"Both diligent and secret": the intelligence letters of William Herle
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""BOTH DILIGENT AND SECRET": THE INTELLIGENCE LETTERS OF WILLIAM HERLE.'

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ABSTRACT

The unpublished letters of William Herle, diplomat and intelligencer to the court of Elizabeth I reveal startling insights into the role of such agents in political affairs. As well as their more obvious content of sensitive information, Herle's letters expose his primary impetus behind the pursuit of intelligence; of the construction and maintenance of a patronage alliance based upon the judicious exchange and release of knowledge at politically sensitive moments. This epistolary aspect of intelligence letters - overlooked by much scholarship - reveals the complex strategies Herle implements to circumvent the disruption of social hierarchy at the moment of counsel, the private transfer of knowledge in a medium often subject to broadcast, and the uncomfortable union of potent intelligence and familiar affect. This dissertation investigates the world of Elizabethan intelligence operations as experienced by William Herle, focusing on the topics of religion, early modern diplomacy, imprisonment, secret communication and patronage relationships based upon intelligence-exchange. The letters are an invaluable resource for scholars of early modern history and sixteenth-century letter writing, documenting the lengths to which a client would go to secure and maintain patronage in this period, encompassing the giving of gifts, the transmitting of books, and the strategic deployment of potent information. Scrutinizing intelligence operations from a social and textual standpoint offers the scholar a wider picture of the agent's position and relation to the political landscape. This dissertation examines Herle's evolving status of common informant, prison spy, diplomatic envoy, and special ambassador, surmounting obstacles of social hierarchy whilst maintaining a marginal, secret status. By identifying the epistolary and social minutiae of Herle's letters, this study relocates the position of the Elizabethan intelligencer, departing from the typical notion of skulking spy and instead positioning the agent directly in contact, both textual and physical, with the political power-base.
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ABBREVIATIONS

BL British Library, London
CSPD Calendar of State Papers Domestic
CSPF Calendar of State Papers Foreign
DNB Dictionary of National Biography
EHR English Historical Review
ELR English Literary Renaissance
HMC Historical Manuscripts Commission
MPM Plantin-Moretus Museum, Antwerp
OED Oxford English Dictionary
PMLA Proceedings of the Modern Language Association
PRO (SP) Public Record Office (State Papers)
TRANSCRIPTION POLICY AND NOTE ON DATES

I have in all direct quotations from early modern manuscripts silently expanded contractions and suspensions, including the open-bowled thorn. Where William Herle made a superscript ending or abbreviation in the middle of a word, I have expanded and filled it in, using italics to denote such practice. Herle made many strikethroughs and crossing-outs in his letters, and these I have retained in the quotes as I find them to be usually significant. All superscriptions have been lowered and placed in italics, and marginal annotations have been placed alongside or within the text and clearly marked.

Dates are in Old Style throughout.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I confess I share some features with William Herle. I, like he did four hundred years ago, have spent much time searching for information about elusive and furtive characters, seeking knowledge deliberately secreted from prying eyes. But my search has at least been aided by the kind help of many.

The staff at the School of English and Drama at Queen Mary College and at the AHRB Centre for Editing Lives and Letters (CELL) have provided a welcome environment in which to work, exchange ideas and comments, and offer solace in times of crisis. After seven years as a student in the department, I regard it and its members most fondly. My supervisor, Professor Lisa Jardine, has encouraged, motivated and inspired me to herculean lengths - her unfailing optimism and enthusiasm prising me from many a dark corner. To her I give my warmest thanks. For offering praise, criticism and support when needed, I thank especially David Colclough, Warren Boutcher, Patricia Brewerton, Julia Boffey, Eleanor Merchant, Graham Rees, Maria Wakely, Alison Wiggins, Alan Stewart, Jan Broadway, Jerry Brotton, Bill Sherman, Harriet Knight, Rosanna Huq, Pete Langman, Jonathan Gibson, Matt Finch, and Jeremy Schildt. Thanks also to the CELL Renaissance Seminar and the Queen Mary Postgraduate Forum.

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My gratitude also extends to my parents and my partner David, whose constant support continues to astound me.

This work is dedicated to my beloved grandfather who sadly didn’t live to read it.

I certify that this thesis, and the research to which it refers, are the product of my own work, and that any ideas or quotations from the work of other people, published or otherwise, are fully acknowledged in accordance with the standard referencing practices of the discipline. I acknowledge the helpful guidance and support of my supervisor, Professor Lisa Jardine.
INTRODUCTION: DRAMATIS PERSONAE

The letters of William Herle, a spy, agent and diplomate of the court of Elizabeth I, have long been employed to illuminate certain moments in the history of that reign, revealing as they do in lurid detail the extent of the political machination, entrapment and intrigue associated with the key statesmen of the period. However, this politico-historical aspect has radically overshadowed the letters' hitherto ancillary content of patronage discourse and friendship strategies; resonant material which crucially alters our perception of early modern espionage activities.

Thus in an eighteenth-century compilation of state papers William Murdin used a series of letters to illustrate the more arcane elements of the Ridolphi plot which frequently mentioned Herle's role in the affair, while James A Froude situated Herle on the fringes of the Northern Rebellion of 1569. Baron Kervyn de Lettenhove published several of Herle's letters in a letter-collection relating to the Low Countries conflict. Later historians have also utilised certain sections of the archive for similar ends, using Herle to demonstrate the furtive activities of prison spies and informers, and locating him (accurately) on the fringes of court life, persistently angling for increased credit to maintain solvency, and deploying sensitive and secret information to this end. Conyers Read positions Herle as a pawn between William Cecil Lord Burghley, the Earl of Leicester and Sir Francis Walsingham - the three 'spymasters' of the middle years of Elizabeth's reign - the latter prompting Herle to feed Burghley drastically modified information to influence his decision over England's policy in the Low Countries' conflict. Read labels Herle as 'hardly a man to be trusted'.

More modern authors have also ascribed to Herle a dubious notoriety founded upon his marginal and furtive status, citing him

alongside the infamous figures of Dr John Story, Francis Throckmorton, and Dr Lopez, and such moments as the Ridolphi plot, the Northern Rebellion and the attempted assassination of the Prince of Orange. John Bossy categorically situates Herle as a suspicious, secret individual, locating him as the conduit of information out of the French Embassy and into the hands of Walsingham, and includes five of his letters in an appendix. This is the extent to which Herle's letters are in the public domain: no more than thirty transcriptions out of nearly three hundred contained in the archives.

Herle's liminal position as informer, spy and diplomatic envoy placed him at the extreme margins of the court, despite the fact that his intelligence reports were conscious contributions to political decision-making. This contradiction between the crucially important information he transmitted and his inferior and ambiguous social position afforded him a peculiar status which has impacted upon how his letters have been viewed. So often employed for their sensational political content, Herle's letters have been denied the recognition they deserve as something other than political documents - each missive a carefully crafted text designed to elicit goodwill and preserve the relationship bond between the correspondents. Occupying this curious place between public, i.e. political, and private, i.e. domestic life, the letters require a dual scrutiny which has not yet been attempted.

Most of Herle's letters are located in the British Library and the National Archives, with others scattered across various collections throughout England. Around three hundred letters survive, along with additional peripheral texts such as legal documents and Privy Council

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2 Froude places Herle at the Northern Rebellion, after a comment by Herle in 1571 claiming kinship with the Countess of Northumberland. Froude, (1903) x, 213 f. For more on Herle's comment and Froude's opinion of Herle, see Chapter 5.

3 John Bossy, Giordano Bruno and the Embassy Affair (New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 2002), see 'Texts'. I have used the second edition of Bossy's book, in which he has reconsidered some of his earlier conclusions.

4 This notion of public/political content is of course undercut by the arcane material commonly contained within Herle's letters, causing their reception, reading and storage to be strictly monitored.

5 These other collections include the Bodleian Library, Magdelene College Library, Cambridge, Hatfield House, Longleat, Ancaster, and Inner Temple. The National Archives was formed in April 2003 - an amalgamation of the Public Record Office and the Historical Manuscripts Commission.
memoranda in which Herle is mentioned. The correspondence spans a period of thirty years, and includes three distinct major sequences of letters: from a period when he was imprisoned in the Marshalsea prison in 1571, another from his residency in Antwerp for six months in 1582, and a fraught set of letters between Herle and Burghley in late summer 1585. The letters in the British Library are mainly the surviving correspondence with Lord Burghley preserved in the Lansdowne papers, and a mixture of recipients in the Cotton papers, many of which letters are copies of the originals. In the National Archives, his recipients are more diverse, ranging from Sir Philip Sidney to Queen Elizabeth, and include the Earl of Leicester, Sir Francis Walsingham, Sir Thomas Parry and Sir Edward Horsey.

Despite the frequent deployment of select Herle letters to illustrate the historian's point, comparatively little is known and published about Herle's life. Official documents exist in the archives which locate him at particular moments through Elizabeth's reign as a diplomat, felon, MP, and sheriff, and, together with the biographical content of his letters, we can begin to recapture both the personal and historical record of this elusive character.

From his correspondence and his appointments abroad, we can deduce that Herle was well educated; able to read, write and speak Latin, French, Dutch, Flemish, Spanish, Portuguese, German and Italian. No traces of him appear at either Oxford or Cambridge, but it seems that he did have legal training at one of the Inns of Court, and resided in lodgings at Temple Bar in the later years of his life. With no details

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6 CGC Tite remarks that the state papers contained within the Cotton Library, both copies and originals, probably came from the time when Cotton was supplying materials to the French historian Jacques Auguste de Thou, who was re-writing the history of late-sixteenth Scotland in an attempt to redeem the reputation of Mary Queen of Scots. "Official work and connections of these kinds undoubtedly provided Cotton with opportunities to gain legitimate access to government papers and, given the still hardly adequate control exercised over their custody, he would have had no difficulty in taking copies or removing originals", Thomas Smith, *Catalogue of the Manuscripts In the Cottonian Library (1696)* ed. CGC Tite (Cambridge; DS Brewer, 1984), p.4. This might explain why, out of the letters relating from Herle's imprisonment in 1571 contained in the Cotton manuscript collection, some are copies and some are holograph. The originals of the Cotton copies (BL MS Cotton Caligula III) are in the State Papers Foreign (Scotland).

of the place or year of his birth, a passing reference in a letter of 1576 gives us a starting point from where to guess his age. He remarked:

I have byn deltt with since my commyng home, by an olld frystnd of myne of xxth yeres acqwaynctance, to have his humble good will long borne vnto your Lord.  

