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# Cheapside:
# Commerce and Commemoration

## Vanessa Harding

 CHEAPSIDE, "THE MOST CHIEF PLACE OF THE CITY," had a wide range of meanings for early modern Londoners. As a physical place it was densely packed with stimulation—visual, aural, sensory, material—but its first and widest connotation was openness, literal and metaphorical, and this underlies or inflects almost all its other meanings. In early modern London, open space made it possible for things to happen that a congregation of people could witness or participate in. Crowds could gather or be summoned; actions begun elsewhere might be transferred to Cheapside for greater effect, or the street might be chosen as a stage. Cheapside was the locus for proclamations, demonstrations, and exemplary punishments—enactments that had to be both seen and heard in public to have their intended effect. Symbolism and actuality were sometimes parallel, sometimes indistinguishable. When something was done in Cheapside, it was done for effect, and with an eye to its audience. Some things were but mimed or pictured there, as in the heavy allegory of royal and civic pageants, but others were performed in the sense of "caused to be." The performance of proclamation made a monarch; the performance of justice annihilated traitors and criminals or destroyed offending objects. Describing an event as "in Cheapside" did more than locate it geographically: this worked to fix it in the public sphere and marked it with significance. Not surprisingly, Cheapside's prominence in the official discourse of the city meant that it was also a symbolic setting for contrariant figures and movements: aggrieved citizens, self-righteous rebels, and even would-be martyrs sought to take over its publicity and resonances for their own ends. This oppositional stance could further strengthen official control of meaning, however, when those who challenged authority and orthodoxy in Cheapside were themselves punished there.

The impact of the public functions described above owed much to the character of Cheapside's daily life. Commercial activity contributed to its image of openness and publicity, reflecting contemporary insistence on an understanding of the market as patent, unmediated, fair, and free. Markets were meant to be occasions clearly defined in time and space, and open to observation. Transactions were to be transparent: goods must be clearly displayed and must be what they appeared to be, in quality and quantity; trading must take place in the public eye and within the hours defined by law, and not after dark or by candlelight. Prices must not be fixed (at least not by the seller) or manipulated by forestalling or pre-contract. The market also reinforced the street's role, with particular clarity, as a site of generalized retribution and exhibition, since market offenses were commonly punished by public example on the spot. Shops displaying luxury goods and costly wares were another highly visible feature of the street. Shop trading was less regulated than food marketing, but it was at least partly monitored by cloth assizes and by the quality control exercised by City companies. Buyers had some protection, too, by way of appeal to standards of good workmanship and fair dealing. Equally importantly, perhaps, shopkeepers and merchants relied on name, reputation, and trust, which were created and maintained in a world of knowledge circulation and information exchange.

Truth, transparency, and legibility were thus corollaries of openness, underwriting the reality of appearances and the honesty of transactions. Words as well as actions mattered, as in the naming of monarchs and traitors and the labeling of offenders. Cheapside's reputation for transparency in these matters, though it could not always be maintained, made it a resonant and powerful element in the image of early modern London.

### ∾ Space and Sight

Openness begins with space, and Cheapside was a notably wide and open space in a city of narrow streets and alleys, almost certainly the largest public open space inside the walls. It was the longest and broadest of the City's streets, some four hundred yards long and fifty to sixty feet broad before the Great Fire of 1666. Some of the streets leading off it were only five or six feet wide at the junction, narrowed by centuries of encroachment, inch by inch. Even where side streets were broader, the forward jettying of houses darkened the sky above, so that emerging into Cheapside must have meant a sudden widening of perspective and increase of light. Even now it is notably wider than its neighbors, though this is less remarkable in comparison to the broad avenues cut through the city's fabric in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

Though spacious, however, Cheapside was not unbounded: its space gained significance from visual, and psychological, enclosure. Although one of the street's functions was to funnel the flow of traffic from west to east, it was terminated on both ends by landmark conduits before leading into much more minor streets (see figure 1). The Little Conduit, a public water source, marked the street's western end, adjoining the

gate into St. Paul's churchyard, the city's place of public assembly and address.[2] The eastern end of the street terminated with the Great Conduit, another major water source.[3]

Several points within the street also gave it spatial resonance: the two conduits; the church of St. Mary le Bow, and before the Reformation that of St. Thomas of Acre; and most of all the Cross and Standard, isolated monuments in the middle of the street. Cheapside Cross originated as one of the crosses erected in the thirteenth century by Edward I, in memory of his queen, to mark the staging posts of her funeral procession, and it therefore had strong royal associations and significance. But it was by the sixteenth century a focus of religious controversy because of its Catholic imagery (the cross itself, statues of the Virgin, Christ, and saints), and this finally brought about its demolition in 1643, as David Cressy has shown.[4] Further east stood the Standard, another medieval monument, the site of judicial performances including executions and exemplary punishments; though less well known than the Cross, it was likewise both a landmark in the city as a whole and a significant site in the ritual uses of Cheapside.[5]

Cheapside was also given a particular character by the nature of its enclosure, which was lined with fine houses and expensive retail shops. In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries the streetside comprised some of the most commercially desirable and valuable sites in the city. The frontage was a continuous line of tall, well-built houses, rising to four or five stories, owned or occupied by prosperous merchants and dealers (see figures 2 and 3). Although individual premises varied considerably, plots tended to be long and narrow, with a short individual frontage of sixteen to twenty feet (sometimes less) and extensive premises to the rear. Almost every property facing the street had a ground-floor shop front, often backed by storerooms or warehouses; many had cellars, partly or fully below ground, also used for storage. Although adjoining houses were structurally co-dependent, as separate freeholds and leaseholds they were built and rebuilt at different times and in different styles, and their appearance tended to vary considerably. Most were jettied forward, gaining a few inches in size on each of the upper floors, but story heights varied, and glazing, carving and perhaps plasterwork distinguished each unit from its neighbors. One distinctive frontage had an oriel window extending through three floors, and above it, on the fourth floor, a decorative

2. Henry Andrade Harben, *A dictionary of London, being notes topographical and historical relating to the streets and principal buildings in the city of London* (London, 1918): 136–37, 353, 461–62; John Allen Schofield, *The London Surveys of Ralph Treswell* (London, 1987): plate 1 f. p. 22.

