

University of Texas Rio Grande Valley

ScholarWorks @ UTRGV

Literatures and Cultural Studies Faculty
Publications and Presentations

College of Liberal Arts

11-22-2019

Propaganda, Patriotism, and News: Printing Discovered and Intercepted Letters In England, 1571–1600

Gary Schneider

The University of Texas Rio Grande Valley

Follow this and additional works at: https://scholarworks.utrgv.edu/lcs_fac



Part of the [Modern Literature Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Schneider, G. (2019). Propaganda, Patriotism, and News: Printing Discovered and Intercepted Letters In England, 1571–1600. *The Journal of Epistolary Studies*, 1(1), Article 1. <https://doi.org/10.51734/jes.v1i1.12>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the College of Liberal Arts at ScholarWorks @ UTRGV. It has been accepted for inclusion in Literatures and Cultural Studies Faculty Publications and Presentations by an authorized administrator of ScholarWorks @ UTRGV. For more information, please contact justin.white@utrgv.edu, william.flores01@utrgv.edu.

Propaganda, Patriotism, and News: Printing Discovered and Intercepted Letters In England, 1571–1600

GARY SCHNEIDER

University of Texas, Rio Grande Valley

Abstract: In this article I propose that the relatively few intercepted and discovered letters printed during the reign of Elizabeth I fall chiefly into three categories: they were published as propaganda, as patriotic statement, and as news reportage. Although Elizabeth and her ministers published intercepted and discovered letters on a strictly ad hoc and contingent basis, the pamphlets and books in which these letters appear, along with associated ideological and polemical material, reveals determined uses of intercepted and discovered letters in print. Catholics likewise printed intercepted letters as propaganda to confront Elizabeth's anti-Catholic policies through their own propaganda apparatus on the continent. Intercepted letters were also printed less frequently to encourage religious and state patriotism, while other intercepted letters were printed solely as new reportage with no overt ideological intent. Because intercepted and discovered letters, as bearers of secret information, were understood to reveal sincere intention and genuine motivation, all of the publications assessed here demonstrate that such letters not only could be used as effective tools to shape cultural perceptions, but could also be cast as persuasive written testimony, as legal proof and as documentary authentication.

The years of the English civil wars are the ones usually associated with the printing of intercepted and discovered letters. The reign of Queen Elizabeth I, however, also witnessed the publication of intercepted and discovered letters, published as self-standing collections, and embedded in books and pamphlets.¹ Although the number of publications containing intercepted and discovered letters was comparatively small, such letters were published with specific, well defined motivations during this period.² In this paper, I contend that the intercepted and discovered letters printed during this time fall into three categories: propaganda, patriotic statement, and news reportage.³ Of these three groupings, intercepted and discovered letters—printed along with associated content clearly ideological in nature—were most often published for propagandistic aims by governments and official institutions. Other intercepted letters not printed under governmental or institutional auspices were published for purposes of nationalism or patriotism; hence, I use the term *propaganda* in this paper expressly to identify material printed by a government or institution whose interests were served by that material, and not to publication by those who were not responding directly to official fiat. Still other intercepted letters, including the largest self-standing collections of intercepted letters printed during the period, were published in the interests of news (and, of course, profit) and whose printing had no direct or explicit propagandistic motive. I hope to demonstrate that those who published any sort of intercepted or discovered letter grasped a crucial feature of correspondence designated as such: that the fact of interception and discovery promised access to the genuine thoughts, motives, and characters of the letter writers, revealing their treachery, duplicity, and malicious intentions in the process; in doing so, these letters

provided unique written testimony that was exploited both as legal proof and as documentary authentication. During the years of Elizabeth's reign, these features of intercepted and discovered correspondence were developed both to advance ideological orthodoxy and to offer compelling news. In short, intercepted and discovered letters were printed well before the press was set loose in 1641, and analysis of these texts—most of which have been little studied—deepen understanding of the practices of Elizabethan print culture.

Letters in general, by contrast, were printed with much more regularity during this period. These include the “copy of a letter” type frequently published in and as news pamphlets.⁴ Intercepted and discovered letters are another matter. To be clear, the intercepted and discovered letters I analyze here are letters printed at large. Intercepted letters were sometimes mentioned in news pamphlets, usually identified as the sources of particular pieces of news or else summarized broadly. A news report, for instance, might source a news item as having “beene lately seene by sundry Letters intercepted.”⁵ Thomas Digges in his *Briefe Report of the Militarie Services Done in the Low Countries by the Erle of Leicester* (1587 / 7285.2) refers twice to intercepted letters as sources of his report, yet he prints none. Verbatim publication of intercepted and discovered letters was much rarer.⁶

The interception of letters could be managed in a number of ways, but (outside of random muggings of mail carriers) these required a postal infrastructure and considerable human resources to accomplish. The postal system in England was designed during the reign of Henry VIII to serve the government, and Elizabeth tightened official control of the postal system in 1585 and 1591—including the authority to detain bearers supposed of carrying suspicious letters and oversight over all packets going to the continent.⁷ The Privy Council opened letters going to and coming from abroad, and government spies and agents on the continent arranged ad hoc thefts of letters or bribed administrators in order to intercept letters.⁸ Privy Councilor Francis Walsingham was foremost in leading these endeavors.⁹

Official control of the post suggests that any intercepted letter that saw print in England must have come from the raw material received by Elizabeth's government: either those seized by her own officers or those taken by foreign agents, organizations, or governments and sent along to members of the Privy Council. In other words, unless the English government wanted an intercepted letter printed, it was not printed. However, printers and publishers also accessed foreign news reports, printed or handwritten, from which they derived or translated material for publication in England; as Joad Raymond makes clear, many news pamphlets of the 1580s and 1590s are in fact translations of Dutch and French content.¹⁰ These included letters. It is no surprise, therefore, that those “copy of a letter” publications, as well as references to intercepted letters in news pamphlets, are almost entirely foreign letters (of state) written—when the names of any letter writers are given—by European military, religious, and political leaders. In any case, despite the fact that English printers and publishers had access to foreign content, any letters, intercepted or otherwise, that publishers and printers wished to print would still have been subject to licensing by the Stationers' Company before they could be published in England.

As Propaganda

When Elizabeth's government printed intercepted and discovered letters, it was always for a specific purpose and in response to a specific context—rather than as general or broadcast propaganda;

she and her ministers sanctioned such letters for the press as propaganda sparingly, yet demonstrated an awareness of the effectiveness of epistolary propaganda to shape cultural perceptions and to manipulate political and religious attitudes. The same holds true for Catholic writers and polemicists, who printed intercepted letters as propaganda in English to confront Elizabeth's anti-Catholic policies through their own formidable propaganda machinery on the continent.

The earliest letters of this sort printed by the English government as propaganda are well known: the casket letters of Mary, Queen of Scots.¹¹ Mary's casket letters have been discussed at great length in prior scholarship but a more penetrating focus on how the printing of the letters was maneuvered, how the reception of the letters was shaped to position the letters as propaganda, illuminates the distinctive uses of discovered letters in print. Of special consequence is to determine why four years passed after the casket letters were initially discovered for the eight letters to see print.

A casket discovered on June 20, 1567, in the castle of Edinburgh was said to have been left behind by James Hepburn, 4th Earl of Bothwell, when he fled Scotland; in the casket were letters supposedly from Mary to Bothwell incriminating her in the murder of her husband, Henry Stuart, Lord Darnley. The letters were discussed during a December 1567 session of the Scottish Parliament, and were the subject of additional discussion during the York and Westminster conferences of October 1568 and January 1569, organized to determine Mary's guilt; during this time the existence of the letters was kept secret from the public at large.¹² While the case against Mary went unresolved, she was to remain a prisoner of the crown in England with James Stewart, 1st Earl of Moray, continuing as regent to the young King James VI, Mary having abdicated in July 1567. Both outcomes were those desired by Queen Elizabeth.¹³

The casket letters were therefore not printed at this time because it served no purpose to print them, as Elizabeth's objectives had been achieved.¹⁴ However, in October 1571 three of the most incriminating of the casket letters were printed in Latin, along with substantial marginalia, near the end of George Buchanan's *De Maria Scotorum Regina* (1571 / 3978), originally written by Buchanan to accompany the presentation of the casket letters at the York and Westminster conferences.¹⁵ The book consists chiefly of the "Detectio," an "Actio contra Mariam Scotorum Reginam," and three casket letters. The "Actio"—which was meant to suggest a legal action in the form of an indictment—was in fact composed by Thomas Wilson, although he is not identified, as the entire book was assumed to be by Buchanan.¹⁶ The book was translated into anglicized Scots roughly a month later by Wilson as *Ane Detectioun of the Duinges of Marie Quene of Scottes* (1571 / 3981) including all eight casket letters. It was also translated into Scots as *Ane Detectioun of the Doingis of Marie Quene of Scottis* and published at Saint Andrews by Robert Lekprevik early in 1572 (3982) also with all eight letters. These last two publications give the first few lines of each letter in French with a complete translation following. Other editions immediately followed. None of the versions but Lekprevik's indicates its place of publication or offers a publisher's imprint (I will henceforth refer to all versions as *Detection*). The collective force of these publications was to make clear that they derived from Scotland—particularly from Buchanan—and not from England or Elizabeth's government.¹⁷ John Guy suggests that William Cecil, 1st Baron Burghley, arranged for printing without Elizabeth's knowledge.¹⁸