We know that Herle was in diplomatic service to Sir William Cecil in the year 1559, from a letter of his from Antwerp on his way to the German provinces, and we can assume that at this date Herle was at least twenty years old. This posits a probable birth date of around 1530-40.

The date of Herle's death is less obscure, yet still indefinite. A packet of letters in the Public Record Office bears the inscription:

Lettres to William Herle from my Lord burghley Lord Tresoror of England, found amongst his wrytyngs & brought to the Erle of Leicester at the deth of Herle.

This confirms that Herle was dead before Robert Dudley, Earl of Leicester, who died in September 1588. Herle's last letter is from the 3rd of May 1588, so he must have died that summer, the administration of his goods being granted on the 8th of February the next year.

William Herle relied upon his patrons to recommend him for offices and appointments throughout his life. His foremost patronage bond was with Sir William Cecil in the early years of Elizabeth's reign, an alliance which persisted for the duration of Herle's life, albeit with sporadic moments of disfavour. At the end of his life, Herle noted in a letter to Burghley that:

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_Cantabrigienses, 1485-1885_ (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1891). Herle's valedictions from 1585 onwards commonly state his residence at 'Temple Barre'.
8 HMC Hatfield MSS 9 f.42v-43v (BL M/485/3), William Herle to Lord Burghley, 18th October 1576.
9 PRO SP 12 181/43. Lord Burghley to William Herle, 18th August 1585.
I have served her majestie from the begynneng of her Raigne, drawn only by your good Lord thervnto, from sir William Garrards howse, a gentillman I am of honest lineage.\textsuperscript{11}

Herle appears to have come to the attention of both the Earl of Leicester and Sir Francis Walsingham in the fifteen-eighties, when he began regularly sending them letters of intelligence, and referring to them as his patrons, although there is evidence that Herle was known to them before this point.\textsuperscript{12}

His first letters are spaced far apart, and were sent from the continent, suggesting either that he was abroad for a long period of time, or made frequent visits to foreign princes as a diplomatic envoy. Instructions and letters of recommendation from Elizabeth to fellow monarchs dating from this period reveal the breadth of Herle’s early diplomatic experience, making legations to sovereigns who included Francis I Duke of Saxe-Lauenburg, Adolph Duke of Holstein, Otto Duke of Brunswick-Lüneburg, and the Senate of Hamburg.\textsuperscript{13} After his return from the German provinces in 1563, there is a gap in his correspondence of eight years, broken only by three letters from mid-1565 in which he denied accusations of piracy to Burghley. One of the documents is a ‘dyarye description’ of Herle’s movements during the month of July 1565, in which he detailed his seemingly innocuous activities:

\textsuperscript{11} BL MS Lansdowne 54, f.150”v, 152”v. William Herle to Lord Burghley, 6\textsuperscript{th} August 1587. Sir William Garrard had been Lord Mayor of London in 1555, had strong mercantile and continental links, and died in 1571. He lived in Dorney Court in Buckinghamshire, from where Herle wrote a letter to Burghley in 1577, BL MS Lansdowne 25 f.129”-130”. William Herle to Lord Burghley, 19\textsuperscript{th} October 1577.

\textsuperscript{12} Indeed, Herle had sent Dudley, then Master of the Horse, a letter in 1563, BL MS Lansdowne 7 f.77”-78”, 13\textsuperscript{th} October. Dr Thomas Wilson had also mentioned Herle to Walsingham in a matter concerning La Mote Fenelon in 1578, Lettenhove, (1891), vol. 10, p.703.

\textsuperscript{13} BL MS Royal 13 B 1, various ff. The British Library Manuscripts Online Catalogue notes that these visits were made by Herle to ‘fetch material of war from Hamburg’. What does this mean? He seems to have been in possession of several copies of one letter addressed to different Northern European rulers. Apart from these letters of credence and a set of instructions from the early years of Elizabeth's reign, no passports or licences to cross the seas exist for Herle. He made a remarkable number of journeys abroad, and made repeated requests for a licence to travel abroad to pursue a living, even asking permission to sail with Sir Francis Drake on his next voyage, PRO SP 12 148/55. William Herle to the Earl of Leicester, 16\textsuperscript{th} April 1581.
I went down the River as far as Lee, in company of mr Blent & on Corbett his neighbor, havyng a pece with vs to shoote att ffowll & mete to make merye withall.14

However, it appears that this appeal to Burghley was unsuccessful, as a minute of the Acts of the Privy Council for August of that year reads:

Hearle, now in prison, standeth charged, and uppon the due triall and examinacion thereof, and of any other matter that shalbe layed to the charge of hym.15

It is not clear whether these accusations of piracy were connected to his re-imprisonment in 1570, an Act of the Privy Council recording that on the 13th of November Herle and three others were to be held incommunicado in the Marshalsea Prison.16 He remained in the Marshalsea for at least six months, complaining to Burghley that he had:

Nott somuche a stole to sitt on, nor a table to wryte on nor yett a clowtt to wipe on.17

It was during this time that Burghley called upon Herle’s services to try and discover the cipher used between a fellow prisoner in the Marshalsea and the Bishop of Ross, ambassador to Mary Queen of Scots. At the end of May he was removed to the Tower of London, where he interviewed a ‘Dr Lopez’ about various matters and duly reported back to Burghley. The documents relating from this episode have provided the foundations for Herle’s historical image of furtive spy and untrustworthy individual, charting as they do in sensational and

16 APC, vol. 7, p.401. Herle’s fellow prisoners included John Poole, who was in prison with Herle until at least 1st May 1571, and was connected with piracy again a year later, BL MS Lansdowne f.102v-103r, William Herle to Lord Burghley, 16th March 1572. See also Chapter 5.
17 BL MS Cotton Caligula C III f.60v. William Herle to Lord Burghley, 4th April 1571.
dramatic detail Herle’s efforts to outwit his quarries by any means. He appears to have been released from the Tower a month later, and resumed correspondence with Burghley.\textsuperscript{18}

During this time he approached the task of protecting the realm from conspiracy with personal fervour. He requested the post of surveyor of strangers, drawing attention to the pernicious alien presence in England (significantly excluding the Protestant refugees from the Low Countries and France). Perhaps to complement his recent experience in the Tower, he requested a lease in reversion of the office of the gentleman porter of the Tower, confidently claiming that its current holder would be dead by midsummer at the latest.\textsuperscript{19} At some point in 1572 Herle was implicated in an improbable conspiracy to kidnap the Duke of Norfolk, abduct Burghley’s sons, and assassinate Burghley. By examining the papers which relate to the conspiracy contained in the Cecil Papers, it is clear that Herle had once more assumed the role of discontented conspirator. The examinations and confessions reveal muddled facts from the other two plotters, both of whom had not wholly trusted Herle to begin with, and were now bitterly claiming the conspiracy was his idea in the first place. It seems that Herle had encouraged treasonous banter between the two men, Edmund Mather and Kenelm Barney, and then revealed the plot to the authorities.\textsuperscript{20}

All this shady activity was adversely affecting Herle’s social reputation. He bitterly wrote to Burghley after the conspiracy that:

\begin{quote}
I am entred into a generall hatred & speche att every table to be the dangerosest & worste man that ever lyved.\textsuperscript{21}
\end{quote}

\begin{footnotes}
\textsuperscript{18} PRO SP 12 78/44. Accounts list of Sir Owen Hopton for the ‘dyets and chardges of certain prisoners’, June 24\textsuperscript{th} 1571.
\textsuperscript{19} BL MS Lansdowne 16 f.80'-81'. William Herle to Lord Burghley, 18\textsuperscript{th} January 1572.
\textsuperscript{20} Many of the documents relating to this plot are printed in Murdin (1759), although Herle’s letters to Burghley about the affair are not reproduced (BL MS Additional 48023 f. 123' - 126'. William Herle to Lord Burghley, 18\textsuperscript{th} December 1571, copy by Robert Beale). Most of Murdin’s printed documents relating to this conspiracy can be found in \textit{HMC Calendar of the MSS ... preserved at Hatfield House}, vol.2 (London: HMSO, 1888), pp.3, 6, 9.
\textsuperscript{21} PRO SP 12 86/42. William Herle to Lord Burghley, 17\textsuperscript{th} May 1572.
\end{footnotes}
He indignantly referred Burghley to the implicit promise of the rewards for his prison ‘service’:

And wheras mi Lords of the Cowncell did promys me in your presence, when as I was committed to the Towre, that they wold be mi deffence for ani malice or infamy that I shold receve for mi service & be also a mene to the Queen’s maiestie for a liveng for me. 22

The whispered rumours might have also been affecting Herle’s marital aspirations. He wrote to Burghley in the same year:

I know where to be sped of an honest matron, that is worth 6000l in redy Coyne ... [if] your Lord wold woee for me your self. 23

Incredibly, Burghley complied with Herle’s request, providing a generic letter of introduction and commendation, stating to the prospective bride:

I thinck assurely he will prove an honest husband & will behave hym self towards you like a gentillman to be loved of you. 24

However, there is little mention hereafter of marital inclination, and there is no record or mention of Herle ever finding his perfect (i.e. wealthy) match.

