

## The Act of Libel: Conscripting Civic Space in Early Modern England

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In her recent study of the writing arts in early modern England, Juliet Fleming has provided a thought-provoking treatment of graffiti. Exploring a range of practices from tattooing to the making of pots, her work challenges the founding division in literary studies between the sensible and the intelligible, positing “a historical moment when the distinction between the letter and the spirit could be differently understood.”<sup>1</sup> Fleming persuasively exposes a conceptual space within sixteenth-century culture inhabited by “writing that is not seeking apotheosis as a text.” The paradigmatic example of this is the posy, whose defining feature is the significance accorded to its material embodiment such that it “cannot exist as text in the abstract.”<sup>2</sup> In this viewpoint, the scene of writing is decentered, moving beyond the limits of the page to an engagement with different materials and methods, and it is from this perspective that the subject of graffiti is approached. Tracking early modern habits in the textual embellishment of domestic interiors, be it through the painting up of self-reflexive, improving phrases or, in a paper-short society, as quite simply “the primary scene of writing in early modern England,” Fleming’s argument confronts the reductive reading of writing on walls as being by definition transgressive. In place of the notion of trespass, Fleming argues that wall-writing was a commonplace activity. Not only was it widespread but it participated in collective, aphoristic conceptions of authorship, evidenced in such productions as posies in the guise of rings or entwined in human hair.<sup>3</sup>

My own work on graffiti builds on Fleming’s insights but approaches the subject from a different direction. As Fleming points out, “graffiti in its modern sense is an effect of categorization.”<sup>4</sup> To my mind, her work suggests the factors that render the term *graffiti* ineffective for analysis of the period and my aim is to supply another context for understanding early

modern practices of writing on civic surfaces. In consequence, this is an essay about the reading of the early modern city. I focus on public responses to the range of textual forms that both characterized and composed the civic surface. From examination of such public material texts, a picture emerges, often indirectly, of contrasting investments in the city and the conflicting readings these texts are capable of generating. If early modern society does not prosecute graffiti as trespass, it can nevertheless read transgression within the rich forms of a materially located textuality. Focusing upon the libel, usually understood as a form of writing practice, I argue instead for regarding it as an identifiable *reading* practice attentive to the broader forms of textuality involved in interpretation. The period possessed its own tools for reading and categorizing the transgressive use of text, its material form, and its spatial positioning, and these elements are best comprehended, I suggest, under the rubric *acts of libel*.

### **Leaving one's mark: The signs of authorship**

Modern attitudes toward graffiti risk obscuring conceptions of textual intervention in the early modern civic environment. A reductive model of the textual and material complexity of graffiti is evident from the term's first deployment in relation to wall decorations at Pompeii.<sup>5</sup> Typical is Cecil Weatherley's article for the 1910 *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, which defined graffiti as "a general term for the casual writings, rude drawings and markings on ancient buildings, in distinction from the more formal or deliberate writings known as inscriptions."<sup>6</sup>

The attempt to construct an opposition between the formality and self-possession of *inscriptions* and the parasitic scratchings and scrawlings of *graffiti* is predicated upon a deeply unstable distinction between casual and deliberate writing. In contrast to the authority of *inscription*, the *graffito* inclines definitively *away* from the textual in precipitous descent from a script marked by its cursoriness, to graphic obscenity, to the almost animal "marking" of territory.<sup>7</sup>

Weatherley's attitude is symptomatic of a tendency to detextualize the manner of graffiti's intervention, a response that restricts the potential signification of graffiti to that of destruction. In a contemporary context, terms such as *daubing*, *scrawling*, and *defacing* are habitually employed to calumniate the activity.<sup>8</sup> From a legal perspective, the practice elicits the charge of criminal damage, which regards graffiti not as an act of writing or drawing but as the destruction of property. Even for those who do

accord a level of value to graffiti as texts, a residual element of their stigmatization is present in the reductive reading of graffiti texts as in some sense “primitive.”<sup>9</sup>

One consequence of this legacy has been a tendency to take graffiti texts a little too readily at face value and hence to underestimate their complexity. For even the most experienced historian of the practice, part of the attraction has been the challenge to reconstruct the artist or culprit from the material trace, but this needs to be tempered by an appreciation of the textual strategies involved.<sup>10</sup> Hence one recent commentator on the extensive collection of early modern inscriptions preserved in the Tower of London remarks that the examples of carved coats of arms are “a way of signing a noble name.”<sup>11</sup> Carved in stone rather than scripted in ink, however, neither textual name nor coat of arms constitutes the particular and recognizable sign of authorship of an individual. They are not a proof of presence. We might more profitably think of the “signature” as just one effect produced by citing upon the walls of these former cells a name and family.<sup>12</sup> Yet for several generations of visitors to the Tower, the citation of the name has served as the material detail through which the experience of incarceration is reanimated in the form of individual biography.<sup>13</sup>

Modern day responses of this kind can be compared to perhaps the most famous example of all from the early modern period, Elizabeth I’s inscription at Woodstock, first recorded by John Foxe.

these verses she wrot w[ith] her diamond in a glas window,  
*Much suspected by me*  
*Nothing proved can be,*  
Quod Elisabeth the prisoner.<sup>14</sup>

Foxe describes an event rather than claiming to record any material evidence; however, the chance survival of three travelers’ reports compiled in succeeding years at the close of the sixteenth century suggest this act of engraved resistance was reproduced *in situ* as part of a tourist itinerary celebrating the Protestant monarch’s long march to the throne.<sup>15</sup> Beginning with Paul Hentzer in 1598, all three of the visitors to Woodstock record the longer poem commencing “Oh fortune thy Wrestling wavering state” (not mentioned by Foxe) for which Hentzer is the earliest known source. Each of the accounts also notes the vital detail of the “signature” shared with Foxe (“Elisabeth a prisoner”), which defines the situation of resistance and appears to validate its status as a surviving trace. In addition to these fea-

tures, Baron Waldstein, who visited Woodstock in 1600, also records the presence of the couplet mentioned by Foxe.

On textual grounds alone, the extent of both overlap *and* divergence across these accounts suggests that we are dealing with a concerted attempt to sustain and perhaps embellish the impact of Elizabeth's imprisonment. There is, however, additional evidence of material inconsistencies touching both the site and the medium of inscription, further undermining the possibility of claiming authenticity for these marks. Foxe's inscription in the window is superseded in Hentzer and Platter by one on the shutter, and in Waldstein the scene of writing has further migrated, to the wall.<sup>16</sup> Similarly, the medium shifts from the relatively durable diamond on glass to the far more vulnerable, but seemingly longer-lasting, charcoal on wood. Waldstein, however, betrays no doubts in his report. "The thing above all to see in this palace," he notes, "is the room in which the present Queen Elizabeth was kept prisoner. . . . Even now one can read her verses in English, written on the wall in Elizabeth's own handwriting."<sup>17</sup> In spite of the inconsistencies outlined above, this response does not appear to me in any sense a gullible one. Rather it suggests a high degree of literacy in reading a material text of this kind. Moving from the location to the text known to be the queen's, the material trace is individualized as the product of a reading experience that understands the substance and the subject of such a text. It is this literacy which we need to recapture if we are to understand the uses of material inscription in the early modern period.