The publication of *Detection* and the four-year-old casket letters it contained was in fact the direct result of the discovery of the Ridolfi Plot of 1571 in which Mary was implicated. Thomas Howard, 4th Duke of Norfolk, potential husband of Mary, was also incriminated. After discovery of the plot and Norfolk's arrest in September 1571, Elizabeth's government authorized publication of the various editions of *Detection* beginning in October, all of which included Mary's casket

letters, to condemn Norfolk's intention to put this fickle, deceitful, and notorious individual (as Mary is portrayed in *Detection*) on the English throne.¹⁹ The casket letters served as ideal documentary evidence to define Mary as such. Of course, the publication of the casket letters in *Detection* was part of a larger propaganda campaign against Mary, undertaken without the appearance of Elizabeth's involvement as Elizabeth took no official action to attain and try Mary, a fellow monarch.²⁰ However, the principle of *Detection* and propaganda similar to it was "to concentrate on the reputed immorality of her personal character ... to render Mary totally unacceptable as a queen in the eyes of God and man."²¹ A response of precisely this sort was in fact articulated by Norfolk, Ralph Sadler, and Thomas Radcliffe, 3rd Earl of Sussex, writing to Elizabeth on October 11, 1568, upon first viewing the casket letters: "The said lettres and ballades do discover suche inordinate ["and filthie" scored out] love betwene her and Bothaill, her loothesomnes and abhorringe of her husband that was murdered, in suche sorte, as every good and godlie man cannot but detest and abhorre the same."²² When *Detection* came out it offered similar characterizations.²³ The casket letters were therefore meant to work within a complex of condemnatory evidence to serve as documentary, now widely public proof (Alison Weir calls the various editions of *Detection* "bestsellers") of Mary's behavior.²⁴ As A. E. MacRobert summarizes, "The English government believed that Mary was involved in Norfolk's plotting, and it was therefore opportune to besmirch her reputation through the publication of George Buchanan's *Detection* and the Casket Letters."²⁵ The publication regime centring on the letters was intended to characterize Mary as an unappealing defender of Catholicism, both in England and on the continent.²⁶

The strategy of printing the letters to condemn Mary was both characterological and forensic. That is, the letters were framed both as testaments of character and as documentary proof. Apologists for Mary were, in turn, compelled to defend her character and criticize the evidence. *Detection* makes clear that what Mary wrote in the letters demonstrates personality and disposition: "Call to minde that part of hir letters to Bothwell quhairin sche maketh hir selfe Medea, that is, a woman that nouthen in love nor in hatrit can kepe any meane"; Mary "partly compareth hir selfe with Medea a bludy woman and a poysoning witch."²⁷ At the same time the *Detection* contains repeated references to the letters as supporting evidence of the claims made elsewhere in the book: "hir awin testimonie, by hir awin letters it must neidis be confessit"; and, more emphatically, "Read her awin letter, her letter (I say) written with her awin hand."²⁸ In the anonymous *The Copie of a Letter Written by One in London to His Frennd Concernyng ... the Doynges of the Ladie Marie of Scotland* (1572 / 17565), which serves as a supporting publication to *Detection*, the author endorses the forensic significance of the letters, observing that the letters "are not counterfait but her owne [demonstrated by] ... the most autentike testimonie of the three estates of Scotland assembled in parliame[n]t."²⁹ To defend against the condemnation of Mary by these tactics, John Lesley in *The Copie of a Letter Writen Out of Scotland by an English Gentlema[n] ... of the Slaunderous and Infamous Reportes Made of the Queene of Scotland* (Louvain, 1572 / 15503) is therefore obliged to shield Mary from both forensic attacks and character assassination. Lesley wonders, "Can any wise man thinke it likely, that the Queene having alwaies shewed herself so modest, so circumspecte and wise, wold write any such letter with her owne hande?" to counter the proposition that Mary would compose any letters of the sort.³⁰ Lesley also makes clear that the casket letters are simply no sound legal evidence, writing that one of the damning letters "beareth no date, no subscriptio[n], no superscription, no seale, no[t] one word in it of co[m]mandme[n]t to co[m]mit the vile murder" to counteract the emphasis *Detection* and *Copie of a Letter* put on the forensic value of the letters.³¹ Indeed, in referring to the casket letters before they were printed en masse in 1571, Lesley writes of them in *A Defence of ... Marie Quene of Scotlande* (Rheims, 1569 / 15505)

that they “are not able anywise to make a lawfull presumption[n]: much lesse anie good & sustantiall proof.”³² Whereas those defending Mary defined the discovered letters as unconvincing proof, those reviling Mary defined the letters—precisely because they were discovered—as compelling evidence of genuine character, sincere thoughts, and unadulterated motives; both the accusations and defenses of Mary increased markedly subsequent to the publication of the letters, as they constituted key evidence on which the arguments of each side turned.

A similar propagandistic purpose marks the publication of the anonymous *A Defence of the Honorable Sentence and Execution of the Queene of Scots* (1587 / 17566.3). It contains an “appendix” that includes the letter Anthony Babington wrote to Mary of the plot to assassinate Elizabeth, as well as Mary’s response in which she acquiesces to the scheme: letters used in part to convict Mary of treason. This is the first—and only—printing of these two letters in England during the sixteenth century.³³ The letters were published well after Mary’s trial but only shortly after Mary’s secret execution on February 8, 1587.

Unknown to Mary and her correspondents, Walsingham had constructed a channel of “secret” communication over which he had complete surveillance.³⁴ These two letters may be considered as intercepted if we deem Walsingham’s intervention into a conduit of apparently surreptitious exchange to constitute interception; Raphael Holinshed indeed calls them “surprised” letters and Thomas Phelippes refers to them as “letters intercepted.”³⁵ The two letters were among the evidence presented to Mary by the commission at Fotheringhay Castle during October 14 and 15, 1586; were read during the crown’s presentation of the evidence in the Star Chamber on October 25; and were read in Parliament on November 9.³⁶ Although authorship of the pamphlet is uncertain, there is evidence to suggest it is by Thomas Martin, doctor of civil law.³⁷

The book appears to have been hurriedly put together—is even unfinished—and some sheets exist in different states; indeed, *Defence* has been the subject of some speculation due to its textual and licensing irregularities. The book was registered to John Windet on February 11, 1587, under the title “An Analogie or resemblance between Johane, Queene of Naples, and Marye, Queene of Scotland,” but it was ultimately published as *Defence of the Honorable Sentence and Execution of the Queene of Scots* with its first chapter dedicated to “An Analogie or resemblance betweene Jone queene of Naples and Marie queene of Scotland.”³⁸ John Payne Collier notes that the last eleven leaves of the book, which contain the two letters, were an “after-thought,” as he puts it, and claims that the “book was put together in great haste.”³⁹ Besides the two letters, the last group of signatures also contains a letter from Mary to Bernardino de Mendoza, former Spanish ambassador; the affirmation of one of Mary’s secretaries, Claude Nau, of the queen’s method of letter writing; two summaries of the principal points of each of the two incriminating letters by another of Mary’s secretaries, Gilbert Curle; and extensive marginal annotations on the three letters.

Cyndia Clegg has also commented on this book, recognizing in addition that a transcript of the book is in the British Library (Additional Manuscript 48027). It is in the hand of Robert Beale, clerk of the Privy Council, and includes Beale’s notation that the book was authored by Thomas Martin and that it was suppressed by John Whitgift, Archbishop of Canterbury.⁴⁰ Clegg, however, believes it is unlikely that *Defence* was a target of suppression; what is more likely is that the printing of “An Analogie” was “stayed until the government could arrange damage control” after Mary’s execution.⁴¹ Recall that “An Analogie” was licensed on February 11, three days after the execution of Mary; however, the execution did not become public knowledge until 18 or 20 days later.⁴² “An Analogie” therefore appears to have been stayed and reconfigured in the

meantime in order to prepare domestic and international perceptions of Mary's execution—specifically to portray an image of law upheld and justice served.