After his prison activities and months of consorting with conspirators, Herle ventured across the channel into the Low Countries, where he was generously received by the Prince of Orange who was anxious to secure aid from Elizabeth. In his poem ‘Gascoigne’s Voyage

22 PRO SP 12 86/42.
23 BL MS Lansdowne 16 f.80'-81”. William Herle to Lord Burghley, 18th January 1572.
24 BL MS Lansdowne 21 f.31”. Lord Burghley, generic letter of reference, endorsed ‘The Copi of mi Lord Tresurors lettre verbatim for William Herlle to ani wydow that he wold make that superscriptyon unto’, 10th August 1573. Herle seems to have been the sole provider for his sister’s four children, and had a ‘brother’ (possibly by marriage), one Laurence Johnson, PRO SP 83 16/34. William Herle to Sir Francis Walsingham, 13th June 1582.
into Holland', the soldier-poet George Gascoigne placed Herle in his boat with Rowland Yorke on his way over to the Netherlands in March 1572. 25 Upon his return Herle drafted a lengthy ‘discourse’ detailing the sundry discussions he had personally held with the Prince, commenting on the threat Spain posed to England, and listing the reasons why England should come to the aid of the Low Countries provinces ruled by Orange. Read describes this document as largely drafted by Burghley, which, while disparaging Herle’s capacity for this sort of work, suggests some intense discussion between Herle and his patron on the matter. 26 Three copies of this ‘discourse’ - which is sixteen sides long - are still extant, two of which are holograph and the other annotated by Herle. 27

His letters from 1573-4 reveal Herle’s efforts to secure employment, suing variously for such patents, leases and offices as the surveyor of clothiers, and the brokering of goods bought by aliens. He was growing increasingly desperate to pay off his debts, many of which he had accrued during his time in prison. His letters from this date until his death rarely neglect to mention his impecunious state, and are usually explicit in requesting the intervention of his recipient between Herle and his creditors. 28

By March 1575 he was negotiating between Burghley and agents of the Prince of Orange who were wary of visiting the London court, apparently terrified of meeting the Spanish ambassador, whom they were convinced was plotting their murders. One of the agents was Paul Buys, who would be Herle’s main contact in the Low Countries in the future. Herle confided to Burghley that:

27 BL MS Cotton Galba C IV f.381'-388”. ‘William Herle’s discourse on the Prince of Orange’, 11th June 1573; BL MS Cotton Titus F III f.295'-301”. ‘Discourses which the Prince of Orange had with WH touching the state of the Low Countries, 11th June 1573; PRO SP 70 127/36, William Herle’s discourse on Flanders’, 11th June 1573.
28 APC, vol. 9 (1894) records a motion on 7th July 1577 at Greenwich, to end ‘the matter between William Herle and William Waad’, p.380. Herle was in almost constant litigation with Waad over a debt until at least 1582.
He wold have attended vppon your Lord him self, saving he 
wolld avoyed the spaynissh Ambassadors eyes & observatyons of 
hym, which otherwise ar ffyxed to nere vppon him & his company, 
& nott aloneyy vppon their bysnes somuch as vppon their Lives, a 
practis being made to kylle theme.²⁹

Herle’s connection with the Low Countries continued throughout the 
latter half of the decade, and he appears to have travelled abroad, 
judging from a comment in a later letter, in which he passed on 
information he had received from the continent since his ‘commyng 
home’.³⁰

By 1580, Herle was back in prison for debt, spending a few 
months in the Counter, suing both Burghley and Leicester for 
intervention in the disputes with his creditors. Upon his release, he 
travelled to Wales, where he held the office of Rhagler (or sheriff) of 
Cardiganshire. Finding that this produced more problems than relieving 
his financial crisis, Herle soon sold the office, and returned to London 
and the peregrinating court, where he diligently applied himself to the 
gathering of information, both domestic and continental.

He followed the Earl of Leicester to the Low Countries in March 
1582, who had escorted the Duke of Anjou to Antwerp to receive the 
sovereignty of the Northern Provinces. Remaining in the important 
mercantile town from March until September, Herle appears to have 
resided in the English House. Hereupon followed a large part of the 
corpus of Herle’s surviving letters; his residency in Antwerp providing 
much opportunity for sending information, which letters and their 
enclosures have been largely preserved. During Herle’s time in the Low 
Countries, he assiduously sent intelligence and raw data to Burghley, 
Leicester and Walsingham, often copying these letters and sending

²⁹ PRO SP 70 137/67. William Herle to Lord Burghley, 11th March 1575. 
³⁰ HMC Hatfield MS 9 f.42'-43'. William Herle to Lord Burghley, 18th October 1576. In 
this letter, Herle made indignant remarks on popular misgivings about the success of 
his recent embassy abroad. In 1578, Dr Thomas Wilson wrote to Walsingham to discuss 
the surveillance of the French Ambassador La Mothe Fenelon, remarking ‘I have 
thought of Hearle, but he wyl fyl our heads here with soche variete of uncertayne 
trewthes, as I dare not adventure upon hym’, 8th August 1578, Lettenhove, vol. 10 
(1891), p.703.
them verbatim to his other patrons. Despite the comment in one of these letters that he was acting as Leicester’s agent, there is little evidence that his status was either official or salaried. He made persistent advances to Burghley, Leicester and Walsingham to secure the restitution of his debts in return for the intelligence he was able to gather and transmit, such as details of the assassination attempt upon the Prince of Orange soon after Herle’s arrival, the loss of Oudenaarde later in the year, and the swearing in of the Duke of Anjou as sovereign.

Upon his return, Herle was recruited by Burghley and Walsingham to frequent the French embassy at Salisbury court in London, and to convey messages between Walsingham and his mole in the embassy. Herle was able to comment on the furtive activity occurring around Salisbury Court, pointing suspiciously to the visits of a kinsman of the Throckmorton family, the hangers-on at the embassy, and the participating celebrants at the ambassador’s mass. During this period, Herle was also assigned by Sir Christopher Hatton to the house of the visiting Count Laski of Poland, in the guise of ‘service’, but principally to maintain surveillance. 31

By the next year, Herle was on diplomatic service of another sort, travelling to Emden and around the Low Countries, and in close contact with William Davison, who had gone over to negotiate England’s offer of aid to the Netherlands. Upon his arrival at Dordrecht he was informed of the recent assassination of the Prince of Orange, sending a curiously unemotional dispatch to Lord Burghley with the news:

31 For more on the suspicious activity surrounding the French Embassy at this time, see Bossy (2002). Bossy also provides a brief yet traditional biography of Herle, that he was a suspicious character, and well suited to the process of espionage, pp.15, 26. He also states that Herle was passing the information from the mole ‘Henry Fagot’ to Walsingham, p.27, despite the fact that all of Herle’s reports from this period are addressed explicitly to Burghley. For Hatton’s employment of Herle, see Sir Harris Nicholas, Memoirs of the Life and Times of Sir Christopher Hatton (London: R Bentley, 1847), and BL MS Additional 15891 f.112””. William Herle to Sir Christopher Hatton, 19th May 1583.
I arryved att dordrecht newlye vpon the Prynces dethe, where the Magistrats conferred with me att large, of the hevye accydent hapned, & of their own propper affayres, & state.\textsuperscript{32}

Uncharacteristically brief in his report to Burghley, Herle apologetically revealed the reason:

\begin{quote}
Mr Secretorye tolld me that it was her maiestie's plesure I sholld dyrect mi packett to her alone, wherfore I humbly refferre your Lord for knowlege of the particularityes that I have collected in mi vyage Throwgh holland.\textsuperscript{33}
\end{quote}

Indeed, Herle had 'briefed' Elizabeth a week earlier with a twelve-side report on the state of the Low Countries provinces still loyal to Orange. It thus appears that Herle had more official status on this legation than previous trips to the continent. Nevertheless, he was impatient in his task, writing home:

\begin{quote}
The pryncipall cawse which I do handelt here is so Towghe, & these persons so slowe & dull of capacyte that I have to dele with, as that I cannott hithervnto com to any conclusyon.\textsuperscript{34}
\end{quote}

Early the next year, Burghley drafted a memorandum to the Earl of Leicester requesting that he send Herle over to Count John of Emden again, as Herle was:

\begin{quote}
One best acquaintid and of sufficient credite already with him.\textsuperscript{35}
\end{quote}

Significantly, Burghley added:

\begin{footnotesize}\textsuperscript{32} BL MS Lansdowne 43 f.24'-25'. William Herle to Lord Burghley, 29\textsuperscript{th} July 1584. William, Prince of Orange was assassinated on the 10\textsuperscript{th} of July 1584 at his palace in Delft.  
\textsuperscript{33} BL MS Lansdowne 43 f.24'-25'.  
\textsuperscript{34} PRO SP 83 23/22. William Herle to Sir Francis Walsingham, 3\textsuperscript{rd} October 1584.  
\textsuperscript{35} PRO SP 84 7/42. Privy Council to the Earl of Leicester, 20\textsuperscript{th} March 1585. The second quote is in superscript on the manuscript.\end{footnotesize}
If by chance of sycknes or other lett William herle can not be
vsed herin than your Lord is to choose some other mete person:
though it will be hard to fynd any meter for this purpose.

Before he left for Emden, however, Herle, who it seems had been
distant from Burghley for some time, set out in writing for his patron's
benefit the slanders and rumours in circulation which concerned
Burghley. Thereupon commenced a remarkable sequence of letters
which began with Burghley thanking Herle for diligently bringing the
slanders to his attention, and then meticulously denying the charges in
detail. An atmosphere of mutual goodwill permeates these initial letters,
where Burghley addressed Herle as his 'lovyng frend', and described
himself as Herle's 'loving frend assuredly'. The letters continued thus
for six weeks, with Burghley affably passing on Herle's separate letters
to Elizabeth, and issuing him a warrant for a buck from Mortlake Park.
Suddenly, however, Burghley's geniality abruptly ceased, and his letters
turned hostile. He had been informed that Herle had been showing
around London these letters containing warm regard and mordant
reaction to the slanders, an act for which Herle was hotly reprimanded.
Herle replied with a peculiar mixture of indignation and obsequiousness,
and attempted to repair the damage to his patronage alliance with
Burghley. He only exacerbated the problem, however, and it seems that
the correspondence dropped off in hostile terms on Burghley's part.

Yet Burghley was still content for Herle to embark on the Emden
legation by the next spring, so perhaps he had forgiven Herle his
untrustworthy behaviour the summer before. Herle travelled over in the
spring of 1586, crossing between Emden and London at least three times
over the next year. Conflicting opinions about the success of his
embassy can be found in the archives: some writers regarded Herle as
little more than a fool; others extolled his capacity for diplomatic
negotiation. Dr Thomas Doyley wrote of Herle's 'needie shifts &

36 PRO SP 12 180/23, 33. Lord Burghley to William Herle, 12th and 18th July 1585.
37 For more on this heated sequence of letters, see Chapter 2.
coosening triks played ther', and described Herle’s arrival at Utrecht as pompous:

Mr William Hearle cam to Utrect as embassador with her Maiestie’s letters to the magistrate & Capetains of Utrecht which he deliuered with great solemnitie.

Yet Lord Roger North remarked to Burghley:

Mr Hearle hath well and wislye carried himself to my knowlage. and suer he canne well govern and well handel any matter committed to him.

Hence common opinion of Herle was divided upon his return; Herle commenting himself that many considered:

That I haue a whiske in mi hed, desirows to be gaddyng, wherby I were vnfytt for an office.