For early modern London, one person above all others stands out as the agent and advocate of reading the civic surface: John Stow. Where Woodstock had its overseers pointing out, and possibly painting in, the elements from which a reading of Elizabeth's experience could be constructed, London had Stow's *Survey*.<sup>18</sup> Stow's text interrogates the civic surface for any information that might inculcate in the reader an identification between the citizen and the fabric of the community. Seeking to amplify the traces of a civic identity, the *Survey of London* constitutes an active intervention in the reading of the civic surface, attempting to re-present the structures of the commune as already inscribed with evidence of that relationship. In the process, the antiquarian Stow puts himself forward as both recorder and explicator of names inscribed into the civic surface—whether written or emblematically denoted by coat of arms, as at the Pope's Head Tavern, Ely Place, and Leadenhall (*SL*, 1:199, 2:35, 1:154). Stow repeatedly draws attention to the material traces remaining in the fabric of the city that testify to the works and days of absent Londoners. Thus in Foster Lane, for exam-

ple, he records how “without the Church [of St. Leonard’s] is graven in stone on the east ende, *John Brokeitwell*, an especial reedifier . . . thereof” (*SL*, 1:306). Stow’s reading of the name in the street is supplemented by information that connects the inscription to the site it inhabits, underlining the link between the citizen and the physical form of the city. But Stow is prepared to do more than merely record, as he reveals when describing the quadrant reserved for prisoners at Ludgate:

certaine verses grauen in Copper, and fixed on the saide quadrant, I haue read in forme following.

*Deuout soules that passe this way,  
for Stephen Forster late Maior, heartily pray,  
And Dame Agnes his spouse, to God consecrate,  
that of pitie this house made for Londoners in Ludgate*

. . .

This place [i.e., plaque] . . . taken downe with the old gate, I caused to be fixed over the entrie of the said Quadrant, but the verses being vnappily turned inward to the wall, procured the like in effect to be grauen outward in prose, declaring him to be a Fishmonger, because some vpon a light occasion (as a maidens heade in a glasse window) had fabled him to bee a Mercer, and to haue begged there at *Ludgate*, &c. (*SL*, 1:40)

In this passage, Stow’s project moves from simple description of the links that bind individual and community within the confines of the city to the active inscription of that relationship into the fabric of the city.<sup>19</sup> Stow not only records a now invisible text but produces a new intervention in the textual surface of Ludgate. Above all, however, it is the events that provoke this act which are worthy of note. The new text is engraved by Stow in direct response to a prevalent series of misreadings in which the image of a woman’s head in a window has been taken for the Maidenhead that comprises the Mercers’ arms—precisely the kind of sign upon which Stow focuses in the *Survey*. This misconstruction is coupled with the more malicious suggestion that Ludgate was Foster’s begging post—a reading that plays upon the cultural associations of the site as both a begging point and debtor’s prison.<sup>20</sup> Strikingly, this counter-reading is founded upon the appropriation of the significance of both the sign itself and the symbolic topography of the city.

## Contested surfaces

Stow's management of the Maidenhead misreadings at Ludgate takes place against the backdrop of a perceived subversive literacy in the reading of civic surfaces which his act of inscription and the printed text of the *Survey* move to contain. Few details are given to establish further the kind of reading practice that so threatens Stow's interests in civic memorialization, but the instance of personal intervention suggests the depth of concern provoked. To elucidate the conflicting interests that register here we need to turn to the work of Stow's fellow antiquarian William Camden, whose *Britannia* is rich in examples of both inscriptions and responses to them. In this work, Camden notes a large number of standing stones and epigraphs in an effort to retrieve an often far distant past and to lay it open for study. In doing so he is prepared to appeal to the expertise of others, as with the mysterious inscription in Derwent: "[b]ut what they [the characters] signifie . . . let the learned determine thereof" (*Brit.*, 768).<sup>21</sup> Such admissions of indeterminacy, however, are directed only to the limited Latinist readership (before 1610) of *Britannia*.

When dealing with the local readings with which some artifacts have become encumbered, Camden often incorporates them into his exposition, but only as a prelude to exposing their errors.<sup>22</sup> Hence at one site in Hampshire, Camden stumbles across the local interpretation given to the hordes of Roman coins "which they terme *Onions pennies*. For, they dreame that this Onion was a Giant, and dwelt in this citie" (*Brit.*, 271). In such cases the antiquarian pursuit of these objects encounters a customary and site-specific understanding of their significance. The contrast is between the ongoing relationship of a community with its environment and an antiquarian project that privileges the historical moment of an artifact's origin. Conflict between these two reading practices emerges most notably over the kind of text found in the same site as Onion's pennies, where "There are digged up also many times inscriptions, of which the unskillfull rurall people envie us the having" (*Brit.*, 271). Opposition to the removal of these artifacts is also opposition to their transformation into a narrower form of text, detached from local custom and site. At Mynd Margan in Glamorgan, the mutual hostility between incomer and community specifically revolves around the textualization of a monumental inscription, "which whosoever shall happen to read, the ignorant common people dwelling thereabout, give it out upon a credulous errour, that hee shall be sure to die within a litle while after" (*Brit.*, 644). Such examples suggest the way in which Cam-

den's text is itself authored upon a particular reconstructive reading that claims the authoritative status of print, erasing in the process the local, collective readings of a far more present social body.

Nevertheless, despite the sense of passivity suggested in responding to the invasive force of textualization, Camden also records significant and sophisticated varieties of opposition. At Ribblechester in Lancashire, a site rich in Roman monuments, he records:

the inhabitants . . . have this hobling rhyme . . . in their mouthes.  
It is written upon a wall in Rome,  
Ribchester was as rich as any towne in Christendome.  
(*Brit.*, 750)

In the pointed medium of an (imagined) inscription in Rome, the verse offers a rereading of antiquarian efforts to reconstruct a classical heritage for the Lancastrian town. It highlights a divergence between the antiquarian reading, in which the inscription is useful insofar as it is able to offer a means of reconstructing the culture of the past, and the local reading upon which Camden stumbles, in which the inscriptions are part of a continuous connection with the present. Where Camden's inscriptions speak from the past, the Ribblechester rhymers invent one which speaks of it, addressing the activities of the present. The verse's intervention in the process of epigraphic interpretation has an active counterpart in the practice of the inhabitants, for as Camden notes, "the country folke have so disfigured the inscriptions, that although I did see many, yet could I scarce read one or two of them" (*Brit.*, 750). There is no way of knowing what kind of disfigurement Camden came across, but it is important to note that it is the derailing of his objectives in recording Roman epigraphs which qualify it as such. Such acts might have constituted either additions to the textual and visual environment of the community or deliberate targeted interventions making significant statements.