Burghley was likely directly behind organizing the revision of “An Analogie.” A document he prepared entitled “The state of the cause, as it ought to be conceived and reported, concerning the execution done upon the Queen of Scots” bears a date of February 17.⁴³ In referring to Mary's execution in this document, Burghley writes of it as “to cause execution of *justice* to be done upon the said Queen of Scots” (my italics).⁴⁴ It is quite possible that *Defence* was quickly put together around the time of Burghley's unfinished memo. Furthermore, in a way similar to how “An Analogie” was reconfigured as *Defence*, sale of the second 1587 edition of Holinshed's *Chronicles* was halted by a February 1, 1587, order of the Privy Council to the archbishop of Canterbury so that the book might be revised.⁴⁵ One of the principal reasons, as Clegg argues, was that certain components of the 1587 *Chronicles*' narrative of the Babington Plot did not represent the image of law and justice that the Elizabethan government sought to present; the Babington conspirators, therefore, were to be portrayed as “traitors *under the statutory civil law*” and not as victims of a Protestant nation's vindictive zeal.⁴⁶ The 1587 *Chronicles* does not quote the two incriminating letters but offers summaries of them, indicating that “the originals themselves [are] extant and surprised.”⁴⁷

Defence is headed by the legend on the title page, “The execution of Lawe, is injurious to no man.” It also contains a chapter on precedents from civil and canon law in justification of Mary's execution. This is how the letters were framed to fit into the discourse: as indisputable legal documents acting as evidence of Mary's guilt. The letters were among the evidence presented during Mary's trial at Fotheringhay, during the Star Chamber proceedings, and in Parliament; and the “appendix” of *Defence* includes other forensic material besides the letters. In short, the intercepted letters play a part in defending the justice of the execution of Mary by emphasizing the cogency of the evidence and the legality of her sentence. Yet if the principal purpose of printing the letters was for forensic documentation, it unclear why the letters were not printed earlier, after Mary's trial, before her execution or, indeed, after Elizabeth signed the proclamation of sentence on December 4, 1586, upon which several publications commending the justice of the sentence and many anti-Mary attacks were printed.⁴⁸ The letters had in fact come out in summarized form in Holinshed's *Chronicles* in late January, before Mary's execution, and the existence of the intercepted letters themselves appears to have been well known. Robert Cecil's official compilation *The Copie of a Letter to the Right Honourable the Earle of Leycester* (1586 / 6052) was printed around the same time as the publication of the proclamation of sentence. It contains parliamentary speeches by Lord Chancellor Thomas Bromley and Speaker John Puckering encouraging the execution of Mary as well as Elizabeth's cagey responses. A summary of Puckering's second speech in *Copie of a Letter* refers to reasons for executing Mary “collected out of her owne letters.”⁴⁹ In full, Puckering had said, “And after in her letters of these treasons to Babington, wrote, ‘That if she [Mary] were discovered, it would give sufficient cause to you [Elizabeth] to keep her in continual close Prison’”—paraphrasing from part of Mary's incriminating letter to Babington that in turn reads, “it were sufficient cause geven to that Queene in catching me againe, to inclose mee for ever in some hole, forth of the which I should never escape.”⁵⁰ In short, the intercepted letters used to convict Mary were publicly acknowledged, intended to emphasize the justice of the sentence and to encourage Elizabeth to order Mary's execution.

However, printing the letters in advance of the execution would have allowed the precise wording to be scrutinized and hence open them to challenge. Mary at her trial had said “That it was an easy matter to counterfeit the Ciphers and Characters of others,” that “many things have

often been inserted, which she never dictated,” and in doing so she introduces reasonable doubt.⁵¹ Mary’s original letter was in fact tampered with—a postscript was inserted by decipherer Thomas Phelippes—so any challenges, particularly to Mary’s letter, might call into question the legitimacy of the evidence against her. Walsingham himself was concerned about the suspicions the forged postscript had aroused: “I feare the addytyon of the postscripht hathe bread the ielousie,” he wrote to Phelippes.⁵² The postscript is indeed absent from the letter as printed in *Defence*. Perhaps this is also why the *summarized* letters in Holinshed’s 1587 *Chronicles* were acceptable and not subjected to censorship (and also did not refer to the postscript); in fact, despite the existence of a number of contemporary manuscript copies, publication of the letters in their entirety appears to have been tightly controlled by the government.⁵³ After Mary’s execution, the legitimacy of the letters was indeed questioned, for instance, in *Mariae Stuartae Scotorum Reginae* (Cologne, 1587): “they have given out some treasonous letters, conceived between the queen and Babington; it is easily done, for either death or condemnation.”⁵⁴

Since Mary’s casket letters had already been printed as propaganda against her, the impropriety of a monarch’s personal correspondence in print does not seem to pertain in the case of her letter to Babington. The *arcana imperii* rationale likewise is not fit since events were well publicized after the proclamation of sentence; and, like the casket letters, Babington and Mary’s letters do not contain sensitive political matter. The propagandistic use of her letter to Babington indeed resembles that of the casket letters: the casket letters were intended to aid in convicting the duke of Norfolk and to disparage Mary in the public eye by framing them as legal and documentary evidence, while the intercepted letters of Babington and Mary were printed under governmental auspices after her execution to lawfully justify it. Both are propagandistic motivations, but one was accomplished before the fact, the other after the fact.

A rather different species of intercepted letter publication appeared six years later as *A Discoverie of the Unnaturall and Traiterous Conspiracie of Scottisch Papists ... Whereunto Are Annexed Certaine Intercepted Letters ... Printed and Publisched at the Special Command of the Kings Majestie* (Edinburgh, 1593 / 14937). It contains nine letters prefaced by Presbyterian minister John Davidson. The book’s immediate circumstance of publication was the discovery of the “Spanish Blanks” plot in late 1592 and early 1593 by way of letters intercepted by Elizabeth’s government, taken on George Ker.⁵⁵ Among the intercepted letters published are a letter from John Cecil to Robert Persons and a letter each from William Douglas, 10th Earl of Angus; James Gordon; and Robert Abercrombie to Jesuit William Creighton. Included also in the book are five letters that had also been intercepted by Elizabeth’s government in early 1589: 1) a group letter from three Catholic Scottish nobles, George Gordon, 6th Earl of Huntley; John Maxwell, 8th Lord Maxwell (styled earl of Morton); and Claud Hamilton, 1st Lord Paisley to King Philip II of Spain; 2) a letter from Huntley to Alessandro Farnese, duke of Parma; 3) a letter from Francis Hay, 9th Earl of Erroll, to Parma; 4) a letter from Robert Bruce to Francis Aguirre; and 5) a letter from Bruce to Parma.⁵⁶ The 1592 blanks themselves consisted of blank papers signed by Huntley, Erroll, and Angus to be filled in afterward by an intermediary as pledges to King Philip once terms were agreed upon.⁵⁷ Davidson, in his preface to the pamphlet, refers to the order “by the Kings Majestie and his honourable Counsaill, that ... some of the most remarkable letters of the practisers, ... quhilkis wer intercepted with Maister George Ker ... shall appeare, and so the whole together to be imprinted, and set foorth unto the viewe of the world, to the glory of Gods Majestie (the onely revealer of these secreits) to the comfort & edification of his kirk, & the perpetual detectio[n] & shame of the unnatural enemye.”⁵⁸ However, it was not King James VI of Scotland who directly

ordered the publication of these letters, as the title page and Davidson's preface suggest; indeed, James may have known of this scheme for Spain to invade Scotland and convert it to Catholicism.⁵⁹

James was presented with the first set of intercepted letters in February 1589, letters described by contemporary historian David Calderwood as "tending to the overthrow of religion, and bringing in of Spanish forces to that effect," in which the earls promised their aid to King Philip.⁶⁰ James temporized. Huntley was briefly imprisoned, but otherwise no action was taken against the offenders despite the encouragement to action Elizabeth expressed in a letter accompanying the packet of intercepted correspondence.⁶¹ Roughly four years later other papers were intercepted, those taken on George Ker, outlining an invasion of Scotland by Spain with the connivance of the northern earls.⁶² As in 1589, James acted equivocally, unwilling to side decisively with any faction. While James was loath to act against the earls, he was pressured by the Kirk as well as by England; he took measures against Catholics during the Raid of Aberdeen, but the ministers of the Kirk demanded tougher action.⁶³ Robert Bowes, England's ambassador to Scotland, writes to Burghley of his "allegations [to King James] that untimely favour was showed towards the rebels and Papists, whereby the due execution of the course promised has not been sufficiently observed."⁶⁴ The publication of *Discoverie* was therefore among James's concessions to the Kirk and a response to pressure from England. Indeed, the order for the publication of the book itself appears to have come directly from the ministers of the Kirk with Davidson put in charge of preparing the preface: "Mr Johne [Davidson] was acquaint with the discoverie, and all the intercepted letters, and made a preface to be prefixed to the printed discoverie, and a directorie for understanding the borrowed and counterfooted names," as Calderwood writes.⁶⁵ Davidson selected judiciously, incorporating the most damning content: 13 letters Ker was carrying and two of the 1589 letters were not printed.⁶⁶ There was a roughly five-month period between when the last group of letters were discovered (in late December 1592) and when they were printed, in late May or early June 1593—certainly before June 21, when Ker escaped from prison (he is mentioned on the title page and in the preface as imprisoned), and after the order to print from the Presbytery of Edinburgh on May 15.⁶⁷

As a concession to the Kirk and to England, the book was published chiefly to castigate the as-of-yet unpunished Catholic earls—"to prevent the farther danger, by assisting the execution of Justice upon the rest of the detected traitors without respect of persones," as Davidson writes in the preface.⁶⁸ Indeed, the inclusion of the four-year-old 1589 letters was crucial to implicate the earls: "the letters of 1589 give the presumptive evidence, the colour and force, which are rather wanting in the letters and blanks of the later conspiracy," writes T. G. Law.⁶⁹ The purpose of the publication was clear enough in one contemporary report sympathetic to Catholics, identifying the Kirk as behind the appearance of *Discoverie* and implying Burghley used the plot to insist on harsher anti-Catholic measures in Scotland: "The ministers at once printed these [1592] letters, and many others, from the duke of Parma, &c., which they had previously seized [in 1589]; and called the book 'Discovery of the treasons of the Scots papists,' for the purpose of making the Catholics hated. They also caused the King to proclaim them traitors, and by the advice of lord treasurer Cecil, they passed a law making it high treason to have mass performed, or to harbour a priest."⁷⁰ It is little surprise that the book came out soon after in England as *A Discoverie of the Unnatural and Traiterous Conspiracie of Scottish Papists ... First Printed and Published in Scotland* (1593 / 14938). It was entered in the Stationers' Register on June 26.⁷¹ None of the subtitle or preface was changed in the London edition—Ker was still indicated as imprisoned even though he had escaped from prison on June 21 (and was still free in October).