3. Harben, *Dictionary*: 545, 270; Derek John Keene and Vanessa Ann Harding, *Historical Gazetteer of London before the Great Fire*, vol. i, *Cheapside* (Chadwyck-Healey microfiche, 1987; full text available online at http://www.british-history.ac.uk/source.asp?pubid=8) (hereafter *Cheapside Gazetteer*): Introduction, Section vi.

4. Harben, *Dictionary*: 271; David Cressy, 'The Downfall of Cheapside Cross: Vandalism, Ridicule, and Iconoclasm," in idem, *Agnes Bowker's Cat: Travesties and Transgressions in Tudor and Stuart England* (Oxford, 2000): 234–50.

5. Harben, *Dictionary*: 353; Tracey Hill, *Anthony Munday and Civic Culture: Theatre, History, and Power in Early Modern London: 1580–1633* (Manchester, 2004), 11–15.

6. *Cheapside Gazetteer*: 11/8A4.

feature of "posts, flower, and reabus."[6] Goldsmiths' Row, on the south side of the street toward St. Paul's, clearly formed a unified group, described in 1603 as the most beautiful frame of fair houses and shops, in London or anywhere in England.[7]

Commercial (and often domestic) premises in London were commonly identified by a name and sign, and the Cheapside streetscape offered a rich array of symbols and pictures, legible even by the unlettered. Though most establishments had signs simply to attract attention, some told the viewer more about what could be found there. Leather goods could be bought at the premises known as the Cow Head or Cow Face, once occupied by the Tanners' guild; hose at the sign of the Leg or Hanging Leg.[8] By the later seventeenth century, new names descriptive of new offerings were appearing: Mr. Sambach, a coffee-man, at the Coffee Sign, Mr. Needham at the Lamp and Sugarloaf.[9] Other distinguishing marks, especially asserting ownership, may have been incorporated into the architecture, such as the combination of the company arms and representations of woodmen riding on monstrous beasts, cast in lead and gilded over, on Goldsmiths' Row.[10] "The Maidenhead" recurs several times in Cheapside, and may allude to the Mercers' Company's symbol or device of a maiden's head, usually represented by the head and bust of a young woman, crowned and with flowing hair, which they required their tenants to display on their properties.[11] Likewise, the sign of the Three Beehives could be a popular reading of the Drapers' Company's device of three papal crowns, which look remarkably like beehives.[12] There was often an element of humor in all this. The house or shop known as the Lock was presumably so named in a punning reference to the family who occupied it, William Lock and his sons.[13] Sir John Gresham, mercer, was probably responsible for calling his shop the Grasshopper, from the family's arms.[14]

Most properties, however, had names unrelated to the occupant's trade or name but clearly useful as markers of identity and location, providing a perhaps bewildering density of image and allusion. One stretch of some eighty yards on the north side opposite the Standard included shops and/or tenements known at various times in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries as the Talbot, the Boar's Head, the Nag's Head, the Shepherd, the Maidenhead & Plough, the White Horsehead & Rainbow, the Bull or Bullhead, the Black Bull, the Black Boy, the Cardinal's Hat, the Crane, the Mariole, the Broad Arrowhead alias the Three Broad Arrowheads, the Goat, the Bull Head tavern, the Bear, and the Weaver's Arms.[15] Elsewhere could be found the Green Dragon, the

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7. John Stow, *A Survey of London. Reprinted from the text of 1603*; with introduction and notes by Charles Lethbridge Kingsford (Oxford, 1908, 1927, reprinted 1971), 1:345; Thomas Fiddian Reddaway, *The Rebuilding of London after the Great Fire* (London, 1951; reprinted 1963): 181–90.

8. *Cheapside Gazetteer:* 104/42, 104/34.

9. Guildhall Library, London (hereafter GL), MS 5026/1, unfoliated page between accounts for 1672 and 1673.

10. Stow, *Survey of London*, 1:345; *Cheapside Gazetteer,* 11/8A4.

11. *Cheapside Gazetteer*: 11/2, 11/6, 11/7, 105/16.

12. GL MS 5026/1, unfoliated page between accounts for 1672 and 1673.

13. *Cheapside Gazetteer*: 104/27.

14. *Cheapside Gazetteer*: 145/36.

15. *Cheapside Gazetteer*: 11/1–11/11–12.

Mermaid, the Three Golden Lions, the Key, the Gilden Cock, the Ship, the Falcon, the Naked Boy, Star & St Bartholomew, the Crown, the Queen's Head, and the Frying Pan.[16]

These were probably represented by actual signs, as suggested by early references to '"The Goat on the Hoop" or "The Maidenhead on the Hoop."[17] The hanging sign with a painted horse's head is an important feature of the depiction of the 1631 entry of Marie de Medici, the queen's mother (figure 3), and it helps to situate the viewer [please see note in Word file] by the Nag's Head, a well-known tavern on the south side of Cheapside.[18] The close identification of sign and business is indicated by the Court of Aldermen's order in 1638 that a linen draper dwelling at the Rose in Cheapside should take down the sign of the Golden Key that he had erected there, presumably in imitation of the well-established shop known as the Key or Golden Key, also occupied by a linen draper.[19] As the numerous "golden" or "gilded" epithets and the white, red, black, and green ones imply, most signs were probably gilded or colored.[20] But names and signs mutated or changed completely over time, in a way that must have been confusing for visitors and even residents. Of the names just listed, the Nag's Head by the Standard became the Maidenhead, and the Mariole changed to the Horsehead, while the Naked Boy and the Star & St. Bartholomew had earlier been known as the Angel and St. Bartholomew.[21] In 1658, the premises known formerly as the Ship but now as the King's Head still displayed the sign of the Ship, hanging over the door of the house from a signpost with iron stays.[22]

