

RICHARD III AND MACBETH - STUDIES IN TUDOR TYRANNY?

AS Lily B. Campbell has shown, the use of history to show contemporary events was well established before Shakespeare began to write. Richard III was seen as the archtype Machiavelian politician and two of Elizabeth's principal ministers, William Cecil, Lord Burghley, and the Earl of Leicester, had been likened to the historical Richard for their ruthlessness, political cunning, and the way they disposed of rivals for power.¹

By late 1591, the earliest date usually given for *Richard III*, Leicester was dead and Burghley was over sixty. However, the latter was promoting his second son, Robert Cecil, then twenty-eight, to succeed him in high government office. He tried to persuade the Queen to make him Principal Secretary, in succession to Francis Walsingham who had died in 1590. Instead she knighted him on 21 May 1591, and on 2 August he was sworn a member of the Privy Council. Like Shakespeare's Richard, Robert Cecil was deformed with a hunched back. He became Principal Secretary on 5 July 1596.² The first quarto of *Richard III* appeared in 1597, which may be coincidence, but it may also suggest some event had occurred that made the play topical, prompting a revival in the theatre.

Further editions in 1598, 1602, and 1605 were no doubt in response to the play's popularity, but this could have been helped by continued topicality. Cecil's power continued to increase, especially after the accession of James I in 1603. The new king created him Lord Cecil of Essendine in 1603, Viscount Cranborne in 1604, and Earl of Salisbury in 1605. In 1607 Nicolo Molin, the newly arrived Venetian Ambassador, wrote a lengthy report on Britain and its rulers:

... his Majesty is devoted to the chase and to his pleasures, and ... readily leaves all to the Council ... these Lords ... are openly styled 'kinglings' and 'tyrants', for in very truth they

permit themselves any action that suits their turn. Greatest and most eminent of all is Robert, Earl of Salisbury, first Secretary of State, whose authority is so absolute that he may truly be called the King.³

Salisbury was appointed Lord Treasurer in addition to Principal Secretary in 1608 and was far too powerful to be openly criticized while he was alive. He died in May 1612 - and the 5th quarto of the play appeared in that year. There are no surviving further editions for the next ten years.

The hatred he had aroused could now be expressed openly. Francis Osborne, who was eighteen at the time, later recalled this doggerel:

Here lyes throwne, for the wormes to eate,
Little bossive Robin, that was so great,
Not Robin good-fellow, nor Robin Hood,
But Robin th'encloser of Hatfield wood,
Who seem'd as sent from ugly fate,
To spoyle the prince and rob the state.⁴

On 2 July 1612 John Chamberlain wrote:

The memorie of the late Lord Treasurer growes dayly worse and worse and more libells comes as yt were continually ... Yt is certain that they who may best maintain yt, have not forborn to say that he jugled with religion, with the King, Quene, theyre children, with nobilitie, Parlement, with friends, foes and generally with all.

On 17 December 1612 Chamberlain noted:

Sir Fraunces Bacon hath set out new essayes, where in a chapter of deformitie the world takes notice that he paints out his late litle cousin to the life.⁵

Bacon's and Salisbury's mothers were sisters. The relevant extract from Bacon's essay 'Of Deformity' reads like a description of Shakespeare's Richard:

... it is good to consider of Deformity, not as a Signe, which is more Deceivable, But as a Cause, which seldome faileth of the Effect. Whosoever hath any Thing fixed is his Person, that doth enduce Contempt, hath also a perpetuall Spurre in himself, to rescue

¹ Lily B. Campbell, *Shakespeare's Histories* (1947, Methuen edn 1964), esp. ch. XVI; 'The Use of Historical Patterns in the Reign of Elizabeth', in *Collected Papers of Lily B. Campbell* (New York, 1968).

² Strype, *Annals*, iv.77: *Acts of the Privy Council*, xxi.358 and xxvi.7.

³ *CSP Venetian*, x.514-15.

⁴ Francis Osborne, *Traditionall Memoyres on the Raigne of King James*, (London, 1658), 87.