During his last two diplomatic missions alone, Herle claimed that he had spent £860 on his official business, which he had been forced to borrow in advance. Now he was permanently resident in London, Herle was growing increasingly desperate to reimburse his creditors and obtain a living. Once again, he sued for any office available, including the clerkship of the duchy, and clerk of the casual fines. Word had been circulating that Herle was in line to be the next clerk of the Privy Council; Robert Cecil, Thomas Danett and William Davison all regarding Herle as already approved for the post. However, Herle was passed over for all of these offices, despite his persistence in requesting aid

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38 PRO SP 84 8/1. Dr Thomas Doyley to Lord Burghley, 24th of May 1586.
39 PRO SP 84 9/75. Dr Thomas Doyley to Lord Burghley, 8th August 1586.
40 PRO SP 84 9/86. Lord Roger North to Lord Burghley, 12th August 1586.
41 BL MS Lansdowne 54 f.151'-152'. William Herle to Queen Elizabeth, 10th April 1587.
42 BL MS Lansdowne 54 f.151'-152'. In a later letter to Burghley, Herle slyly rounded this figure of £860 up to £900, BL MS Lansdowne 54 f.145'-146'. William Herle to Lord Burghley, 24th July 1587.
43 PRO SP 12 194/60. Thomas Danett to William Davison, 25th October 1585.
from his patrons, even calling in the support of the Earl of Warwick among others to encourage his brother Leicester to secure paid employment. In October 1586 Herle was returned to Parliament for Callington, in Cornwall, probably in a bid to avoid his creditors, and no doubt sponsored by Burghley. Parliament sat until March 1587, but Herle was not an active member. The only mention of his name occurs in relation to the formation of a committee to oversee the improvement of the education of the ministry; the names put forward include a 'Mr Hearly'.

Paramount in Herle’s letters from this period were the indignant comments that he should not have to personally bear the charges of his diplomatic missions, and that his sovereign should accept responsibility for his debt. His letters became more and more insistent on this point, verging even on impertinent:

Yf I shall be vndon by, by beryng the charge of the publyck owtt of mi purse, I desire to knowe, that I may troble your Lord & the State no longer.

Herle repeatedly requested that Burghley intercede with the Queen, complaining that he had mortgaged his pension and had borrowed all he could from his friends, but could not secure any office at all. He began to mention his failing health and his advanced years, claiming he was:

Now in the fruteles Awtompne of [my] Aige.

Explicitly stating his plight, Herle announced to Burghley:

I have bin of late Right honorable Lord, at dethes dore, escaping the going in very narowly.

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46 BL MS Lansdowne 54 f.151r-152r. William Herle to Queen Elizabeth, 10th April 1587.
Poignantly, this is his last surviving letter.

Herle's diverse (yet curiously cyclical) career which spanned and adapted to thirty years of shifting tensions and policies has made him and his correspondence difficult to classify. Perhaps this is the reason why he periodically surfaces only as an historical exemplar - a convenient character who epitomises the persona of surreptitious, furtive individual.

Yet, as I aim to demonstrate in the following chapters, Herle's letters have more to offer than the much-repeated record of his prison activities in the Ridolphi Plot, or as an example of spy-turned-envoy. The rich texture of his correspondence is studded with curious epistolary forms and strategies which both complement and extend his historical status of secretive informer, and crucially illuminate the delicate patronage system fuelling the Elizabethan administration; patronage which extended far beyond art and literature, and fundamental to the pursuit of intelligence.

The following chapters are the outcome of the transcription of all of Herle's letters that it has been necessary for me to make during this research project. They demonstrate key areas of importance when studying Herle in terms of intelligencing and espionage activity, i.e. the communication of secret information; the deployment of potent intelligence to strengthen and consolidate a patronage relationship; the pursuit of conspirators fuelled by a peculiar mixture of patronage and patriotic fervour; aspects of diplomatic excursion; and the leaking of information in and out of prison. In no way does this study aim to map out all the available avenues of enquiry in relation to Herle studies - this is far from an exhaustive survey of Herle's letters. Rather, much work remains to be done on this stimulating and forgotten archive in order to bring to light the opportunities for a richer understanding of the period offered by the intelligence letters of William Herle.

CHAPTER 1

‘Kepte very close & secrett’: Communicating Secrets and Secret Communication.

An Habit of Secrecy, is both Politick, and Morall.
(Of Simulation and Dissimulation) ¹

Early in September 1587 William Herle wrote a letter to Robert Dudley, Earl of Leicester. Ostensibly a letter full of court gossip with a petition at the end like an afterthought, Herle nevertheless presented Leicester with a valuable piece of intelligence:

This daye abowtt 2. of the clock in the after noone, arryved mr Athye here from your Excellencie & on wensdaye mornyng to Thiballdes, were lettres brought owtt of Spayne towching a full assent to the peace, which ar kepte very close & secrett.²

So excited about the occasion of these Spanish letters’ arrival at Theobalds, Herle placed the news of their arrival in the first sentence of his letter, uncharacteristically omitting his customary salutation. Regardless of the fact that Herle didn’t know the specific contents of the letters, he considered their mere arrival worthy of mention to Leicester. The conditions of their carriage, their coming to Theobalds, and their reception at the reader’s hands (if Herle had witnessed this) had all contributed to signal to Herle that they were ‘secrett’, and his enquiries had only elicited the knowledge that they concerned peace with Spain. Herle translated these signals of secrecy into alerting Leicester that there was a secret abroad to which, no doubt, Leicester

would probably soon be privy. It was enough for Herle that he was able to identify that there was secret knowledge circulating, even if his uninitiated status prevented him from knowing the full contents of the Spanish letters.

This chapter will concentrate on the routine employment of secrecy within Elizabethan intelligence operations. It seems a given to investigate secrecy within this field - it being a natural requisite for such marginal activity. Yet it is necessary to penetrate this web of intrigue and dissimulation in order to examine the nuances of secrecy in agents’ correspondence and intelligence reports. By examining the letters of William Herle, we can gauge and discern his application of secrecy in arcane situations; uncover and dismantle his various attempts to conceal and withhold information; and identify his methods to effect the routine secretion of knowledge, both physical and textual.

The notion of a ‘culture of surveillance’ is now a commonplace in Renaissance Studies, illustrating the vigilant eye of the Elizabethan regime, from the Privy Council down to the village gossip, and it encapsulates the atmosphere of duplicity, secrecy and conspiracy pervasive throughout Elizabeth’s reign. Numerous plots and conspiracies to dethrone Elizabeth and install a Catholic alternative necessitated the development of a network of domestic and foreign surveillance by Elizabeth’s ministers. Ironically, these spies and agents employed to discover the origins and financiers of plots and conspiracies were obliged to source their information in the very same way their targets were operating: establishing their reports on hearsay, informers, interception of letters, and the other, more dubious methods of information-gathering. With both ‘sides’ working for what they thought a righteous cause, the bi-lateral operations of espionage and counter-espionage bear little differences. Not only were both sides acting secretly, they were writing secretly, and writing secrets.

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This atmosphere of secrecy and deception can be identified by examining Herle’s letters, which reveal copious references to secret plots, secret agents, and secret letters. As an agent in the midst of this culture of surveillance, how did he manage these and his own secrets? How did he negotiate the obstacle of writing secrets in the only available medium of communication? The letters he sent were potentially subject to scrutiny at nearly every stage of their journey to the recipient’s hands. What strategies and precautions could he employ to avoid his ‘secrett’ being revealed?

William Herle’s letters of intelligence were familiar; continually attempting to foster intimacy and friendship through the deployment of potent intelligence, much of which was secret information. Confident that his position as client was consolidated and reaffirmed by the inclusion of sensitive knowledge, Herle’s political motivation was permanently shadowed by his personal interest. His status and favour with his patron was proportional to the amount of secret information he could incorporate into the letters, whether it was intelligence concerning internal domestic politics, continental concerns, as the above letter displays, or the marginal manoeuvres of discontented conspirators.

His use of the words ‘secrett’ and ‘secresye’ varied; applied to conspirators and patriots alike with no seeming distinction between ‘secret’ as pejorative, i.e. against the Elizabethan regime, or ‘secret’ as a sanctioned withholding of information to benefit the said administration. The word ‘secrett’ was influenced by the context into which Herle placed it, correspondingly altered by the bias of the author:

On thing is diligently to be obserued, that a grett fight ar scattred abrode of scotts & frenchemen in the Contrey, who ar retyned by the like men, even to sowe whatt poyson they can, & to espyme owtt the secretts of the state ... Now for seres & John Hamellton, I vse all diligens to fynde them owtt, & there is som hope given that they may be hard of, for they affirme certaynly
that they were here of late, & that in very secret manner, but it is great pity that Chambers is so escaped, for in him rested a whole mass of treason & practis, which the ambassadors men to cover, have given out since he departed, that he was a physician. 4

Frequenting the French embassy located at Salisbury Court during the residence of Michel de Castelnau, Seigneur de Mauvisiere, between 1583-4, Herle regularly directed reports of events and visitors to Lord Burghley. 5 His agitated letters from this period reveal the threat which Herle concluded was posed by that particular Catholic sanctum towards the Protestant reign:

The Frenche Ambassador on Thursday morning, being the 25. of this month, had Archeballd Duglasse brought secretly to him by Corselles into his chamber, where after long & earnest consultacyon had between them, which chiefly concerned the late letter Received from the scottish Queen the sayd Archeballd was secretly dismissed again.

They ij do holld for certain that mr Francis Walsingham open the scottish Queens packet, before it cam to the Ambassadors hands, & imported the secretts thereof to the Queens Majestie which makes them the more respectye mani wayes. 6

Yet this uneasy mention of the secrecy of traitorous papists is indistinct from the secrecy with which Herle knowingly conducted his surveillance. In a letter to Richard Huddilston Herle commented:

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4 BL MS Lansdowne 15 f.180-3, William Herle to Lord Burghley, 28th September 1572.
5 For more on Salisbury Court, which had been used for the French Embassy since 1568, see John Bossy, Giordano Bruno and the Embassy Affair (New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 2002), pp.10-13.
Mr Secretorye Wallsingham retorned to the Cowrtt on thursday night last, his negociatyon is kept very secrett yett this muche is it lawfull for yow to knowe. 7

His notion of secrecy here is no different in tone to that which he forwarded a fortnight later in a letter to the Earl of Leicester:

And now vppon Monsieurs commyng, he brethes nothyng eles butt hotte passyons of threttnyngs of warre & revenge, yf I had hability, her maiestie sholld knowe hym throwly & all his secretts. 8

An anonymous correspondent of Sir Francis Walsingham similarly related his recent obstacles in gathering intelligence in France. Following the arrival of envos from the Low Countries, he had attempted to decipher the reasons for their presence:

For I imployed all the Intelligence I koulde gett, and all the Conferences I koulde have in all Places lykelye to gather any Thing by, and fownde so small Matter brought by them, and so small a Care of the King to deale with them, that I was suspitious that theire was further Matter a tretynge with them then I koulde come to be acquainted withall. For Things weere so secretly kept by them that brought them, and the Strangeness in Secrecy of the King's dealinge with them was sutche, that I was somewhat jelos of. 9

Frustrated by the barrier of secrecy around the deputies and the King, the intelligencer identified and lamented the tight security guarding the secret occasion, confiding that he was somewhat mystified by their conduct:

7 PRO SP 12/150/15. William Herle to Richard Huddilston, 28th September 1581.
8 PRO SP 12/150/59. William Herle to the Earl of Leicester, 7th November 1581.
I ... would not have thought, that theie that came would have beene so carefull to keep that which theie brought so secret, nor that theie, which the King sent to them, would have been heedfull not to be discovered as theie weere.\textsuperscript{10}

Revealing that he was familiar with such situations, marvelling at the careless method of the King's dealing with it, and contemptuously observing the faults in their secret operation, the agent nevertheless remained on the outside, uninitiated into the secret 'dealinge'. As with Herle's opening letter, this was a signal to Walsingham that something secret was occurring - the specifics of which were almost unnecessary.

