Ashes and "the Archive": The London Fire of 1666, Partisanship, and Proof

Frances E. Dolan
Miami University
Oxford, Ohio

Mice, mold, fire, flood—and assiduous destruction by the very subjects whom we study—have diminished and rendered somewhat random extant evidence of the medieval and early modern periods. As a result, scholars of these periods need to think creatively about what remains. We still make some "discoveries," of course. For instance, work on early modern England has been transformed by more careful and creative inquiry into understudied materials: church court records, chancery and probate records, popular print, religious discourses, women's writings. As these last three categories particularly reveal, however, none of this evidence has exactly been buried, awaiting discovery like the lost tombs of Egypt. Instead, for the most part, we know what's there; a new question leads to research "discoveries" in the field more often than does a new document. It's not what you "find"—which some industrious antiquarian in the nineteenth century probably led you to anyway—it's what you have to say about it.[1]

And yet, it is hard not to feel that we should be digging up "new" sources, especially given the fact that granting agencies are most likely to recognize the discovery of evidence as the creation of new knowledge, and research libraries are most likely to fund those projects that rely most heavily on their collections. What Robert Darnton called "grubbing in the archives" feeds a desire among humanities scholars, especially those who study literature, to understand our own practice as in some way "hard."[2] In the current institutional and political context, in which humanities scholars, especially those who study the remote past, must justify their existence, it sometimes feels as if we've got two choices: we can defend our practice as the appreciation or fuller understanding of recognized authors, or as the creation of new historical knowledge. I sometimes think of the choice in these terms: love the bard, or find a fact. Hence the current retreats to aestheticism, archives,

Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies 31:2, Spring 2001.
Copyright © by Duke University Press / 2001 / $2.00.

or, in some cases, both. In a research proposal, or a dinner party conversation, or a book treatment, a bid to legitimacy as a scholar creating new knowledge can best be bolstered by claiming to have found something no one else has found—to need a trip to an archive, rather than to plug away dismally and unromantically with microfilm. As a consequence, at the same time that literary critics, for instance, cast their nets more widely in response to the oft-repeated criticism that they make too much of a single text, episode, or artifact, nostalgia lingers for the one spectacular piece of evidence: which no one else has seen or quoted; which will ground the free float of association; which will legitimize our practice.[3] The archive, particularly when understood as a depository of unpublished records and documents, as opposed to more broadly diffused and widely available print "culture," promises what other scholars do not have, the uniquely juicy and justifying tidbit.

This climate helps to explain the otherwise quirky experiment Megan Matchinske conducts in her recent book, *Writing, Gender, and State in Early Modern England*. Matchinske engages in "a literal re-imagining of historical record" by composing a letter that the Catholic martyr Margaret Clitherow might have written to her daughter. She offers a narrative of how she herself might have found such a document in a priory in Devon, the precise state of the imagined manuscript, and a transcript of the letter in suitably challenging faux old spelling, as if the more fully she imagines and describes her composition the more proof-value she can confer upon it. In the process, she enacts a perfect identification of researcher and subject, which is also an absolute form of intellectual property; as she says, "Margaret Clitherow's letter *is* my letter."[4] What interests me about Matchinske's choice is that, at the same time that it utterly disregards standards of evidence, it reinshrines them. To invent a letter is to assume that a letter would matter, that a single document could change how we understand Margaret Clitherow.

I must confess that, although Matchinske scrupulously signals her movement into fiction, I was still confused. My response reminded me of my own lingering investment in the Holy Grail model of scholarship: first I was impressed by Matchinske's sleuthing, then disappointed to learn that she has "never been to St. Augustine's priory or seen its library of the convent, and Devon is still one place among many that [she] dearly wish[es] to visit."[5] Since the letter Matchinske invents is not all that informative, I found myself wishing not that she had actually found it, but that she had actually looked. Given how much material about Catholic women such as

Clitherow remains unassessed, why not devote one's energies to working with what we can readily find even without research trips or paleographical skills? Matchinske clearly intends to elicit such responses as part of this provocative gambit. Yet, by substituting an imagined discovery for the process of grubbing to which it is the desired conclusion, Matchinske enhances the romance of the big discovery more than she deflates it. While this brief moment in Matchinske's otherwise conventionally historicized study of women's writing does not represent a trend in research on early modern England, it does testify to the persistence and power of a nostalgic fantasy about what scholars do, what sleuths can find, what documents can prove, and what we can know about the hearts and minds of people in the past.

In this essay, I want to use a catastrophic event—the London Fire of 1666—to join the inquiry into what an archive contains, what a researcher can find therein, and what that might prove. This is an inquiry already underway in the pages of this journal.[6] The Fire and its carnage might certainly stand as "the real," since no one disputed that *something* happened. Considerable ink was spilled, however, about why and how the fire started. Our mediated access to that real event is not a consequence only of the passage of time. Even then, no one was sure about the fire's causes. What one finds in whatever "archive" survives is rumor, disputation, missing documents, contested authority. I will focus here on the fire's discursive documentation (the report leaked to the press by the parliamentary committee appointed to investigate the causes of the fire) and the fire's material commemoration (Christopher Wren's monument). That the monument is encrusted with inscriptions reveals the overlap of the discursive and the material. As I will show, the printed "informations" and the still-standing monument are readily accessible proofs of a considerably less accessible history, a history not only of fire but of equally incendiary conflicts about which account of a highly charged event achieves the widest circulation, which party's interpretation is written in stone. Considered together, this printed text and stone column suggest that the standards of proof emerging in late-seventeenth-century England are inseparable from the matrix from which they spring: a "Whiggish" investment in progress founded in a highly partisan, and anti-Catholic, construction of the past.

The Great Fire

There is little disagreement about the timing or extent of the "Great Fire," which was distinguished from the many other, smaller fires that plagued London by its scale. It began 2 September 1666; by some accounts, debris was still smoking in March of 1667. Although it is possible to quibble about the precise tallies of damage, the fire laid waste to about 436 acres, 400 streets, 89 parish churches, and 13,200 houses.[7] The fire does not, however, seem to have caused many deaths. It finally burned itself out after the houses in its path were blown up. By this time, however, it had transformed the lives of everyone who lived within the greater metropolitan area; since the fire devastated the capital, its effects were felt in the lives of many across the country, as well as in England's relations to other countries. This fire was, indisputably, news.

It is not surprising, then, that the fire was widely described, lamented, and explained. These responses ranged from catalogues of lost property and accounts of damage, to lamentations, lyrics, and sermons. As Cynthia Wall has argued, the fire, erasing and rewriting the familiar topography of the city, and thereby challenging urban ways of defining and experiencing identity, inspired a prolific literature of loss.[8] Other critics, too, have argued that the fire became an important occasion of and incentive to textual production.[9] The great diarists of the age, Pepys and Evelyn, discuss the fire at some length; Burnet and Clarendon grant it prominence in their histories; countless sermons and pamphlets dilate upon it. As Burnet explains, "many books are full of" the destruction the fire caused; "That which is still a great secret is, whether it was casual, or raised on design."[10] "Many books" were as full of speculations about this "secret" as they were of descriptions of the damage. Indeed, the difficulty of establishing any one answer made this a more controversial topic than the relatively straightforward assessment of the ruins. According to Pepys, "Our discourse, as every thing else, was confused."[11] The conundrum of a disaster without cause, without agent, seems to have provoked ingenious efforts to assign purpose to the fire. Many works responding to the fire urged Londoners to look within themselves, and not to avert an opportunity for reflection by hunting after other culprits.[12] Yet a great deal of effort went into the search for a person or group to blame for this catastrophe. This was the easiest way to make sense of the chaos the fire created: to tell a familiar story, even if a disturbing one, with a villain who acts as an agent, but who also gives meaning to the mayhem and who can be rooted out and punished.