Unquestionably, the most culturally contested sites of all were the surfaces of the early modern church, subjected as they were to iconoclastic violence throughout the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries that targeted objects ranging from statues to tomb inscriptions.<sup>23</sup> While the range of targets for iconoclasm was broad, this is not to say that its activity was indiscriminate. Recent research has indicated extreme particularity in the parts of inscriptions and images selected for erasure, showing that funerary monuments and their texts were cultural forms subjected to intense scrutiny and

that their targeting was the product of a highly charged reading of the site of worship.<sup>24</sup> Significantly, these attacks upon aspects of the material remains of parish history were influential in stirring antiquarians into action in the early seventeenth century.<sup>25</sup> Stow's *Survey* is again among the first and most concerted attempts to counter this loss from sight of the fabric of the past. Stow's description of every church, and above all the scrupulous noting of church monuments, is undertaken against a vividly drawn backdrop of destruction in order to bear witness as to whether these monuments have suffered the common fate or not, as with the exception of St. Olave Upwell where "to the commendation of the Parsons and Parishioners, the monumentes of the deade remayne lesse defaced then in many other" (*SL*, 1:281). Yet while Stow scoured manuscript records so as to reinscribe the names and deeds of former residents within the reader's memory, he also famously justified omitting "manie newe monumentes" by complaining that "those men have bin the defacers of the monumentes of others, and soe [are] worthy to be deprived of that memory whereof they have injuriously robbed others."<sup>26</sup> Iconoclasm, which we might term in this context a kind of *super*-reading of acutely sensitive public places, is a form of collective reading with real potential for generating social unrest. Stow's private admission reveals his work to be a text that carefully edits out traces of the perpetrators and their motives.

Both Stow and Camden, then, function as authors by appropriating the potential meanings of the material inscription, taking possession of the surfaces they encounter and establishing a textual authority that privileges certain reading practices. The hostile treatment of collective readings in these antiquarians' works has its counterpart in their handling of the authorship of textual interventions in the environment. This subject comes into view in both Stow and Camden in the context of practices of memorialization, another area in which the monumental tomb was at the center of controversy. Humanist rhetoric contrasted lavish expenditure on elaborate monuments with the lasting good name that the acts of a virtuous life purchased, and this debate was influential in the development of the literary epitaph.<sup>27</sup> When Camden, paying tribute to the efficacy of this mode of memorialization, devotes to them an entire section of his *Remains concerning Britain*, it is often unclear whether his examples exist in manuscript or in material form. Nevertheless, the conceptual hold of material monumentality in the period dominates even those literary epitaphs that sought to celebrate a subject whose good works had fashioned their own monument.<sup>28</sup> When Payne Fisher compiled from various sources a post-Fire collection of

verses and tomb inscriptions of figures buried in St. Paul's, the conceptual currency of the epitaph was sufficient for him to assume many to have had authoritative concrete existence, written on vellum and hung as tablets.<sup>29</sup>

The idea of the written epitaph placed *in situ* near the tomb is appropriated in an intervention cited by Stow as making its mark in the contested arena of funerary monuments. His description of the grandiose tomb of Sir Christopher Hatton includes the following verse written by "a merry poet" upon the wall there:

*Philip and Francis have no Tombe,  
For great Christopher takes all the roome. (SL, 1:338)*

Aside from striking a light-hearted note rare in his discussion of church tombs, the verse recorded here offers an instance of the kind of spatial redescription which Stow in other places shows himself so keen to avoid. Resurrecting the names of Sidney and Walsingham whose tombs lie near Hatton's, the added text turns away from the ornamental splendour of Hatton's display toward signalling and countering the act of effacement it performs.<sup>30</sup> Stow's attitude toward excessive tomb expenditure is suggested by his inclusion of this mocking verse at the expense of the tomb inscription itself, but crucially Stow cites this intervention as a literary production, the work of an author.

A similar exclusivity is present in an example given by Camden from New College, Oxford, protesting in Latin against the lack of a monument to a certain Woodgate, "who bequeathed 200 pounds to one, who would not bestow a plate for his memorial."<sup>31</sup> Here the specific spatial resonance of *this* wall provides the occasion for a learned intervention that stresses its own textuality in the place where a more substantial material presence might be looked for.

The particular contested nature of monumental memorialization at this time, and its close links to the productive play on materiality undertaken within the literary epitaph, suggest a rich semiotic vein in which a carefully sited material text could profitably intervene. Among the handful of printed examples of such direct on-site interventions undertaken in the temporary medium of charcoal or chalk is one historical instance approvingly published by Camden. Rather than featuring a tomb, this example is of a Carmelite monk and one Dan Elingham engaging in a textual dialogue-on-a-wall in scholarly Latin. In this pre-Reformation example, a picture of Christ on the monastery wall provided the subject and site for rival inter-

pretations of the image.<sup>32</sup> Another more recent example of adept targeting of a significant site in an interventionist text is given by Camden's reviser John Philipot, who tells of

A Scholler and a Gentleman living in a rude Country Towne,  
where he had no respect, [who] wrote this with a coale in the  
town Hall. Subi dura a rudibus [I have undergone hardship at the  
hands of the rude].<sup>33</sup>

Essential to the impact of this superficial text is its appropriation of a key symbolic site—the seat of civic authority—to offer a comment upon the local populace of an unspecified town and its representatives. Yet most striking of all is the opposition rehearsed, in the exclusive form of a Latin palindrome, between an individualized author and the rude masses—a label which the positioning of the text seems to suggest includes the entire provincial oligarchy. Textually framed as the product of a scholar of gentle status, this example shares with those of Stow and Camden an emphasis on authorship. All these examples are introduced in celebration of a succession of wits from a “merry poet” to the Latinate Oxford students and clerics of Camden. This focus on the elite practitioners of wall-writing does not confirm this as an elite art of course, but it does suggest an attempt to constrain the resonance of this medium within the confines of a certain form of authorship.