It is clear from these examples that even if they were not initiated into the secret, letter-writers were anxious to signal and comment on the activity surrounding the secret, aware that their recipient deemed this knowledge valuable and significant. Conversely, the secret-keepers and those initiates of the furtive information were faced by the dilemma of necessarily advertising the existence of a secret by these acts of secrecy, yet ensuring that the secret could not be penetrated by the uninitiated. As DA Miller comments:

\begin{quote}
It becomes clear that the social function of secrecy ... is not to conceal knowledge, so much as to conceal the knowledge of the knowledge.\textsuperscript{11}
\end{quote}

Correspondents had to assure their recipients that although they were writing secrets in their letters, they could be trusted to keep those secrets if necessary. Sir Edward Stafford, writing to Burghley in 1583, acknowledged this dichotomy:

\begin{quote}
Your Lordship may see by the Effect of the Contents of the Answeere I mak to a Letter I receaved from Mr. Secretary this
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{10} Murdin (1759), p.413.
Day in great hast, an Advertisement that is given of the corruptinge of some neere abowte me. This Advertysement he writeth was given to the Queen, and I am verie earnestlie commanded by his Letter to keep ytt secret, and to make my proffyt of ytt; you may by my Answeer see that I harde of ytt before, but indeed the Way it come to me by was suspitious, for the Reasons written in my Letter; and I have Cause to think ytt cometh to the Queen after that Sorte, and for these Causes I would give any Thing it were trewe.  

Writing of his recent letter to Walsingham (which seems to have been enclosed within this packet to Burghley), Stafford referred to something transferred between himself and Walsingham. Although, considering his key position in the Privy Council, Burghley would have been privy to information about threats to the realm, and especially secret information, it seems he may have been excluded from this particular intelligence, as Stafford remarked:

By your Lordship’s good Helpe all Things may the better be donne; I beseech your Lordship to keepe this that I writte to you secret, because I am so earnestly charged. Yet I will keepe this, nor nothing else secret from you.  

Burghley’s insider status is confusing here; was he already an initiate of the secret ‘Advertysment’, or had Stafford only just revealed the secret in the enclosed letter? Or was Burghley a secret initiate, his insider status unknown to Walsingham? As Sissela Bok remarks:

The separation between insider and outsider is inherent in secrecy; and to think something secret is already to envisage

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potential conflict between what insiders conceal and outsiders want to inspect or lay bare.\textsuperscript{14}

Stafford’s claim of ‘I will keepe this, nor nothing else secret from you’ radically undermined any trust he may have fostered with Walsingham, regardless of his apparently valuable update for Burghley. Furthermore, by revealing the secret information to Burghley, Stafford was paradoxically advertising his incapacity to keep those secrets.

The safety measures demanded by the Tudor period’s pervasive plots, conspiracies and discontentment enacted through secret writing, correspondence and meeting prompted a parallel level of security in the counter-measures taken against them. This increased security was implemented via various ingenious and sensational strategies contrived and achieved by both sides, such as the use of ‘invisible ink’, concealment of items, letters and documents among garments, and decoy letters. William Herle periodically wrote of such methods of concealment of information, at one time sardonically advertising to Leicester that he had the means
to decipher the Spanish ambassadors’ actions by an instrument of his own, who also can advertys the secret menes that he conveys into the Low conteyrs his lettres & practises, which somtymes is by a woman & somtymes by others, of whose departures we shalbe advertised att the ynstant, & in whatt certayn place abowtt the sayd messengers, their lettres be placed, which is somtymes conveyed into a plummet of lede, hangyng by a stryng from the womans waste next her skyn downwards & somtymes in the man messengers pommell of his sword, & his scawbord, which devises may be mett with ether here, or for more clener handlyng att donkerk or fflusshyng where they arryve.\textsuperscript{15}

\textsuperscript{15} PRO SP 12 150/59. William Herle to the Earl of Leicester, 7\textsuperscript{th} November 1581.
Similarly, the confession of one Kenelm Barney in 1571 revealed a comparable method for evading surveillance. Barney was relating a conversation held between William Herle and Edmund Mather, in which Herle was eliciting valuable and seditious information:

Emonge muche *Italyan* Talke betwext *Mather* and *Hearle*, whiche I dyd not well understond the Depthe of the Matter, they once brake out in *Englishe*, and *Hearle* sayd, How myght a Letter, or anye other Wryttinge, come to the Duke's Hands? Marrye, sayd *Mather*, the finest Waye, and of all leste to be suspected, ys to wryte upon fyne *Hallond* Clothe, whiche, sayd he, would beare Yncke as well as Paper, and to lyne hys Hose with the same, and send yt unto hym by his *Italyan* Taylor.¹⁶

These methods could belong in the spy novel, and are dramatic and extraordinary. Rather, I am interested by the quotidian communication of secrets and secret communication - specifically in letters: a medium which was under almost constant surveillance.

Attempts to avoid this scrutiny could include the employment of a trusted bearer, to accompany the letter on its journey from the sender to the recipient. Yet this method, although relatively secure, necessarily occluded and undermined the letter: the bearer’s comments would be privileged over the text, which would eventually become extraneous to the dialogue of bearer and recipient.

Ciphered letters were also more secure than those written in plain text, although most ciphers were over-used and known to both the authorities and enemy intelligencers alike. Indeed, ciphered letters thwarted the attempts by illicit readers along the post route from sifting the information and selling it on for a bribe. However, encipherment was time-consuming and tiresome, so often only the secret parts of the letter were put into cipher, saving time, and evading illegitimate perusal. Important names or places were often referred to

by numbers or special names. Robert Bowes, ambassador to Scotland and treasurer of the garrison at Berwick, used a cipher in his letters to Walsingham in which Elizabeth was 32, James VI was 91, France was 54, and so on. In a cipher of Burghley’s, which evolved and changed with each user, major political names were denoted by signs of the zodiac. In correspondence with Thomas Bodley in 1590, the Duke of Parma was Aries, and in 1591, in correspondence with Sir Henry Unton, Aries was changed to denote Elizabeth. 17

In the nearly three hundred letters of William Herle, ciphers are only employed once, and even then only individual words are ciphered. 18 A letter to Walsingham of 1585 suggests that the matter was broached,

Yow vowchesave further, that ye will send me a Cipher, to be vsed bettwen your honor & me (which I do expect). 19

Yet no evidence of this cipher survives.

Although he was habitually employed on missions abroad, which, while not specifically clandestine, nonetheless necessitated frequent sensitive missives, his superiors decided not to supply him with a dedicated cipher. 20 Indeed, at one point he requested that it might be expedient to use a cipher for his correspondence with the Queen and Lord Burghley, signalling cryptically that he had something particularly sensitive to write:

My dere & Right honorable good Lord I do send your Lord herynclosed, the copies of mi ij last lettres written to the Erlle of Lecester verbatim. Wheryn I do towche som part of scottissh affayres, for that I do vnderstand that his Lordship is advertised

18 The letter where Herle uses a cipher is PRO SP 70 13/29. William Herle to Sir Thomas Parry, 7th April 1560. A discussion of this letter can be found in Chapter 3.
19 PRO SP 12 186/35. William Herle to Sir Francis Walsingham, 27th January 1585.
20 Alternatively, it is possible that Herle’s requests for a cipher may have been successful, and the resulting corpus of ciphered letters have not been preserved.
by som other, of assmuche as I do signeffye in mi sayd lettres. Butt yf it may plesse your Lordship to send me spedylye a Cipher, which shalbe peculyer only to her maistie & your sellf, I will vnder the sayd Cipher, advertys yow of a matter that consernes her maisties Crown & person, wherfore it may plesse your Lordship with the diligens that is convenyent to send me the same, & I will discharge the part of a lovyng dutifull servant & subiect, which I will seall with mi blood, Butt trulye there most be non more acquainted with the sayd advertisments butt her maistie & your Lordship aloneyn.

It appears here that Herle requested the cipher in order to further foster an intimate relationship with Burghley, using the occasion of the transmission of a secret to effect his plan, ‘advertyys yow of a matter that consernes her maisties Crown & person’, a secret which was evidently absent from the two letters to Leicester enclosed within the packet. Yet this attempt at intimacy seems to have failed - the lack of evidence of this particular cipher suggests that his request was ignored.

So how did Elizabethan letter-writers secrete and preserve information on the page without resorting to encoding the contents? One method was to make seemingly cryptic remarks, confirming, negating or referring to something already discussed elsewhere. In this way, Herle wrote to Leicester of a matter concerning Colonel Steward, commander of forces in the Low Countries:

Your Lord knowes whatt I writt of hym by the last, which is confirmed more & more.

This cryptic suggestion that Burghley was to infer Herle’s meaning created a bond between Herle and Burghley, and publicly (if this letter was to be ‘shown’ to others) called attention to the intimacy engendered by a shared piece of valuable information.

