

Thus we find that Parliament is seen as unequivocally just (hardly what one would expect from a piece of Royalist propaganda) whereas Digby is criticised in a way that is tempered with a recognition of his talents. The next item in the pamphlet is the Papist plot poem, which we may note is referred to in its title as specifically being 'against the Parliament'. This begins as follows:

Mifchiefes in hell erst hatcht, hath not been found  
So bad, pernicious, or fo curs'd a ground,  
As this I mean to treat on, whose intent  
Hath been for to abolifh Parliament,  
Vndoe a King and Kingdome, make a State  
Through want of Peeres to prove unfortunate:

Clearly, and contra the poem's title, both sides in the dispute are being portrayed as the potential victims of the plot which, as we have seen above, was the work of the 'demy Blades' and their 'Papiftical comrades'. Similarly, I would suggest that we ought to read the following item, the 'relation' about the entertainment given to the governor of Hull, in religious rather than political terms. There are no critical allusions to either the character or the behaviour of the 'gentleman' authorized by Parliament to take control of Hull (Captain Hotham) which, had this been a Royalist propaganda piece, we might have expected. On the other hand, the Earl of Newcastle is 'a man so generally fraught with virtue ... that he may be a paterne of emulation for hereafter times'. Here too I would suggest that such sentiments reflect an admiration for the Earl's efforts in protecting the kingdom from foreign enemies rather than the enemy within. We should not forget that Hull, strategically located at the mouth of the Humber river on England's east coast, was seen as an essential defence against attacks from the continent.

## **Conclusion**

In this paper I have begun an investigation into the media discourse of civil war pamphlets and newsbooks as seen through the lens of the Thomason Tracts. Although CDA emphasizes the importance of analysing texts within the context of the discursive and sociocultural practices and events in which they are embedded, I have only been able to offer the briefest of sketches of the historical background against which these texts were produced. However, it should be noted that there is now a wealth of specialist studies on seventeenth-century news media available and readers interested in finding out more are encouraged to refer to those.<sup>34</sup> Likewise, I have only been able to discuss one pamphlet which on examination, although fairly typical in terms of format, we have found to be composed almost entirely of falsehoods. Such propagandistic texts, masquerading under the pretence of providing news, were clearly intended to play an ideological role in establishing the sense of 'us' versus 'them' (or 'in-group' and 'out-group' to use van

Dijk's terms<sup>35</sup>), a process that Reisigl and Wodak have termed 'relationalisation'<sup>36</sup>, in the consciousness of the London reading public in the run-up to the civil war. However, it would appear that at this stage the 'them' is neither the Parliament nor the Royalists but real or imaginary Catholic plotters. In future studies I will use CDA to analyse a number of other pamphlets and newsbooks from later during the same period in order to illustrate both this and some other textual patterns and ideological features that are to be found in the form and content of these texts and also to demonstrate how these evolved as the civil war unfolded.