Contrast the impression created by these antiquarians' examples with the widespread nature of the practice implicit in a proverb known throughout Europe at this time: “A White Wall is a fool's paper.”<sup>34</sup> Despite the cautionary and pejorative tone of the saying, its effectiveness depends upon the civic surface having sufficient recognition as a medium of textual communication to sustain the analogy. Perhaps inevitably antiquarians, who were themselves engaged in authoring works which claim authority in the interpretation of the civic and national environment, privilege the individuated author in their representations of textual interventions in the environment. Yet taken together with the hostile descriptions of local readings that register sometimes obliquely in these antiquarian accounts of the contested arena of monumental memorialization, it seems there is more at stake. The energies devoted to the censure and attempted correction of perceived errors in responding to the material environment suggest a considerable measure of anxiety over the implications of unrestrained and unsupervised readings. In such a context the appeal of the author function as a way

of containing the capacity of textual meaning to proliferate is immediately apparent.<sup>35</sup> When exploring the scratching, carving, or writing up of textual interventions, this focus identifies and confines the practice within a literary model of communication between elites. The image of public textual intervention created by the antiquarian authors is thus a deliberately partial one, and in what follows I examine interventions on the civic surface which raise just those concerns that the antiquarians seek to dispel. Texts are brought to light in which it is precisely the difficulty of ascribing authorship that generates anxiety and that accounts for the effectiveness of their impact.

### **Acts of libel**

The study of libel in the early modern period has produced a wealth of recent articles examining the composition, dissemination, and prosecution of these texts.<sup>36</sup> While such work has greatly enhanced our understanding of the range of libel texts and the modes of their transmission, they have inevitably focused upon either the investigation of principally literary libels in manuscript miscellanies or on the examination of records of prosecution for libel. Despite the overwhelming importance of these studies as specific investigations, there is a danger of extrapolating from them a definition of libel that reproduces the limitations of the material under investigation. Hence, too rigid an emphasis upon the legal records may blind us to the preconditions of prosecution for libel, which necessitate both an aggrieved party and an accused individual, along with sufficiently incriminating evidence.<sup>37</sup> With the exception of certain prosecutions in Star Chamber for seditious libel, such cases promote a conception of libel as consisting of an *ad hominem* attack by an individual or group. Likewise, exclusive attention to the strategies of libel verses can skew understanding of the breadth of texts construed as libel toward the self-consciously literary. Andrew McRae's thorough investigation of the literary forms of libel verse argues that "the libel was more specifically understood to be an unauthorised and controversial text, generally in poetic form."<sup>38</sup> Generally, perhaps, but not exclusively. McRae's working definition is nevertheless important in drawing attention to the construction of libel as produced by a reading experience—as with modern day conceptions of graffiti, libel is an effect of the categorizing process. Unlike graffiti, however, it is not action upon a site alone which defines the transgression of libel; their status as texts remains central to the perception of these interventions as unauthorized and controversial. It is

this process and the specific anxieties aroused by it that I wish to focus on here, taking as my object of study the record of the discovery of libels in the urban context of late-sixteenth-century London.

In letters between the civic authorities and the Privy Council in this period, there are numerous examples of texts discovered in London which are construed as libels. Although few would lead to prosecution, the evidence of these responses suggests that the penetration of the structures of civic authority formed one focus of the anxiety they aroused. The transgressive force of these texts and their classification as being unauthorized appear intimately connected to the manner of both their material and textual intervention in the civic environment as acts of libel. Consider the example of one such double intervention publicized by John Mylles near the time of the Essex rebellion in February 1601:

He said . . . [tha]t these wordes were written uponn Sr Robt [Cecil]s chamber doare, at Courtt & also uponn his chamber doare or Lodging at London. vizard here lieth the Toade at Court, & here lyeth the Toade at London.<sup>39</sup>

The transgressive act undertaken is contained not in the defacement of the property but in the specific textual act of intervention that reinvents Cecil's lodgings as a toad's den. Not only does the inscription reveal a satirical reading of the site which is unavoidably political, but its double exposure in both London and the court raises the specter of a coordinated design in which an alternative satirical topography emerges. The appropriation of a threshold is a powerful strategy frequently deployed in libel, and its impact in reconceptualizing the space described can be effectively achieved whether through the act itself or the mere reporting of it, as appears to be the accusation Mylles is called upon to answer.<sup>40</sup>

Textual interventions in the civic surface of this kind have the power to reconfigure radically the relationship between place and authority, challenging control over both the security and the significance of the civic topography. Letters from the civic authorities, notably from the different Lord Mayors to members of the Privy Council and especially to Sir Robert Cecil, reveal the sites in the city used as points for disseminating libels in the course of the 1590s and the beginning of the 1600s. In the weeks after the Essex revolt, the Lord Mayor, Sir William Rider, assiduously collected and forwarded to Cecil a series of libels notable for the manner of their attempted intervention in the cultural life of the city. Rider scrupulously

records the discovery of libels in places of public congregation about the city, including, for example, a libel found simultaneously in both Newgate Market and the Poultry, and another uncovered “uppon the Staires of the Royall Exchange.”<sup>41</sup>

Such points of transmission mirror those specified in the warrants for dissemination of the Royal Proclamation, the official version of the rebellion’s events, which was required “to be proclaimed and publicly sett up in the streetes in such usuall places as all her Majesty’s subjects may take knowledge of the same.”<sup>42</sup> As with Stow’s inscriptions, the proclamations of this date reveal themselves as engaged in a contested arena, competing for control over the dissemination of information against those “that shall give out slanderous and undutiful words or rumours against us and our government,” and of the vagabonds “that lie privily in corners and bad houses, listening after news and stirs, and spreading rumours and tales.”<sup>43</sup> Indeed, a further proclamation directed specifically against the perpetrators of “divers traitorous and slanderous libels” at large in London attempted to exorcise these troubling phantom authors by offering a £100 reward for information leading to their identification.<sup>44</sup> Yet the impact of these libel texts derived not only from their public placement but also from a degree of penetration that an official proclamation could not achieve. The extent to which the libel is able to infect the civic fabric is suggested by one found in the week after the revolt “stucke . . . betwene two bourdes in olde fishe streete.”<sup>45</sup>

In by far the majority of these cases, the only surviving trace of the libel text is the letter reporting its discovery. Nevertheless, the sheer emphasis placed on their permeation of civic space suggests the extent to which the physical transgression of the libel constituted a key element in its impact. Where the doorway, as noted above, was a common site for public posting of libels appropriating physical space, the threshold between the domestic interior and the street presented another possibility for transgressive penetration and was a frequent site of discovery. James Knowles has recently demonstrated how the casting of the infamous York House libel of Francis Bacon into the space of the household resonated with its textual accusation of sodomy.<sup>46</sup> In the fraught atmosphere of the 1590s, the targeting of civic officials could expose more directly the vulnerability of both the leading citizens and the authority they represented. Multiple examples exist of libels such as that “founde under Sr Richard Martyn his dore” in 1595 or the “sedytyous lybell lately throwen under my Lorde Mayors gate” in 1586.<sup>47</sup> The permeability of a more secure interior was demonstrated by that “taken up with in the Warders room before the Tower gate by on[e] Proby Under-

porter thear.”<sup>48</sup> An example of a dual violation of the domestic and the defensive spheres is provided by the libel found in the house of “one Iohn Cooke dwelling with in Newgate. . . . Cooke sayth his servant George Zacharye about nyne of the clock the last night goynge to make clean his entrie, and to shutt in his utter dore, found the same cast into the entrie.”<sup>49</sup> The juxtaposition of the acts of cleaning and securing the house with the discovery of the libel underlines the invasive force of this anonymous act and the powerlessness of the recipients to resist its assault on the integrity of city and home.