⁵ N. E. McClure (ed.), *The Letters of John Chamberlain* (Philadelphia, 1939), i.364-5, 397.

and deliver himself from Scorne: Therefore all Deformed Persons are extreme Bold. First, as in their own Defence, as being exposed to Scorn; But in Processe of Time, by a Generall Habit. Also it stirreth in them Industry, and especially of this kinde, to watch and observe the Weaknesse of Others, that they may have somewhat to repay. Againe, in their Superiours, it quencheth Iealousie towards them, as Persons that they think they may at pleasure despise: And it layeth their Competitours and Emulatours asleepe; As never believing, they should be in possibility of advancement, till they see them in Possession. So that, upon the matter, in a great Wit, Deformity is an Advantage to Rising. . . . they will, if they be of Spirit, seeke to free themselves from Scorne; Which must be, either by Vertue, or Malice.

The True Tragedie of Richard III, a Queen's Men's play, which from an entry in the SR for a ballad on the subject, may have been written as early as 1586,⁶ can be seen as propaganda for the benefits conferred by the Tudors after Plantagenet misrule. Elizabeth of York, Queen Elizabeth I's grandmother, is given a prominent and very praiseworthy role – in Shakespeare's *Richard III*, she does not appear at all. There is a long Epilogue in the *True Tragedie* with a Messenger, young Elizabeth and her mother, in which the (future) achievements of Henry VII, his son Henry VIII, and the reigns of Edward VI and Mary are recalled to the audience, and finally, there is a long speech in praise of Elizabeth I. Shakespeare's ending, the speech of Richmond, is very low key in comparison. If the tyrant he has in mind is not the real Richard but a contemporary politician, some similarity to the earlier play would be useful for deceiving the censor, and may be no more than this.

All openly printed material had to be censored to ensure that it contained nothing critical of matters of religion or state.⁷ To get a balanced idea of the condition of England when the play was written, it is necessary to consult also the 'alternative' literature of the period and the evidence of state papers and court records. In late 1591, a Catholic priest working in

England, probably the Jesuit, Robert Southwell, wrote an unsigned paper describing the condition, not only of his fellow Catholics but also of the Protestants, to Richard Verstegan on the continent. Verstegan based his pamphlet, *A Declaration of the True Causes of the Great Troubles presupposed to be intended against England* (STC 10005) on the paper, and Southwell also used it for his *Humble Supplication to her Maiestie*, written before his capture in June 1592, circulated in manuscript copies and printed surreptitiously in an edited form in 1600.⁸

Harassment by corrupt officials, the poursuivants, and indeed any rascal with a taste for blackmail and theft, the imprisonment and torture of both priests and lay people, vilification and impoverishment, denial of redress at law, of education and career opportunities, were endured by those who openly professed Catholicism and make the paper read like a description of the life of political dissidents in a twentieth-century dictatorship. *Agents provocateurs* were employed by the government to foment and foster 'plots' – the writer shows that, the Babington Plot, which provided the excuse for Elizabeth to be rid of Mary Queen of Scots, was of this kind.

The condition of those who conformed to the state religion was little better according to the paper – legal redress depended on bribes; taxation was high and frequent and if the citizen did not have the money to pay, the taxgatherer would take his livestock instead; the evils of courtiers' monopolies, and the crown's right of purveyance are noted, as is the misery caused by the suppression of hospitals which had relieved the poor; the lack of cohesion in society is expected to make for civil war, especially when the Queen dies; nobility and gentry have become so servile that no one dares to speak what they think; highways are filled with beggars, many of them impressed ex-soldiers who have never been paid, and prisons are filled with more debtors, thieves, and murderers than ever before. The writer considers that the real enemy of England is not the priests, who are

⁶ E. K. Chambers, *The Elizabethan Stage* (Oxford, 1923, repr. 1974), iv.44.

⁷ *Ibid.*, iv.264.