## Notes

- 1 For an excellent overview see Austin Woolrych, *Britain in revolution, 1625-1660* (Oxford, 2002). For the intellectual history of the period there is still no work that surpasses Christopher Hill's seminal *The world turned upside down: radical ideas during the English revolution* (Temple Smith, 1972).
- 2 See for example, G. E. Aylmer, *Rebellion or revolution? England 1640-60* (Oxford, 1987).
- 3 Access to some texts is available via the *Early English Books Online* database but very few institutions in Japan subscribe to this.
- 4 For a study that draws extensively on the Thomason Tracts and pays particular attention to the role of the media see Michael Braddick, *God's fury, England's fire: a new history of the English civil wars* (Allen Lane, 2008).
- 5 See Eriko Nakai, *Outline of the Mizuta library* [Mizuta Bunko Gaiyou] (Nagoya Daigaku Fuzoku Toshokan, Fuzoku Toshokan Kenkyuu Kaihatsu Shitsu, 2013) [in Japanese with English abstract].
- 6 The present paper has relied for its data almost entirely on this source and I am pleased to be able to record my gratitude to Professor Mizuta here. I would also like to express my great thanks to the reference staff of Nagoya University's Central Library, Economics Library and Informatics and Languages Library for their invaluable and unfailingly helpful assistance. For a useful guide to the Tracts, see J. Shawcross, 'Using the Thomason Tracts and their significance for Milton studies', *SEL Studies in English Literature 1500 – 1900*, Vol. 49, No. 1, pp.145-172.
- 7 The first study in this series, focusing on the earliest English newspapers in the years leading up to the civil war, was the author's, 'The history of the earliest English newspapers 1620 – 1642', *Studies in Media and Culture*, Vol. 2, pp. 15-35 (Nagoya University, 2006).
- 8 For an overview of CDA see R. Wodak and M. Mayer (eds.), *Methods of critical discourse analysis*, 2nd. ed. (Sage, 2009). For an introduction to the approach adopted here see N. Fairclough, *Analysing discourse: textual analysis for social research* (Routledge, 2003).
- 9 See M. Reisigl and R. Wodak, 'The discourse-historical approach' in R. Wodak and M. Mayer (eds.) pp. 87-121.
- 10 S. Prentice and A. Hardie, 'Empowerment and disempowerment in the Glencairn uprising: a corpus-based critical analysis of early modern English news discourse', *Journal of Historical Pragmatics*, Vol.10, No. 1, pp. 23-55 (2009); A. Hardie *et al.*, 'Historical text mining and corpus-

- based approaches to the newsbooks of the Commonwealth' In B. Dooley (ed.) *The dissemination of news and the emergence of contemporaneity in early modern Europe* (Ashgate, 2010) pp. 251-286.
- 11 Pym's speech might perhaps be viewed as an interesting early example of what the media sociologist, J. B. Thompson, termed 'mediated quasi-interaction'. See J. B. Thompson, *The media and modernity* (Blackwell, 1995) pp. 81-118.
  - 12 Woolrych tells us that woodcuts of Irish rebellion atrocities were selling well on the bookstalls at this time and that during the early months of 1642 scares of one sort or another were endemic. (Woolrych, p.206, 218).
  - 13 Joseph Georger Muddiman ("J. B. Williams") 'The beginnings of English journalism', In Adolphus William Ward and Sir A. R. Waller (eds.) *The Cambridge history of English literature*, Vol. 7, p. 347. (Cambridge. 1911).
  - 14 Martin Conboy, *Journalism: a critical history* (Routledge, 2004 p. 30).
  - 15 In the Journal of the House of Commons for Tuesday, 11 January 1642 it is recorded that it was resolved 'That Sir John Hotham, or such Person as he shall be responsible for, do instantly repair to Hull, and put some of the Trained Bands, of the Parts next adjoining to that Town, into that Place, for the Defence of that Town, and Magazine there, according to the Resolution of both Houses.' Likewise, the following day's entry records a resolution 'That the Lords be moved to agree with this House, that Sir Jo. Hotham, or whom else he shall appoint under him, shall not deliver up the Town of Hull, or Magazine there, or any Part thereof, without the King's Authority, signified unto him by the Lords and Commons House of Parliament.'
  - 16 Since at this time no newsbooks dealing with domestic news had yet been licensed this meant an official embargo on all news relating to the impending war.
  - 17 Although this was never completely achieved during the interregnum the ban was not lifted till 1660.
  - 18 The numbers relating to Hull were derived from a close reading of Fortesque's *Catalogue*, both the pamphlet titles and his parenthetical observations thereon. The keywords searched for were 'Hull' and 'Hotham', although pamphlets relating to the activities of Captain Hotham but unrelated to Hull were excluded. This approach to determining the number of Hull-related pamphlets is clearly limited in that there may well be some pamphlets which do indeed refer to events at Hull while not clearly being indicated as such in the *Catalogue*. Thus the numbers here must represent a minimum that slightly underestimates the actual figures.
  - 19 See J. Holstun (ed.) *Pamphlet wars: prose in the English revolution* (Routledge, 1992).
  - 20 Some aspects of formatting and spelling but not punctuation, such as the use of italics and the long s ( ſ ) have been changed here for ease of reading but see Figure 1 for an approximate rendering of the original.
  - 21 It should be noted here though that the dates listed in the *Catalogue* are not those of the date of publication but of the events to which the contents are chiefly related. This is a considerable limitation of the Tracts particularly when one wishes to focus closely on the timing of media activity in relation to events as they unfold. There are indeed numerous pamphlets for which Fortesque has been obliged to conjecture the date and others where only an approximate date can be assigned. In a very few cases they cannot be assigned more precisely than to a particular year. For a discussion of such issues see S. Greenberg, 'Dating Civil War Pamphlets, 1641-