In the nervous atmosphere attaching to the threat of civic unrest, the capacity of the anonymous libel to permeate boundaries operates as a potent signifier of the city’s vulnerability to attack from an invisible enemy. Alongside the libel’s persistent ability to expose sites of weakness in the city’s defences, it also succeeds in infiltrating official networks of communication. Thus William Rider is obliged to admit to Cecil that a “lewd libell was put into my handes as I came this forenone from [th]e Cessions by on[e] that named him self servant to the right honorable my Lo. Admirall w[hich] I receaved thinking it had ben a lettre & when I came home finding it to be a libell & looking for the partie that browght it he was not to be found.”<sup>50</sup> The impersonation of authority undertaken here in broad daylight at the very heart of the city not only challenges the security of the channels of communication through which the Lord Mayor advises Cecil of his concerns, it also affords a tantalizing glimpse of the perpetrators themselves, who are able to engage in social interaction with the mayor and then slip back into anonymity. Such a close encounter with the libel’s elusive and here effortlessly adaptable producers draws attention to the way in which the libel frustrates attempts to locate the source of its threat.

If it is the manner of the libel’s textual and spatial intervention in the city which constitutes the transgressive act, it is the anonymity of this operation that renders the threat unquantifiable. The libel appears to offer a material trace of one who has been present, but without an individual suspect, the potential culprits remain indeterminate. The compulsion to recover an author thus fulfills a dual need to produce a prosecutable individual while restraining the capacity of the authorless text to signify rebellion without limit. Attempts to embody the threat behind the posted paper libel text in the form of an individual author relied on identifying the scribal hand from the textual trace. The extent to which this anxiety might override the dangers of dissemination is indicated by the preservation *in situ* of a libel in 1587 in order that “whosoever can discover the writer . . . by a viewe

of the handwritinge . . . may repaire to the Roiall Exchaundge,” where the offending article “remayneth openly to be seene.”<sup>51</sup> With little definite information, however, an investigation of authorship often could be no more than speculative and imaginative interpretation of the libel’s salient features on the part of those already anxiously fearing the worst. Lord Mayor Stacey, considering the text found at the Tower gate, surmises:

The Libell as may bee coniectured by the stile & manner of writing & the place whear it was found seemeth to have been devised by soom Apprentizes of St Catherins or thearabouts, or by some other lewd & discontented person that couldbe content to see soom stirre & disturbance within this citie & common wealth.<sup>52</sup>

In attempting to ascertain the producers of the libel, the content, in which “mention [is] made of the late iustice doon against those disordered persons Apprentizes,” the style of writing, “somewhat hard to bee picked owt,” and the place in which it was displayed all play a part in Stacey’s considerations. Based on an obscure textual trace, the conclusion of collective authorship by either the apprentices or some other party interested in unrest links the vulnerability of the public site to a social group defined by the latent threat to authority it is perceived to represent. In the absence of an author, then, anxieties over unrest supply the image of popular revolt to fill the void.

The process by which such fears take shape is exemplified by one of the few letters recording the detection of a libel to survive with the libel text intact. In an incident datable to a little over a week after the events of the Essex rebellion, the bishop and city councillors of Salisbury report to Cecil the following discovery:

this present day in the open markett place of the Cittie of Sarum was found a sedicious and as we thinke a traiterous writinge beinge written as it seemeth in a counterfaite and ragged hande, w[hich] we detayne uppon farther examinacion of handes, the true coppie whereof we have here inclosed, sent. [A]nd although the author of it cannot yet be founde . . . Yet we have caused search to be made, and have sett watch and ward through the whole Cittie, w[ith] purpose to continewe the same w[ith] our uttermost dilligence.<sup>53</sup>

Along with the now familiar details of the libel’s intervention in the “open” heart of the city, the report emphasizes the effort to locate an author based

on scrutiny of the handwriting. This detail, common to many of the letters of discovery in London, is virtually the sole strategy available to forge a link between the material text and a prosecutable individual. Here, however, as with the Tower gate libel, the scribal hand appears deliberately executed to frustrate detection, another instance of the libel's ability to adopt an untraceable guise. This single unascrivable document, a copy of which was transported eighty miles to the Privy Council post haste in under twenty hours, had sufficient impact to raise security levels to a state of armed alert. In the light of this response, the original brief text that prompted such dramatic activity deserves some attention:

Ye noble Earles it is a greafe to our harts cominge from  
Sea to heare this newes that thou noble Essex shouldest be so  
rewarded for thy viage into Cales and Ireland feare not; Inghland &  
Scotland will revenge shortlie thy quarrell for in everie Cittie I  
have companie  
Spaine.<sup>54</sup>

At first sight, it seems remarkable that a text such as this should generate such consternation, but this is no doubt to underestimate the anxieties upon which it feeds. For the authorities at least, it functions as the quintessential unauthorized and controversial text, adopting the textual position of an intercepted communication between rival authorities that reveals the hidden transcript of seditious voices. The unlikely coalition evoked here concentrates diverse potential threats to the state, activating fears over national security which the Essex rebellion had served to exacerbate. In doing so, the libel configures nation and city to produce a silent and invisible presence, a waiting army that remains undetected and seemingly unaffected by efforts to re-enlist their loyalties as good subjects. A central factor producing this reading and the response it generated is the inability to limit either the subject or object of the text to a particular author or targeted addressee. Instead, it functions for those in authority, troubled by the impossibility of ascertaining the state of mind of those under their rule, as a wandering signifier implicating all whose allegiance is suspected.

