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PRINCE RUPERT'S WHITE DOG:
AN EPISODE IN PUBLISHING HISTORY

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PRINCE RUPERT (1619-1682), Count Palatine of the Rhine and Duke of Bavaria, had an eventful career as one of the great men of action of the seventeenth century and by far the most notable military commander on the Royalist side of the English civil war. Indeed, one might speculate that, if he had been given a little more time and had encountered a little less resistance from his fellow commanders, the whole Cromwellian interregnum might never have occurred. However, since this number of the *Bulletin* commemorates John Fletcher, the bibliographer and bibliophile, as well as John Fletcher, the Germanist, the present paper is concerned with one aspect only of Prince Rupert's life, namely, the attention he received from the pamphleteers of the day during the first few months of his decisive incursion into English affairs.

Prince Rupert was the third son of Frederick, briefly King of Bohemia, and Elizabeth, sister of Charles I of England. From an early age, he was fascinated by the mechanics of warfare. In 1632, aged about 13, he marched with the Prince of Orange to the siege of Rhyndergh where, says his first biographer, 'he gave the world the first proof of his Valour and Conduct'.¹ In 1637, aged 18, he commanded a regiment of horse in the German wars. In the following year he was captured by the imperialists and held for over three years. This early reverse seems to have shortened his temper but not to have diminished his appetite for warfare. He was released just in time to play a major part in the English civil war.

In September 1642, when Rupert arrived in England, matters were going badly for his uncle, King Charles. The parliamentary leaders had deprived him of his most able advisers and had been none too scrupulous about the methods they employed to do so. Their most important coup had been to cause the execution of the King's chief minister, Thomas Wentworth, Earl of Strafford, using the disgraceful procedure of Act of Attainder when it became clear that he could not be convicted by lawful means. Thereafter, the King's other servants came progressively under attack, the fiction being maintained that all would be well if only the King could be separated from his evil advisers. In parliament, Pym skilfully maintained an atmosphere of perpetual crisis with countless rumours of plots and threats so that rational resolution of the country's problems became impossible. Outside parliament, pamphlets were circulated giving publicity to any adverse votes of parliament and attacking almost everyone in the King's immediate circle. Finally, on 22

August 1642, the Royal Standard was raised at Nottingham, thus marking (symbolically at least) the start of civil war.

Neither side was well prepared and, as is so often the case, the early steps taken by both sides were weak and indecisive. Into this scene the 22-year-old Rupert descended like a thunderclap. He was quick-thinking, knowledgeable in the arts of war, decisive and imperious by temperament, alarmingly energetic and absolutely fearless. Not too surprisingly, the King immediately made him a commander. The first task was recruiting. Rupert 'flew up and down thro' divers Counties, and gained a considerable Body together'.² Then he went into battle. His first great success was at the battle of Powicke bridge, Worcester on 23 September. A month later, at the battle of Edgehill, he commanded the right wing of the cavalry 'where he discharged the part of a Courageous and Valiant Commander, charging with such fury upon the Parliaments Left Wing, that he wholly routed them, pursuing them as far as Keynton, and there fell on the Waggon which Essex had left behind him'.³

Unfortunately, this eagerness for pursuit and plunder left the other less energetic parts of the King's forces unprotected and the battle was indecisive. However, it was clear to both sides that a remarkable phenomenon had entered the war and that, if Rupert could only discipline himself and his troops a little more, he had the capacity to be a devastating commander in the field.

At this stage the London pamphleteers started to turn their attention to Prince Rupert. They had become increasingly active since the publication of the Grand Remonstrance, pouring out a stream of information, misinformation and opinion. Most of the printers still able to operate in London favoured the parliamentary side and something of the flavour of their pamphlets can be obtained by running one's eye down the titles of the Thomason tracts for September to November 1642.

As usual in time of war, truth was the first casualty. Precise information was difficult to come by and one notices immediately that the outcome of battles is frequently misrepresented. Thus on 24 September⁴ we have *A True Relation of a victory obtained against Prince Robert at Worcester by the Earl of Essex* and others to like effect. This was followed by a succession of *True Relations*, *True Newes*, *Exceeding true Newes* and *Most true Newes*, the reliability of which did not necessarily accord with the strident assertions of their truthfulness.