As with Mary's casket letters, there was significant delay in the printing some of these letters—four years in the case of the 1589 epistles. The evidence of intercepted letters presented in the publication was built up over the course of two separate interceptions, letters from different contexts yoked together to structure a specific narrative with specific motivations. Moreover, because no publication resulted from the first interception, the printing of the intercepted letters was not intended generic or broadcast anti-Catholic propaganda, but was rather a consequence of pressure mounting on James to deal with those individuals suspected of conspiring with Catholic powers. In his introduction to the letters, Davidson specifically incorporates the language of duplicity exposed by way of providential discovery—that God is “the onely revealer of these secrets”—both to stress that the letter writers' genuine motives were laid bare and to impart divine sanction to this religious propaganda.

Catholic polemicists also exploited intercepted letters in pamphlet propaganda in English. One of these letters is in *An Advertisement Written to a Secretarie of My L. Treasurers of England, by an Inglish Intelligence ... Also ... a Letter Written by the L. Treasurer in Defence of His Gentry, and Nobility, Intercepted, Published, and Answered by the Papistes* (Antwerp, 1592 / 19885), likely printed sometime in August.⁷² Although framed as intelligence, it is not in fact a report sent to a secretary of Burghley from abroad but a piece of polemic by Richard Verstegan, who takes the persona of an English spy and who writes an introductory letter to frame the subsequent summary he is sending—a digest in English of Robert Persons's *Responsio ad edictum* (Antwerp, 1592), which is a reply to Elizabeth's promulgation of 1591 to apprehend and punish Jesuits and priests. *Responsio* contains a letter by Burghley of January 1592 written to Michael Moody, a genuine English informant in Antwerp, in which Burghley justified his government's policies and defended his ancestry. Moody had in fact received Burghley's letter, but the letter was evidently stolen from Moody afterward, copied, and then returned, finding its way into *Responsio* in Latin translation where it is given in segments with Persons's commentary on specific parts of the letter.⁷³ Though the role Verstegan takes in *Advertisement* is a fictional persona, the letter of Burghley printed as part of the pamphlet is authentic.

While it was not intercepted in the customary way interception operates—that is, taken in transit—the letter is nevertheless designated as intercepted on the title page of *Advertisement*, a statement meant to emphasize the authenticity of the letter's contents: that it is a genuine letter of Burghley. In taking the role of an English intelligencer in this book, Verstegan is in fact impersonating Moody, the informant to whom the letter was written and from whom it was stolen. Moody deeply regretted the theft of the letter and was obliged to explain to William White at court that he was not in fact the “Inglish Intelligence” designated on the title page of *Advertisement*, that he “Has not purposely allowed his name to be printed in that odious book, as an intelligencer, and as having received a letter from his Honour; his having done so would render him infamous wherever the religion of that book is professed.”⁷⁴ Although he admitted to having received the letter (and that it was not intercepted en route), Moody defended himself from the accusation that he had anything to do with the publication.

Burghley's intercepted letter is mentioned in the framing news report as “A lettre of my L. Treasurers writte[n] with his owne hande.”⁷⁵ In the summary of Persons's *Responsio* that follows in *Advertisement*, Burghley's letter is quoted in part and analyzed in some detail; Burghley's explanation of the edict is challenged, and his defense of his ancestry is mocked over several pages. On the subject of the latter, for instance, Burghley had written in his letter that “his howse is descended of the very old Princes of Wales themselves” and that the name of Cecil was derived “fro[m] Cecilius the Romaine name, whereof there were divers, but especially that famous rich

man named Caecilius Claudius”—all of which is called by Persons “an ambitious fiction of M. Cecill himself, and very ridiculous to all English of the discreeter sort.”⁷⁶ Edward Jones called *Advertisement* “a seditious vile book” and despite the attempt at suppression, it made its way into England in both print and manuscript form.⁷⁷ *Advertisement* acted as potent counterpropaganda for Spain, which had been deeply troubled by Elizabeth’s proclamation.⁷⁸ The letter was also meant to act as evidence that Burghley profited from the disenfranchisement of English Catholics and to demonstrate that he had intervened in the friendship between King Philip and Queen Elizabeth as an evil counselor in what was called the *Regnum Cecilianum*.⁷⁹

Newes from Spayne and Holland ... Written by a Gentleman Travelour Borne in the Low Countryes and Brought up from a Child in England unto a Gentleman, His Frennd and Oste in London (Antwerp, 1593 / 22994) by Robert Persons (and prepared by Verstegan), is another example of Catholic religio-political propaganda in the guise of news.⁸⁰ The pamphlet appeared sometime after September 1, the date given at the conclusion of the discourse. It includes an intercepted letter from Sultan Murad III of Turkey to Queen Elizabeth that was put to propagandistic use in the publication. The intercepted letter was not contemporary since it dated from September 1589 and had appeared in the German periodical *Mercurius Gallobelgicus* after it was intercepted.⁸¹ William Camden writes that in 1593 there

were set forth in Germany certaine scandalous Libles against Queene Elizabeth, as if she had excited the Turke to make warre upon Christendome, and the letters were divulged which she had sent unto the Turke, but most unfaithfully falsified and corrupted, very many things being added, and divers contumelious and calumnious matters falsly and maliciously feigned and devised. ... [T]here passed no other thing betwixt the Turke and her, but that her Subjects might trade securely in his Empire.⁸²

Yet Elizabeth had, in fact, sought an alliance with the sultan against their common enemy Spain.⁸³

The presentation of ideological perspective in the guise of news is evident in the format of *Newes from Spayne and Holland* as the pamphlet was described by a correspondent writing to Robert Cecil: “in the preface the collector declares how, being at Amsterdam, were consorted thither certain travellers, some from Spain and Italy lately arrived, and upon occasion of talk, question being asked ‘What news in Spain?’ the Spanish traveller openeth his bosom and draweth certain papers of all that he had collected at his being in Spain.”⁸⁴ Hence, the “Gentleman travelour” who is reporting to his friend and host in England refers in a portion of his news report to England’s “ope[n] dealing with the Turke[,] the publique enemye of al christian professio[n] ... by a playne letter written by the Turk himselfe about three or fower yeares agoone, to the Queene about this matter soone after the defeat of the spanish Armada, which letter [was] intercepted in Germany & printed ther both in the Latin & germane tonges.”⁸⁵ The letter from Murad to Elizabeth follows, in turn followed by detailed observations. As in *Advertisement*, the 1591 proclamation against Jesuits and priests is engineered to serve as the context of the letter in *Newes from Spayne and Holland*: “Lord Burley semed to bragg in his proclamation [of 1591] of the most quiet state and gover[n]ment of your common wealth for 33. yeares togeather, while other common wealthes rounde about you have lyved in broyles”; yet the intercepted letter demonstrates “the great hatred & obloquie which your country is in for styrring warres and rebellions on every side.”⁸⁶ The letter reveals the hypocrisy of Burghley and England, as the author asks rhetorically: “who would have thought when Ingla[n]d uppo[n] pretence of purer serving of Christ, did first seperate it selfe in religio[n] fro[m] the rest of Christian kingdomes, that it would have come in so few yeares, to that passe, as to make recourse to Christes open enemye & persecutor, & that agaynst Christians?”

More potently, however, it condemns them as heretics by their desire to “put into Christes enemyes handes, so many millions of [King Philip’s] subjects as are in Spayne ... and to put in hazard al Christendome besides.”⁸⁷ The 1589 letter is maneuvered to bear on a much later, though specific event: the 1591 proclamation against Jesuits and priests. This intercepted letter, one offering a peek into secret negotiations of state, was inserted into this context to demonstrate proof of Elizabeth as an adversary of Christianity itself. Moreover, as with *Advertisement*, framing the intercepted letter as news in *Newes from Spayne and Holland* invites one to see it as disinterested reportage rather than as ideologically loaded propaganda.