- 1644', *Albion* Vol. 20, No. 3, pp. 387-401 (1988) and M. Mendle, 'The Thomason Collection: A Reply to Stephen J. Greenberg', *Albion* Vol. 22, No. 1, pp. 85-93 (1990).
- 22 N. Brownlees, 'Narrating contemporaneity: text and structure in English news', In Dooley (2010) pp. 225-250. For the underlying model of news discourse see T. van Dijk, *News as discourse* (Hillsdale, 1988).
- 23 F. Dahl, *A bibliography of English corantos and periodical newsbooks, 1620-1642* (Bibliographical Society, 1952) p. 26.
- 24 There is no indication of who 'produced and presented' this poem to Parliament. And the identity of 'I.P.' is unclear. Although the initials could refer to Sir John Pennington, who is the only person named in the whole pamphlet other than Lord Digby and the Earl of Newcastle, this seems unlikely.
- 25 Indeed, the very following pamphlet in Thomason's collection, also labelled January 10th, is the following: *The Papists Designe against the Parliament and Citie of London, discovered by a Letter found neere White-Hall, sent from L.M. a Jesuit to R. C. a Popish Lord* which bears the inscription *Printed for H. F.*
- 26 E. Partridge's *Dictionary of Slang and Unconventional English* gives a slang meaning of 'demy' as an illicit die or dicing which dates from this period but the relevance to this context is unclear. It may simply be a variation of 'damn' but it might also be a slighting reference to the poor (half-, hence demi-) quality of the blades (swordsmen). A demy was (and still is) a kind of scholarship offered by Magdalen College, Oxford. It is so called because such a scholar originally received only half the allowance of a fellow.
- 27 M. Talbot, *Media discourse: representation and interaction* (Edinburgh, 2007). For a useful survey of marginalia see H. Jackson, *Marginalia: readers writing in books* (Yale, 2001).
- 28 In fact, the evidence is conflicting. The House of Lords Journal for 24 January records the testimony given by one of Pennington's men 'That the Lord George Digby is gone to Sea, for, upon Tuesday last, he did see the Ship (one of the King's Whelps) under Sail wherein he was, and, by the Wind and the Steering of the Ship, he went for Holland'. Incidentally, the Whelps referred to were a private fleet of ten three-masted, armed full rigged pinnaces, all called *The Lion's Whelp*, built for the 1st Duke of Buckingham in 1628. They were bought by the Navy in 1632 following the duke's assassination.
- 29 The Earl was Digby's father and Sherborne was his family seat.
- 30 House of Lords Journal, Volume 4, 25 January 1642, pp. 533-537.
- 31 Since there is no Unicode code for the c+t digraph all such instances of its use, as here, have been shown as two separate glyphs.
- 32 The magazine was stored in the old Manor Hall, a house built by Henry VIII.
- 33 For an account of these sieges see E. Broxap, 'The sieges of Hull during the great civil war', *The English Historical Review* Vol. 20, No. 79, pp.457-473 (1905).
- 34 The numerous works of Joad Raymond, such as his *The invention of the newspaper, English newsbooks 1641-1649* (2006), provide a very thorough account of this topic.
- 35 T. van Dijk, *Racism and the press* (Routledge, 1991).
- 36 M. Reisigl and R. Wodak, *Discourse and discrimination: rhetorics of racism and anti-semitism* (Routledge, 2001).