Where victory cannot be claimed, the next best approach is the atrocity story. These started modestly enough with *A True Relation of Prince Robert his forces coming to one M. Purslins neere Coventry, and burning down all his out-houses*,⁵ but rapidly progressed to *The Debauched Cavalleer, or the English Midianite; setting forth their diabolicall cruelties*⁶ and *Terrible Newes from York, declaring the barbarous actions of the Cavaliers in plundering and imprisoning those citizens, that refuse to contribute money to maintaine a war against the*

Parliament. The latter and similar accusations were treated sufficiently seriously for the King to issue and publish directions 'that the goods of no inhabitants be despoiled or unjustly pillaged, but that due satisfaction be given for meat, or drink, or whatever shall be convenient and necessary for them'.⁸

Accusations that the King's army was popishly affected were common, as for example in *The Butcher's Blessing or, the bloody intentions of Romish Cavaliers against the city of London*.⁹ There were also tracts unashamedly directed to the credulous such as *A Wonderfull Miracle. Declaring how Andrew Stonesby, a Cavalier at Listelleth, dranke a health to the Devill; also how the Devill appeared to him at that instant, so that he was distracted and died raving*¹⁰ and *A Blazing Starre seene in the West at Totneis. Wherein is manifested how Ralph Ashley, a deboyst Cavalier, attempted to ravish a young Virgin; also how at that instant a fearefull Comet appeared; likewise how he, persisting in his damnable attemt, was struck with a flaming sword so that he died*.¹¹

Eventually, Prince Rupert could stand it no longer and replied in a pamphlet entitled *Prince Rupert his Declaration* published in several editions in Oxford,¹² London¹³ and York¹⁴ and also in a Dutch translation.¹⁵ The immediate cause of the Prince's wrath was a speech of Lord Wharton at Guildhall, later published,¹⁶ alleging, as Rupert put it, 'that one great cause of their preservation at Edge-hill, was the barbarousnesse and inhumanity of Prince Rupert and his Troopers, that we spared neither man, woman, nor child, and the thing which we aime at is pillage and plundering, and the way which we would come by it is murthuring and destroying'. Since such a charge as this came from such a mouth, Rupert says that he felt bound in honour to reply to it. He adds drily that he would have raised the matter personally with Wharton at the battle of Edgehill 'if his Lordship had but stayed so long as to be asked the question'.

Having decided to reply, Rupert did not believe in half measures. Every sentence of his pamphlet carried weight. First, there is a general attack on his critics. 'I need not tell the world (for it is too well knowne) what malicious lying Pamphlets are Printed against mee almost every morning, whereby those busie men strive to render me as odious as they would have Mee, against whom doubtless I had sooner declared, but that I well knew this mutenous lying spirit would be easily convinced, but neiver silenced, which, as it ceaseth at no time, so it spares no person'. Having made his apology for venturing into print, Rupert wastes little time on these generalities. Nor, in contrast with his occasional lapses in the field, does he bother to pursue his critics merely for the sake of rhetorical plunder. Indeed, his capacity for resisting the lure of side issues is quite remarkable in what he calls 'this scribbling Age'.

Most of his pamphlet is spend dealing directly with each of the major allegations against him - the false claims that he had been defeated in certain battles in which he had in fact been victorious, the allegations of inhumanity in battle, barbarity towards women and children and looseness and incivility

towards civilians. It is one of Rupert's great strengths in argument that he never overstates his case, but seeks to put each matter in context. 'Twas ever my opinion', he says, 'that no valient man would speake a knowne untruth'. His declaration is masterly and unanswerable.¹⁷ This does not, of course, mean that it was left unanswered. The first of the replies appeared about four days after the first publication of Rupert's declaration in London: *The Parliament's Vindication in answer to Prince Rupert's Declaration*.¹⁸ It was immediately followed by *An Answer to a scandalous lying Pamphlet intituled Prince Rupert his Declaration*¹⁹ and others to like effect appeared in the following year.²⁰ But the pamphleteers had a short attention span and by this time the debate had moved on.

Prince Rupert had a white poodle called Boy, which was devoted to him and accompanied him everywhere, even into battle. Not too surprisingly, there were some amongst the credulous who attributed magical powers to Boy and suggested that these magical powers were responsible for Rupert's extraordinary successes. This led to production of a pamphlet which well illustrates a gentler and more whimsical side to the controversial literature of the earlier months of the civil war. It is entitled *Observations upon Prince Rupert's white dog called Boy*²¹ and has a woodcut on the title-page showing a dog of astonishingly leonine aspect. It purports to be written from Oxford by a parliamentary sympathizer, but, while the humour and style could well have come from Oxford, its gently ironical treatment of parliamentary mishaps could hardly have come from a whole-hearted sympathizer.