The most obvious suspects were the usual ones, Catholics and/or foreigners, or a conspiracy between local and foreign Catholics. Like many other alleged conspiracies, "the Fire in *London* might be the effect of desperate designs and complotments from abroad, shrowded under and seconded by some male-contents at home."[13] The search for scapegoats was directed toward Catholics and foreigners by the fact that the fire began in a neighborhood crowded with French and Dutch tradespeople, some of whom were Catholic. Those first suspected were, as a result, strangers or "Outlandish-men."[14] Pepys records in his diary that many were seized as the suspicion of a plot spread, "and it hath been dangerous for any stranger to walk in the streets." The earl of Clarendon marvels that "in this general rage of the people no mischief was done to the strangers, that no one of them was assassinated outright, though many were sorely beaten and bruised."[15] This process of blaming foreigners issued in the rapid trial and execution of one Hubert, a confused, possibly insane Frenchman.[16]

Peter Stallybrass and Allon White describe as "displaced abjection" the process "whereby 'low' social groups turn their figurative and actual power, *not* against those in authority, but against those who are even 'lower' (women, Jews, animals, particularly cats and pigs)."[17] But the attempts to blame the fire on Catholics suggest that, in this particular case, scapegoating did not work in quite this way. Given that Charles II was suspected to be a Catholic, his brother James was known to be, and both were accused of not working hard enough to contain the fire, Catholics can not be classified as "lower" than their fellow Londoners. Nor were they clearly foreign or strange.[18]

Indeed, it was in their very familiarity that Catholics most resembled fire and threatened to be most incendiary. Like Catholics in the Protestant imagination, fire was widely viewed as simultaneously domesticated, necessary, and familiar—"home is where the hearth is," after all—and unpredictable and dangerous. Like Catholics, fires could burst out of bounds from within, or invade from without. "Fire and Water are proverbially said to be *good servants, but bad masters.* Both are good enough, whilst within their limits, but bad enough God know's [*sic*] when got beyond their bounds."[19] "How tyrannical a Master Fire is, when once it ceases to be a servant."[20] According to one writer, the king of France employs Jesuits "with the same fear and circumspection the Common People do Fire, which though it be necessary to warm them, and boil or roast their Meat, yet are they loath to trust it out of sight, without a faithful Watch-man."[21]

A country that tolerated Catholics was thus like a house or ware-

house overstocked with flammable goods. As Samuel Rolle says, spinning out this comparison at length:

> I cannot but thence think of the danger of Kingdoms and Countries which are over-stocked with forraigners (especially if of a forraign Religion as well as Nation) especially if men of fiery principles and spirits: for though such persons may lie still and make no noise for a time, so long as there are other parties to ballance and tie their hands (as the particles of Salt doth that of Fire) and whilst they are not suffered to imbody and flock together; yet let an enemy come (like water upon lime) presently they hiss, and smoak, and reak, and heard together, and are ready to burn up all that comes neer them. May the popish party never verifie what I have now hinted from the nature of Lime.[22]

The incendiary combination, then, is that of the internal combustible and the external spark.

The anxiety about the potential of both Catholics and fire to be trusted familiars or destructive betrayers indicates the difficulty there was in displacing blame wholly onto "others." One writer fantasized that even if they didn't actually set the fires, "Papists and Atheists have warmed themselves at the flames of *London*, saying, Aha, so would we have it."[23] Yet this claim, of course, forgets that "papists and atheists" lived in London and would have been warming themselves at the flames of their own smoldering goods. Since fire defined civilized domesticity, how could it be viewed as an invader? Since there was no clear boundary between Catholics and everyone else, how could they be clearly distinguished as "others"?

As a consequence, the ritual of displacement never quite worked and was never complete: not with the death of Hubert, not when strangers were off the street, not when the fire was finally out. The claim that Catholics set the fire was revived again and again, especially at moments of crisis in Catholic/Protestant relations; many of the texts I discuss here are from later in the century.

Catholics and the burden of proof

Whereas material evidence that there had been a fire abounded in the form of smoldering ruins, it was far more difficult to determine what might constitute proof of who had been responsible. In accounts of fire in the seven-

teenth century, proof of arson takes surprising forms: a rosary discovered during the search of a suspect's rooms; a suspect's distracted cry to the Virgin Mary when an angry mob surrounded him;[24] eyewitness reports recorded and published by a commission that never reached a conclusion; the inscription on a monument. A circular logic gave meaning to much of this evidence. If you were Catholic you were likely to be an arsonist; if you were an arsonist, you were likely to be Catholic. For this reason, the law was ambivalent about Catholic ritual objects, which, while prohibited, also offered valuable proof of Catholic allegiance—a kind of proof that was assumed to be elusive given Catholics' reliance on disguise, equivocation, and general sneakiness.[25] A broadside about a small fire later in the century makes explicit the connection between possessing ritual objects and arson. After the fire, a man was heard "speaking suspitious and reflecting Words; whereupon he was presently seized, and brought before Mr. Justice Evans, and upon Examination was found to be a Roman Catholick having Crucifixes, Beads, and other Trinkets about him, and therefore was committed Prisoner to the Marshalsea."[26] What is the logic of "therefore"? How does guilt of arson logically follow from the possession of crucifixes, beads, and other trinkets?

The cultural logic compressed into that "therefore" makes most sense in the context of a long-standing association of Catholicism with arson. Fears of Catholic arson regarding the Great Fire hearken back to that earliest connection between Catholicism and fire: the burning of heretics. As J. P. Kenyon explains, "The association of Catholicism with combustion had been established, of course, by Mary I, who in her short reign (1553–58) had sent nearly three hundred men and women to the stake."[27] It had then been confirmed when that other troublesome Mary, Mary Stuart, allegedly conspired to blow up her husband. The Gunpowder Plot, with its ambitious plan to explode the House of Parliament while in session, thus killing James I, his wife and male heirs, and virtually all of the most powerful men in the kingdom, gave a particularly vivid focus to anxieties about Catholic incendiarism. Surely, "those, who could intentionally blow up King and Parliament by Gunpowder, might (without any scruple of their kinds of conscience) actually burn an heretical City (as they count it) into ashes."[28] Many attempts to attribute the Great Fire to Catholics argue that they have shifted their tactics from burning Protestant believers to burning Protestant homes. William Bedloe, for instance, argues that Catholics had decided

> to ruine Protestants in a more oblique and clandestine way; since they had not (as is hop'd they never shall have) power to re-kindle the *Marian Bonfires*, and *consume* their Bodies: they resolv'd, and make it their business treacherously to *Fire their Houses*, to destroy their *Goods* and *Estates*, till they might be strong enough to venture on their *Persons*.[29]

Another text remarks, "Certainly they who rejoyce to burn Protestants in *Smithfield*, would have been as glad to have burnt 'em in their own Houses."[30] Still another claims:

> I had almost called it another *Smithfield* (alluding to the use that place was put to in the Marian dayes) for that every house was a kind of Martyr sacrificed to the flames: and that (as is vehemently suspected) by men of the same Religion, with those that burnt the Martyrs in Queen *Maries* dayes.[31]

Thus disputes about the causes of the fire attempt to confer significance and dignity on martyred property, to seize the moral highground in mourning over goods.

They also constantly negotiate the relationship between the discursive and the actual, between incendiary words and incendiary actions, between pen and ink and fireballs. The official account of the "powder treason," for instance, describes the belief that the pope has the authority to judge the king, or to relieve his subjects of their obligation to obey him as "that Ball of Wildefire, which hath caused so great losse of lives & States by combustion in Monarchies."[32] One text around the time of the Popish Plot cites as evidence of the dangers of papists "those swarms of Insolent and Audacious Papers, daily like their Fire-balls flung amongst us, and which like Wild-fire take place with some persons, as in their houses formerly"; another, later text warns of "a lurking *Jesuite* or *Priest*, whose Pen and Ink is now imploy'd to much the same Purposes as their Fire-balls of old."[33] Fire thus provided a model for how ideas, especially subversive ones, spread by circling back, scattering, starting up in unexpected places. According to Thomas Scott, even the Roman church itself knows that the Word is fire, "For this cause the Romish Catholikes (a politique people) have taken order to stop the free passage thereof, lest men should burne their fingers with it."[34]

Other writers insisted that some Catholics, particularly Jesuits,

were literally incendiaries, instructed in making fire-balls and other explosive devices. In *Pyrotechnica Loyolana, Ignatian Fire-works. Or, the Fiery Jesuits Temper and Behaviour* (1667), the author couples this claim that Jesuit seminaries teach the manufacture and use of explosives with an explanatory etymology of their founder's name:

> That, the *Jesuits* are ambitious, their *Founders* name signifies a FIRE-BRAND, quasi *ab igne natus*; and that his disposition was *Fiery*, and his profession *Military*; whereupon they affirm he came to *send Fire*. Hence *de jure* they profess the *Art* of making and casting about *Fire-balls* and *Wild-fire* to burn *Houses* and *Cities*: to promote which, they have two *Colledges*, one at *Madrid*, another at *Thonon* to advance the *study* of *Artificial Fire-works*, and to subdue Protestants by *fraud* and *Arms*: they keep *stores* of *powder* in their Colledges.[35]

Especially after the "Great Fire," Jesuits were widely referred to as "*Master-Incendiaries*" and "those grand *Incendiaries* in all senses."[36]