⁸ A. G. Petti (ed.), *The Letters and Despatches of Richard Verstegan* (London, Catholic Record Society, 1959), 1–33; R. C. Bald (ed.), *An Humble Supplication to her Maiestie by Robert Southwell* (Cambridge, 1953).

harassed and accused of treason at every turn, but the Treasurer, Burghley, who has used his position to enrich himself.⁹

Evidence that such assertions were believed by contemporaries is contained in records of prosecution for slander of the Queen and members of her government. Southwell does not blame the Queen herself, but others are not so restrained. They range from Sir John Perrot, said to be a bastard son of Henry VIII and so Elizabeth's half-brother, who was tried for treason in April 1592 and had described her as a 'a base bastard piss-kitchin woman',¹⁰ to the man prosecuted at Essex Sessions in 1591, for saying 'We shall never have a merry world while the Queen liveth'. As more contemporary court records are examined, more of these offenders appear who voiced their discontent openly before a hostile witness.¹¹ As punishments ranged from the pillory or mutilation to death, there must have been many more who spoke in private or kept quiet.

John Aubrey credits Shakespeare with generally drawing from life.¹² If he was doing this for his portrait of a tyrant in Richard III, we can only guess at his motive but some hints may be gleaned from considering the use of drama in twentieth-century police states. Before Romania overthrew Ceaucescu in December 1989, the considerable popularity of theatre in Bucharest owed much to the fact that it was the only place where people could safely give vent to their feelings. The audience did not come to hear criticism of the government, or political debate – they were already 'converted'. By empathizing with the situation on stage they kept hope alive for better times. The Bulandra Company of Bucharest found they could respond to this need, and also elude the government censorship, by writing plays about their

own history, in which they saw similarities with the present – and in performing classics like Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, which provided such a striking parallel with their own situation that it was in their repertoire from 1985 to the revolution.¹³ Michael Pennington, in *The English Shakespeare Company. The Story of the Wars of the Roses* (Nick Herne Books, 1990), describes how an East Berlin audience for *Richard III* in January 1989 reacted to the scene where Buckingham cajoles the Lord Mayor, aldermen, and citizens of London into accepting Richard as king (III.vii). Where English audiences regard the scene as bordering on farce, the East Berliners reacted in 'appalled silence' to a form of political coercion they knew only too well (202–4). Similarly, *Macbeth* was popular in Vlasta Chramostowa's 'underground' Living Room Theatre of Prague. The secret police having failed to stop the performances finally resorted to banishing two of the actors. The Czechs used a straight translation and found it was not necessary to alter the play to point the parallels with their situation.¹⁴

Critics compare Richard to Macbeth as another study of a ruler who degenerates into complete tyranny. Even more than Richard, he drags his country down with him. It has been assumed that the Porter's allusions to the traitor-equivocator, and Lady Macduff's definition of a traitor as one who swears and lies, can only refer to the Jesuit, Henry Garnet, who was tried on 28 March 1606 for complicity in the Gunpowder Plot and hanged on 3 May, which is therefore assumed to be the earliest date Shakespeare could have written the play. Critics who find evidence of an earlier date feel obliged to assume that these parts of the text are revisions made after Garnet's execution. I suggest that both can refer to other, earlier events which may even fit them more closely.

Equivocator and equivocation were words in more common use than today so we do not need to assume the notoriety of Garnet's trial to enable the theatre-going public to recognize them or put a name to the practises they were used to describe. Reginald Scot had written of equivocation in his *Discoverie of Witchcraft* in

⁹ Southwell may have been more familiar with the situation in the south of England but a similar letter, describing conditions in the north, is printed in Charles Dodd, *Dodd's Church History* (London, 1839–46), iii.77f. See also J. Morris, *Troubles of our Catholic Forefathers* (1872–7), for further firsthand accounts.

¹⁰ T. J. Howell (ed.), *Cobbett's Complete Collection of State Trials* (London, 1816), i.1321.