I have tried to outline some of the ways in which the anonymous libel text intervenes in civic space both textually and materially, and to show how the authorless text can play upon the imaginations of the city's governors. Just how fertile a sign the anonymous libel could be is shown by one particular incident in which an extreme vision of the city's vulnerability to

unrest was generated by news of a prospective libellous intervention in the space of the city. Of all the references to seditious libels surrounding the Essex rebellion, none better illustrates the complicity of the authorities in imagining the prospect of rebellion than the plot attributed to the London apprentices, and “uncovered” in the week after the revolt. Not only were the apprentices a frequent focus for anxiety over civic unrest (witness the earlier suspicions of Lord Mayor Stacey cited above), their allegiance to the Crown was also doubted given the popularity Essex was believed to enjoy amongst their ranks. No libel text survives, and the only evidence of the plot occurs in a summary of the examination of three suspects. In this text, detailed plans are laid out for an uprising that fulfills the worst fears of the authorities. The key objectives of this rebellion were to have been the seizure of the gates, prisons, churches, armorers’ shops, and powder stores, before an attempt was to be made on the Tower in the company of a hostaged Lord Mayor. The end of the plot was to have seen the release of the earl of Essex and his presentation before the queen to reconcile their differences. At just this time leading participants in the failed Essex rebellion were confessing in the Tower the details of the Drury House conference. The testimony they gave of intentions to seize sites in the city and force access to the queen would be used at the earl’s trial to demonstrate premeditated treason.<sup>55</sup> In their detail, the plans attributed to the London apprentices conform with remarkable symmetry to those of the Drury House conspirators. They also dovetail in more than coincidental exactness with security measures that had just been taken to defend precisely those points of weakness identified in this projected second rising. It thus seems highly probable that the confessions exacted from the three “principall agents and plotters” were produced as much by the expectations of their examiners as by the consciences of the accused—especially when one considers that libel texts occupied center stage in the mooted revolt and appear to have been the only material evidence for the pretended actions of the rebels.

They intended to draw their companie together by Libells, w[ith] hope to have: 5000 persons. Two Libells made, but none of those published. Some others dispersed, but the Authors not yett known.<sup>56</sup>

It is no small testimony to contemporary faith in the potency of libels that so massive a mobilization of insurgents could creditably be expected from some few libel texts. It is even more powerful an example of the productive capacity of the absence of an author in the imaginations of the examiners

that a community of rebellious interests could be read into the shadows behind the anonymous hand.



## Notes

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- 1 Juliet Fleming, *Graffiti and the Writing Arts of Early Modern England* (London: Reaktion, 2001), 115.
- 2 *Ibid.*, 24 and 43.
- 3 *Ibid.*, 51.
- 4 *Ibid.*, 33.
- 5 I differ here with Fleming who sees J. A. Symonds as representing the joyful welcome such inscriptions found among antiquarian historiographers (*ibid.*, 40–41). While some did welcome the light these discoveries shed upon Roman society, for others the heavy investments made in the culture of antiquity were seriously jeopardized by elements of this new evidence “at once so gross and so unblushing that we can only understand their presence in a public place by supposing the whole tone of the public mind to be sunk to [the] lowest depths of hideous and unnatural depravity.” At the particular historical moment when the concept of graffiti emerged, that very discovery could thus be conceptualized as a form of (unwarranted) writing upon a preexisting edifice. Anon., “The Graffiti of Pompeii,” *Edinburgh Review* 110 (1859): 411–37, 422.
- 6 “Graffito,” *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, 11th ed. (New York: Encyclopaedia Britannica, 1910–11), 11:316. Although later editions drop the adjective *ancient*, Wetherley’s article has remained the basis for all subsequent revision, and the entry in the most recent edition still opens with this definition.
- 7 On the late-nineteenth-century trend through which graffiti was “stigmatised as the unevolved, regressive behaviour of the socially dysfunctional,” see Kirk Vardenoe and Adam Gopnik, *High and Low: Modern Art, Popular Culture* (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1990), 69–99, esp. 73–74.
- 8 See Susan Stewart’s explication of numerous responses to contemporary graffiti in *Crimes of Writing: Problems in the Containment of Representation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991), 216–23.
- 9 See Stewart’s useful analysis of the appropriation of graffiti by the art market, *Crimes of Writing*, 223–26.
- 10 See Doris Jones-Baker, “English Mediaeval Graffiti and the Local Historian,” *The Local Historian* 92.2 (1992): 4–19, esp. 6–9.

- 11 Max W. Thomas, "Urban Semiosis in Early Modern London," *Genre* 30 (1997): 11–28, 22. For the inscriptions themselves, see E. A. Humphrey Fenn, "The Writing on the Wall," *History Today* 19 (1969): 419–23.
- 12 For two examples of the coat of arms as the *subject* rather than the authenticating mark of graffiti, see Fleming, *Graffiti and the Writing Arts*, 58.
- 13 For one example among many, see the readings of "the tragic records of torture and death engraved on its walls," in H. Plunkett Woodgate, *Things Seen at the Tower of London* (London: Seeley, Service and Co., 1928), 111–20. Raphael Samuel has shown how the rediscovery of these inscriptions proved a central factor in the nineteenth century's reinvention of the Tower visitor experience. The new emphasis placed on its comparatively minor function as a one-time prison-house for the nobility—above that of fortress, royal palace, armory, mint, or zoo—ought perhaps to alert our attention further to the overdetermined interpretation of these walls. Samuel, "The Tower of London," in *Island Stories: Unravelling Britain*, ed. Alison Light, Sally Alexander, and Gareth Stedman Jones (London: Verso, 1998), 101–24.
- 14 John Foxe, *Actes and Monuments of these latter and perilous dayes* (London, 1563), 1714. The incident occurs in the account of Elizabeth's life prefacing the description of the tribulations of the Protestant martyrs. This account grew through succeeding editions to become, by the 1596 edition, the fully hagiographical "miraculous preservation of Lady Elizabeth, nowe Queene of England, from extreme calamity and danger of life, in the time of Queene Mary her sister." It is this later version which formed the basis for Heywood's description of Elizabeth's captivity and his telling of the inscription story. Thomas Heywood, *Englands Elizabeth: Her Life and Troubles* (London, 1631), 189.
- 15 The three accounts, by Paul Hentzer, Thomas Platter, and Baron Waldstein respectively, are printed in *England as Seen by Foreigners in the days of Elizabeth and James the First*, ed. William B. Rye (London, 1865), 108; *The Journals of Two Travellers in Elizabethan and Early Stuart England: Thomas Platter and Horatio Busino* (London: Caliban Books, 1995), 91–92; and *The Diary of Baron Waldstein, Traveller in Elizabethan England*, trans. G. W. Groos (London: Thames and Hudson, 1981), 116–18.
- 16 Two early-seventeenth-century itineraries, which may not be based on eyewitness accounts, mention verses by Elizabeth still visible on the window at Woodstock (*England as Seen by Foreigners*, 362, 172).
- 17 Groos, *Diary of Baron Waldstein*, 116.
- 18 All references to John Stow, *A Survey of London (1603)*, ed. C. L. Kingsford, 2 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1908), are given parenthetically by volume and page number with the abbreviation *SL*.
- 19 A parallel incident is recorded in St. Albans Abbey concerning the association of one of the town's most famous sons, Sir John Mandeville, with the building where he was once said to lie buried. John Weever records the inhabitants' attempts in the early seventeenth century at a literal reinscription of the association between Mandeville and the cathedral: "This Towne vaunts her selfe very much of the birth and burial of Sir Iohn Mandevill Knight, the famous Travailer. . . . And that you may beleve the report of the Inhabitants to bee true, they have latterly pensild a rare piece of Poetry,