## ✺ Wealth, Show, and Ceremony

Cheapside was thus a notable center of wealth and display, owing to its development as a high-quality retail environment. The most famous specialty retail area was the cluster of goldsmiths at the western end, in and near Goldsmiths' Row, "the bewtie and glorie of cheapeside," though the growth of the west end and luxury shopping there was beginning to dilute its link to this particular trade by the early seventeenth century.[23] The eastern end of Cheapside was dominated by textile dealers, many of them members of the Mercers' Company. The company itself had its hall at the eastern end of the street

16. GL MS 5026/1, unfoliated page between accounts for 1672 and 1673; *Cheapside Gazetteer*: 145/9–10, 145/38, 145/38B, 104/16, 104/43, 105/13–15, 105/14, 105/13.

17. *Cheapside Gazetteer*: 11/10, 105/16.

18. Harben, *Dictionary*: 427.

19. City of London Records Office, London Metropolitan Archive, London (hereafter CLRO), Repertory 52, f. 247.

20. *Cheapside Gazetteer*: Index to topography.

21. *Cheapside Gazetteer*: 11/6C 11/9A, 104/43.

22. *Cheapside Gazetteer*: 145/38B.

23. Norman Egbert McClure, ed., *The Letters of John Chamberlain* (2 vols. Philadelphia, 1939) (hereafter *Letters of John Chamberlain*), 2:460. Thomas Fiddian Reddaway. "Elizabethan London - Goldsmiths' Row in Cheapside 1558–1645" *Guildhall Miscellany* 2.5 (1963): 181–206; Paul Griffiths. "Politics made visible: order, residence and uniformity in Cheapside, 1600–45," in Paul Griffiths and Mark Jenner, eds., *Londinopolis. Essays in the social and cultural history of early modern London* (Manchester, 2000): 176–96.

and owned a good deal of property nearby, which they preferred to lease to company members. They seem to have been anxious to maintain the character and reputation of the street as a center for the supply of high-quality textiles.[24] By the 1660s, there was a concentration of silkmen (retailers of silk textiles) on both sides of Cheapside near the Standard, while the south side also had several dealers in items of fashionable dress such as stockings, hose, lace, and bodices.[25]

These two luxury trades helped to fix Cheapside's identity, and shopkeepers were expert in the use of display to dazzle the eye and stimulate desire, including, we are told, seating their beautiful wives outside their shops to encourage custom. The goldsmiths' wares were particularly notable. The Italian visitor Alessandro Magno characterized Cheapside simply as "the street of the goldsmiths" in 1562, while the German visitor Thomas Platter wrote in 1599 that "in one very long street called Cheapside," inhabited by goldsmiths and money-changers, "inexpressibly great treasures and [a] vast amount of money may be seen."[26] The street and its commodities stood in the popular imagination for luxury of lifestyle: dress, adornments, and plate for the table. Isabella Whitney bequeathed, to those for whom linen was not good enough, "Mercers . . . with silke so rich, as any would desyre. / In Cheape of them, they store shal finde."

Also from Cheapside, she singled out:

> I Goldsmithes leave with Juels such,
> as are for Ladies meete.
> And Plate to furnish Cubbards with,
> full brave there shall you finde:
> With Purle of Silver and of Golde,
> to satisfye your minde.
> With Hoods, Bungraces, Hats or Caps,
> such store are in that streete:
> As if on ton side you should misse,
> the tother serves you seete.[27]

In a similar vein, Falconbridge's Captain Spicing urged his men, in Heywood's *Edward IV* (1599), to seize and spend Cheapside's riches:

> You know Cheapside? There are mercers' shops, Where we will measure
> velvet with our pikes, And silks and satins by the street's whole breadth!

24. *Cheapside Gazetteer*: 104/32, 104/33, 145/9–10B; Anne Frances Sutton, *The Mercery of London: Trade, Goods, and People, 1130–1578* (Aldershot, UK, 2006).

25. The National Archive (Kew, London), E 179/252/27, E 179/252/36/16.

26. Caroline Barron, Christopher Coleman, and Claire Gobbi, "The London Journal of Alessandro Magno, 1562," *London Journal* 9 (1983): 142; Claire Williams, ed., *Thomas Platter's Travels in England, 1599* (London, 1937), 157.

27. Isabella Whitney. "Will and testament" in *A sweet Nosgay, or pleasant Posye: contayning a hundred and ten Phylosophicall Flowers, etc.* (London, 1573) (accessed via EEBO): lines 49–60.

We'll take the tankards from the conduit cocks, To fill with Hippocras, and drink carouse! Where chains of gold and plate shall be as plenty as wooden dishes in the weald of Kent! (1.2. 66–72).[28]

Cheapside's identity as a place of luxury provision and its fine architecture and appearance, in addition to its spaciousness, made it particularly appropriate for those public events that involved a show of splendor, authority, and largesse. Just as the Crown co-opted the City to welcome a new queen or victorious king, or to entertain visiting dignitaries, so the City co-opted Cheapside's space and wealth to support its presentation. Royal entry processions climaxed with pageants staged at the Cross or the Little Conduit, while the conduits occasionally but memorably ran with wine, as Captain Spicing obviously remembered hearing.[29] Many of these pageants involved specially built stages, some incorporating the structure and perhaps the symbolism of the Cross and Standard, but as the illustration of Edward VI's coronation procession shows (figure 2), the tall houses that lined the street became part of the show. Shopkeepers, it appeared, displayed their finest goods, while the windows and frontages were hung with banners and fine cloths. Presumably these were supplied by the property owners, and may also have been displayed to advertise their luxury textile wares. The houses thus provided decorative stages in themselves, as well as ideal points of view: they were to be *looked at* as well as *looked from*. It was essential for a performance of this kind to have an audience, so the viewers hanging out of the windows were as important as those lining the street. A similar integration of spectacle, audience, and viewing point can be seen in the entry of Marie de Medicis in 1631 (figure 3).