The fire, then, and the attempts to assign and prove a cause of it, enable us to consider the ways in which proof was partisan in this period. In post-Reformation England, the stakes of religious disputes over truth and error were high: knowing and embracing what was true might determine life or death, salvation or damnation. As a consequence, religious controversy and contestations over evidence were interrelated. Stephen Greenblatt, for instance, argues that "most of the significant and sustained thinking in the period about the nature of linguistic signs, and particularly about figuration, centered on or was deeply influenced by Eucharistic controversies."[37] Like the controversy over transubstantiation, debates over the role of images and ritual objects in worship and the efficacy of relics worried the relationship between the seen and the unseen, the material and the spiritual, the representational and the real. As Protestantism sought to achieve what Lyndal Roper has called the "desomatization of the spiritual," it also attempted to displace onto Catholicism an emotional investment in objects and a blurring of the line between the animate and the inanimate which were, in fact, widespread in the culture.[38]

While accusing Catholics of a disregard for scriptural authority and divine truth, and of a rather shoddy presentation of evidence, Protestants also manipulated evidence freely in support of the truths that seemed incontrovertible to them. John Foxe, for instance, or the collective of writers for

whom his name stands, operated on a sophisticated understanding of the truth, which sought to emphasize some "facts," and repress or recast others in the interests of a larger truth.[39] For Foxe, in Patrick Collinson's view, truth was not prior to or beyond or wholly separate from fiction, but rather could best be conveyed with the help of persuasive art. In rival versions of English history by Protestant and Catholic martyrologists, religious allegiance played a crucial role in determining what constituted the truth and who and what to believe. Proofs were dictated by and recruited in the service of truths already known but perhaps not always unwaveringly believed.

The apocryphal and popular story of "Pope Joan" became another focus for debates regarding the religious inflection of evidence. Although Joan supposedly cross-dressed with sufficient success to achieve the papacy in the ninth century, she was ultimately exposed, ruined, and killed by her ungoverned sexuality: when her birthpangs disrupted a procession she died in childbirth in the street.[40] Before the Reformation, this story seems to have been accepted as true; after the Reformation, it was seized by reformers eager to castigate the corrupt church and repudiated by counter-reformers. Because of this shift, Protestants could justifiably claim that they had their evidence of Joan's existence out of Catholics' own mouths and books.[41]

Stories about Joan constantly refer to her telltale sexuality. Yet disputes about Joan's existence often return to the difficulty of proving the case one way or the other. Two pieces of physical evidence are disputed: a statue of the pope going into labor, supposedly placed in the street where this occurred, and a porphyry "chair of ease," designed to prevent subsequent subterfuges like Joan's. Through the hole in the seat, candidates for the papacy after Joan might have their genitals groped to determine whether they had the crucial qualification for the job. The myth of the porphyry chair proposes a crudely literal test of gender, a reversion to a fact assumed palpable and indisputable.

By the sixteenth century, however, neither statue nor throne existed. John Mayo claims that "the Pope's Parliament" ordered that they be destroyed. But what does it mean to say that they do or do not exist in English texts which will presumably be read by readers who cannot confirm their existence through occular proofs? In a ferociously anti-Catholic text, John Baxter insists that "at this day there doth remaine an Image of stone [of Joan in labor] hewen out of the earth, as their histories do report, and that the Popes in their processions never doe passe that way, least that the like might happen unto them."[42] Baxter also mentions the porphyry throne. Yet he hasn't seen either one, and must trust "their histories" that they exist. Bax-

ter values the statue and the throne in the same ambivalent way that penal laws valued ritual objects: they are despicable but also useful since they provide a proof somehow prior to, distinct from, and more convincing than "their histories."

Catholic polemicists often reminded their readers that iconoclasm proved that Protestants valued images as much as Catholics did: Protestants not only passionately denounced and smashed images, but prosecuted as treason the destruction of their queen's image, mooned over portraits of their mistresses, and used woodcuts as part of their propaganda against Catholics. John Floyd, for instance, reminds his readers of Protestants' "ordinary painting the Pope in the shape of ugly Monsters, and *John Fox* his filling his lying Acts & Monuments with such Pageants, and ridiculous devises, to fright fooles, whereof he was Father."[43] If reformers' critiques of transubstantiation faulted it as crudely literal—the bread becomes rather than represents or reminds us of Christ's body—writers like Floyd emphasized that iconoclasm required a flatfooted understanding of the devotional response to images. In Catholic devotion, images served as inspirations and triggers to memory not as idols or objects of worship in themselves. In the context of such vexed and subtle debates, Mayo's and Baxter's assessments of the supposed statue of Joan appear surprisingly reductive: whatever the statue depicts must have happened; if it exists or existed, then Joan must have.

What kind of evidence is a statue? In Alexander Cooke's dialogue about Joan, the interlocutors both assess a statue, but cannot even agree on what the statue depicts.[44] Does it show Joan in labor, or a priest about to sacrifice with a young male helper standing before him? The Protestant claims that, given the limited ability of artists at that time, who can be sure what the statue represents? One must accept the accounts of contemporaries. He thus shifts from an object, which in any case stands before the reader only through the interlocutors' descriptions, to the written interpretations of that object. Yet the Protestant interlocutor himself points out the instability of contemporary written evidence. Given the vagaries of manuscript transmission, he explains, just because something isn't in one copy doesn't mean that it couldn't be in another. "I presume you are not so ignorant, but you know, that words, sentences, and memorable accidents, have sometimes by negligence, sometimes by wilfulnesse, bene left out of copies" (sig. G1r). This is especially the case since Catholics are instructed to blot out whatever reflects badly on the clergy. Furthermore, how can Catholics dismiss "report" as corroboration since they believe so many things (such as miracles) only by

report? The Catholic counters that, even if historians all agreed, he wouldn't believe them because they based their accounts on hearsay. The Protestant asserts, "and for my part, without proofe, I beleeve nothing, whosoever he be that speakes it, especially if he be a Papist" (sig. G2r). The two thus reach an impasse. Each will believe what his religio-political allegiance inclines him to believe; each will accept as proof what serves to support that existing belief; neither is in any way available to persuasion.

In this debate about evidence, the standard cannot be agreed upon because it comes down to report and who is doing the reporting. Each believes the reports only of his own cohort—as read by his own cohort. All evidence is what Lorraine Daston calls "enlisted evidence."[45] Furthermore, these disputes about Pope Joan set forth objects as compelling proof, but then explain that objects only accrue meaning through "histories" and "reports." The material is not the non- or extradiscursive. Rather, those who seek to understand objects invest them with meaning rather than prizing meaning out of them.

Debates about the Eucharist and Pope Joan participated in a more general inquiry into standards of evidence that ultimately shaped scientific method, literary form, and legal practice in the early modern period.[46] Disputes about method and evidence often assumed a connection between Protestantism and more rigorous standards, dismissing the superstition, obeisance to papal authority, and "ridiculous fictions" that were associated with "popish" investigation, standards of evidence, and methods of argument.[47] At one level, these controversies and conflicts were headed in the direction of "progress"—clearer standards of evidence, more equitably and consistently applied. Yet the relation of these debates to religious controversy should remind us that this is not a simple matter of rigor triumphing over superstition, fact over fiction. The preferred standards earned their prestige in part because of their association with the winners of history; they were themselves always acknowledged as partisan—and as more true precisely because of their alliance with the "right" side. Neither the scientific nor the legal were clearly separable from the religious arena of controversy; all were intensely political. Legal procedures could not operate in a vacuum—shut off from religious controversy and political pressures. This is born out in the official proceedings to determine responsibility for the fire, as we will now see.

JMEMS31.2-06 Dolan 4/30/01 9:39 AM Page 391

The parliamentary committee and the official story

Charles II appointed the Privy Council and the Lord Chief Justice to look into the causes of the fire, but this body did not come to a resolution. Only Hubert was brought to trial, and the only evidence against him was his own confession. On 25 September 1666, after some debate, the Commons appointed their own committee (of seventy) to inquire into the causes of the fire.[48] One month later, the Commons joined with the House of Lords to petition "for the banishment of all Popish priests and Jesuits, . . . the enforcement of the laws against Papist recusants, and the disarming of all who refused the Oaths of Allegiance and Supremacy."[49] Charles II agreed to make a proclamation to this effect. Obviously, the inquiry took place in the context of profound anti-Catholic sentiment and the presumption of Catholic guilt. The committee seems to have received testimony from a diverse range of informants; it collected reports of papist predictions, of papists throwing fireballs, of papists bearing confiscated goods into Somerset House, the residence of the queen mother, Henrietta Maria. Perhaps most damaging were suggestions that the Duke of York, and to some extent the king, suppressed evidence, failed to pursue leads, and baffled attempts to stop the fire. This perception of complicity at the top contributed to the many deadends and loose threads in witnesses' testimony. As Wall points out, "most accounts end with the witness admitting that the apprehended suspect was 'heard of no more,' or the witness 'could never hear nor learn' of his or her tale producing verifiable results."[50] In this, as Wall suggests, these accounts anticipated the committee's inconclusive findings.