- or an Epitaph for him, upon a pillar” (*Ancient Funerall Monuments* [London, 1631], 567). Within the abbey church today, a venerable carving that reads “Syr John Mandevyll knight” is clearly a similar product, maintaining and reinscribing the association rather than in any way denoting some originary presence. For inscriptions in the abbey, see Michael Rose, Gail Thomas, and Joyce Wells, *A Short Graffiti Tour of Saint Albans Abbey*, Fraternity of Friends of St. Albans Abbey Occasional Papers, n.s. 3 (St. Albans: n.p., 1998).
- 20 For a text exploiting the cultural associations of Ludgate, see Dekker’s description of Politick Bankruptisme entering London through this gate by way of a visit to the prison buildings, in *The Seuē deadly Sinnes of London* (London, 1606).
  - 21 All references to William Camden, *Britain, or a Chorographical Description of the most flourishing Kingdomes, England, Scotland, and Ireland*, trans. Philemon Holland (London, 1610), are given parenthetically with the abbreviation *Brit.* For other examples, see 235–36, 191–92.
  - 22 Camden was in fact criticized for incorporating hearsay, unlike Stow who made little use of oral evidence. See D. R. Woolf, “The ‘Common Voice’: History, Folklore, and Oral Tradition in Early Modern England,” *Past and Present* 120 (1985): 26–52, esp. 38–42.
  - 23 On the course of iconoclastic activity in the sixteenth and seventeenth century, see especially Margaret Aston, *England’s Iconoclasts, Volume 1: Laws against Images* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988); John Phillips, *The Reformation of Images: Destruction of Art in England, 1535–1660* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1973); and Susan Brigden, *London and the Reformation* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989), 288–92, 423–33.
  - 24 Lee Palmer Wandel’s important study, *Voracious Idols and Violent Hands: Iconoclasm in Reformation Zurich, Strasbourg, and Basel* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), esp. 131–39, argues that targets were selected on the basis of intense and specific engagements on the part of iconoclasts with their subjects.
  - 25 On links between Reformation destruction and antiquarianism, see Margaret Aston, *Lollards and Reformers: Images and Literacy in Late Medieval Religion* (London: Hambledon Press, 1984), 313–37; and Robert Tittler, *The Reformation and the Towns in England: Politics and Political Culture, c. 1540–1640* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998), 279–304. John Weever undertook his mammoth recording of the monuments and inscriptions of Britain in response to the realization of “how barbarously within these his Maiesties Dominions, they are (to the shame of our time) broken downe, and vtterly almost all ruinated, their brazen Inscriptiōs erased, torne away, and pilfered, by which inhumane, deformidable act, the honourable memory of many virtuous and noble persons deceased, is extinguished,” (Weever, *Ancient Funerall Monuments*, Author to the Reader [unpaginated]).
  - 26 From John Manningham’s record of a conversation with Stow, *The Diary of John Manningham of the Middle Temple, 1602–1603*, ed. Robert Parkes Sorlien (Hanover, N.H.: University Press of New England, 1976), 154. The *Survey* is equally silent on the new additions to the textual and visual environment of the church, such as the compulsory creed and Decalogue, whose introduction was frequently contiguous with acts of iconoclasm. In the *Annals*, Stow would accompany his description of the removal of imagery from St. Paul’s and churches throughout England in the 1540s

- with the acknowledgment that religious inscription was increased as “textes of scriptures were written upon the wals of those churches against Images.” John Stow, *The Annales of England* (London, 1605), 1002. See also Brigden, *London and the Reformation*, 424, 429; Phillips, *Reformation of Images*, 88.
- 27 See Joshua Scodel, *The English Poetic Epitaph: Commemoration and Conflict from Jonson to Wordsworth* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1991), 15–49; Philippe Ariès, *The Hour of Our Death*, trans. Helen Weaver (London: Allen Lane, 1981), 217–33. On the scrutiny made of funeral monuments during this period, see also Jean Wilson, *The Archaeology of Shakespeare: The Material Legacy of Shakespeare’s Theatre* (Stroud: Alan Sutton, 1995), 81–95.
  - 28 Scodel, *English Poetic Epitaph*, 19–21; Ariès, *Hour of Our Death*, 228–29. Not only might a text offer itself as a form of monumental memorialization, it might also signal the attributes of site and inscription whether or not it had concrete existence. Hence, for example, Jonson’s lines on Margaret Radcliffe (*Epigrams* XL) refer specifically to the site of the tomb that they were never actually to appear on and spell out the deceased’s name acrostically, evoking directly the material practice of inscription.
  - 29 Payne Fisher, *The Tombs, Monuments, &c., visible in S. Paul’s Cathedral previous to its destruction by Fire A.D. 1666* [1684], ed. G. Blacker Morgan (London, 1885), 3–4, 10, 14. These verses are all apparently independent of the monuments themselves.
  - 30 See also Thomas Bastard’s epigram 31 from book 4 of *Chrestoleros* (1598), which may be a response to Stow’s poet, ending, “Let them trust tombs which have outliv’d their praise” (cited in Scodel, *English Poetic Epitaph*, 29).
  - 31 William Camden, *Remains Concerning Brittain* (1605), ed. R. D. Davies (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1984), 349–50.
  - 32 *Ibid.*, 313.
  - 33 William Camden, *Remaines concerning Britaine*, revised by John Philipot (London, 1636), 420.
  - 34 *Ibid.*, 292. Also recorded by N. R., *Proverbs, English, French, Dutch, Italian and Spanish* (London, 1659), 6. Two Latin versions were current in the Middle Ages: “Stultorum manes depingunt latera domus” [The hands of fools decorate the sides of the house], and “Stultorum calami carbones, menia charte” [Pieces of charcoal are the pens of fools, the walls their paper]. Hans Walther, *Proverbia Sententiaque Latinitatis Medii Aevi: Lateinische Sprichwörter und Sentenzen des Mittelalters*, 6 vols. (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, 1963–69), 5:142–43 (nos. 30428 and 30432). French and Italian versions of this proverb (“Muraille blanche, papier de fou” and “Muraglia bianca, carta di matto”) are recorded by H. C. Bohn, *A Polyglot of Foreign Proverbs* (London, 1867), 39, 110. The German version is “Narrenhände beschmieren Tisch und Wände” [fools’ hands write on tables and walls], in Walter Gottschalk, *Die Bildhaften Sprichwörter der Romanen*, 3 vols. (Heidelberg: Carl Winters Univeristät, 1935–38), 3:66 n. 1, which also records a Romanian variant.
  - 35 In Foucault’s seminal formulation of the author as “the principle of thrift in the proliferation of meaning,” the public material text is one of the examples of a textuality not accorded this status in the contemporary world: “[a]n anonymous text posted on a wall probably has a writer—but not an author.” The contrast between this status judgment of the modern era and the privileging gesture amongst the antiquari-