¹¹ See F. G. Emmison, *Elizabethan Life: Disorder* (Essex County Council, 1970), 57 and elsewhere; J. C. Jeaffreson (ed.), *Middlesex County Records* (1886), i; J. S. Cockburn (ed.), *Calendar of Assize Records, Surrey* (1980).

¹² O. L. Dick (ed.), *Aubrey's Brief Lives* (London, 1949; 3rd edn, repr. 1971), 275.

¹³ Seumus Milne, 'Exit the villain', *The Guardian*, 6 March 1990, 38; Richard Eyre, 'Noises off in Elsinore', *The Guardian*, 13 September 1990, 21.

¹⁴ *Index on Censorship*, xiv, no. 1 (Feb., 1985), 37–42.

1584, and Shakespeare himself used the word in *Hamlet* (V.i.148). The dilemmas facing both Puritans and Catholics from the 1580s forced them to consider whether equivocation was allowable when replying to incriminating questions. At the secret meetings of the Puritan Classical movement, that began in 1582, members pledged to refuse Archbishop Whitgift's Articles of 1583. In 1584 Whitgift required ministers suspected of Puritan sympathies to give answers to certain searching questions and obliged them to take an oath before being shown what these were. One question asked was whether the respondent attended unofficial meetings. Failure to answer satisfactorily meant suspension and the numbers who subscribed suggest that they did so with what we might call 'mental reservations'.¹⁵

The first publicly quoted example of equivocation by Catholics was at the trial of Robert Southwell in 1595. An Act of Parliament passed in 1585, made it treason merely to be a Catholic priest who had returned to England after ordination overseas, in other words, the offence was religion alone. However the authorities were reluctant to execute priests for priesthood alone and tried to find evidence however scanty of additional treason to tarnish the accused's reputation. Southwell's trial was the first for which no suggestion of other treason could be found, in spite of barbaric torture since his capture three years earlier. However he did mention advice given to Catholic lay people on equivocation to Robert Cecil during an examination and the government at last had material for a smear at a trial.

A young woman, Anne Bellamy, was persuaded to give evidence:

And she, being sworn, said that Father Southwell told her that if, upon her oath, she were asked whether she had seen a priest or no, she might lawfully say 'No' although she had seen him that same day, keeping in her mind this meaning: that she did not see him with intent to betray him.

Southwell admitted the substance of her words. Sir Edward Coke, the Attorney General, prosecuting, shouted 'Perjury, it is lawful to commit perjury!' Apart from his priesthood, which he did not deny, this was the only misdemeanour of which he could be accused. He asked Coke if he too would not equivocate if asked to betray the whereabouts of the Queen to an enemy.¹⁶

There can be no doubt that the proceedings were very well known. Although not printed, accounts circulated in manuscript and Southwell was already something of a celebrity. As well as being a Jesuit missionary, he became chaplain to the Countess of Arundel and was in residence at Arundel House in the Strand where he was able to devote more time to writing in both prose and verse. Although initially his works circulated in manuscript, *Mary Magdalens Funerall Teares*, was licenced in November 1591 and printed legally in London. It had three editions before his trial. The poem, *St Peter's Complaint* had two London editions in 1595 and a third edition that year included other poems of his as well.¹⁷ Peter Milward finds phrases from *St Peter's Complaint* echoed in *Macbeth*¹⁸ and it seems possible that *The Burning Babe*, so admired by Ben Jonson, could have been in Shakespeare's mind when Macbeth likens Pity to 'a naked newborn babe, / Striding the blast' (I.vii.21-2). Is Lady Macduff glancing at Southwell's approval of 'swearing and lying' and that this alone had made him a traitor (IV ii)? Macduff, as the audience are aware, is a true patriot who puts loyalty to his country before any to the tyrant who is ruling it, which was Southwell's plea in his *Humble Supplication to her Maiestie*. That the boy Macduff, when confronted by the Murderers, refuses to believe his father was a