The committee began meeting on 26 September; its chair, Sir Robert Brooke, reported to the House on 22 January, read aloud some of the examinations gathered, and submitted his report to the Commons clerk.[51] Since the committee made no recommendation, their report seems to have been intended as an interim update on their findings. After hearing Brooke read aloud the "many wicked and desperate expressions" his committee had collected, one member of the House of Commons concluded, "I cannot conceive that the House can make anything of the report from the committee."[52] According to Gilbert Burnet, Sir Thomas Littleton, a member of the committee, "often assured me that there was no clear presumption well made out about [whether the city was 'burnt on design'], and that many stories that were published with great assurance came to nothing upon a strict examination."[53] Still, the report was slated for debate in the House the following day, then deferred to the next day, and then disappears

from the business recorded in the journal of the House of Commons. Shortly thereafter, Charles II prorogued Parliament (8 Feb. 1667); Parliament was thus unable to give its judgment on the committee's report. The committee itself was disbanded. Although some citizens petitioned that the inquiry be reopened, it never was. Certainly, neither Charles nor the Privy Council were convinced; they concluded that "after many careful examinations by Council and His Majesty's ministers, nothing hath been found to argue the fire in London to have been caused by other than the hand of God, a great wind, and a very dry season."[54]

The official account of the cause of the fire was printed in the *London Gazette* (Sept. 3–10), the paper published by authority. This account emphasizes the efforts of the king and his brother to quell the fire and the continuing loyalty of their subjects. It is reproduced again and again, into the twentieth century, in accounts of the fire and its commemoration. *An Account of the Burning of the City of London*, a popular eighteenth-century reprinting and reconsideration of this "official story," explains that, on weighing all the evidence, it is impossible to make an exact determination and thus it is best to choose "the charitable, and perhaps probable Side"—that is, to decide to believe that the fire was God's judgment, not the result of human scheming. In this text, it is possible to distrust Catholics without abandoning standards of evidence: "tho' we account the *Papists* our bitter Enemies, 'tis highly wicked to bely and slander them; as has been too much the Practice of those who value themselves for being Protestants."[55]

Yet the matter was not closed. Nor were Catholics absolved of complicity in the fire, or dethroned as menacing specters in the Protestant imaginary. Quite the opposite. Although the committee appointed by the Commons never came to an official finding, its report was published as *A True and Faithful Account of the several Informations exhibited to the Hon. Committee appointed by the Parliament to enquire into the late dreadful firing of the city of London* (London, 1667). This text contained not only the report that Robert Brooke made to the House of Commons on 22 January 1667, but also information "given into the committee but not by them reported to the House at that time."[56] Thus the print version exceeds the "archival" version, which, itself, is not available for comparison. The first print version "had the curious fate, for a parliamentary document, of being burned at the hands of the common hangman in Westminster Palace Yard —a step possibly justified by the fact that the published version contained evidence taken but not recorded in the committee's report. Many copies

were confiscated."[57] As early as July 1667, the mayor of Bristol reports to the king that he has seized items from a woman bookseller, including "an account of the informations exhibited to the commissioners of Parliament appointed to enquire into the late dreadful firing of London"; in August, another source reports from Rydal the circulation of *A True and Faithful Account* and asks "whether to take any notice of a libel or not."[58] Neither confiscation nor burning successfully curtailed the circulation of this report. Indeed, the news of suppression may have heightened interest in this text. Samuel Pepys, for instance, responds to news of the order to burn "the printed account of the examinations" by planning to outwit it: "I will try to get one of them."[59] Published in many editions and versions, framed in many different ways, the report—really a collection of witnesses' statements—took on a life of its own.[60] It earned authority through repetition and circulation: what is printed in *State Tracts: Being a Collection of Several Treatises Relating to the Government* (1693), is not the report Robert Brooke handed in to the clerk, but rather the expanded version printed as *London's Flames Reviv'd*; in the early nineteenth century, Cobbett's *State Trials* reprints *A True and Faithful Account* as "Examinations concerning the Firing of London," and consigns the *London Gazette* account to the notes.

One openly partisan account conveys some sense of just how much longevity the fire had as a focus for religio-political conflict, and how this conflict always recurs to the partisan nature of evidence and its interpretation. *A True Protestant Account of the Burning of London* (1720) billed itself as *An Antidote, Against the Poyson and Malignity of a Late Lying Legend, Entituled, An Account of the Burning of London*, a reprinting of the "official" account of the fire that I cited above, and which was itself an antidote to anti-Catholic narratives such as Bedloe's in which "the Evidence is so wretchedly mean, that they deserve no Historian's consideration"(*Account*, D3r). Announcing its partisanship in its title, the *True Protestant Account* seeks to prove "from unexceptionable Evidence and Authority, that it was those Blood-thirsty Monsters the Papists, and none but they, who were the sole Authors of that most dismal Tragedy" (A3v). *A True Protestant Account* charges that the narrative published in the *London Gazette* and cited by *An Account of the Burning of London* (first published in 1720) "doth no where say, either that the *Papists* did, or that they did not Fire the City; neither indeed could they insert such a Thing in favour of the *Papists* at that Time of the Day, when so many Thousands were Eye Witnesses that they did it; Neither if they had, would they have been proper Evidences for them, both the King and the Duke of *York* being *Papists*" (A4r). As a result, "both

because that Account published by Authority saith nothing of the *Papists*, and because the King (by whose Authority it was publish'd) was a *Papist*: It cannot in the least serve to clear the *Papists* of that heavy Charge of *Burning the City of London*" (A4v).[61] For this writer, the alliance between Catholicism and the court, particularly the control of the "Popish Court" over the press, compromises the proof value of the "official story." Of course, *A True Protestant Account* itself made it into print, but only much later, from which vantage it could reprint yet again the informations first published as part of the committee's report, and reveal that the official report on the fire is a false Catholic account as opposed to a "true Protestant" one.

To accuse a text of being "Roman" or "papist" in this period was often tantamount to saying it sought to mislead. For instance, an account of the Gunpowder Plot published around the time of the Popish Plot, so as to remind readers of a history of Catholic conspiracy, insists that it offers "no lying Legend, no vain Romance, no spurious or unlicenc'd-seditious Pamphlet, but an Authentique History."[62] This distinction is typical. The author asserts a difference between a lying legend and an authentic history but also claims that this distinction is made by the allegiance of the speaker: Catholics lie; Protestants tell the truth. Yet such texts, which advertise both their Protestant bias and, therefore, their truthfulness also acknowledge that their own narratives are partial and interested. It is their "interest" that marks their stories as true. To make the past politically useful, Protestant writers had to remember selectively. As Ernest Renan and others have argued, forgetting is as important a part of nation-formation as remembering.[63] As a consequence, English Protestants obsessively remembered their Catholic compatriots' past offenses even as they chose to forget the histories that bound them together.

Versions of the parliamentary committee's report were reprinted whenever the political climate warranted or required another denunciation of papists: not just in 1667, just following the fire, but in 1679, at the time of the Popish Plot, and in 1689, when the Revolution was being justified in part through anti-Catholicism. All of the versions of the parliamentary examinations are roughly similar in content; to read the many reframings and reprintings of the "informations" supposedly collected by the Commons committee is to see again the fiercely partisan nature of what constitutes a true account in this period. For many of these writers, the past—recent or remote—is a field on which one can mobilize old conflicts and conspiracies as proof of what one already knows, that is, who can be trusted and who cannot. For all of the durability of the claim that Catholics were

JMEMS31.2-06 Dolan 4/30/01 9:39 AM Page 395

responsible for the Great Fire of London, this claim never disguised its own interestedness or silenced the other explanatory narratives—even when this "true Protestant" account was literally written in stone.