John Stow took for granted the use of Cheapside houses as appropriate viewing galleries for the processions and ceremonies staged in the street. His account of the royal tournaments held in Cheapside in 1331 attributes to Edward III the building of a large stone house alongside St. Mary le Bow church for himself and the queen "to behold the joustings and other shows" at their pleasure. Stow is in fact mistaken in this attribution, making a false association between the name Crown Seld, which denoted a different property, and the building next to St. Mary le Bow, which was much older, but the general point is probably correct. He also notes the visit of Henry VIII in 1510 to view the Midsummer Watch pageants from the King's Head in Cheapside, and that of Henry VIII and Jane Seymour to see the same from Mercers' Hall in 1536.[30] Over the course of the sixteenth century, the Midsummer Watch was suppressed and replaced by the Lord Mayor's riding or show, and again Cheapside was a key viewing point. The

28. Thomas Heywood. *The First and Second parts of King Edward IV* , ed. Richard Rowland (Manchester, 2005). ///? [please clarify]

29. *Cheapside Gazetteer*: Introduction, Section vi; Stow, *Survey*, 1:264–269; Arthur Hermann Thomas and Isobel D. Thornley, eds., *The Great Chronicle of London, 1189–1512* (London, 1938), 164, 304–307. See Gordon Kipling, *Enter the King: Theatre, Liturgy and Ritual in the Medieval Civic Triumph* (Oxford, 1998).

30. Stow, *Survey*, 1:257, 268, 270; *Cheapside Gazetteer*: 104/20, 104/33. See also Anne Begor Lancashire, *London Civic Theatre: City Drama and Pageantry from Roman Times to 1558* (Cambridge, 2002), esp. 153–70; David Moore Bergeron, *English Civic Pageantry, 1558–1642* (Columbia, S.C., 1971).

Elector Palatine went to see an "extraordinarie" Lord Mayor's Show in Cheapside in 1612, while visitors such as the Venetian Ambassador, Pietro Contarini, watched the procession from Cheapside in 1617; Samuel Pepys watched the show in 1660 from a linen draper's shop, "a very good place to see the pageants," but he was disappointed, finding them "good for such kind of things but in themselfs poor and absurd."[31]

Pepys was a sophisticated and cynical viewer, but a century earlier the Lord Mayor's procession was in full force. In some ways the show was more at home in Cheapside than the more popular occasion of the Midsummer Watch, being more about display than community participation. The procession took as much from royal entries as from the watch (it was after all a way of showing the new mayor to the citizens), and certainly drew on the public acknowledgment of authority and power. It may also have had a more direct significance for Cheapside's residents, since many aldermen, and hence a number of lord mayors, lived in or near the street.[32] Any Mercer mayor (and the company supplied up to a quarter of the aldermanic bench) would have a particularly strong local following for his show, with the company's hall overlooking one end of the street and the shops of his fellow companymen lining the way. Grocers' Hall and Goldsmiths' Hall were only a short distance away, too.[33]

### ∾ Market Overt

If the permanent retail shops offered a feast for the eye and the imagination, the food market was an equally important part of Cheapside's identity. Cheapside took its name from its market function, being originally known in documentary sources as *vicus fori*, the street or place of the market; medieval Londoners probably spoke of it as "Cheap" or "Westcheap." The form "Cheapside," though known in the fifteenth century, did not become common or dominant until the sixteenth. Henry Machyn uses "Cheap" and "Cheapside" equally."[34]

The medieval and early modern city of London had several retail food markets, each with a distinct specialization: freshwater fish and saltwater fish, beef or butcher's meat, "white" meats (pork, lamb, poultry, and dairy produce), and fruit and vegetables. At least one market of each kind lay in each half of the city, hence Westcheap and Eastcheap, Old Fish Street and New Fish Street. The eastern half of Cheapside was the designated site of the city's largest "white" market, extending eastward from the Cross to the Great Conduit, held on most weekdays from early morning to noon. "Women market folk and victuallers" sold veal, pork, bacon, and pickled or preserved meats,

31. Lancashire, *London Civic Theatre*, 171–83; *Letters of John Chamberlain*, 1:384; Contarini ref; *Cheapside Gazetteer*: 145/9–10A; Robert Latham and William Matthews, eds., *The Diary of Samuel Pepys* (London, 1970–83), 1:277.

32. *Cheapside Gazetteer*: Index to statuses. For the livery company affiliations of aldermen and lord mayors, see Alfred Beaven Beaven, *The aldermen of the City of London, temp. Henry III–1912, with notes on the parliamentary representation of the City, the aldermen and the livery companies* (2 vols., London, 1908–13). For company halls, see Harben, *Dictionary*.

33. *Cheapside Gazetteer*: Index to statuses.

