

## E. Attacks on the Scots

This selection of verse attacks on the Scots who had followed James VI into England documents some of the many anxieties and resentments the king's countrymen provoked south of the border. As such, the libels provide important evidence of the broader context to the better-known complaints against the Scots aired in the early Jacobean House of Commons during the 1604-10 and 1614 sessions. All the libels, for instance, dwell to a greater or lesser degree on the material rewards that numbers of Scotsmen had reaped by royal gift—and, it seemed to observers, at English expense—since 1603. Two of the longer surviving verses explore this theme through extended satirical accounts of the sartorial transformation of coarsely dressed Scotsmen into silk-bedecked dandies, compellingly illustrating contemporary perceptions of the connections between clothing and national and social distinction. Some of the same sartorially focused ethnic and socio-economic disdain was expressed in a now lost ballad on James I's coronation which, according to John Aubrey, included the lines, “And at the erse of them marched the Scottish peeres / With lowzie shirts, and mangie wrists, went pricking-up their eares” (2.4). Two other poems—including the widest-copied of the anti-Scots collection—comment on a series of violent clashes between Englishmen and Scots that occurred during the spring and early summer of 1612, and that significantly heightened ethnic tensions both at court and on the London streets. Firth (“Ballads” 113-16, and “Ballad” 22-24) was the first historian to take note of at least some of these anti-Scots verses, and Akrigg (48-55) offers a brief overview of English resentments of “The Hungry Scots” that allows us to put these poems in context. But neither the libels, nor the incidents they document, have yet been analyzed in detail.