The monument

In 1677, a monument commissioned by Parliament, designed by Christopher Wren and Robert Hooke, and begun in 1671, finally raised its head 202 feet to commemorate the fire. The monument, which still stands today, consists of a huge Doric column topped by a vase of flames, a cheaper substitution for a fifteen-foot statue of Charles II that had originally been planned. An allegorical bas-relief of Charles II coming to the aid of a female London, designed by Caius Gabriel Cibber (father of Colley) decorates the west side of the pedestal. The east side lists those who were lord mayor in the years during which the monument was begun, under construction, and at last completed. The north and south sides of the pedestal feature lengthy Latin inscriptions, one describing in detail the devastation wrought by the Great Fire, and the other describing and praising Charles II's initiatives for rebuilding the city. Neither inscription blames a human agent for setting the fire. The Latin inscriptions simultaneously confer grandeur and permanence on the history they describe and withhold that history from wide circulation by limiting those who can decipher and thereby learn from it. Dr. Thomas Gale, the head of St. Paul's school, and later the dean of York, seems to have composed them.[64]

In January 1681, in response to the anti-Catholic sentiment surrounding and fuelling both the Popish Plot and the Exclusion Crisis, the House of Commons voted unanimously both to thank the city of London for its vigilance in preserving the Protestant religion, and "that the City of *London* was burnt in the Year One thousand Six hundred Sixty-and-six, by the Papists; designing thereby to introduce arbitrary Power and Popery into this Kingdom."[65] This assertion was not based on any new inquiry or new evidence. To the extent that Parliament heard any testimony at all they heard key Popish Plot witnesses, Israel Tonge and William Bedloe, rehash the earlier "findings" of the Commons committee.[66] But this pronouncement, so divorced from any forensic process, was soon to achieve a very public manifestation. The Court of Aldermen of the City of London, and their lord mayor, all decidedly Whiggish, ordered that this verdict be carved—in English—in a single line around the base of the monument's pedestal. Here was an inscription that would be legible to a far larger number of London-

ers. There are small disparities among the transcriptions of this inscription, but it seems to have said roughly this:

> This Pillar was set up in perpetual remembrance of the most dreadful burning of this Protestant City, begun and carried on by the treachery and malice of the Popish faction in the beginning of September, in the year of our Lord 1666, in order to the carrying on their horrid plot for extirpating the Protestant religion and old English Liberty, and introducing Popery and Slavery.[67]

Guides to the monument printed in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries explain, "And whereas, upon evidence, it was thought that this dreadful fire was contrived and carried on by the Popish faction, the same is expressed in English round the base of the pedestal."[68] This explanation erases the gap of fifteen years between, on the one hand, the fire and the parliamentary inquiry into its cause, and, on the other, the blunt assertion that Catholics did it. Furthermore, the phrase "upon evidence" begs the question of what this evidence was; the passive construction obscures who it was who thought that the fire was "contrived and carried on by the Popish faction." In 1681, a final sentence was also added to the Latin inscription on the north side: "Sed furor papisticus qui tam dira patravit, nondam restinguitur" [But the rage of the papists, which perpetrated such horrible things, is not yet extinguished]. This sentence bears no relation to the Latin passage it concludes, which simply describes the devastation wrought by the fire. Presenting it in Latin grants it a certain credibility, and blurs the difference between the sentiments and goals of 1677 and of 1681. While Latin remained the language of learning, diplomacy, law, and architectural sententiae, it was also increasingly associated with Catholic liturgy—and its elitism—and occult practices, which led worshippers to follow liturgical form without necessarily understanding its content. Thus presenting this terse and menacing indictment of Catholic guilt in Latin has an ironic smack. In 1685, at the accession of James II, these two inscriptions were effaced. After the Revolution of 1688 at least the English one, and perhaps the Latin one, were restored to the monument—in very deep characters, as many explain. The inscriptions were not finally gouged out until 1830 (after the [Catholic] Emancipation Act of 1829 and the election of the first Catholic MP).[69]

Given this history of contention over the inscriptions, the monument itself has long been interpreted as a site of struggle over English

national memory. This was sometimes literally the case; for instance, a pope-burning was held before the monument on Guy Fawkes day in 1677.[70] What I'm interested in here is how various parties that were engaged in political conflict in seventeenth- and eighteenth-century England worked self-consciously and openly to shape national memory. In that process, the monument was taken by many Protestants not as an assertion, but as a proof. The inscription on the monument so robustly pronounced the truth of Catholic conspiracy that, in itself, it became a kind of proof, not of belief or of desire, but of what had actually happened. *A True Protestant Account*, for instance, adduces both another inscription and the monument itself as evidence:

> But yet further to Corroborate our Evidence, we will add the *Inscription*, Curiously Engraven on a Stone purposely affix'd to the Wall of the House, that now stands on that very Spot of Ground, whereon that House stood, which was first set on Fire in *Pudding-lane*; which is this, *Verbatim: Here by the Permission of* Heaven, HELL *broke loose upon this* Protestant City, *from the malicious Hearts of Barbarous PAPISTS, by the Hand of their Agent HUBERT, who Confessed, and on the Ruins of this Place declared the Fact*, (for which he Hang'd) viz. *That he begun* [*here began*] *that Dreadful Fire which is describ'd & perpetuated on* [*and by*] *that neighbouring Pillar (the MONUMENT)*.[71]

But what kind of proof is this? By setting in stone one interpretation—the most aggressive and extreme Protestant one at that—Sir Patience Ward, the lord mayor of London, and his masons wrote onto their city the assessment of the fire's causes that was of greatest political use to them.[72] Yet such unequivocal assertion could not suppress the controversy of which it was born.

Like the disparity between the official account in the *London Gazette* and the accounts propagated in various print versions of the committee's findings, the history of the monument's inscription—on, then off, then on, then off—suggests that the proof, like the truth, is historically and politically contingent. Who had most power at a given moment? Especially when assertion constitutes proof, engraving a statement in stone grants it no greater permanence than the regime that funds the memorial. The monument became one site of struggle not just between Catholics and Protestants, but between Whigs and Tories, the city of London and the court. At

the same time that Sir Patience Ward was presiding over the city's project of sententious graffiti, he and the court of aldermen were also engaged in conflict with Charles II protesting his proroguing of Parliament and contesting the city's charter and the election of sheriffs, the lord mayor, and aldermen. In 1682, Ward was indicted for perjury and sentenced to the pillory, resulting from a conflict between the duke of York and several city aldermen regarding their libellous claim that the duke had set the city on fire.[73] Thus while the appearing and disappearing inscriptions on the monument are usually read as markers of the shifts from one ruler to another—particularly James II to William III—and how these rulers reshaped national memory in their own interests,[74] this approach focuses too squarely on the sovereigns. The inscriptions emerged from a struggle between the Crown and the city, a city closely allied to the House of Commons and to political positions that have come to be called "Whig."

The partisan inscriptions on the monument continued to pose problems for London boosters, long after these particular struggles had ended. While the inscriptions were still in place, guidebooks to London tended to present them as a blot on an otherwise impressive column, an embarrassing reminder of a less-enlightened past. *A Critical Review of the Publick Buildings, Statues, and Ornaments in and about London* (1734) lavishes praise on the monument, insisting that "nothing material can be cavill'd with, but the inscriptions round about it."[75] *The Ambulator; or, A Pocket Companion for the Tour of London and its Environs* (1811) proudly announces that "the inscription, imputing the calamity to the Papists, is now universally considered unjust."[76] *The Picture of London for 1811; Being a Correct Guide* announces that "no rational being can entertain the notion, that the Catholics, or any religious sect, could willfully have perpetrated so horrible a deed as this pillar was intended to impute to them."[77] Most guidebooks across the centuries quote Pope's famous couplet: "Where London's column, pointing at the skies, / Like a tall bully, lifts the head, and lies." But if Pope could see it this way in the 1730s, why does a "lie" retain the materiality of 28,126 feet of Portland stone? In his massive *The Wards of London* (1828), Henry Thomas asks just this question. Like so many others, he insists that there are no reasons to object to the monument "except the tenor of the inscriptions. These were concocted by prejudice, penned with spleen, and stand the bigotted evidence of party spirit, neither justified by liberality, nor founded in fact." Of the Latin sentence he says, "It argues but little for the liberality of the times" that it is still on the monument. "Why does it now remain?"[78] Dismissing the inscriptions as an acknowledged lie, such

JMEMS31.2-06 Dolan 4/30/01 9:39 AM Page 399

texts articulate a Whiggish sense of having moved beyond the prejudice on which Whigs relied. In doing so, they remind us that what is still called a "Whiggish" investment in progress was founded in a highly partisan construction of the past.

After the inscriptions were effaced, many guidebooks simply ignored them. The Baedeker guides, for instance, do not refer to them. *Relics and Memorials of London City* says exactly the same thing as the *Ambulator* had earlier—the inscription was "universally considered unjust," but can say, with relief, "it has been erased for many years past."[79] But are the inscriptions gone? In *Memories and Monuments in the Streets of the City of London*, A. K. Bruce shows that it is possible to reassert Catholic-bashing while simultaneously repudiating it: "The gross imputation cast upon Roman Catholics in certain lines ('sed furor Papisticus qui tam dira patravit nondum restinguitur') of the original inscription need not be referred to, since the offensive words were expunged by order of the Common Council on 26 January 1831."[80] *A Description of the Monument, Erected in Commemoration of the Dreadful Fire of London in the Year 1666* (1834) announces that it has been officially agreed that the fire was not the work of papists, or at least that it is no longer politically expedient to insist that it was, yet also recounts the whole history of attributing the fire to papists and records the "erased" inscription.[81] Thus, for the readers of these guidebooks, the inscriptions are both absent and present.