The theme of the pamphlet is that Boy is really a witch transformed by art to a handsome white dog, which has vowed to follow Rupert to preserve him from mischief.

Boy is said to have great intelligence and supernatural powers. He understands learned Masters of Arts, often better than they understand one another (an ageless donnish jest). He can prophesy, though 'not as our Master Green the Haberdasher doth Prophecy'. (Purported prophecy by ignorant tradesmen who used the freedom of the pulpit to express political views was a regular butt of Royalist humour.) Boy is also said to be responsible for most of the disasters that have overtaken the parliamentary forces.

He can goe invisibly himself, and make others doe so too. He hath often been where no body hath seen him, and done that which no body else could. Who think you conveid Oneal out of the Tower? even Boy. Who conveid the L. Digby first in to Hull afterwards out againe? even Boy. Who got Legg out of prison? even Boy. Who released Bamfield? verily Boy still. Yet who all this while less suspected then Boy? and now, if ever, I beseech you have an eye to your selves; for he goes oftner between Oxford and London, every week, than the three Carriers doe. He conveies Letters without being broken open, and brings mony without being robbed. He it is that lays the Apprentises²²

Designe in one shape and then leads them on to the Action in a nother: one day he is Philip the Shoemaker, and another day Tom the Barber. And when he would find out our counsellis, he mingles himself with the good apprentices; sometimes appears like Eziekiel, M. Bostock²³ the bookbinders boy; and sometimes like Nathaniel, Mrs Greens Freeman. Under these disguises he brings us false Informations, and carries them true [. . .] Then upon my certain knowledge he doth usually break a black cloud about Prince Rupert too, in which hee goes as invisible as our Church, or our Faith doth, or as our Charity should.²⁴ And by this mysticall meanes it was, that the Prince so often passed our Guards undiscovered, and by so many disguises entred those Townes of Ours, which the book to that purpose sets down very edifyingly.

Boy is said to be weapon-proof, and indeed the author claims to have attempted unsuccessfully to kill him by those characteristically parliamentary methods of 'poyson and extemporary prayer'. Boy takes terrible revenges on those that speak slightingly to him. 'Tis observed that most of the Gentlemen that were killed at Edgehill had injured the Dogges reputation some way or other, and forgot to give him satisfaction before they went to the Battell. The Lo: Taaff did but speak angrily to him, and the same morning was shot in the mouth for it. The Lo: Bernart Stuard kickt him the night before the Batell, for hearkning what he said to a faire Lady, and this spitefull Curre got him shot in the very same toe that kickt him'. The conclusion is that the Royalists intend to 'make him a new Officer of State, Sergeant Major Generall Boy', but that in truth Boy is a 'meen Malignant Cavalier-Dog, that hath something of divel in or about him'.

The theme of *Prince Ruperts White Dog* was much too good to be left alone by other pamphleteers. Its first successor was *A Dialogue, or, Rather a Parley betweene Prince Ruperts Dogge whose name is Puddle, and Tobies Dog whose name is Pepper*, 1643.²⁵ Once again the title-page has a splendid woodcut, this time showing Puddle and Pepper snarling at each other 'Roundhead curr' and 'Cavalier Dog' while their respective masters urge them on: 'To him pudel' and 'Bite him peper'. As the title suggests, the style is somewhat less witty and a little more vulgar than the style of its predecessor. However, there are many topical references and the supernatural powers attributed to 'Puddle' are almost identical with those attributed to Boy in the earlier pamphlet. Similarly, many of the targets for wit are common to the two pamphlets. Master Green, the prophetic haberdasher, appears again when Puddle says 'But thou hast been a friend to Tub Lecturers, there is a number of Fellows that will expound by private spirit, and think the best colour for their knavery is Greene'. Both pamphlets credit Prince Rupert's dog with the fact that none of the silver owned by the Oxford colleges could be found when the parliamentarians were there, but it all turned up again when the Royalists arrived. Both attack the London apprentices. Both credit Prince

Rupert's dog with making himself invisible at the battle of Edgehill and controlling who were hit by bullets. Both say that he can change into many shapes and thus passes in disguise between London and Oxford carrying parliamentary secrets to his master. However, one final touch of extravagance attributed to Puddle but not to Boy is the idea of putting 1000 barrels of gunpowder, 500 iron bars and 600 tons of stones under the river Thames and blowing it up at high tide so as to drown all the city and the roundheads in it, the cavaliers and John Taylor the water poet having been warned privately in advance so that they can make good their escape.