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21 PRO SP 83/15/87, William Herle to Lord Burghley, 1 April 1582.
22 BL MS Cotton Galba C VII 222-3. William Herle to the Earl of Leicester, 14th April 1582.
Similarly, in reference to Paul Buys, a prominent figure in the Low Countries and agent of the Prince of Orange, Herle noted:

I have made mi proffitt by his instructyons, asswett of mi lorny Estwards, as otherwise for things that ar fftytt for her maiesties knowlege.\textsuperscript{23}

Herle drew attention to the tripartite group of initiates comprising of the Queen, Burghley and Herle, creating a micro-information network wherein Herle was the dedicated provider.\textsuperscript{24}

Another method to protect the sensitive information was to write it in the letter or in an enclosure, (presumably sent via a ‘safe route’), and include within the letter a request for its return. This strategy ensured minimum contact with unauthorised readers, although it doubled the potential danger for the letter by having to survive two journeys rather than one. It also negatively questioned the safety of the recipient’s closet or office chamber, suggesting that efforts at securing the archive of correspondence and access to it were unsatisfactory. However, this kind of request also implicitly emphasised the secrecy or sensitivity of the information within the letter, signalling that, for a while at least, the letter should be safely guarded - the request for its return effectively advertising the potency of the contents:

I do send your Lord here with certayn secrett collectyons from the last of Apryll to the xvj\textsuperscript{th} of maye, observed by me, with som breeff discowrse ioyned thervnto, which for mi dutye & perfect affectyon, borne your Lord I am bolld to acquaynt yow with, & humblye do pray yow, that after the perusying of the same, that ytt may plese your Lord to retorne ytt me sealed ffor the which mi man shall attend.\textsuperscript{25}

\textsuperscript{23} BL MS Lansdowne 43 f.24-5. William Herle to Lord Burghley, 29\textsuperscript{th} July 1584.
\textsuperscript{24} For more on shared information fostering intimacy and friendship see Lynne Magnusson, Shakespeare and Social Dialogue (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), p.98.
\textsuperscript{25} BL MS Lansdowne 36 f.186-7. William Herle to Lord Burghley, 10\textsuperscript{th} July 1582.
Herle candidly explained his concern for the safety of the content of his letters in a dispatch to Leicester:

Rydeng mi Right honorable good Lord into Dorsett shire on sunday last, I retorned yesterdaye abowtt noone to this Town agayne, By the nere vnto Chobbam in Surrey, I mett with a person of a good accompte, & vnderstandyng, who caryed vnto a grett Cownsellor from the Cowrtt the repport of those accydents that fell owtt bettwen your Lord & the other partye on wensdaye Last. ytt plesed this gentillman that I mett with, to carye me back with hym a myle, & to discowrse the whole circumstance of the matter with me, with som secrett judgements that ar made therof, & of the intent why her maiestie went on thursday to the Lord Thresuror accompanied only with the Lord of Effinham & marche mownt, which discowrse is most necessarye for your Lord to here att large, & spedilye, yf ytt be your plesure that I shall attend vppon you for that purpose ... This fformer parte of mi lettre is cheeffest &t that it consernes grett ones yndeede & grett matter withall, I must humbly yntreatt your Lord to retorne this mi lettre presently ynclosed by your sellf vnder your own lyttell seale, to the end that no servant may beholld it, otherwise knowing whatt I knowe I shalbe discomforted for ever writeng to your Lord more.²⁶

The contents of this letter were indeed incriminating - not only to the gentleman bearer who revealed the import of his journey, but also to Leicester, who appears to have been involved in a court dispute. Herle boldly questioned the security of the Earl's private correspondence, suggesting it was open to scrutiny by his servants, a fact which would discourage him from 'ever writeng to your Lord more'.

Herle was not alone in his concern about servants spying on letters. In his treatise The Secretaries Studie, Thomas Gainsford sets out a model letter in which he states:

²⁶ PRO SP 12/149/71. William Herle to the Earl of Leicester, 15th July 1581.
Worthy Sir, I was almost ashamed to write any thing from these parts, as newes, or matter worth the inquiring after, but that I receiued a letter from you while I was in Scio, which seemed to command me, and taught me the way of good manners to satisfie your pleasure. I would hasten to an end, lest some curious eye make a tush at these papers, when they examine, that I would fill a letter with such poore and common intelligences. 27

In a later letter to Burghley Herle assiduously avoided deprecating the security of his patron’s bureau by suggesting the appropriate receptacle for such a letter:

Butt whatt may nottwithstanding, torne to ani good use of your Lord I will be redy in discrete & honest Termes, to performe throwly which I refferre withall other things passed in mi former lettres lately, to your own secrett skryne & deske. 28

This particular letter was a mixture of a petition for financial reward and information against Archibald Douglas and an unnamed fellow Scottish conspirator. The intelligence was accusatory:

There be ij Bad instruments in this Town, that even govern the scottish Intelligences wholly, & do Lewd offics: writeng somtymes as grosse error as may be: Ar made Bollts to shoote att men, & be full of malyce & ffynesse in all their advertisments & proceedings. 29

Herle evidently deemed this intelligence so secret that it should be kept in a secure place - Burghley’s ‘secrett skryne & deske’ - adding that

27 Thomas Gainsford, The Secretarie’s Studie (London: T.C. f. Roger Jackson, 1616), Sig. O3'.
29 PRO SP 12/180/53.
recent letters which exhibited similar content should be likewise deposited. Five days later, he sent another letter reiterating the preventive action:

My Right honorable good Lord I sent your Lord on satterday a lettre by an Allmaigne servant to hym that wrytt to her maiestie wherof for that he hath long attended there, & I have hard nothing of the Receytt, I desire humbly to be resollved therof, for that som matter conteyned therin, caryes further mistery than is yett discoverd, & Requires bothe perfect secresye & Regard, in mi poore lugement I have Refferred it for a note to your Lord's own private deske & sincerity.  

Robert Beale, himself a secretary to Walsingham and privy to much secret information, clearly indicated the appropriate receptacle for arcane material received in the nobleman's secretariat:

A Secretarie must have a speciall Cabinett, wherof he is himselfe to keepe the keye, for his signetts, Ciphers and secrett Intelligences, distinguishing the boxes or tills rather by letters than by the names of the Countryes or places, keeping that only unto himselfe, for the names may inflame a desire to come by such thinges.

An implication of these requests is that Herle's letter would rest in the most hallowed and private place of Burghley's secretariat - an honour which would augment Herle's status with his patron, albeit a status founded upon clandestine and illicit activities. This request for

30 PRO SP 12/181/15. William Herle to Lord Burghley, 4th August 1585.
31 Robert Beale, 'Instructions for a Principall Secretarie obserued by R:B for Sr Edwarde Wotton' in BL MS Additional 48149, unpaginated. I cite the printed version: 'A Treatise of the Office of a Councillor and Principall Secretarie to her Maifestie', p.427, in Conyers Read, Mr Secretary Walsingham and the Policy of Queen Elizabeth (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1925), pp.423-443, p.428. Note that Beale recognises that even the security offered by the official receptacle of correspondence, the 'box', within the most secure and private 'Cabinett', might not deter prying eyes, 'inflame a desire to come by such thinges'.
extra security simultaneously emphasised Herle’s concern for the location of his sensitive letters and demonstrated his peculiar patronage strategy: angling to secure his position as Burghley’s client by attempting to ensure a piece of himself - his letters - remained undisturbed in Burghley’s private closet. He was careful to direct not only his letters to Burghley’s desk, but also the abstract notion of his duty and service:

\[ \text{I will be redy in discrete \& honest Termes, to performe throwly which I refferre withall other things passed in mi former lettres lately, to your own secrett skryne \& deske.}^{32} \]

The request for the return of letters created a cycle of correspondence and established a circular reading between Herle and Burghley or Herle and Leicester, and occasionally all three together, which began and ideally terminated at Herle’s hands. This is assuming that Burghley and Leicester assented to the requests and that they did in fact return these letters. Yet it seems, for these letters at least, the request was ignored. The fact that letters with the tag to return them remain in the archives derived from Burghley and Leicester’s administration (and not with a group of Herle’s letters to which the above belongs, which were returned to Burghley after Herle’s death in the summer of 1588) corroborates the possibility that the recipients held onto them regardless of the request, careful inspection revealing that these letters are original and not copies. Moreover, in Burghley’s reply to the above letter, he made no mention of provision for its return, embarking on a tirade about slanders levelled against him (information about which Herle had originally forwarded to Burghley) - possibly the subject Herle considered so inflammatory in the first place.

Yet why did Herle specifically request his letters be returned to him rather than the more common instruction to burn them? Only when Herle had his letters in his possession could he be absolutely sure of their security (and this is assuming he had a secret hiding place in his

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32 PRO SP 12/180/53. [My emphasis].
lodgings). The act of distinguishing these particular letters by requesting their return emphasised their value, and Herle probably recognised that these letters were a commodity - one which he should preferably control.

A possible reason that Herle might desire the return of his letters was to have them available for future testimony or proof against accusation. The letters were a written record of illicit actions which, whilst he held them in his possession, offered Herle a degree of security. It seems that rather than make copies of these secret letters for his own archive, these sporadic requests to return material arose from Herle's concern about the end-care of his secret missives and a desire to possess and control inflammatory documents that could amount to proof should occasion demand.33

Occasionally, however, the request for the return of letters was purely practical, and not prompted by concern over their security or contents. In a letter to Burghley of 1585 Herle enclosed a letter written to him from Amsterdam in French. Despite its 'stale date', Herle included it in order for Burghley to show Elizabeth, the letter containing important matters regarding the Low Countries:

> It may please your Lord to deliver to hir maiestie this lettre inclosed, which compreheneth matter of East friseland ... Therefore though [t]his lettre bere a stale date, despise it not, ffor the disposicion of the Contrie is such as he describes, and more slipperie now after the losse of Antwerpe vnles hir maiestie do enter into the whole action with diligence ... May it please your Lord to return the frenche lettre to me againe.34

Herle desired the letter's return not because the contents were particularly secret (or if they were, he chose not to signal this), but because the letter belonged in his own archive of continental correspondence which he was anxious to maintain.