Visiting the monument today, one similarly sees both the marks of the chisel on the north side where the part of the inscription blaming Catholics has been removed and a bronze placque helpfully reminding one of the words that used to be there, translating the Latin—"But Popish Frenzy Which Wrought Such Horrors, Is Not Yet Quenched"—and explaining that the inscriptions were removed. Those words, and that interpretation of events, are thus in no way gone; they have simply been moved to the side and glossed. The monument itself now claims to commemorate an event without cause or perpetrator; off to the side of the missing inscription, seemingly less official but every bit as durable, is the reminder of a history of blame, a history inseparable from the history of the fire. There is a groove around the pedastal where the English inscription was removed but these missing words are not supplied. However, one can also find the stone from the house in Pudding Lane, and a reproduction of the English inscription on the monument, at the Museum of London. Since I have been arguing that the monument commemorates not only the fire but the whole process of making meaning out of that catastrophic event, the contestations

over who set the fire are as real as the fire itself. Thus, it is, in my view, quite appropriate that evidence of this history of contested memory should be preserved. My only concern is that, for many visitors, this commemoration may operate, instead, as a reenactment. The removed yet memorialized inscription still hints that this is the real story, marginalized only by squeamishness about boldly stating blame. Since the interpretation blaming Catholics is put into words, while alternatives are not, the version written in stone is still granted a weight and durability that alternatives cannot match. The words continue to be repeated, while the whole history that gave them meaning has evaporated. Thus the Great Fire offers a reminder of what we do and do not have when we find a rich piece of evidence. Both the print versions of the parliamentary committee's supposed findings and the monument are fascinating, highly visible, and apparently readily legible, proofs. But we can only begin to understand what they might mean by tracing their complicated provenance, and the web of institutions, political struggles, and processes of transmission by which they have survived to us. To "find" them is no great victory. To begin to understand the history subtending what stands in plain view is challenging, indeed. I have only begun to sketch out that history here.

The inscription was chiseled into the base of the column toward the end of a century during which "writings" had come to be granted priority as evidence. Michael McKeon argues that collections of documents—such as the "informations" supposedly collected by the committee investigating the fire, and subsequently published and republished—suggest that a shift from oral to print culture occurred, and that authority was increasingly vested in the written.[82] Print did not cause this shift, but rather facilitated it. Furthermore, the shift was never complete in that the two regimes continued to coexist (as they still do). The highly partisan, controversial nature of print culture in the seventeenth century insured that most readers could not take words printed on paper or engraved into stone as inevitably true. A work needed other authorizations—such as its own declaration that it was true and Protestant—to compel belief. Yet both the printing of the evidence collected by the parliamentary committee and the controversy about the inscription on the monument suggest that the written was beginning to carry more weight than the spoken. Written words had a particular ability not only to command belief but also to shape memory. For instance, Anna Trapnel, in her autobiographical narrative, explains how writing prompts and creates, as well as records, memory: "I could not have related so much from the shallow memory I have naturally, but through often relating these

things they become as a written book, spread open before me, and after which I write."[83] Similarly, the story that Catholics were responsible for the Great Fire gained its status as a memory of what really happened, as the "truth," first by reflecting what many people were already prepared to believe, and second by fixing this assumption into stable and durable texts; these representations in turn came to stand, at least for some sympathetic readers at some moments, as the real.

In taking this approach to the Great Fire, I am not, then, arguing either that nothing really happened, or that it does not matter what did. My own practice in this essay—the use of many different kinds of evidence, the abundant notes, the historical narrative—should all demonstrate that I do not disdain the project of finding out what happened and why. Relying largely on print evidence, much of it available on microfilm, and on a towering monument, I have not found anything heretofore unknown. Neither of my central pieces of evidence was a smoking gun—definitive, irrefutable. Even a monument cannot stand alone, however much it may look as if it does. While the romance of the archive resurrects a model of the lone researcher—"I am the only one who has found or who can decipher this"—we need to work together, in or out of the archives, to make sense of all that we have already found, of all that we already know. Given this, scholars of early modern England might most fruitfully set aside the tedious project of redrawing disciplinary distinctions in order to engage in the shared project of assessing the limited evidence we do have and making the case to granting agencies and others that collaborative assessment is as valuable to the creation of new knowledge as individual "discoveries."

Notes

A Miami University Summer Research Appointment and a Newberry Library/National Endowment for the Humanities Fellowship enabled me to research and write this essay. I am also grateful to audiences at the University of Chicago and Columbia University for their helpful questions and comments, and to Richard Strier and Jean Howard for inviting me to speak and for responding to this work in especially useful ways. Liz Brown of the English Heritage National Monuments Record and Paul Bell, Senior Attendant at the Monument, offered prompt, generous, and clarifying assistance. Finally, I wish to thank Michael Cornett and the anonymous readers at the *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies* and Scott Shershow for their advice.

1 On archives and their uses in the study of the early modern period, see Lynda E. Boose, "The Priest, the Slanderer, the Historian, and the Feminist," *English Literary Renaissance* 25 (1995): 320–40; Miranda Chaytor, "Husband(ry): Narratives of Rape in the Seventeenth Century," *Gender and History* 7 (1995): 378–407; David Cressy, *Birth, Marriage, and Death: Ritual, Religion, and the Life-Cycle in Tudor and Stuart England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), 7; Cressy, "Gender Trouble and Cross-Dressing in Early Modern England," *Journal of British Studies* 35 (1996): 438–65; Robert Darnton, *New York Times* (12 June 1999): A25; Natalie Z. Davis, *Fiction in the Archives: Pardon Tales and Their Tellers in Sixteenth-Century France* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1987); Malcolm Gaskill, "Reporting Murder: Fiction in the Archives in Early Modern England," *Social History* 23 (1998): 1–30; and Garthine Walker, "Rereading Rape and Sexual Violence in Early Modern England," *Gender and History* 10.1 (1998): 1–25.

2 Robert Darnton, "In Search of the Enlightenment: Recent Attempts to Create a Social History of Ideas," *Journal of Modern History* 43 (1971): 132; Dominick LaCapra, *History and Criticism* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1985), chap. 3. See also Hayden White, "'Figuring the Nature of the Times Deceased': Literary Theory and Historical Writing," in *The Future of Literary Theory*, ed. Ralph Cohen (New York: Routledge, 1989), 19–43, esp. 31; Hayden White, *The Content of the Form: Narrative Discourse and Historical Representation* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1987); and White, "The Historical Text as Literary Artifact," in *Tropics of Discourse: Essays in Cultural Criticism* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1978).

3 See especially Walter Cohen, "Political Criticism of Shakespeare," in *Shakespeare Reproduced: The Text in History and Ideology*, ed. Jean E. Howard and Marion F. O'Connor (New York: Methuen, 1987), 18–46; and Jean E. Howard, "The New Historicism in Renaissance Studies," *English Literary Renaissance* 16 (1986): 13–43.

4 Megan Matchinske, *Writing, Gender, and State in Early Modern England: Identity Formation and the Female Subject* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 56, 84–85. Matchinske cites as her inspiration Stephanie Jed, "The Tenth Muse: Gender, Rationality, and the Marketing of Knowledge," in *Women, "Race," and Writing in the Early Modern Period*, ed. Margo Hendricks and Patricia Parker (London: Routledge, 1994), 195–208. Jed imagines a "find" in the context of a very sophisticated inquiry into what archives are and how they are arranged.

5 Matchinske, *Writing, Gender, and State in Early Modern England*, 194 n. 91.

6 See Catherine Brown, "In the Middle," *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies* 30 (2000): 547–74; and Siân Echard, "House Arrest: Modern Archives, Medieval Manuscripts," *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies* 30 (2000): 185–210. See also the recent special issue of *Studies in the Literary Imagination* 32.1 (1999), devoted to "The Poetics of the Archive"; and Pierre Nora, "Between Memory and History: *Les Lieux de Mémoire*," trans. Marc Roudebush, *Representations* 26 (1989): 7–25.

7 I quote here the numbers inscribed on the Monument, discussed below. These tallies seem to have been based on assessments by the city surveyors. See also Walter George Bell, *The Great Fire of London in 1666* (London: John Lane, 1920); John Bedford,

London's Burning (London: Abelard-Schuman, 1966); John E. N. Hearsey, *London and the Great Fire* (London: William Clowes, 1965); James Leasor, *The Plague and the Fire* (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1962); and Stephen Porter, *The Great Fire of London* (Phoenix Mill, Gloucestershire: Sutton, 1996).

8 Cynthia Wall, *The Literary and Cultural Spaces of Restoration London* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998).