34. Harben, *Dictionary*; Mary D. Lobel, ed., *The British atlas of historic towns. 3, The City of London from prehistoric times to c.1520* (Oxford, 1989); *Diary of Henry Machyn*.

and butter, milk, and cheese, from tables or temporary stalls in the middle of the street. Poulterers, standing from St. Lawrence Lane eastwards, supplied poultry, rabbits, and eggs, while herbwives and others sold vegetables, fruit, and flowers in the herb market centered on Soper Lane end.[35] In the Middle Ages, the western half of Cheapside had been occupied by stationers, booksellers, and purveyors of notarial services.[36]

The market had been in this location for at least as long as the luxury retail trades, but London's demographic and commercial growth in the sixteenth century increased the tensions between them. London's population tripled in the sixteenth century, but since the City opposed the establishment of any new markets in the suburbs, the city-center marketplaces experienced a substantial growth in the volume of business. As middlemen and intermediaries moved in, there was an increasing commercialization of the market system,.[37] The image of country producer selling direct to city housewives became less and less realistic, but invoking the traditional punishments for forestalling, engrossing and regrating [please define, perhaps in a footnote] to restrict these new practices was equally unrealistic as a solution. Market supervision was always troublesome for city government, but it now became something of a nightmare. All the markets were affected, but Cheapside seems to have been of particular concern, as a string of proclamations and orders attests. In 1578 the Aldermen reiterated the ban on selling any fruit, milk, herbs, roots or flowers, except in the common markets and on common market days and times;[38] in 1581 they ordered a bell to be hung from the Standard, to be rung at noon, signaling that the market would close within half an hour.[39] In 1582 citizen poulters were forbidden to sell their wares from shops between nine and eleven o'clock on the Sabbath, and from stalls on the Sabbath at all; nor were they to sell any poultry secretly on Fridays and Ember days.[40] The prohibitions reflect what was already happening. In 1588 a small committee of senior aldermen reported on the disorders of the markets, again paying particular attention to Cheapside and the kinds of goods and traders found there. Their recommendations included imposing spatial order on the traders: flower-sellers were to stand between the Little Conduit and the Cross, along the south side of the street toward Goldsmiths' Row; the bringers of herbs, roots, and seeds were to stand on the north side of the same part of the street—none was to have more than three baskets. The committee recommended that the herbwives and flower sellers should not be allowed to bring tables or stools into the marketplace, or tubs, pails, or vessels for water, nor should they wash their herbs and roots in the street, "or we find by experience that that leads to great annoyance." The market in victuals was to extend, as before, from the Cross to the Great Conduit, with designated places for hucksters and hagglers, and for the sellers of oatmeal.[41]

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35. Ian W. Archer, Caroline Mary Barron, and Vanessa Ann Harding, *Hugh Alley's Caveat: The Markets of London in 1598* (London, 1998): 5–7.

36. Archer, Barron, and Harding, *Hugh Alley's Caveat*: 9–10, 89–91.

37. Alan Everitt, "The marketing of agricultural produce," in Joan Thirsk, ed., *The Agrarian History of England and Wales,* iv, *1500–1640* (Cambridge, 1967): 466–592.

38. CLRO, Letter Book Y, f. 251.

39. CLRO, Repertory 20, f. 237v.

40. CLRO, Letter Book Z, f. 207 ff.

41. CLRO, Repertory 21, ff. 542–4.

As these orders reveal, the market in perishable goods had expanded from its original space to fill the whole street, and in 1592 it was objected that the western end of the street, "between the Cross and Old Change, which in ancient times was free from any market, [was] at this day so pestered with herbwives, fruiterers, etc." that the whole of Goldsmiths' Row was blocked, and people could hardly get by. Moreover, the market was in practice being kept on Sundays, "and every other day from morning till 9 at night and sometimes with candlelight, very dangerous for fire." If the market could not be removed, then at least the herbwives and fruiterers ought to stand ten feet from any door or stall in Cheapside, and the market hours and Sabbath trading bans should be strictly observed.[42] Problems continued, nevertheless, through the 1590s, exacerbated by some of the worst harvests and price increases of the century, when food shortages seemed likely and the prospect of food riots threatened. As Ian Archer has noted, the City seems to have retreated from a policy of pursuing major offenders, engrossers, and middlemen—perhaps deeming this fruitless—and went after the petty market folk instead. The number of market prosecutions declined, and the City's Fines Book records market offenses and confiscations mostly amounting to a few shillings each.[43] Deterrent as these forfeitures may have been for the small-scale sellers, it seems unlikely that this did much to ease the larger problem.

Food marketing always had a moral dimension, with quality, availability, and just price being seen as fundamental rights, not just contingent variables. Food shortages and rising prices in the 1590s sparked the most serious disorders of the period, with assemblies at Tower Hill, popular appropriation of the oversight of the market, and a backwash of violent protest that swept into Cheapside.[44] The protesters had Cheapside's pillories among their targets, but the continuing tension over the regulation of food marketing there and the blatant displays of wealth in the shops must have played a part. As Richard Rowland has recently argued, Heywood's *Edward IV*, registered in 1599, "addresses tensions which had threatened to tear 1590s London apart," and it is no coincidence that Cheapside is realized with great specificity.[45]

Among responses to the crisis of the 1590s was a document submitted to the mayor by one Hugh Alley, a self-interested informer, suggesting changes to the markets and a new system of controls and officers.[46] The value of Alley's contribution lies not so much in his practical proposals, which are unclear, and in any case short-lived, where they were adopted, as in the series of drawings of the markets that accompanied his submission. The drawings, which represent the markets as they would be if Alley's proposals were implemented, are clearly intended to serve a political purpose.. They are an idealization of the medieval system, in Elizabethan dress. Thus we see nothing of the disorder and confusion that contemporaries ascribed to the markets, but instead

42. CLRO, Repertory 22, f. 408v–9.
43. Archer, Barron, and Harding, *Hugh Alley's Caveat*: ///; CLRO, Fines Book, ff. 225, 227.
44. source.
45. Heywood, *The First and Second parts of King Edward IV* (ed. R. Rowland): 19, 21.
46. Archer, Barron, and Harding, *Hugh Alley's Caveat*.

find a series of orderly scenes, including Cheapside (figure 4), where country traders sell appropriate goods at the foot of pillars (imagined or proposed) denoting their county of origin. In markets where citizen-sellers predominate, there are pillars (likewise imagined) where it seems the names of offenders against market rules were posted. The goods pictured in each market correspond closely with the evidence from documentary sources for market activity, but there is no evidence that any of the proposed pillars were ever built, or indeed that Alley's proposals were taken very seriously.[47]