- ans is in part symptomatic of the shifting understanding of the textuality of the material text. Michel Foucault, "What Is an Author?" in *The Foucault Reader*, ed. Paul Rabinow (London: Penguin, 1984), 101–20, esp. 118, 108.
- 36 The principal recent contributions to the study of libel are the following: Alastair Bellany, "A Poem on the Archbishop's Hearse: Puritanism, Libel, and Sedition after the Hampton Court Conference," *Journal of British Studies* 34 (Apr. 1995): 137–64; Bellany, "'Rayling Rymes and Vaunting Verse': Libellous Politics in Early Stuart England, 1603–1628," in *Culture and Politics in Early Stuart England*, ed. Kevin Sharpe and Peter Lake (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1993), 285–310; Thomas Cogswell, "Underground Verse and the Transformation of Early Stuart Political Culture," in *Political Culture and Cultural Politics in Early Modern England*, ed. Susan D. Amussen and Mark Kishlansky (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1995), 277–300; Pauline Croft, "The Reputation of Robert Cecil: Libels, Political Opinion, and Popular Awareness in the Early Seventeenth Century," *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 6th ser., 1 (1991): 43–69; Adam Fox, "Ballads, Libels, and Popular Ridicule in Jacobean England," *Past and Present* 145 (Nov. 1994): 47–83; Martin Ingram, "Ridings, Rough Music, and Mocking Rhymes in Early Modern England," in *Popular Culture in Seventeenth-Century England*, ed. Barry Reay (London: Routledge, 1985), 166–97; James Knowles, "To 'scourge the arse / Jove's marrow so had wasted': Scurrility and the Subversion of Sodomy," in *Subversion and Scurrility: Popular Discourse in Europe from 1500 to the Present*, ed. Dermot Kavanagh and Tim Kirk (Aldershot, Hampshire: Ashgate, 2000), 74–92; Andrew McRae, "The Verse Libel: Popular Satire in Early Modern England," in *Subversion and Scurrility*, 58–73; and McRae, "The Literary Culture of Early Stuart Libelling," *Modern Philology* 97 (2000): 364–92.
  - 37 David Colclough offers a critique of studies focusing on libel legislation in a recent unpublished paper, "Freedom of Speech, Libel, and the Law in Early Modern England."
  - 38 McRae, "The Literary Culture of Early Stuart Libelling," 367–68.
  - 39 Record of words spoken by John Mylles (1601), Hatfield House, Middlesex, Hatfield Papers, vol. 83, fol. 53r.
  - 40 A parallel conscription of a doorway is recorded in the political prison of Louis XI at Domme in France, where a satirical inscription remarks, "Enter, Sirs, into the House of the King our Master," or the more directly defamatory "Within this doore dwelleth a verie notorious whore," posted in Southwark in 1613. See Luoc Bucherie, "Mise en Scène des Pouvoirs dans les Graffiti Anciens (XV–XVIIIe Siècles)," *Gazette des Beaux-Arts* 103 (1984): 1–10, 5 (my trans.); and Fox, "Ballads, Libels, and Popular Ridicule," 64.
  - 41 See the letters from the Lord Mayor to Cecil on March 19th and April 3rd, Hatfield Papers, vol. 180, fol. 41r; vol. 181, fol. 127r.
  - 42 *Acts of the Privy Council 31: 1600–1601*, ed. John Roche Dasent (London: HMSO, 1906), 149–50.
  - 43 *Tudor Royal Proclamations III*, ed. Paul L. Hughes and James F. Larkin, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1969), 232, nos. 808 and 809.
  - 44 *Tudor Royal Proclamations III*, 233, no. 810.

- 45 Lord Mayor William Rider to Cecil, 14 Feb. 1601, Hatfield Papers, vol. 180, fol. 21r.
- 46 Knowles, "To 'sourge the arse,'" *Subversion and Scurrility*, 75–77.
- 47 Lord Mayor Sir John Spencer to Burghley, 26 June 1595, London, British Library, Lansdowne MS 78, art. 64, fol. 159r; 7 Sept. 1586, Corporation of London Record Office, Rep. 21, fol. 334v.
- 48 Lord Mayor Sir Stephen Stacey to Burghley, 19 Apr. 1596, British Library, Lansdowne MS 81, art. 28, fol. 72r.
- 49 Lord Mayor William Rider to Cecil, 4 Mar. 1601, Hatfield Papers, vol. 77, fol. 25r.
- 50 Lord Mayor William Rider to Cecil, 15 Feb. 1601, Hatfield Papers, vol. 76, fol. 77r.
- 51 Proclamation of the Lord Mayor, 29 Mar. 1587, Corporation of London Record Office, Journal 22, fol. 97r.
- 52 Lord Mayor Stacey to Burghley, 19 April 1596, British Library, Lansdowne MS 81, art. 28, fol. 72r.
- 53 Bishop and councillors of Salisbury to the Privy Council, 20 Feb. 1601, Hatfield Papers, vol. 76, fol. 98r.
- 54 *Ibid.*, fol. 96r.
- 55 See the examinations of Sir Ferdinand Gorges, Sir Christopher Blount, Sir Charles Danvers, and Sir John Davies, 18 Feb 1601, London, Public Record Office, SP 12/278/84; SP 12/278/87; SP 12/278/89; SP 12/278/93. For their importance to the case against Essex, see Francis Bacon, *A Declaration of the Practises and Treasons attempted and committed by Robert late Earle of Essex and his Complices* (London, 1601), sigs. D4r–E3v.
- 56 Hatfield Papers, vol. 83, fol. 67r.