9 Regarding the discursive contests around the fire, I am indebted to Michael McKeon's thorough discussion in *Politics and Poetry in Restoration England: The Case of Dryden's "Annus Mirabilis"* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1975), chap. 4; and to Laura Lunger Knoppers, *Historicizing Milton: Spectacle, Power, and Poetry in Restoration England* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1994), chap. 6.

10 Gilbert Burnet, *Burnet's History of My Own Time*, Part I, *The Reign of Charles the Second*, 2 vols., ed. Osmund Airy (Oxford, 1897), 1:410.

11 Samuel Pepys, *The Diary of Samuel Pepys*, ed. Henry B. Wheatley, 9 vols. (London: George Bell and Sons, 1900), 5:392–411, esp. 405.

12 Evelyn and Pepys both take this view. See also Thomas Brooks, *Londons Lamentations* (London, 1670); T[homas] D[oolittle], *Rebukes for Sin by God's Burning Anger* (London, 1667); William Sandcroft, *Lex Ignea: Or The School of Righteousness. A Sermon Preach'd before the King, Octob. 10. 1666. At the Solemn Fast appointed for the late Fire in London* (London, 1666); O. S., *Counsel to the Afflicted: Or, Instruction and Consolation for such as have suffered Loss by Fire* (London, 1667); Rege Sincera, *Observations Both Historical and Moral Upon the Burning of London* (London, 1667); Edward Stillingfleet, *A Sermon Preached before the Honourable House of Commons* (London, 1666); Thomas Vincent, *Gods Terrible Voice in the City* (London, 1667); Samuel Wiseman, *A Short and Serious Narrative of London's Fatal Fire* (London, 1667); and William Wray, *The Rebellious City Destroyed. Being an Anniversary Sermon in Memory of the Dreadful Fire of London* (London, 1682).

13 *A Short Narrative of the Late Dreadful Fire in London* (London, 1667), sig. B5r.

14 Vincent, *Gods Terrible Voice in the City*, sig. E6r.

15 Pepys, *Diary of Samuel Pepys*, 5:402; Edward Hyde, Earl of Clarendon, from his *Life*, as quoted in *Cobbett's Complete Collection of State Trials*, ed. Thomas B. Howell, 33 vols. (London, 1809–26), vol. 4, col. 819.

16 This scapegoating process was not unique to England. Penny Roberts argues that arsonists were often viewed as threatening the community from both inside and outside ("Arson, Conspiracy, and Rumour in Early Modern Europe," *Continuity and Change* 12 [1997]: 9–29).

17 Peter Stallybrass and Allon White, *The Politics and Poetics of Transgression* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1986), 53.

18 For differing interpretations of the peculiar status of Catholics in post-Reformation England, see Frances E. Dolan, *Whores of Babylon: Catholicism, Gender, and Seventeenth-Century Print Culture* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1999); Jonathan Gil Harris, *Foreign Bodies and the Body Politic: Discourses of Social Pathology in Early Modern England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998); Alison Shell, *Catholicism, Controversy, and the English Literary Imagination, 1558–1660* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999); and Raymond Tumbleson,

Catholicism in the English Protestant Imagination: Nationalism, Religion, and Literature, 1660–1745 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998).

19 Robert Elborough, *London's Calamity by Fire Bewailed and Improved* (London, 1666), sig. B4v.

20 *A Sad Relation of a Dreadful Fire at Cottenham* (London, 1676), 3.

21 E.C., *A Full and Final Proof of the Plot from the Revelations* (London, 1680), sig. A2v.

22 Samuel Rolle, *The Burning of London in the Year 1666* (London, 1667), Part II, sig. I7v.

23 Brooks, *Londons Lamentations*, sig. D4v.

24 Given this climate, John Satterthwayt, in defending himself against charges of arson, had to defend himself against the charge that he was a Catholic, and did so, in court and in print, by bringing in witnesses and documents as evidence for his Protestant upbringing and allegiance. See *A Warning for Servants: and a Caution to Protestants. or, the Case of Margret Clark, Lately Executed for Firing Her Masters House in Southwark* (London, 1680), sigs. B4v–C1r; and *A True and Perfect Narrative of the Tryal and Acquitment of Mr. John Satterthwayt* (London, 1679). For more on this case see Frances E. Dolan, "'Gentlemen, I Have One Thing More To Say': Women on Scaffolds in England, 1563–1680," *Modern Philology* 92 (1994): 157–78.

25 For prohibitions against the trade in or possession of ritual objects, see, for instance, 13 Eliz. cap. 2, sect. 6 and 3 [and 4] Jac. 1, cap. 5, in William Cawley, *The Laws of Q. Elizabeth, K. James, and K. Charles the First Concerning . . . Recusants* (London, 1680), sigs. H2r–v, 2H2v. These statutes can also be consulted in *Statutes of the Realm*, 11 vols. (London, 1810–24), vol. 4.

26 *A Full and True Account of the Sad and Dreadful Fire which happened in the Borough of Southwark* (Sept. 1689).

27 J. P. Kenyon, *The Popish Plot* (London: Heinemann, 1972), 3.

28 Vincent, *Gods Terrible Voice in the City*, sig. E4r.

29 William Bedloe, *A Narrative and Impartial Discovery of the Horrid Popish Plot Carried on for the Burning and Destroying the CITIES of London and Westminster* (London, 1679), sig. B1r.

30 *The Burning of London by the Papists: Or, A Memorial to Protestants on the Second of September* (London, 1714), sig. B3v.

31 Rolle, *The Burning of London in the Year 1666*, Part III, sig. A2v.

32 *A True and Perfect Relation of the Whole Proceedings against the late most barbarous Traitors* (London, 1606), sigs. 2H1v–2r.

33 *The Act of Parliament of the 27th of Queen Elizabeth* (London, 1679), 5; *The Burning of London by the Papists*, sigs. A2v–3r.

34 Thomas Scott, *Exod. 8.19. Digitus Dei* ([Holland], 1623), sig. A4v.

35 *Pyrotechnica Loyolana, Ignatian Fire-works. Or, the Fiery Jesuits Temper and Behaviour* (London, 1667), sig. R2v. See also E. C., *A Full and Final Proof of the Plot from the Revelations* (London, 1680), sig. A2r.

36 Bedloe, *Narrative and Impartial Discovery of the Horrid Popish Plot*, sig. B1v; *Warning for Servants: And a Caution to Protestants*, sigs. B2v–3r. See also J.J., *Heaven Upon Earth. Or the Best Friend in the Worst Times* (London, 1667), sig. A8v; and *The English Pope, or a Discourse wherein the late Mysticall Intelligence Betwixt the Court of*

England, and the Court of Rome is in part discovered (London, 1643), sigs. F2v–3r.

37 Stephen Greenblatt, "Remnants of the Sacred in Early Modern England," in *Subject and Object in Renaissance Culture*, ed. Margreta de Grazia, Maureen Quilligan, and Peter Stallybrass (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 342.

38 On the animacy of objects, and the somatization of the spiritual which Protestantism sought to counter, see Lyndal Roper, *Oedipus and the Devil: Witchcraft, Sexuality, and Religion in Early Modern Europe* (London: Routledge, 1994); and Peter Stallybrass, "Worn Worlds: Clothes, Mourning, and the Life of Things," *Yale Review* 81.2 (1993): 35–50.

39 Patrick Collinson, "Truth, Lies, and Fiction in Sixteenth-Century Protestant Historiography," in *The Historical Imagination in Early Modern Britain: History, Rhetoric, and Fiction, 1500–1800*, ed. Donald R. Kelley and David Harris Sacks (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 37–68; D. R. Woolf, *The Idea of History in Early Stuart England: Erudition, Ideology, and "The Light of Truth" from the Accession of James I to the Civil War* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1990). Alison Shell argues that often, for Protestant readers, "the reading of popish books must have served only to reinforce previously held convictions" ("Catholic Texts and Anti-Catholic Prejudice in the Seventeenth-Century Book Trade," in *Censorship and the Control of Print in England and France, 1600–1910*, ed. Robin Myers and Michael Harris [Winchester, Hampshire: St. Paul's Bibliographies, 1992], 49).

40 John Mayo, *The Pope's Parliament, Containing a Pleasant and Delightful Historie* (London, 1591), sig. G2r.

41 Alexander Cooke, *Pope Joane. A Dialogue betweene a Protestant and a Papist. Manifestly Proving that a Woman Called Joane Was Pope of Rome* (London, 1610), sig. A4r; H.J., *History of the Life and Death of Pope Joane* (London, 1663), sig. A2v.