Although the number of discovered and intercepted letters published as propaganda during Elizabeth’s reign was small, the majority of those that were printed were done so belatedly: the casket letters, the Scottish-Catholic earls’ letters, and Murad’s letter to Elizabeth were each four years old by the time they were employed as propaganda, while Mary’s letter to Babington waited roughly seven months for publication after it was intercepted. Moreover, all of these letters were meant to document: some of the letters were intended to document forensically, that is, as legal evidence, as those in *Detection* and *Defence*. Other intercepted letters, like those of Burghley, the earls, and Murad’s to Elizabeth were intended to document malfeasance, treason, and heresy respectively, but not to act as legal or even as quasi-legal evidence; Burghley, Murad, and the earls were not put on trial, yet their letters were meant to document nonetheless. On the other hand, some of these pamphlets can be distinguished from one another based on the timing of publication: whereas the discovered casket letters published beginning in 1571 were printed with governmental connivance in *advance* of the duke of Norfolk’s trial to disparage Mary in the public eye, the intercepted letters of Babington and Mary were printed under governmental auspices *after* Mary’s execution in order to justify it, while the Scottish Catholic earls’ letters published in *Discoverie* were meant to *induce* charges of treason against Huntley, Erroll, and Angus.

As Patriotism

A number of intercepted letters found their way into the 1598–1600 edition of Richard Hakluyt’s *The Principal Navigations, Voyages, Traffiques, and Discoveries of the English Nation* (12626, 12626a). The largest cluster consists of 12 letters taken by English privateer John Watts, probably brought back to England in March 1591.⁸⁸ D. B. Quinn speculates that these letters could have been given to Hakluyt directly by those who had captured the Spanish vessels, but it seems more likely (as Quinn also proposes) that Hakluyt received them from a government official after they were examined for intelligence.⁸⁹ Among the letter writers are the governor of Havana, the bishop of Mechuacan, and a Spanish soldier, writing from locales including Peru, Cuba, Panama, and Mexico. The letters were published in 1600 in Book 3 of *Principal Navigations* in order for Hakluyt to encourage English Protestant patriotism.

As with other content included in *Principal Navigations*, these intercepted letters have little to do with navigation, trade, or exploration.⁹⁰ The Spanish correspondents write to request slaves, money, and other resources; express concerns about defense and military matters; and report the scarcity of commodities. However, like his inclusion of accounts of naval battles in *Principal Navigations*, Hakluyt incorporated these intercepted letters to serve a related nationalistic purpose. Indeed, between the first 1589 and second 1598–1600 edition of *Principal Navigations*, England had become a maritime power equal to Spain.⁹¹ This fact is explicitly registered in the 1598–1600 *Principal Navigations* and is expressed precisely in the acquisition of “Certaine Spanish Letters

intercepted by shippes of the worshipfull Master John Wattes written from diverse places of the islandes and of the maine land as well of Nueva Espanna, as of Tierra Firma and Peru, containing many secrets touching the aforesaid countreys” as the heading to these 12 letters in part reads.⁹²

England and Englishmen as Spain’s enemy are mentioned a number of times in these intercepted letters. The English are intermittently referred to as adversaries to assail, but the majority of the references are to the English as the assailants. For instance, John Lopez Canavate writes of “the audacious Englishmen being without all shame [who] are not afraid to come and dare us at our owne doors,” while Don John de Miramontes Suasola writes “newes of the enemy, which is comming upon the coast ... certeine Englishmen of war comming thither” in referring to John Chidley’s fleet; the bishop of Mechuacan mentions a fort constructed to defend against the invading English, Suasola reports that “English rovers” are pestering the coast of Peru, and Hieronymo de Nabares relates that there is an “extreme feare of the Englishmen our enemies, that the like was never seene or heard of: for in seeing a saile, presently here are alarmes in all the countrey.”⁹³ The marginal annotations to the intercepted letters are equally revealing and provide reinforcement to what the Spanish are writing in their letters about the English. The events referred to and Englishmen alluded to in the letters are clarified, but more often episodes and attacks are accentuated: “The Englishmen extremely feared in Peru” reads one annotation, while “The boldnes of the English” is twice added as an annotation to other letters.⁹⁴ Of course Hakluyt included a great number of various types of letters to compose his *Principal Navigations*, but the inclusion of expressly intercepted letters imparts a brand of objective authentication to declarations of English power, as the letters from Spaniards detailing English seafaring serve as compelling statements of English maritime prominence.⁹⁵

Hakluyt’s strategy has broader implications, however, since “England, Hakluyt implies, will be God’s instrument in breaking the bondage imposed by Spain on its subjects,” as David Harris Sacks puts it.⁹⁶ In other words, Hakluyt’s use of letters intercepted from Catholic Spain alerts us to a dimension of Hakluyt’s nationalism besides his declaration of England’s maritime preeminence—that is, the truth of England’s Protestant faith. For instance, another set of intercepted letters taken by George Popham in 1594, given in abstract, reports the circumstances of the Spaniards claiming the “wonderfull riches in ... [Nuevo] Dorado ... [where] golde ... is in great abundance,” as described in one of these intercepted letters; and in another letter Rodrigo Caranza reports to King Philip specifically of the Christianizing process:

frier Francis Carillo by the Interpreter, delivered him [the cacique] certain things of our holy Catholique faith, to all which he answered, that they understood him well and would become Christians, and that with a very good will they should advance the crosse, in what part or place of the towne it pleased them.... Thereupon the said master of the campe tooke a great crosse, and set it on end towarde the East, and requested the whole campe to witnesse it.⁹⁷

However, Hakluyt believed that Spain’s conversion of new world peoples was only a ploy to obtain their wealth: the Spanish and Portuguese “pretending in glorious words that they made their discoveries chiefly to convert infidels to our most holy faith (as they say), in deed and truth sought not them but their goods and riches.”⁹⁸ Therefore, to Hakluyt, the intercepted letters taken by Popham give documentary evidence of the falsehood (and hypocrisy) of Spanish religious pretensions; indeed, the letters are evidence of Spain’s attempt to perpetuate the dominion of the anti-Christ and so buttress Hakluyt’s broader thesis of Spanish imperial and religious tyranny.⁹⁹

The act of printing these intercepted letters also allows Hakluyt to reveal secret matter, sincere intentions, and bona fide motives. Without a doubt, Hakluyt acknowledges the utility of printing secret information, expressly that taken from Spain, in prefacing *Principal Navigations*: “I have used the uttermost of my best endeavour, to get, and having gotten, to translate out of Spanish, and here in this present volume to publish such secrets of theirs, as may any way availe us or annoy them, if they drive and urge us by their sullen insolencies, to continue our courses of hostilitie against them.”¹⁰⁰ Recall that the heading of the 12 intercepted letters taken in 1591 indicates that they contain “many *secrets* touching the aforesaid countreys” (my italics). In other words, Hakluyt’s printing of Spanish secrets in the form of intercepted letters is precisely part of his goal of availing England.

As News

Among the largest self-standing collections of intercepted letters printed during the period under consideration are *Newes from Antwerp, the 10 Day of August, 1580. Contayning ... Sundrie Late Intercepted Letters* (1580 / 692), containing nine letters; and *Letters Conteyning Sundry Devices ... by Card. Grenvelle and Others* (1582 / 19768), containing nineteen letters. Unlike the other large collection, *Discoverie of the Unnaturall and Traiterous Conspiracie of Scottisch Papists*, however, these were not published as a species of propaganda meant to support a specific religious or political agenda; rather, they were intended simply as news reportage.

The full title of *Newes from Antwerp* indicates that it contains “a speciall view of the present affayres of the lowe countreys: revealed and brought to lyght by sundrie late intercepted letters.... Translated into English ... according to the originall copie printed at Antwerp by William Riviere.” It was printed by John Charlewood, who entered it in the Stationers’ Register on August 4, 1580.¹⁰¹ It contains letters from correspondents such as Frédéric d’Yve (abbot of Marolles) and Gaspar Schetz writing to correspondents Cardinal Antoine Perrenot de Granvelle and King Philip II of Spain. All but one of the letters are dated in the last half of June 1580. The entirety of *Newes from Antwerp* is in fact a faithful translation of *Lettres Interceptes de Quelques Patriots Masqués* (Antwerp, 1580) including the prefatory matter and the extensive marginal annotations that occur throughout. The subtitle of the English translation indicates that it was printed by Guillaume de la Riviere, but the pamphlet in fact derives from the print house of Christopher Plantin.¹⁰²

Lettres Interceptes de Quelques Patriots Masqués was printed in Antwerp in the interests of the Dutch rebels and the Calvinist cause. The author of the preface and marginal annotations may be Jean-François le Petit, former court clerk of Béthune, who became a Calvinist and went to Antwerp where he entered the service of the Prince of Orange.¹⁰³ Whoever wrote the preface and marginalia composed condemnatory, sometimes sarcastic text that is fiercely anti-Spanish, anti-Catholic, and anticlerical. Generally, the pamphlet despairs of the possibility of a United Provinces and the hopelessness of peace with Spain. Specifically, the pamphlet indicts as traitors d’Yve and Schetz, individuals who took part in the Cologne conference of 1579 as ambassadors of the States-General to negotiate peace.¹⁰⁴ Because there is no direct reference to England or English involvement in the Low Countries in the preface, in the marginal annotations, or in the intercepted letters themselves, it seems that the English translation of this pamphlet as *Newes from Antwerp* was published simply as straightforward reportage rather than as the ideologically charged polemic it was when published originally in Antwerp as *Lettres Interceptes de Quelques Patriots Masqués*. Indeed, the main title of the English translation—*Newes from Antwerp, the 10 Day of August*,

1580—frames the pamphlet in the context of news, particularly foreign news of the Dutch revolt popular in England during this decade.¹⁰⁵

Letters Conteyning Sundry Devices, printed by Thomas Dawson for Thomas Charde, a similar collection of intercepted foreign letters of state printed two years later, is, like *Newes from Antwerp*, a translation of a foreign publication as stated on the title page (“Lately Intercepted and Published”)—in this case of *Lettres Interceptes du Cardinal de Granvelle et Autres* (Antwerp, 1582) also printed by Christopher Plantin.¹⁰⁶ Of the nineteen letters in *Letters Conteyning Sundry Devices*, eleven are by Granvelle. They are all from April 1582.