These two were followed by further pamphlets. As the theme wore thinner, the titles became more imaginative. Two days after the *Dialogue* was published, there appeared *An Exact Description of Prince Ruperts Malignant She Monkey*, 1643.²⁶ This was followed by *The Parliaments Unspotted Bitch. In answer to Prince Ruperts Dog called Boy and his Malignant She-Monkey*, 1643.²⁷ Predictably enough, this latter pamphlet has a woodcut on the title page showing a very lactiferous-looking bitch. Then came *The Humerous Tricks and Conceits of Prince Roberts Malignant She-Monkey* 1643.²⁸

But by early 1643 the original hopes that the war would be short were beginning to grow dim. The time for the gentler, more whimsical, sallies against one's opponents exemplified by *Prince Rupert's White Dog* was already almost past. On both sides, the propaganda became more professional in tone. The Royalists sought to counter the London parliamentary pamphlets by starting a regular newsbook of their own, *Mercurius Aulicus*²⁹ and a variety of other mercuries, representing all shades of opinion, followed. *Prince Rupert's White Dog* and its successors were left behind as the war progressed, but remain for posterity to cast just a little light on one aspect of Royalist thinking at a time when it was still possible to hope that the more civilized habits of the preceding decade could be preserved through the war.

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NOTES

1. *Historical Memoires of the Life and Death of that Wise and Valiant Prince Rupert*, 1683 (Wing H2104), p.5.
2. Sandford, *A Genealogical History of the Kings and Queens of England*, 1707, p.588.
3. *Historical Memoires* (supra), p.6.
4. I have generally used Thomason's dates as sufficiently accurate for present purposes. However it should be noted that Thomason sometimes dated his tracts in batches, so that his date may be a few days after the date of publication. Furthermore, he sometimes back-dated tracts to the date of the events reported in them. In the light of this uncertainty, where Madan gives a date, I have preferred the latter.
5. Wing T2914 (6 September, Thomason's date appears to be in error).
6. Wing L656 (18 October).

7. Wing T773 (19 October).
8. Wing C2178 (21 October).
9. Wing G1152 (4 November).
10. 30 October.
11. Wing B3182 (14 November).
12. Wing R2290, Madan 1094 (30 November).
13. Wing R2290A, Madan 1095; Wing R2290B, Madan 1096; Wing R2290C, Madan 1097 and Wing R2291 (the earliest of these London editions being published about 2 December).
14. Wing R2291aA.
15. *De Declaratie van Prins Robbert na de Copije gedrukt tot Oxford*, 1642.
16. Wing W1574 (27 October).
17. Since we are commemorating John Fletcher as bibliophile as well as in his other capacities, I add that a friend of mine has a presentation copy of *Prince Rupert his Declaration* illustrating Rupert's characteristic efficiency. At the top of the title page in a big bold hand is the word 'From' and at the bottom are the words 'Tho. Ravenscroft'. At first sight this suggests that the pamphlet was sent to someone by Ravenscroft. It is not until one notices the placing of the creases that one realizes that, as originally folded, these words came together with the first two words of the title to read 'Tho. Ravenscroft From Prince Rupert'. See *The Book Collector*, 15(1966), at page 165. Rupert had a big bold hand from an early age. A copy of Cicero *De Officiis* (1623), which may be his only surviving school book, shows the same hand in a dated inscription '1632 Constanter & sincere Rupertus P'. 1632 was the year of the siege of Rhyndergh. Rupert wrote the inscription when he was 12 or 13 years old.
18. Wing W110 (6 December).
19. Wing H27 (7 December).
20. Wing A3373 (16 February 1643).
21. Wing B194 (2 February 1643).
22. The 'light heeled Apprentices' took part in tumults in London which were considered by the Royalists to be part of the lamentable behaviour of parliamentary sympathizers.
23. Robert Bostock was a leading pro-parliamentary bookseller, later responsible for publishing *The Kings Cabinet opened* 1645 (Wing C2358), one of the most successful pieces of parliamentary propaganda during the civil war.
24. The accusation that the parliamentary leaders were hypocrites was, of course, a staple of Royalist propaganda.
25. Wing D1369 (23 February 1643).
26. Wing E3639 (25 February 1643).
27. Wing P526 (March 1643).
28. Wing H3719 (15 March 1643).
29. Nelson and Seccombe 275.