### The Exposure and Punishment of Falsehood

The market contributed to Cheapside's role as a place of exemplary punishment, possibly already overdetermined by the street's combination of authority, publicity, and public resort. A frequent feature of medieval market regulation is the prescription of public punishment for offenders. Those who sold corrupt goods might be pilloried during market hours, and have the goods hung round their necks or burned before them; likewise with false measures. London's medieval records list the burning of bad fish, putrid and poisonous meat from diseased animals, improperly made hats and caps, nets, and dorsers (baskets), and charcoal sacks of inaccurate capacities.[48] Given that market infringements were an offense against the community, public punishment was deemed appropriate, and it was assumed that members of the public would share the attitude of the authorities and perhaps help to punish the pilloried. It is interesting that Alley's 1598 proposal seems to recommend that offenders against market regulations simply be named and shamed, but the use of informers (of which he was one) presupposes a financial penalty, to be shared between the informer and the authorities. There may be a distinction between those who sold bad or short-weight goods and those who infringed the market in other ways: the sixteenth-century records of the City seem to focus more on fines and bans than on personal punishment, but it may be that violations related to the quality of goods were dealt with summarily in the market itself while forestalling and regrating called for financial penalties as well, and thus generated a written record.

Public punishment of this kind could be characterized as the exposure of falsehood, in different manifestations. The rationale for such punishment was explicitly stated in 1418, when Nichol Wighe (who had three other aliases) was pilloried for forgery. The judgment of the mayor and Aldermen, lest "such falsnes and disceyt shold passe unponysshid," was that "aftir the custume of the Citee, in exaumple that all other shal the rather eschewe al such falsnes and disceyt," he stand at the pillory for a full hour on three successive market days, "with on of his fals lettres be hym falsly and disseiably contrefetid and forgid" hanging about his neck. Nichol's "falseness" was consistent with the false goods and false measures already mentioned, though the severity of

47. Archer, Barron, and Harding, *Hugh Alley's Caveat*: 15, 32; CLRO, Journal 25, f. 150b.

48. Henry Thomas Riley, ed., *Memorials of London and London life in the 13th, 14th and 15th centuries: being a series of extracts…from the… archives of the City of London, A.D. 1276–1419* (London, 1868).

his offense warranted further punishment: he was thereafter to be taken to Newgate until he found surety for future good behavior.[49] "Deceit" was likewise invoked in the pillorying of a man in Cheap in 1556, who "deceived many" by selling copper rings as if they were gold. Of a similar nature, perhaps (deception, falsehood) was the pillorying of three men for wilful perjury.[50]

False goods, false writings, false words: the pillory was also used to punish slander, sedition, and statements contradicting the prevailing orthodoxy. A Catholic priest was pilloried in Cheapside and branded on both cheeks, allegedly for a false accusation, in 1545. John Day, parson of St. Ethelburga, was set in the pillory in Cheap in August 1553 and had one ear nailed for seditious words of the queen; two days later he was pilloried again and had his other ear nailed.[51] On three different days in 1554, two men, a woman, and two more men were set in the pillory in Cheap for speaking "seditious words and false lies against the queen and her council," "lies and seditious words against the Queen's majesty," "horabull lyes and sedyssyous wordes," and "sedyssyous slanderous wordes" against the queen and her council.[52] In the early seventeenth century such public punishment for anti-establishment libel was still common: the (false) accusers of Lord Treasurer Buckhurst "had theyre payment" at the pillory in Cheapside in 1602; a young man who libeled the vice-chancellor of Oxford was pilloried in 1603; one Floude or Floide was pilloried and branded for "lewde and contemptuous words" against the king and queen of Bohemia in 1621; and an attorney called Moore lost both ears in Cheapside for speaking "very lewdly and scandalously" of Queen Elizabeth and King Henry VIII in 1624.[53]

False doctrine was similarly punished. Two pillories were set up in Cheapside in June 1561 for seven men accused of conjuring and other matters. One of them seems to have been Francis Cox, an astrologer and medical practitioner, who there confessed his "employment of certayne sinistral and divelysh artes."[54] In June 1562 Elizeus Hall was pilloried in Cheapside, wearing a gown of gray fur, for "speaches" revealing him to be "of the popishe judgemente in religion."[55] Not surprisingly, "error" in written form was also publicly destroyed in a series of book burnings through the Reformation, though Cheapside was by no means the only location; indeed, by virtue of their reproduction books lent themselves to multiple performances of destruction. More symbolically, Cheapside was one of the locations for the destruction of Marian images in August 1559: "a-gaynst Yremonger Lane and a-gaynst sant Thomas of Acurs ij gret

49. Riley, *Memorials*: 668.

50. *Diary of Henry Machyn*: 103, 014, 109.

51. Willam Douglas Hamilton, ed., A *chronicle of England during the reign of the Tudors, 1485 to 1559, by Charles Wriothesley, Windsor Herald*. (Camden Society, new series vol. 20, 1877) (hereafter *Wriothesley's chronicle*): ii, 100, 101.

52. *Diary of Henry Machyn*: 60, 63, 64.

53. *Letters of John Chamberlain*: i. 154–5, 186; ii. 370, 377, 545.

54. *Diary of Henry Machyn*: 261; Henry Colin Gray Matthew and Brian Howard Harrison, eds., *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography: From the Earliest Times to the year 2000* (Oxford, 2004) (hereafter *ODNB*): Cox, Francis.

55. *ODNB* sub Hall, Elizeus.