On July 12, 1582, English informant William Herle wrote to Walsingham from Antwerp, “I do send yow ... a booke newlye ymprynted of lres intercepted, ytt may plese your honor to take theme in good part, as yow be wont to do.”¹⁰⁷ It is almost certain that the collection of printed intercepted letters Herle sent to Walsingham was *Lettres Interceptes du Cardinal de Granvelle et Autres*, as it appears to be the only collection of intercepted letters printed in Antwerp during 1582.¹⁰⁸ What is unclear, however, is if Walsingham authorized the translation and had the collection printed in England. Christopher Barker—the queen’s printer and a client of Walsingham who did other printing for Walsingham—did not print it; neither did John Wolfe, who published similar sorts of material for Burghley during the 1580s.¹⁰⁹ Hence, although we can trace a line of transmission of these printed intercepted letters from Antwerp to a member of the Privy Council, there is no conclusive evidence that the government initiated the publication of the translation of the intercepted letters. It is more likely that industrious printers and booksellers like Dawson and Charde were capitalizing on popular interest in news of the Dutch revolt—as Charlewood did with *Newes from Antwerp*. No preface, no marginalia, no concluding remarks were added to *Letters Conteyning Sundry Devices* to highlight English political or religious interests, which suggests that the translation of the intercepted letters was to present them as news rather than as unofficial propaganda.

There is little doubt that both *Lettres Interceptes de Quelques Patriots Masqués* and *Lettres Interceptes du Cardinal de Granvelle et Autres* were meant to have ideological impact in their country of origin. These two pamphlets may have had the ideological impact in England that they had in the Low Countries, but the express purpose of publishing either of the pamphlets in England was not as propaganda. It is instructive to understand that the largest collections of intercepted letters published in England during the time were not ordered into print by the government, which indicates that Elizabeth’s administration simply did not envision the printing of foreign intercepted letters as propaganda insofar as they sought to publish or even supported their publication. The State Papers, in fact, records many, many instances of foreign letters that had been intercepted and passed onto the queen and members of her Privy Council, but these were never printed; one such interception in France in 1581 as reported to Secretaries Walsingham and Thomas Wilson, for instance, included letters written by Granvelle, but these were never printed by the government.¹¹⁰ One of the reasons no doubt was because publishing these sorts of letters—sometimes state letters dealing with sensitive issues—would allow the public too much insight into English politics and foreign policy: what King James I later complained of as trespasses against the *arcana imperii*. This explains why—with but a single exception—no self-standing collections of foreign or domestic intercepted letters were printed as pamphlets in England during the reign of James I or during the reign of Charles I up to 1640.¹¹¹ On the other hand, the intercepted and discovered letters of Mary, Queen of Scots—a monarch—do not appear to fall within the purview of *arcana imperii* precisely because of Mary’s threat to Elizabeth’s reign. The English government therefore mobilized a queen’s letters to serve as propaganda by printing them.

Unlike the civil war publication practices of the English Parliament, which undertook a pervasive, ongoing regime of printing the intercepted, captured, and discovered letters of its enemies, publication during Elizabeth's reign was on a strictly contingent basis. Furthermore, comments and observations that so often frame publications of intercepted and discovered letters printed after 1640—detailed discussion of the processes by which letters were intercepted or discovered, and analyses underscoring the meaning of discovered and intercepted letters—are few in the books and pamphlets I examine in this paper; that is, there is little detailed commentary on the fact that these sorts of letters take secret paths, expose treachery, and energize conspiracy. These meanings are implied, even touched upon, but methodical explorations of the complex ways through which discovered and intercepted letters could be exploited in print would not occur in England until the years of the English civil wars.

NOTES

I include English Short Title Catalogue (ESTC) numbers directly after the year of the publication, as per A. W. Pollard and G. R. Redgrave's *Short-Title Catalogue of Books Printed in England, Scotland and Ireland and English Books Printed Abroad 1473–1640*, accessed through the ESTC database at the British Library. I change “u” to “v,” “i” to “j” and “vv” to “w” in all early modern sources I quote (but not in modern editions or when early modern sources are quoted in modern scholarship). Punctuation in long titles of early modern books is tidied up and I normalize italics in all primary sources; I also extend printed contractions and silently correct nonsubstantive printing errors. I have adjusted Lady Day dating and assume the year began on January 1.

¹ Prior research conducted on the various intersections of letters, print, propaganda, and news during the years of Elizabeth's reign includes Lisa Ferraro Parmelee's *Good Newes from Fraunce: French Anti-League Propaganda in Late Elizabethan England* (Rochester: University of Rochester Press, 1996); Luc Racaut's *Hatred in Print: Catholic Propaganda and Protestant Identity during the French Wars of Religion* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2002); Joad Raymond's *Pamphlets and Pamphleteering in Early Modern Britain* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003); Gary Schneider's *The Culture of Epistolarity: Vernacular Letters and Letter Writing in Early Modern England, 1500–1700* (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 2005); M. A. Shaaber's *Some Forerunners of the Newspaper in England, 1476–1622* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1929); Paul J. Voss's *Elizabethan News Pamphlets: Shakespeare, Spenser, Marlowe and the Birth of Journalism* (Pittsburg: Duquesne University Press, 2001); and Denis B. Woodfield's *Surreptitious Printing in England, 1550–1640* (New York: Bibliographical Society of America, 1973).

² I define discovered letters as those found in one's closet or chambers, usually letters that had already been sent and received. Intercepted letters comprise those taken in transit, not received by their intended addressees—although sometimes copies of the letters intercepted were made and the originals sent on.

³ In the interest of thoroughness, I would like to observe that intercepted letters were also printed in history writing, though such occurrences were rarer still during this period. One is in John Proctor's *The Historie of Wyates Rebellion* (1554 / 20407), while Raphael Holinshed in the second volume of the *1577 Chronicles* (13568.5, 13568b) refers to intercepted letters taken during reign of Edward II, one of which is quoted (Proctor, *Historie of Wyates Rebellion*, 42r–v; Holinshed, *Chronicles*, 2:864). Intercepted letters are mentioned as source material in other histories, including both the 1577 and 1587 editions of Holinshed's *Chronicles*, John Stow's *Chronicles of England* (1580 / 23333), and Richard Knolles's *The Generall Historie of the Turkes* (1603 / 15051), but the full texts of these letters are not printed.

⁴ Schneider, *Culture of Epistolarity*, 201–10; Shaaber, *Some Forerunners*, 253–54; Voss, *Elizabethan News Pamphlets*, 197–208.

⁵ *Good Newes from Fraunce* (1592 / 11273.5), sig. B.2.v.

⁶ When Paul Voss writes of “the propensity for intercepted letters finding their way into print in the news quartos” (*Elizabethan News Pamphlets*, 195), he must be referring to instances where intercepted letters are identified as the sources of some specific information or whose content is recapitulated in general within a broader news report. In fact, Voss's bibliography contains no pamphlet with a title including the term “intercepted letter” or the like.

⁷ Philip Beale, *England's Mail: Two Millenia of Letter Writing* (Stroud: Tempus, 2005), 139, 177–78.

⁸ Beale, *England's Mail*, 176, 178–79.