42 John Baxter, *A Toile for Two-Legged Foxes* (London, 1600), sig. D1v.

43 John Floyd, *The Overthrow of the Protestants Pulpit-Babels* (St. Omer, 1612), sig. B4r.

44 Cooke, *Pope Joane*, sig. D4v. Subsequent references to this pamphlet appear parenthetically in the text.

45 Lorraine Daston, "Marvelous Facts and Miraculous Evidence in Early Modern Europe," *Critical Inquiry* 18 (1991): 93–124, quotation at 94.

46 Ibid.; Barbara Shapiro, *Probability and Certainty in Seventeenth-Century England: A Study of the Relationships between Natural Science, Religion, History, Law, and Literature* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1983); and Shapiro *"Beyond Reasonable Doubt" and "Probable Cause": Historical Perspectives on the Anglo-American Law of Evidence* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991).

47 In addition to the above, see Keith Thomas, *Religion and the Decline of Magic* (New York: Scribner's, 1971); and Frances E. Dolan, "'Ridiculous Fictions': Making Distinctions in the Discourses of Witchcraft," *differences: a journal of feminist cultural studies* 7 (1995): 82–110.

48 *The Diary of John Milward, Esq. Member of Parliament for Derbyshire*, ed. Caroline Robbins (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1938), 7, 31–32; Bell, *Great Fire of London*, 196.

49 Bell, *Great Fire of London*, 201. See also Hearsey, *London and the Great Fire*, 172–73.

JMEMS31.2-06 Dolan 4/30/01 9:39 AM Page 406

50 Wall, *Literary and Cultural Spaces of Restoration London*, 15.
51 *Journal of the House of Commons* 8 (1660–67): 627, 681.
52 Milward, *Diary of John Milward*, 68–69.
53 Burnet, *Burnet's History of My Own Time*, 1:415.
54 *Calendar of State Papers, Domestic series, of the Reign of Charles II*, vol. 6 (1666–1667), 175.
55 *An Account of the Burning of the City of London: As it was Publish'd by the Special Authority of King and Council in the Year, 1666*, 3rd ed. (London, 1721), sig. D4r–v.
56 *London's Flames Reviv'd: Or, An Account of the Several Informations Exhibited to a Committee appointed by Parliament, September the 25th 1666* (London, 1689), sig. B1v.
57 Bell, *Great Fire of London*, 203. See also, Bedford, *London's Burning*, 173.
58 *Calendar of State Papers, Domestic series, in the Reign of Charles II*, vol. 7 (1667), 290, 393. On other attempts to control print representations of the fire, especially those incendiary texts that blame Catholics, see *CSPD* (1666–67), 214–15, 430.
59 *Diary of Samuel Pepys*, 8:108 (16 Sept. 1667).
60 In addition to those already cited, these include: *London's Flames Discovered by Informations Taken before the Committee Appointed to Enquire after the Burning of the City of London* (London, 1667); Rege Sincera, *Observations Both Historical and Moral Upon the Burning of London*; *London's Flames: Being an Exact and Impartial Account of Divers Informations Given in to the Committee of Parliament* (London, 1679); Bedloe, *Narrative and Impartial Discovery of the Horrid Popish Plot*; *Burning of London by the Papists*; and *Pyrotechnica Loyolana*.
61 *True Protestant Account of the Burning of London, Or, An Antidote, Against the Poyson and Malignity of a Late Lying Legend, Entituled, An Account of the Burning of London, &c.* (London, 1720). Citations appear in the text.
62 *The Gunpowder-Treason: With a Discourse of the Manner of Its Discovery* (London, 1679), sig. A3r.
63 Ernest Renan, "What Is a Nation?" in *Nation and Narration*, ed. Homi K. Bhabha (London: Routledge, 1990), 8–22.
64 The *DNB* entry on Gale claims that he, "by the king's command, composed the obnoxious inscription for the monument of London, for which he received from the city a present of plate" (7:820). This is confusing for several reasons. First, the Act of 1667 for rebuilding the City stipulated that the inscription on the monument would be determined by the lord mayor and court of aldermen, not the king. Furthermore, if Gale was chosen, as he had been on other occasions, because of his mastery of Latin, then he probably composed the original and relatively nonpartisan Latin inscriptions of 1677. The king certainly did not command the "obnoxious" inscriptions, which were put on later, and were unlikely to have been by Gale.
65 *Journal of the House of Commons* 9 (1667–87): 703. See J. P. Kenyon, *Popish Plot*, 13.
66 On 26 Oct. 1678, Tonge addressed the Commons on the firing of the city. See *Journal of the House of Commons* 9 (1667–87): 522.
67 *Burning of London by the Papists*, sig. A4v. Some versions of the inscription refer to

London as an ancient rather than a Protestant city. See, for instance, Samuel Arnott, *The Column Called the Monument, Described, Erected to Perpetuate the Dreadful Fire of London in the Year 1666* (London, 1805), 15.

68 This sentence appears both in Robert Seymour, *An Accurate Survey of the Cities of London and Westminster* (London, 1736), 612; and Arnott, *The Column Called the Monument*, 15.

69 For detailed descriptions of the monument and its inscriptions, see *The Official Guide to the Monument* (Guildhall: The Corporation of London, 1994). On the fluctuating fortunes of the inscriptions, see also *True Protestant Account of the Burning of London*, sigs. A4v–B1r, C4v; *The Diary of John Evelyn*, ed. William Bray, 2 vols. (London: Dent, 1966), 2:229; Bell, *Great Fire of London*, 208–9; and Porter, *Great Fire of London*, 173–74.

70 Tim Harris, *London Crowds in the Reign of Charles II: Propaganda and Politics from the Restoration until the Exclusion Crisis* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 93, 111.

71 *True Protestant Account*, sigs. C4v–D1r. There are a few discrepancies between this "verbatim" transcription and the inscription itself. I've indicated significant ones in brackets. In 1830, the stone tablet at Pudding Lane was broken and buried. In 1869, it was discovered and donated to the Guildhall. It is now in the collection of the Museum of London, although not on display.

72 As McKeon puts it, "the papist treachery of the Great Fire, immortalized by the Monument's altered inscriptions, was to become the foundation of the Whig mythology which Shaftesbury used to mold an opposition of awesome unity and strength" (*Politics and Poetry in Restoration England*, 146).

73 John Noorthouck, *A New History of London, including Westminster and Southwark* (London, 1773), 252.

74 David Cressy, "National Memory in Early Modern England," in *Commemorations: The Politics of National Identity*, ed. John R. Gillis (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994), 61–73, esp. 70–71. On memory and Protestant nationalism, see also David Cressy, *Bonfires and Bells: National Memory and the Protestant Calendar in Elizabethan and Stuart England* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989); and Ronald Hutton, *The Rise and Fall of Merry England: The Ritual Year, 1400–1700* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994). On monuments, see Stephen Greenblatt, "Murdering Peasants: Status, Genre, and the Representation of Rebellion," *Representations* 1 (1983): 1–29; Thomas W. Laqueur, "Cemeteries, Religion, and the Culture of Capitalism," in *Capitalism in Context: Essays on Economic Development and Cultural Change in Honor of R. M. Hartwell*, ed. John A. James and Mark Thomas (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994), 138–55; and Sanford Levinson, *Written in Stone: Public Monuments in Changing Societies* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1998).

75 *A Critical Review of the Publick Buildings, Statues, and Ornaments in and about London* (London: 1734), sig. C1r.

76 *The Ambulator; or, A Pocket Companion for the Tour of London and its Environs* (London, 1811), 17.

77 John Feltham, *The Picture of London for 1815; Being a Correct Guide*, 14th ed.

(London, 1815), 203. The pagination in this volume is somewhat confusing. The quotation appears in the entry on the monument.

78 Henry Thomas, *The Wards of London; Comprising a Historical and Topographical Description of Every Object of Importance Within the Boundaries of the City*, 2 vols. (London, 1828), 1:211, 216.

79 James S. Ogilvy, *Relics and Memorials of London City* (London: Routledge, 1910), 31.

80 A. K. Bruce, *Memories and Monuments in the Streets of the City of London* (London: Methuen, 1931), 109.

81 *A Description of the Monument, Erected in Commemoration of the Dreadful Fire of London in the Year 1666* (London, 1834), 16. This is an updated version of Arnott's *The Column Called the Monument*, similarly aimed at tourists.

82 Adam Fox, "Customs, Memory, and the Authority of Writing," in *The Experience of Authority in Early Modern England*, ed. Paul Griffiths, Adam Fox, and Steve Hindle (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1996), 89–116; Michael McKeon, *The Origins of the English Novel, 1600–1740* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1987), 127.

83 Anna Trapnel's *Report and Plea, or, A Narrative of her Journey from London into Cornwal* (London, 1654), 34; repr. in *Her Own Life: Autobiographical Writings by Seventeenth-Century Englishwomen*, ed. Elspeth Graham, et al. (London: Routledge, 1989), 74.