¹⁵ Christopher Devlin, *The Life of Robert Southwell* (London, 1956), Appendix 'C', 333-5, for short account of equivocation by Puritans and Catholics. Devlin refers to R. G. Usher (ed.), *The Presbyterian Movement in the Reign of Queen Elizabeth as Illustrated by the Minute Book of the Dedham Classis, 1582-9*, Camden Society, 3rd series viii; Puritan dilemma also described in Patrick McGrath, *Papists and Puritans under Elizabeth I* (London, 1967), 210-17. See J. P. Sommerville, 'The "New Art of Lying"', in E. Leites (ed.), *Conscience and Casuistry in Early Modern Europe* (Cambridge, 1988), esp. 171-84, for an account of the theological arguments for and against equivocation, used by both Catholics and Protestants in the sixteenth century.

¹⁶ Devlin, op. cit., 305-24, 358-9 for list of sources for Southwell's trial.

¹⁷ Ibid. Licenced editions of Southwell's works published in London 1591-5 given at Appendix 'D', 336.

¹⁸ Peter Milward, *Shakespeare's Religious Background* (London, 1973), 57-8.

traitor, may glance at Southwell's execution, when the onlookers prevented the hangman from cutting down his body for drawing and quatering (the sentence on a traitor) until he was dead. When his severed head was held up to the crowd for their loyal approval, no one was heard to cry 'Traitor'.¹⁹

In the trial of the Gunpowder Plotters in January 1606, Sir Edward Coke, again prosecuting, noted at length the papist doctrine of equivocation as one of the means whereby the treason was to be kept secret. He supported this by quoting from *A Treatise of Equivocation*, written 'not long before the Queen's death'. The copy in his possession was endorsed by Garnet and Blackwell, the archpriest.²⁰

Shortly after James's accession in 1603, William Watson, a secular priest, was accused of the Bye Plot, the object of which was to kidnap the new king and force him to agree to religious toleration. Those whom Watson approached were first asked to take an oath of secrecy which ended:

... this oath is voluntarily taken by me in simple and plain terms, without all equivocation and deceit, and religiously to be kept, I attest, so help me God and holy doom.

but the oath itself was equivocal, as it bound the swearer

not to reveal anything . . . without advice and consent of twelve of the chief thereof,

which was an impossibility as Watson admitted there were never more than three or four chief contrivers!

Copley, one of Watson's accomplices, admitted in examination in July 1603 that:

for the better drawing on of associates of the best sort, and of the timorous, it was to be intimated by the tenderers of the oath, that the business was no more than to present unto his majesty . . . a supplication . . . for an assuage of our grievance.

Having taken the oath, 'the activer and more mettled spirits' were to be told of the plan to

seize the king's person though the exact ploy used with each was varied –

to urge men on to be in a readiness for his majesty's defence, and furthering of the catholic cause according to the diversities of changes in men's opinions.

They were assured that seizing the king was lawful as he was not yet crowned. Thomas, Lord Grey of Wilton, regarded as the leader of the Puritans, was approached to give his support, but declined to be 'used'. This did not prevent some would-be conspirators, who hesitated at seizing the royal person, being told that they were to seize the king in order to forestall a Puritan plot to do the same! Watson was tried for treason on 15 November 1603 and executed on 29 November.²¹ In the words of the Porter, 'an equivocator, that could swear in both the scales against either scale, who committed treason enough for God's sake, yet could not equivocate to Heaven' (II.iii).

We do not know if Watson was helped or encouraged in his treason by an *agent provocateur*. What no historian will dispute was that the plot was 'used' by those in power to eliminate personal rivals. Lord Grey of Wilton might have been involved, as the prosecution alleged, but Sir Walter Raleigh was regarded by Watson as an enemy to be removed by the conspirators when the king was in their power! This is clear from Watson's examination, but was not mentioned at the trials and Raleigh only escaped the axe – for the time being – because the king changed the sentence to life imprisonment in the Tower.