Printing Discovered and Intercepted Letters

- ⁹ Stephen Budiansky writes of Walsingham's control of a "far-flung network of reporters, spies, and purloiners of secret correspondence" (*Her Majesty's Spymaster: Elizabeth I, Sir Francis Walsingham, and the Birth of Modern Espionage* [New York: Penguin, 2005], 115).
- ¹⁰ Raymond, *Pamphlets*, 103; see also Clifford Chalmers Huffman, *Elizabethan Impressions: John Wolfe and His Press* (New York: AMS, 1988), 69.
- ¹¹ Modern scholarship has reached the consensus that the casket letters of Mary were forged or doctored. See A. E. MacRobert, *Mary Queen of Scots and the Casket Letters* (New York: I. B. Tauris, 2002), 149–53; Alison Weir, *Mary, Queen of Scots and the Murder of Lord Darnley* (New York: Ballantine, 2003), 221; John A. Guy, *Queen of Scots: The True Life of Mary Stuart* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2004), 397, 399–400, 403–4; and Retha M. Warnike, *Mary Queen of Scots* (New York: Routledge, 2006), 177–79.
- ¹² MacRobert, *Casket Letters*, 89; Peter Lake, *Bad Queen Bess? Libels, Secret Histories, and the Politics of Publicity in the Reign of Queen Elizabeth I* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 19.
- ¹³ MacRobert, *Casket Letters*, 93–102; James Emerson Phillips, *Images of a Queen: Mary Stuart in Sixteenth-Century Literature* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1964), 53.
- ¹⁴ MacRobert offers other reasons why the letters may not have been published sooner after their discovery: "there must have been some collusion between them [the Scottish and English governments] not to do so. Perhaps there was a lack of confidence in exposing them to widespread scrutiny; or their publication might have offended foreign governments; or the Letters may have been withheld as a form of pressure on Mary" (*Casket Letters*, 104).
- ¹⁵ Phillips, *Images of a Queen*, 62; Warnike, *Mary Queen of Scots*, 200; MacRobert, *Casket Letters*, 93–97.
- ¹⁶ Phillips, *Images of a Queen*, 63, 62.
- ¹⁷ Phillips, *Images of a Queen*, 63; Lake, *Bad Queen Bess?*, 44.
- ¹⁸ Guy, *Queen of Scots*, 453–54.
- ¹⁹ MacRobert, *Casket Letters*, 104; Phillips, *Images of a Queen*, 64.
- ²⁰ Weir, *Mary, Queen of Scots*, 557; Warnike, *Mary Queen of Scots*, 200; Phillips, *Images of a Queen*, 55–56.
- ²¹ Phillips, *Images of a Queen*, 64, 65.
- ²² *Calendar of the State Papers Relating to Scotland and Mary, Queen of Scots, 1547–1603*, vol. 2 (1563–1569), ed. Joseph Bain (Edinburgh: Her Majesty's General Register House, 1900), 527 (abbreviated CSP hereafter).
- ²³ Guy, *Queen of Scots*, 455.
- ²⁴ Weir, *Mary, Queen of Scots*, 557.
- ²⁵ MacRobert, *Casket Letters*, 104.
- ²⁶ Phillips, *Images of a Queen*, 59.
- ²⁷ *Ane Detectioun* (1571), sigs. G.ij., K.ij. See also Karen Cunningham, *Imaginary Betrayals: Subjectivity and the Discourses of Treason in Early Modern England* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2002), 122–26.
- ²⁸ *Ane Detectioun* (1571), sigs. M.ij., H.ij.
- ²⁹ *Copie of a Letter Written by One in London*, sig., B.ii. The pamphlet has been attributed to Burghley and Buchanan.
- ³⁰ Lesley, *Copie of a Letter Writen Out of Scotland*, fol. 13r.
- ³¹ Lesley, *Copie of a Letter Writen Out of Scotland*, fol. 14r.
- ³² Lesley, *Defence of ... Marie Quene of Scotlande*, fol. 10v.
- ³³ See John Scott, *A Bibliography of Works Relating to Mary Queen of Scots 1544–1700* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh Bibliographical Society, 1906).
- ³⁴ See Conyers Read, *Mr. Secretary Walsingham and the Policy of Queen Elizabeth*, 3 vols. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1925), 3:1–70, for details of the plot.
- ³⁵ Raphael Holinshed et al., *The Chronicles of England, Scotland, and Ireland*, 2nd ed., 3 vols. (1587 / 13569), 3:1578; *CSP Relating to Scotland and Mary, Queen of Scots, 1547–1603*, vol. 8 (1585–1586), ed. William K. Boyd (Edinburgh: His Majesty's Stationery Office, 1914), 677.
- ³⁶ *Cobbett's Complete Collection of State Trials*, 34 vols., comp. T. B. Howell (London: Bagshaw, 1809–1826), vol. 1, col. 1174; *Miscellaneous State Papers from 1501 to 1726* [The Hardwicke Papers], 2 vols. (London: Strahan and Cadell, 1778), 1:228, 230. *Cobbett's Parliamentary History of England*, 36 vols., various eds. (London: Longman et al., 1806–1820), 1:838.
- ³⁷ See John Payne Collier, *A Bibliographical and Critical Account of the Rarest Books in the English Language*, 4 vols. (New York: Francis and Scribner, 1866), 3:252–4; Cyndia Susan Clegg, *Press Censorship in Elizabethan England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 272 n. 86.
- ³⁸ The Stationers' record is quoted in Collier, *Bibliographical Account*, 3:253.
- ³⁹ Collier, *Bibliographical Account*, 3:254.
- ⁴⁰ Clegg, *Press Censorship*, 272 n. 86.
- ⁴¹ Clegg, *Press Censorship*, 272 n. 86.

⁴² Clegg, *Press Censorship*, 162.

⁴³ *Calendar of the Manuscripts of the Most Honourable the Marquess of Salisbury* [The Cecil Papers], 24 parts, various eds. (London: Her / His Majesty's Stationery Office, 1883–1976), 3:223–24. See also Phillips, *Images of a Queen*, 130, on Burghley as principal agent of this sort of anti-Mary propaganda.

⁴⁴ See Lowell Gallagher, *Medusa's Gaze: Casuistry and Conscience in the Renaissance* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1991), 30–35, for comment on the justice of the actions.

⁴⁵ Clegg, *Press Censorship*, 140–41. Burghley was also among the Privy Councilors responsible for the reformation of the publication (152).

⁴⁶ Clegg, *Press Censorship*, 167–68.

⁴⁷ Holinshed, *Chronicles*, 2nd ed., 3:1578.

⁴⁸ See Phillips, *Images of a Queen*, 118–27, for these sorts of publications.

⁴⁹ Cecil, *Copie of a Letter*, 25.

⁵⁰ *State Trials*, vol. 1, col. 1198; *Defence*, sig. E. of the second gathering.

⁵¹ *State Trials*, vol. 1, cols. 1182, 1186. See also Cathy Shrank, "Manuscript, Authenticity and 'evident proofs' against the Scottish Queen," *English Manuscript Studies 1100–1700*, vol. 15: "Tudor Manuscripts, 1485–1603," ed. A. S. G. Edwards (London: British Library, 2009), 210. Cunningham (115–20) has also discussed the question of Mary's letters as sound evidence of treason.

⁵² John Hungerford Pollen, *Mary Queen of Scots and the Babington Plot* (Edinburgh: Constable, 1922), 26–46, offers the details of Mary's letter to Babington; see 132–33 for Walsingham's August 3, 1586, letter to Phelippes.

⁵³ See Pollen, *Mary Queen of Scots*, 35–37, on contemporary copies.

⁵⁴ The original reads, "sparsert aliquas literas proditionis, inter Reginam & Babingtonium conceptus, id facillè factu est, utroq[ue] iam aut mortuo, aut condemnato" (sig. B4v).

⁵⁵ The 1592 letters are printed in *CSP Relating to Scotland and Mary, Queen of Scots, 1547–1603*, vol. 11 (1593–1595), ed. Annie I. Cameron (Edinburgh: His Majesty's Stationery Office, 1936), 3–15.

⁵⁶ Andrew Lang, *A History of Scotland from the Roman Occupation*, 4 vols. (New York: Dodd, Mead, 1900–1907), 2:343. See David Calderwood, *The History of the Kirk of Scotland*, 8 vols., ed. Thomas Thomson (Edinburgh: Woodrow Society, 1842–1849), 5:14–35, for all the 1589 letters. Morton's and Hamilton's names are suppressed in *Discoverie* since they have "sensyne returnit to the professioun and defence of the trueth" (sig. Cv).

⁵⁷ T. G. Law, "The Spanish Blanks and the Catholics Earles, 1592–4," *The Scottish Review* 22 (July and October 1893): 17. Francis Shearman sees the blanks less ominously, as blank letters of credit, commonly used at the time: Shearman, "The Spanish Blanks," *Innes Review* 3.2 (1952): 89.

⁵⁸ [Davidson], *To the Reader*, sigs. 2r, 2v.

⁵⁹ Calderwood, *History*, 5:251; John Rawson Elder, *Spanish Influences in Scottish History* (Glasgow: Maclehose and Jackson, 1920), 193–94, 202–3. But see Shearman, "Spanish Blanks," 84, for the view that no evidence exists of James's knowledge of the plotting.

⁶⁰ Calderwood, *History*, 5:6–7; Gordon Donaldson, *Scotland: James V to James VII* (New York: Praeger, 1966), 189.

⁶¹ Donaldson, *Scotland*, 189; for Elizabeth's letter to James, see Calderwood, *History*, 5:7–8.

⁶² Donaldson, *Scotland*, 190.

⁶³ Elder, *Spanish Influences*, 199–200; 206–8, 209; Shearman, "Spanish Blanks," 95–96.

⁶⁴ Cameron, *CSP Scotland*, 11:90.

⁶⁵ Calderwood, *History*, 5:251.

⁶⁶ Law, "Spanish Blanks," 14. Davidson also writes in his diary on May 26 about the care given to the selection of letters for publication (Calderwood, *History*, 5:251).

⁶⁷ Thomas M'Crie, *The Life of Andrew Melville*, 2 vols. (Edinburgh: William Blackwood, 1819), 2:27 n. *: the book "was published under the direction of the ministers of Edinburgh. (Rec[ords] of Presb[tery] of Edin[burgh] May 15. 1593.)" A statement by James Melville that the book was "publist in print at the executioun of the said [coconspirator] David [Graham]," which was on February 15, 1593, is mistaken, and must refer to the fact that Graham's name and date of execution were stated in the full title of *Discoverie (The Autobiography and Diary of Mr. James Melville)*, ed. Robert Pitcairn [Edinburgh: Woodrow Society, 1842], 306 n. 2).