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33 These letters, of course, could work the opposite way, incriminating Herle's role in intelligence operations and could be used for evidence for prosecution.
34 BL MS Lansdowne 46 f.36-7. William Herle to Lord Burghley, 17th August 1585.
Burghley assented to this request; only four days later Herle could write:

Your lettre Right honorable Lord written yesterday I have Received, within which was the same of myne to the Queen’s majestie with his allso of Amsterdam, & on to mr ffanshaw in favor of Acerbo. ffor the which I thanck your Lord humbly, having don an Acte of Charitye & Iustice in the same. 35

Similarly, an anonymous correspondent sent a missive to Walsingham in 1583 from France, enclosing a propagandist ‘booke’ or pamphlet in answer to a seditious book of the Guises against the King of Navarre, which, after great trouble in sourcing the book, he desired to have returned:

I, for my Part, have fought all the Wayes and Meanes I could to come by ytt. This I had left but a Night with me, and as you may see by the Manner of the Writing, made ytt be pulled in Pieces, and copyed by diverse Parsons, and so bound ytt up againe. I have let Plessis have a Copye of ytt, who nere could come by ytt but by my Meanes, and thanked me more for ytt, then for any Thing I did for them sence I came into France. I think now, by that Book theie have formed the principall Points of the seditious Book, theie will add and mend some Things in ytt. I pray you lett my Lord Tresorer see ytt, to whom I have written that I have sent you, havinge but that one Copye, and when you have seen ytt, I beseeche yoo retourne ytt me againe. 36

It would appear that it was the investment of the letter-writer’s time and care taken over the copying of the book that prompted the request for its return, the comment ‘having but that one Copye’ signifying both its exclusivity and import to the owner. The correspondent recognised

35 PRO SP 12/181/56. William Herle to Lord Burghley, 21st August 1585.
36 Anonymous correspondent to Sir Francis Walsingham, c. 8th December 1584, in Murdin (1759), p.425.
the value of the copy, and pragmatically regarded his possession of it as beneficial for his circumstances in France:

The Book ytself, wherunto ytt answereth, is shewed heere onlye to the factious Sort, and not left owte of Sight in any Body's Hands, so that theire is no possibilitie to come by ytt; yet bothe Plessis and [ ] have offered fayre for ytt, and I, for my Part, have fought all the Wayes and Meanes I could to come by ytt ... I have let Plessis have a Copye of ytt, who nere could come by ytt but by my Meanes, and thanked me more for ytt, then for any Thing I did for them sence I came into France.\textsuperscript{37}

Here we see Walsingham's source exhibiting similar patronage strategies to Herle: aligning himself with the politically and religiously significant Du Plessis Mornay, requesting that Walsingham forward the book to Burghley to widen the parameters of his 'service', and requesting the book's return after perusal to consolidate the information exchange beginning and terminating from his own hands and secretariat.

In the same way, after enclosing a letter within a packet, Herle asked for the enclosed letter to be returned to him:

I have sent your Lord by this berer sondry lettres & papers to consyder of, havyng Received back mi paper of observations collected in Apryll & Maye here, wheryn yow have don me an honorable ffavor to remember me so well herewith. And bycawse your Lord shall perseve whatt proceded from me in answer to those ffrenche discowrseres & obiectyons against our State, I do send yow ynclosed the copye of a lettre wrytten from me to the Erlle of Lecester on that behallf to satisfye hym towching the same, which when your Lord hath perused asslong as shall plese

\textsuperscript{37} Murdin, (1759), p.425.
you, I do humbly pray, that ye will inclose ytt within a paper vnder your seall, & Restore it by mi man vnto me. 38

Herle had stated that the letter was only a 'copye', sent to Burghley to aid his intelligence on the subject of 'ffrenche discowrses & obiectyons agaynst our State'. It seems that after another earlier request for his 'paper of observatyons', Burghley had returned them accordingly. It is curious that Herle was circulating copies of restricted-access letters to another member of the council and simultaneously advertising their potency. If the letter was so private and/or crucial, why was Herle doubling its potential to be intercepted by a re-issue to another reader? Was this a strategy to parade his correspondence with another recipient, made significant by the sensitive material within? Herle required the letters' return; perhaps merely to advertise their import, or for practical reasons, in a bid to save time and clerical expense.

Likewise, in a heated textual altercation between Burghley and Herle in 1585, in which Burghley accused Herle of showing his private letters around the city, Burghley wrote:

I am frendly informed, that you mak ostentation of your greatness with me and do send all my lettres abrod in the Cite, which I send yow ... to send and disperss my lettres in that sort I can not allow ... many may think grett levity in me, to have my privat lettres in this sort spred abrod. 39

Burghley was explicit in his concern about what others would think if he was unable to keep control of his own correspondence, aware that deficiency in this behalf negatively coloured his capacity as a Privy Councillor.

It is clear from these above examples that Elizabethan letter-writers were as concerned with the security and end-care of their

39 PRO SP 12/181/60. Lord Burghley to William Herle, 24th August 1585.
letters as the safety of the initial route to the recipient. For those letters that were so secret and incriminating, the writer could issue an instruction to burn the letter after its perusal, thereby evading unauthorised scrutiny. In 1586 Walsingham wrote to Leicester exhibiting anxiety about the guarding of a secret matter even at the highest level:

I have acquainted this gentleman with the secret to the end he may impart the same unto your lordship. I dare make none of my servants here privy thereunto. My only fear is, that her majesty will not use the matter with that secrecy that appertaynethe, though yt import yt as greatly as ever any thing dyd sythence she cam to this crown, and suerly, yt the matter be well handeled, yt wyll breacke the necke of all daynergowse practyces duryng her majestyes reygne. I pray your lordship make this letter an heretyke after you have read the same. I mean, whan the matter is growen to a full ripenes, to send some confidential person unto you, to acquaynt you fully with the matter.

Walsingham’s agitation about the destination and precarious existence of the letter was judicious. The letter recounted the queen’s reaction to letters from Leicester detailing the present state of the Low Countries, and revealed her indecision over policy. His comments about the queen’s discretion were particularly unflattering, as was his portrayal of her demeanour:

She is also advysed, in the meane tyme, to make no shew of her dyslyke, but rather to countenauce the cause by all outwarde


means she may, which, contrary to her naturall dysposytion, she doth very well performe.\textsuperscript{42}

His directive to burn the letter after Leicester had finished reading it - to ‘make this letter an heretyke’ - therefore seems to stem from these concerns about unresolved policy and vacillation of the queen, and it is significant that the Earl did not comply with the request.

William Herle also requested that a letter of his be destroyed, after revealing that he was on the verge of tracking down the author of a recent libel against Burghley. Significantly however, the letter did not contain any specific information: Herle discoursed vaguely and cryptically about matters discussed with the Earl of Leicester:

\textit{Right} honorable Lord. I talked yesternight at good leysure with my Lord of Lecester, after I departed from your Lord of those Italeyen Erles & of other things, which he toke in very good parte. I forgatt to aske of your Lord whither there had nott byn delyverd to yow som whiles synce, certayn verses unadvowed, which conserved your sellf, & were in nature of an Infamous libell which yf ani suche thing were, I knowe how to com nere your knowledge of theme, ffor suche verses have byn shewed furth of late, & it may haplye bryng furthe these new libelles withall, of whom I hope to have half a gesse before it be to morrow att night … prayeng your Lord to burne this paper when ye have red it.\textsuperscript{43}

It is difficult to identify which part of this particular letter might be construed so inflammatory that it necessitated immediate destruction. Is it possible that Herle regarded his offer to ‘com nere your knowledge of theme’ a task inappropriate to his position of gentleman (although he seemed eager nevertheless to execute the enterprise), and perhaps desired the record of his offer to spy to be eradicated?

\textsuperscript{42} Bruce, (1844), p.341.
\textsuperscript{43} BL MS Lansdowne 39 f.194. William Herle to Lord Burghley, 22\textsuperscript{nd} December 1583.
The instruction to burn letters which contained potent secrets was certainly a practical one. The Earl of Leicester tersely exhibited the same custom in a letter to Walsingham:

I pray you breake or burne this.\(^{44}\)

Herle realised his tardiness in not ensuring the safety of his letters whilst imprisoned during an intelligence operation in the Marshalsea in 1571:

As your wisdom mi Lord is grett & noble, so now shew it or never. ffor I am this mornynge committed to close prison for Charles’ cawses,\(^{45}\) & am charged with hevye Irons, being searched for wrytyngs, butt as God wold, whiles I was putt aparte, & they seking another chamber, I brake Charles’ lettre as ye se & putt it in a darke chinke, wherof consydering affterwards that it might serve you for som Instrucyon, I send itt herin enclosed, beseching your Lord for that vertue sake, which is lodged in an invincible mynde to stand ffast in on thing, thatt I never was with you, nor that ones ye know me, nether that you be privy to ani lettres or participatyon that shold passe by me in these affayres, otherwise there is grett wrong don to me & I most crye owtt on ffayth & constancye.\(^{46}\)

The expedience of burning the letter was accompanied by the ritualistic element of committing the letter to fire, a ceremonious act which amplified while it destroyed the secrets contained within. This practice (which was commonly performed) served to emphasise and acknowledge

\(^{44}\) The Earl of Leicester to Sir Francis Walsingham, 10\(^{th}\) June 1586. Bruce, (1844), p.298.

\(^{45}\) Charles Bailly had been intercepted with some suspicious ciphered letters by Lord Cobham, warden of the Cinque Ports, early in April 1571 and committed to the Marshalsea. Herle was being used as an agent provocateur to try and prise the cipher out of Bailly, but he failed, and Bailly was removed to the Tower, where, after torture on the rack, he revealed the cipher to his interrogators. For more on this episode which has radically (and perhaps understandably) coloured the limited historiography of Herle, see Chapter 5.

\(^{46}\) BL MS Cotton Caligula C III f.239. William Herle to Lord Burghley, 26\(^{th}\) April 1571.
the potency of the item set alight, an act incontrovertibly signifying and preserving the secret. In 1569 the Earls of Shrewsbury and Huntingdon, at that time guarding Mary Queen of Scots, sent a letter to Elizabeth detailing the fruitless (yet significant) results of a search of their prisoner’s papers:

According to your Highnes Commandement by your lettres of the 25th of this Present, we have searched for Lettres in the Coffers of the Quene of Scotts. And suerly we doubte that she hathe burnte all that we think your Majestie did lok for, if ever she had any; for at Wingfield one Daie she consumed with Fier very many writings.47

The appeal for letters’ incineration echoed the request for letters to be returned to their sender, and similarly advertised their potency. In this vein, Herle wrote to Walsingham of future letters he would receive, and of their tremendous import:

I do now send this mi servant of purpose ynto England, to procure som provision for mi charges of those poore thyngs I have there, by whom, I do allso kepe promis with your honor: ffor herewith ye shall Receive certayn secrett observacions of myne, which I besoke yow to committ to the ffire, when yow have Received theme, & to attribute aloneyle to the zele born to her maiesties estate, the Rowndnes & symplycitye that I vse, therin without respect had to others.48

Alerting Walsingham to the impending arrival of ‘secrett observacions’, Herle deferred the secret to another time, obliging Walsingham to wait, and heightening his anticipation of what the letters might contain.

47 The Earls of Shrewsbury and Huntingdon to Queen Elizabeth, 29th September 1569, in Samuel Haynes, ed. A Collection of State Papers, relating to affairs in the reigns of King Henry VIII, King Edward VI, Queen Mary, and Queen Elizabeth, From the Year 1542 to 1570 ... Now remaining at Hatfield House (London: William Bowyer, 1740), p.537. Here ‘doubte’ is taken to mean ‘suspect’, www.OED.com ‘doubte v’ (6b).
48 PRO SP 83/16/44. William Herle to Sir Francis Walsingham, 28th June 1582.
Implicit in his comment 'to attribute alonelye to the zele born to her maiesties estate, the Rowndnes & symplycitye that I vse' was the suggestion that Herle was acting illicitly, perhaps informing on great personages or political figures. His anxiety at this inappropriate lack of deference endorsed the practicality of destroying the record of his behaviour.