[bonfires] of rodes and of Mares and Johns and odur emages, ther thay wher bornyd with gret wondur."[56] As late as 1650 the House of Commons ordered the public hangman to burn the Ranter Abiezer Coppe's *A Fiery Flying Roll* at Westminster, the Exchange, in Cheapside, and in Southwark market.[57]

Cheapside might be deemed the center of orthodoxy, where lies were purged and truth proclaimed, but views on what was orthodox varied; truth itself became much more contested during the Reformation. Changes of direction at the center led to confusion, and some religious self-determination, among the people. While Mary's proclamation at Cheapside Cross seems to have been widely welcomed, the celebrated protest against the Mass in 1554 used exactly the same setting. A cat dressed and tonsured as a priest, with a Mass wafer between its paws, was hanged from a gallows near the Cross; despite rewards offered for information, the perpetrator could not be traced.[58] It may have been only a minority view, or a group of iconoclast vigilantes, but the statue of St. Thomas Becket set up by the orders of Philip and Mary at the entrance to Mercers' Chapel (the former church of St. Thomas of Acre) at the east end of Cheap was broken down as soon as it was put up, and again when it was repaired; Elizabeth's accession seemed to license its final destruction.[59] The burning of Marian images in 1559 was perhaps more to the liking of the crowds. Stow reports the repeated assaults on Cheapside Cross in Elizabeth's reign, and David Cressy, in his brilliant dissection of the story of the Cross's downfall, notes the ambivalence of the authorities: Elizabeth and Bancroft favored it as "an ancient ensign of Christianity." while the godly Edward Dering thought it was "a gorgeous idol, a fit stake" for the burning of superstitious books. Its symbolism and imagery worried churchmen, including the cautious George Abbot, but the prospect of its being destroyed in riot or "tumultuously" was also unacceptable. The City seems to have been rather proud of it, and had it repaired and regilded, and fenced off for protection, but opposition grew as religious views polarized in the 1630s. The (self-styled) "honest ancient and good inhabitants of Cheapside" were among those denouncing the Cross as a symbol of the old religion, one that still attracted secret devotions and not-so-secret reverence, while satirists alleged that female sectaries would make long detours to avoid passing it on their way to the markets of the country women. In 1642 it was attacked and badly damaged, and something of a pamphlet war ensued, leading up to its final destruction in May 1643, on the orders of Parliament, mayor, and Aldermen (figure 5).[60]

Most of the actions and punishments discussed above could be seen as demonstrative rather than fully retributory. Boys and young men were whipped at the pillory or at "the post of reformacyon be the standard in Chepsyd," but as the name implies, punishments of this kind still had a reformatory intent. Bawds were pilloried there,

56. *Wriothesley's Chronicle*: 143; *Diary of Henry Machyn*: 207.
57. *ODNB* sub Coppe, Abiezer.
58. *Diary of Henry Machyn*: 59–60; *Wriothesley's Chronicle*: 114.
59. Charles Lethbridge Kingsford (ed.), "A London Chronicle, 1523–1555," from "Two London chronicles from the collection of John Stow," in *Camden Miscellany* 12 (Camden Society, Soc 3rd series vol. 18, 1910): 42; *Wriothesley's Chronicle*: 127, 143.
60. Cressy, "The downfall of Cheapside Cross": 234–50.

and others of that ilk. The symbolism of exposure was quite harsh, but exhibition had a cruel entertainment value too. Henry Machyn reported with some relish that in 1563 Doctor Langton the physician was publicly punished for being found in bed with two young wenches, and was carted through Cheapside on a market day, on his way to Guildhall, dressed in his gown of damask lined with velvet, and a coat and cap of velvet, to which a blue hood was pinned.[61]

But as some of the records indicate, punishment in Cheapside seems to have been shifting, from shame and discomfort to cruel physical chastisement. A pilloried man might have one or both ears nailed, cropped, or cut off, and his face branded or further disfigured. Alexander Leighton, religious controversialist, was in 1630 sentenced in Star Chamber to pay £10,000, be degraded from holy orders, be pilloried and whipped at Westminster, have one of his ears cut off, one side of his nose slit, and his face branded with "SS" (for sower of sedition), to be then carried back to prison and after a few days to have the whole punishment repeated at Cheapside, and then to be imprisoned for life.[62] William Prynne was pilloried in Cheap and had his ears cropped in 1634, though his second and more savage mutilation took place at Westminster in 1637.[63] Carrying out severe physical punishment was not new to Cheapside, which had long been a site of execution, but these sentences seem to be closing the gap between punishing by showing and showing by punishment.[64]

Such savagery runs the risk of undermining the exemplary function: the presumption behind public punishment is that the crowd concurs with the verdict and the punishment inflicted, but if that consensus fails then the whole enterprise is in danger, and the place of punishment may become a site where intentions are reversed. Attempts to impose order in London often met resistance: apprentices rescued their fellows from officers of the law, or broke open prisons and destroyed pillories to release them. Cheapside was perhaps especially vulnerable to such reversals, or attempted reversals, since it symbolized so much more than authority expressed through the power to punish: it was the locus of celebration, of authorization, sometimes of largesse; it exemplified the unequal distribution of wealth, and its market raised vital questions about the supply and cost of food.

Both Jane and Mary were quick to proclaim their accession in Cheapside, though one or both technically involved a seizure of power. At Jane's proclamation, "fewe or none sayd 'Good save here' "; Mary's supporters ensured that her proclama-

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61. *Diary of Henry Machyn*: 107, 109, 266, 284, 309.

62. *ODNB* sub Leighton, Alexander.

63. David Cressy. "The portraiture of Prynne's pictures", in idem, *Agnes Bowker's cat. Travesties and transgressions in Tudor and Stuart England* (Oxford, 2000): 213–33.