⁶⁸ [Davidson], *To the Reader*, sig. 3v. See Shearman, "Spanish Blanks," 85, for the Kirk's position regarding the handling of the discovery of the plot.

⁶⁹ Law, "Spanish Blanks," 14, 16.

⁷⁰ *Calendar of Letters and State Papers Relating to English Affairs Preserved Principally in the Archives of Simancas*, 4 vols., ed. Martin A. S. Hume (London: Her Majesty's Stationery Office, 1899), 4:589.

⁷¹ *A Transcript of the Registers of the Company of Stationers of London, 1554–1640*, 5 vols., ed. Edward Arber (London: Privately Printed, 1875–1894), 2:633.

Printing Discovered and Intercepted Letters

- ⁷² The dedicatory letter heading the pamphlet is dated August 1. G. B. Harrison lists it under August 15, 1592, but does not provide a rationale for this date (*An Elizabethan Journal: Being a Record of Those Things Most Talked about during the Years 1591–1594* [New York: Cosmopolitan, 1929], 161).
- ⁷³ Albert J. Loomie, “The Authorship of ‘An Advertisement written to a Secretarie of M. L. Treasurer of England...’,” *Renaissance News* 15.3 (1962), 202–3.
- ⁷⁴ Loomie, “Authorship,” 205–6.
- ⁷⁵ *Advertisement*, 8.
- ⁷⁶ *Advertisement*, 38.
- ⁷⁷ Loomie, “Authorship,” 203; Victor Houlston, *Catholic Resistance in Elizabethan England: Robert Persons’s Jesuit Polemic, 1580–1610* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007), 54; Jones is also quoted in Houlston.
- ⁷⁸ Loomie, “Authorship,” 203–4.
- ⁷⁹ Alexandra Gajda, *The Earl of Essex and Late Elizabethan Political Culture* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 86; Donna B. Hamilton, *Anthony Munday and the Catholics, 1560–1633* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2005), 143; Stephen Alford, “The Political Creed of William Cecil,” in *The Monarchical Republic of Early Modern England: Essays in Response to Patrick Collinson*, ed. John F. McDiarmid (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007), 76.
- ⁸⁰ Houlston, *Catholic Resistance*, 55; Paul Arblaster, *Antwerp & the World: Richard Verstegan and the International Culture of Catholic Reformation* (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2004), 61.
- ⁸¹ *Mercurius Gallobelgicus sive rerum in Gallia et Belgio potissimum; Hispania quoque Italia, Anglia, Germania, Polonia, Vicinisque locis ab anno 1588 usque ad Martium anni praesentis 1594 gestarum* (Cologne, 1594), 120. It is likewise in Thomas Stapleton’s *Apologia pro Rege Catholico Philippo II* (Constance, 1592), 89. See Arthur Leon Horniker, “William Harborne and the Beginning of Anglo-Turkish Diplomatic and Commercial Relations,” *The Journal of Modern History* 14.3 (Sept. 1942): 303–16.
- ⁸² Camden, *Annals, or the Historie of ... Elizabeth*, 3rd ed. (1635 / 4501), 419–20.
- ⁸³ Horniker, “William Harborne,” 305.
- ⁸⁴ *Calendar of the Salisbury Manuscripts*, 4:498.
- ⁸⁵ *Newes from Spayne and Holland*, fols. 16r–v.
- ⁸⁶ *Newes from Spayne and Holland* fols. 14v–15r, 16r.
- ⁸⁷ *Newes from Spayne and Holland*, fol. 18v.
- ⁸⁸ These are in volume 10 of the 12 volume reissue of *The Principal Navigations* (Glasgow: J. MacLehose and Sons, 1903–1905), 158–78. Other intercepted letters are scattered throughout *The Principal Navigations*. See 9:204, 11:39 and 11:64. But except for a small group of intercepted letters (given in abstract) about Guiana taken by George Popham in 1594 (10:432–39), no marked nationalistic capital is made out of the others.
- ⁸⁹ *The Hakluyt Handbook*, 2 vols., ed. D. B. Quinn (London: Hakluyt Society, 1974), 2:451.
- ⁹⁰ James P. Helfers, “The Explorer or the Pilgrim? Modern Critical Opinion and the Editorial Methods of Richard Hakluyt and Samuel Purchas,” *Studies in Philology* 94.2 (Spring 1997): 170. See also Julia Schleck, “‘Plain Broad Narratives of Substantial Facts’: Credibility, Narrative, and Hakluyt’s *Principall Navigations*,” *Renaissance Quarterly* 59.3 (Fall 2006): 776–77, 785, and 791 on the letters generally.
- ⁹¹ Helfers, “Explorer or Pilgrim,” 170.
- ⁹² Hakluyt, *Principal Navigations*, 10:158.
- ⁹³ Respectively in Hakluyt, *Principal Navigations*, 10:163–64, 170, 168, 169, and 178.
- ⁹⁴ Hakluyt, *Principal Navigations*, 10:178, 162, 163.
- ⁹⁵ Quinn writes of “Hakluyt’s own inclusion of captured Spanish documents [that] gave a new dimension to the 1600 volume. The letters intercepted in 1590 dovetail well with the English record, for their emphasis is on Spanish reactions to English attacks” (*Hakluyt Handbook*, 1:239).
- ⁹⁶ Sacks, “Richard Hakluyt’s Navigations in Time: History, Epic, and Empire,” *Modern Language Quarterly* 67.1 (March 2006): 56.
- ⁹⁷ Hakluyt, *Principal Navigations*, 10:433, 436.
- ⁹⁸ From Hakluyt’s dedicatory epistle to *Divers Voyages* (1582 / 12624), sig. ¶2v. Quoted in Richard Helgerson, *Forms of Nationhood: the Elizabethan Writing of England* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press), 168.
- ⁹⁹ See Sacks, “Hakluyt’s Navigations,” especially 53–57.
- ¹⁰⁰ Hakluyt, *Principal Navigations*, 1:xxvii. See also Mary Fuller, “Richard Hakluyt’s Foreign Relations,” in *Travel Writing, Form, and Empire: The Poetics and Politics of Mobility*, ed. Julia Kuehn and Paul Smethurst (New York: Routledge, 2009), 41.
- ¹⁰¹ *Extracts from the Registers of the Stationers’ Company of Works Entered of Publication between the Years 1570 and 1587*, 2 vols., ed. John Payne Collier (London: Shakespeare Society, 1849), 2:119.

¹⁰² Colin Clair, *Christopher Plantin* (London: Cassell, 1960), 139.

¹⁰³ *Nieuw Nederlandsch Biografisch Woordenboek*, 10 vols., ed. P. C. Molhuysen and P. J. Blok (Leiden: Sijthoff, 1911–1937), 7:954.

¹⁰⁴ John Lothrop Motley, *The Rise of the Dutch Republic: A History*, 3 vols. (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1868), 3:453.

¹⁰⁵ Shaaber, *Some Forerunners*, 168–69.

¹⁰⁶ One edition of *Lettres Interceptes du Cardinal de Granvelle et Autres* does not designate any printer on the title page (this edition is available at <<http://gallica.bnf.fr>>). Another edition of *Lettres Interceptes du Cardinal de Granvelle et Autres* exists with Plantin as printer expressly stated on the title page and an imprimatur from the duke of Anjou on the verso (available at <<http://www.archive.org>>).

¹⁰⁷ The transcription of this letter was prepared by Robyn Adams and is located at the Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC) Centre for Editing Lives and Letters, <http://www.livesandletters.ac.uk/herle/letters/269.html>.

¹⁰⁸ See Willem Pieter Cornelis Knuttel, *Catalogus van de pamfletten-verzameling berustende in de koninklijke bibliotheek*, 9 parts in 11 vols. ('sGravenhage: Algemeene Landsdrukkerij, 1889–1920), vol. 1, part 1, 114–22. *Lettres Interceptes* and *Letters Conteyning Sundry Devices* also coincide chronologically insofar as *Lettres Interceptes* was granted privilege by the duke of Anjou on June 26, Herle sent Walsingham the book on July 12, while the translated *Letters Conteyning Sundry Devices* was entered in the Stationers' Register by Charde on July 23 (Arber, *Transcript*, 2:414).

¹⁰⁹ Derek A. Wilson, *Sir Francis Walsingham: A Courtier in an Age of Terror* (New York: Carroll and Graf, 2007), 109; Parmelee, *Good Newes from Fraunce*, 32–33.

¹¹⁰ *CSP Foreign* (Jan. 1581–Apr. 1582), ed. Arthur John Butler (London: His Majesty's Stationery Office, 1907), 20–21.

¹¹¹ The lone exception is the reprinting of *A Discoverie of the Unnatural and Traiterous Conspiracie* in 1603 (14939.5) and in 1626 (14940)—reprintings intending to reconfirm the dedication of the new Stuart monarchs to confronting Spanish and Catholic conspiracies.