If an allusion to Watson is accepted, the most likely date for the writing of *Macbeth* is the latter half of 1603 and so the play would have been ready for presentation in the first Christmas season at Court for the King's Men's new patron. This would solve other problems in the play. The compliments to James to be seen in the Apparitions are hard to reconcile with a date of writing after both *Measure for Measure* and *King Lear*, as both plays were performed at Court and contain material that can be construed as critical of the king.²² Shakespeare

¹⁹ Devlin, *op. cit.*, 324.

²⁰ Howell, *op. cit.*, ii.180. *Treatise of Equivocation*, ed. David Jardine (London, 1851); A. F. Allison, in 'The Writings of Fr. Henry Garnet, SJ (1555–1606)', *Recusant History* (formerly *Biographical Studies*), i (1951), 7–21 at 14–15. attributes the *Treatise* to Garnet.

²¹ Howell, *op. cit.*, ii.61–6 for trial and execution; Dodd, *op. cit.*, iv, appendix for statements by Watson and Copley.

²² M. Hotine, 'Two Plays for St Stephen's Day', *N&Q*, ccxxvi (1982), 119–21, and 'Measure for Measure: Further Contemporary Notes', *N&Q*, ccxxxv (1990), 184–5.

does not indulge in courtly compliment of James in any other play. The euphoria that had greeted him on his accession was well described by John Chamberlain on 12 April 1603, before the King's arrival in London:

These bountiful beginnings raise all mens spirits and put them in great hopes, insomuch that not only protestants, but papists and puritanes, and the very poets with theyre ydle pamphlets promise themselves great part in his favor: so that to satisfie or please all, *hic labor hoc opus est*: and wold be more then a mans worke.²³

James reached London on 7 May 1603. By June that year the French ambassador, Beaumont, already noticed a change:

The discontent increases from day to day on various grounds and spreads itself over all classes. The people are sensible of no alleviation in any quarter . . . The upper classes are furious against the Scotch; nay one has suffered the expression to escape him, that they must have Scotch vespers like the Sicilian.

By June 1604 Beaumont noted:

Consider, for pity's sake, what must be the state and condition of a prince, whom the preachers publicly from the pulpit assail, whom the comedians bring upon the stage, whose wife attends these representations to enjoy the laugh against her husband, whom the parliament braves and despises, and who is universally hated by the whole people.²⁴

The time for compliment was past. In 1604 in *Measure for Measure* Shakespeare was writing advice on good government.

Macbeth, if performed in the winter of 1603/4, is not just a compliment though, it is a prayer that James will indeed deliver England from tyranny, as Malcolm does Scotland. Like Malcolm's father, James's mother, Mary Queen of Scots, had been killed by the ruler he was replacing. Although Shakespeare found the Malcolm/Macduff scene (IV.iv) in Holinshed, he embellishes it, perhaps after perusing

James's advice on kingship in his *Basilikon Doron*, on sale in London since March 1603.²⁵

[page 25, opening of The First Booke] As he cannot be thought worthie to rule and command others, that cannot rule and dantone his owne proper affections and unreasonable appetites, so can he not be thought worthie to gouerne a Christian people knowing and fearing God, that in his own person and harte, feareth not and loueth not the Divine Majestie.

[page 103] But it is not ynough to a good King, by the scepter of good lawes well execute to gouerne, & by force of armes to protect his people; if he joyne not therewith his vertuous life in his owne person, and in the person of his Court and companie: by good example alluring his subjectes to the loue of vertue, and hatred of vice. . . . [page 105] And this example in your owne life and person, I likewise deuide in two parts: The first, in the gouernement of your Courte and followers, in all godlinesse & vertue: the next, in hauing your owne minde decked & enriched so with all vertuous qualities, that ther-with ye may worthelie rule your people.

[page 123] Since then without the blessing of GOD, ye cannot looke for a happie successe in Mariage; ye must be carefull both in your praeparation for it, and in the choise and usage of your wife, to procure the same. By your praeparation, I meane, that ye must keep your bodie cleane and unpolluted, till ye giue it to your wife; whome-to onlie it belongeth. For howe can ye justly craue to be joyned with a pure Virgine, if your body be polluted? Why should the one halfe be cleane, and the other defiled? And althogh I knowe, Fornication is thought but a light & veniall sinne, by the most part of the world; yet remember wel what I saide to you in my first booke anent conscience: and count euerie sinne & breache of Gods lawe, not according as the vaine world esteemeth of it; but as God the judge & maker of the lawe accounteth of the same.