64. For later developments, see John Beattie, *Policing and Punishment in London, 1660–1750: Urban Crime and the Limits of Terror* (Oxford, 2001). Exposure at the pillory in Cheapside continued in the later seventeenth century but the authorities were increasingly uncertain about its efficacy: ibid., 307–8. In 1664 a huge crowd of (allegedly) 4,000 apprentices rescued two of their fellows from the pillory in Cheapside: Tim Harris, "Perceptions of the crowd in later Start London," in Julia Frances Merritt, ed., *Imagining Early Modern London: Perceptions and Portrayals of the City from Stow to Strype, 1598–1720* (Cambridge, 2001): 250–72 at 255.

tion was further ratified by "alle the belles ryngyng thrugh London, and bone-fyres, and tabuls in every strett, and wyne and bere and alle, …and there was money cast a-way."[65] Charles I was proclaimed in Cheapside, but so was his trial, "by the sound of trumpets and drums, in Westminster hall, at the Exchange, and in Cheapside." Cheapside's role in the proclamation of monarchy also attracted the lunatic fringe. A trio of aggrieved Puritans, Hacket, Coppinger and Arthington, planned a coup in 1591 against Elizabeth and her conservative council. Although it may have arisen from a reasonable sense of persecution and danger, by the time it came to action the conspiracy had taken on messianic overtones. Coppinger and Arthington went about London "warning of vengeance and preaching repentance." They then "mounted a cart in Cheapside and announced to the thronging crowd that Hacket … was the long-awaited messiah." Perhaps not surprisingly, this bird failed to fly; all three were arrested, and Hacket was executed near Cheapside cross a week later. He died "uttering 'execrable blasphemie,'" denouncing the queen, and calling upon "mightie Jehovah" to "send some miracle out of a cloude to deliver him," a vividly theatrical image.[66]

This case indicates the ability of authority to resist such reversals and indeed impose closure on an incident, but earlier and more serious rebels had been more effective, even if only temporarily. The simplest inversions are the executions of hated authority figures, in place of those whom the state deemed traitors, and Cheapside saw several of these: bishop Walter Stapledon, Edward II's chancellor, was lynched by Londoners and decapitated in Cheapside in October 1326, after Isabella and Mortimer's coup; Richard Lyons, merchant and alleged extortioner, was executed in Cheapside during the Peasants' Revolt; Lord Saye and Sele was beheaded at the Standard in Cheapside in 1450 during Cade's revolt.[67]

### ∽ Determination

As powerful and diversely evocative as Cheapside was in the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, its significance seems to have started to change at the end of that period. There may have been a decline in the psychological centrality of Cheapside to London's life, as the metropolis grew and other centers emerged. Cheapside's pre-eminence as a symbol of commercial wealth was eroded by the increasing importance of the Royal Exchange, well established as a meeting place for merchants by the early seventeenth century, and also developing as a center of luxury retail.[68] The New Exchange in the Strand was explicitly blamed for enticing goldsmiths to abandon the city center.[69] There may also have been a decline in the confidence or belief in the kind of popular political affirmation that the street had offered, and that various authorities

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65. John Gough Nichols, ed., *Chronicle of the Grey Friars of London* (Camden Society, vol. 53, 1852), pp. 78–80; John Gough Nichols, ed., *The Diary of Henry Machyn, citizen and merchant-taylor of London, from A.D. 1550 to A.D. 1563* (Camden Society, vol. 42, 1848) (hereafter *Diary of Henry Machyn*): 35–6. Cf . *Letters of John Chamberlain*: i. 189.

66. *ODNB* sub Hacket, ///, Coppinger.

67. *ODNB* sub Stapledon, ///// Lyons, Fiennes.

68. I thank Deb Harkness for this suggestion.

69. Griffiths, "Politics Made Visible," 176–96.

had formerly exploited. The experience of the 1640s showed that energizing and activating the populace for political purposes could easily get out of hand, with unforeseeable results; neither the Cromwellian protectorate nor the Restoration monarchy had much trust in the loyalty of the people at street level. Popular action was increasingly deprived of its former political legitimacy.

At the same time, the symbolism of Cheapside as a destination—a place of determination—was in rising tension with a discourse of passage and flow. The produce market's blockage of the street was increasingly unacceptable. The attacks on the Cross focused on its dubious iconography, but arguments about traffic were also invoked, though perhaps rather disingenuously.[70] The growing popularity of coaches for private transport exacerbated the congestion, as well as signaling a dis-engagement with the crowd, a reluctance to experience the street at ground level. In 1657 there was an attempt to reduce street congestion by removing most of the Cheapside herb-market traders to St. Paul's churchyard. In 1661 the latter were moved again to Aldersgate Street, despite complaints from the gardeners, who argued that this was farther from the waterside and so less convenient.[71]

It is not surprising that one of the major changes effected after the Fire was the removal of the market to a new off-street site in Honey Lane, on the plots of two burned churches. But this was part of a wider plan to open up the city for traffic: the Standard and the Conduits were taken down, the middle rows in Newgate market and Old Fish Street were removed. Side streets were widened to a minimum of ten feet, and frontages straightened and cut back. A new street, King Street, was cut through from Guildhall to Cheapside, and continued on as Queen Street, following the path of Soper Lane but making a wide new street down to the Thames (later appropriated as an approach road to Southwark Bridge). And Cheapside lost some of its sense of enclosure when buildings at the eastern end were cut right back to make an uninterrupted passage into Poultry, and so on to the Stocks, now also laid open as a large market place. We should not see this as a Haussmanization of London, an attempt to suppress political demonstration by reshaping the spaces in which it had occurred, since processions continued to use the street. But changes of this sort did make a substantial practical difference. "Openness" in the streets of later seventeenth-century London became a more general (if less morally charged) feature, and this must have contributed, along with the drift of much of London's population, culture, and social life to the new West End, to the decline of Cheapside as a site of special significance for Londoners.

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70. Cressy, "The Downfall of Cheapside Cross."
71. Betty Rowena Masters, *The Public Markets of the City of London Surveyed by William Leybourn in 1677* (London, 1974), 15.