²³ McClure, op. cit., i.192.

²⁴ Frederich von Raumer, *History of the 16th and 17th Centuries Illustrated by Original Documents* (London, 1835), ii.197, 206-7.

²⁵ McClure, op. cit., i.191; page nos refer to James Craigie (ed.), *The Basilikon Doron of King James VI* (Scottish Text Society, 1944), i, which gives three versions of the text. I have used that of the Waldegrave edition of 1603.

[page 163. The Third Booke] It is a true olde saying, That a King is as one set on a stage, whose smallest actions and gestures, all the people gazinglie doe beholde: and therefore although a King be neuer so praecise in the discharging of his office, the people, who seeth but the outward part, will euer judge of the substance, by the circumstances: and according to the outwarde appearance, if his behaiour be light or dissolute, will conceiue prae-occupied conceits of the Kings inward intention . . . and prae-judged conceits will, in the meane time, breede contempt, the mother of rebellion and disorder.

The play may well have acquired new topicality in 1605/6, occasioning a revival that would account for those echoes of the play noted by critics around this time.²⁶ However, this topicality may not have been in straightforward condemnation of the Gunpowder Plot as is usually assumed. Macbeth is the murderer but he arranges for the two grooms to be suspected and makes assurance doubly sure by killing them before they can be examined. Contemporaries were puzzled that the Gunpowder Plot appeared to be the work of minor gentry, and wondered that the principal alleged conspirators, Catesby and Percy, were 'conveniently' killed before they could be examined – like the grooms? Godfrey Goodman, in London at the time of the plot, notes:

The great statesman [i.e. Salisbury] . . . would first contrive and then discover a treason; and the more odious and hateful the treason were, his service would be the greater and the more acceptable.

. . . Now it is conceived . . . that Percy did put them upon this particular plot; and this is most certain . . . Sir Francis Moore, who had been an ancient acquaintance to this Mr Percy, . . . having some occasion of business, at twelve of the clock at night, and going then homeward from York House to the Middle Temple at two, several times he met Mr. Percy coming out of that great statesman's house, and wondered what his business should be there.

[when the conspirators were surrounded at Holbeach] . . . Now here was a great oversight; that whereas there was no possibility that the traitors could resist, nor any hope that they could escape, neither did they kill any one man that did beset them, therefore a special charge should have been given that they should take the traitors alive, whereby that upon the rack they might discover the whole plot. Now they that beset them were permitted to shoot, and did kill Percy and Catesby, the two principal contrivers of the plot, and none but they were killed; and some will not stick to report, that the great statesman sending to apprehend these traitors gave special charge and direction for Percy and Catesby, 'Let me never see them alive;' who it may be would have revealed some evil council given.²⁷

These suspicions were widespread enough to demand action. At Garnet's trial, Sir Edward Coke noted:

There was a particular apology spread abroad . . . That king-killing and queen-killing was not indeed a doctrine of theirs [i.e. the Jesuits] but only a fiction and policy of our state, thereby to make the popish religion to be despised and in disgrace.²⁸

The preface to the proceedings of the trials printed by the government printer in 1606, makes clear they are being published to give the lie to those who still insisted on believing this. To judge from the evidence of Osborne and Chamberlain, noted above, widespread belief that Salisbury was the real villain persisted to his death.

MARGARET HOTINE

London

²⁷ Godfrey Goodman, *The Court of King James the First* (London, 1839), i. 102, 104–5, 106–7. Goodman was born in 1583 and later became Bishop of Gloucester.

²⁸ Howell, *op. cit.*, ii.220.

²⁶ See K. Muir (ed.), *Macbeth* (Arden edn, 1962, repr. 1976), xv, xix–xxi.