It is worth noting here that Herle's next letters to Walsingham in the archives, while certainly full of intelligence from the Low Countries, do not resemble the 'secret observacions' anxiously and cryptically alluded to in the above. There could be many reasons for the absence of this report: Walsingham had indeed burned it after perusal; Herle may have sent it anonymously and it has been catalogued accordingly; by the time Herle sent it, the contents were not so sensitive and he resisted attaching a tag of secrecy to it, and so on.\textsuperscript{49} That there remain in the archives holograph letters which contain a directive to burn them after perusal suggests that these instructions were often ignored. This disregard is as significant as the appeal itself, suggesting that the contents of the letter were just too important to be destroyed, or conversely that the recipient deemed the contents not worthy of ritual destruction.

Yet there is a coda to this: if the letter which contained secrets was destroyed, and the secrets contained within no longer inhabited a textual space but resided in a conceptual bureau of those who had read the letter before its destruction, the lack of physical text rendered the secret more potent, and heightened the bond it generated between its sharers. As an instruction based on anxieties of unauthorised scrutiny, the incineration of a letter was appropriate, yet the act of burning the letter intensified those secrets initially guarded, and amplified the sentiment of intimacy and common-ground felt between initiates of the secret. The readers of the letter which had been destroyed were united by the bond of both the secret, and the act of the previous perusal of

\textsuperscript{49} Careful scrutiny of the letters which exist in the state papers after this date reveals several possible candidates for this letter of 'secrett observacions', letters which contain various intelligence concerning the Low Countries, yet none display any signals of secrecy, either to burn or return the letters, or any indication that the material is secret.
the letter which no longer existed. The secret could still be transmitted, but its original form could never be recovered.

These extreme anxieties about the safety and security of letters could prompt the correspondent to omit parts of the news or intelligence from the letter entirely, preferring to wait until a later and more secure method of delivery. These omissions, with reference to William Herle at least, provide a glimpse of an internal categorisation process based upon shifting levels and degrees of secrecy. Herle’s letters made the distinction between that which could be revealed, that which could be revealed in a letter which then must be returned or destroyed, and that which could not be revealed in the letter medium at all. In 1582, Herle sent an eight-page letter to Walsingham from Antwerp, with details of sundry items of intelligence, including intercepted Italian letters, logistical provision by the Duke of Guise for his army, and the movements of various notable Low Countries figures. Although many of these related to sensitive affairs, Herle carefully distinguished the unrestricted advertisement of these events from a particular occurrence towards the end of the letter:

Yow shall se of mi worde, a horrible conffusyon when the ffrenche navye is assembled here, & som mischeeff breke owtt, that may nott be wrytten of.50

This suggests that there was a point at which intelligencers and writers of potent information declined the medium of epistolary communication and instead turned towards verbal delivery, either by trusted bearer or the writer himself. In early 1584 Henry Fagot, a spy in the embassy of Castelnau at the same time as Herle, wrote to Walsingham:

Je vous en garde quelque choses de segret que Je [vous] diray plus amplement.

50 PRO SP 83/16/34. William Herle to Sir Francis Walsingham, 3rd June 1582.
[I have kept back something secret which I will tell you more of later.]51

This preference for verbal over textual transmission was a practical strategy against the diligent surveillance and scrutiny conducted by both malcontents and state-sponsored agents. The verbal message was more difficult to extract from its carrier than a physical letter: torture and substantial bribery providing costly and time-consuming methods of information retrieval.

Herle was consistently worried about the carriage of his letters. Explaining the cause of his delay in returning to England in a letter to Burghley of 1563, Herle was at pains to arrange a safe passage for both himself (he was on an official legation, carrying some sort of contract), and his letters. Frustrated by the difficulty of securing such passage, Herle complained:

Fynally seing non other reffuge, & also for discharge of my servyce, haue aloneiy hired a fflyshyer boate to carye over mi man in habyte of a Germayne with lettres to your Honor, fyrye signeoffyeng the apparent cause of mi long delaye, with th'interceptyon twyse before of my other lettres, therfore that itt wold please your honor to gyve som order now for mi better transport over ... I have with me the Contract of the same, vnder their ffyrme Et seales very substantyallye, therfore wold not rasheley commytt mi seltf to the seas without good conduct, seing howerly beffore mi face the ffrenche Shalloys spoyle, & take even here at the havens mowthe.52

Here, Herle sensibly declined to send the information in the letter at all, distrusting both the weather and the safety of the postal route, his letters having been intercepted twice before.


52 BL MS Lansdowne 7 f.66-7. William Herle to Lord Burghley, 2nd August 1563.
The decision not to include an item of information in a letter yet nevertheless drawing attention to it echoes the signalling of Herle and others earlier in this discussion. The signalling letter becomes a pre-text to the ensuing dialogue or secret letter, and cautions the recipient to be vigilant and circumspect whilst engaged in the administration of this furtive correspondence. Hamlet cryptically advertises that he has information that will astonish Horatio:

Let the King have the letters I have sent, and repair thou to me with as much speed as thou wouldst fly death. I have words to speak in thine ear will make thee dumb, yet they are much too light for the bore of the matter. These good fellows will bring thee where I am. Rosencrantz and Guildenstern hold their course for England. Of them I have much to tell thee. Farewell.

He that thou knowest thine,

Hamlet.\(^{53}\)

In a practice newsletter, Thomas Gainsford signals yet declines to disclose certain sensitive information:

This is all I can say, this is all I dare write, for feare of interruption: but if euer the sunne will make our shadowes meete in England, I will justifie further particulars, and make you wonder, that so many wise and understanding men as haue bene in these partes, will bee transported against the veritie of Scripture, and the infallible congruitie of judgement and reason.\(^{54}\)

Richard Rambuss discusses this refusal to disclose information in the context of the Edmund Spenser-Gabriel Harvey correspondence. Spenser

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\(^{54}\) Thomas Gainsford, *The Secretarie's Studie* (London: T.C. f. Roger Jackson, 1616), Sig. Q1".
alludes to a meeting with the Queen, alerting Harvey to the prestigious event, yet attempts to quash any speculation he may offer:

Your desire to heare of my late beeing with hir Maiestie, must dye in it selfe.  

Rambuss explains:

Spenser’s refusal to disclose can be read as a public assurance that he can keep secrets (like a trustworthy secretary), even when it entails withholding them in a friendship that would normatively operate as one in which secrets would be shared ... throughout Spenser’s career [there] is a constant transitivity between on the one hand maintaining the secrecy of a secret, and on the other inviting the secret’s penetration by signalling its existence.

This deferring of information by signalling but reserving secret knowledge often carried with it an explicit request for audience with the recipient. In 1573, Herle wrote to Burghley to apologise for embarking on a journey without notifying his patron:

Though I did nott make your good Lord privy of late whatt jorney I had in hand, the same was don of a speciall & humble regard, towards your place which haply may interprete the better of me, & excuse the menyng that I had therin.

No doubt to deflect Burghley’s irritation, Herle cautiously hinted at a potentially profitable discovery:

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57 BL MS Lansdowne 18 f.14-15. William Herle to Lord Burghley, 7th June 1573.
And being now returned, I am sufficiently instructed of many matters, which may like your Lord to understand of, but lest I might give som occasyon of offense, I dare not presume to com vnto yow, before I first vnderstand your honorable plesure & wither I shall com openly or secrettly, or rather not come at all, butt to wryte the discourse of thinges at large vnto your Lord which in the effect of this my humble lettre sending to yow in the mene season these few chartes, having mayny mo for yow, with further matter of importance, necessary for her maiestie & your Lord to understand: besyde that I must shew yow of some mistery, that is conteyned in de Lombres negociaton here, & what is a practiseng by that mene wherein it may plese your Lord of this berer to signifie where yow wolde command me.  

Understandably anxious about whether Burghley would permit an audience after his unauthorised journey, Herle mapped out all the available avenues of transmission of his secret and mysterious information, privileging the personal visit over epistolary communication. He was careful to stress that he was not at liberty to write openly, signalling that even if he did send the information by letter, there was ‘further matter of importance’ which required vocal dispatch, and that he was able to ‘shew yow of some mistery’. The stress here is on ‘shew’, emphasising the necessity of oral and physical rather than textual nature of communication.

Herle’s humble requests for audience and his gesturing that he had something important and sensitive to impart obliged his recipient to arrange the meeting:

I have some whatt of ymportance to ymparte with your Lord when your honorable plesure wil vowchesave yn heryng.  

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58 BL MS Lansdowne 18 f.14-15.
59 BL MS Cotton Galba C XI f.76. William Herle to Lord Burghley, 5th January 1587.
Yf yow will give me leve from hence furth to make yow acquaintance with that I know, I will faithfullye & willinglye yeu devour mi self to content yow in som good sort, ffor I have the mene, & that is to dele theryn all the service I can.60

Herle preferred to transmit his intelligence orally, focussing explicitly on the specific organ of vocal delivery:

I have iiij thyngs to utter touching this matter & partye, which only I wold revele to your Lord by mowth.61

Wheryn I have mani particularities to gyve me wytnesse, which only myne owne mowthe, shall declare vnto you.62

During a spell of surveillance in 1583 when he was assigned to observe the movements of the Polish Count Laski, Herle wrote to Sir Christopher Hatton:

... which I thought my part, to cerifie your honor of, reserving somewhat to imparte with you herein, by mouthe, at my next attendance on your honor yow.63

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60 PRO SP 83/15/50. William Herle to Sir Francis Walsingham, 8th March 1581.
62 PRO SP 12/144/20. William Herle to Edward Horsey, 10th November 1580.
63 BL MS Additional 15891 f.112v. William Herle to Sir Christopher Hatton, 19th May 1583, Copy. In the margin by ‘I founde’ is written by the copyist ‘the Count Palatyne Laschy, gon to recreate hym self wth the syght of Doctor Dees lbyraty at Mourclack’. great
In 1580, Herle forwarded a letter from Vincent Murphyn, a fellow prisoner in the Counter, who possessed information about ‘yll practises that ar in hand’ and was insistent on meeting with Burghley:

So yt is, that yf your honors accustomed cleemencie, wolde voutsauff me some fauourable hearinge in the premisss: (mauger th’enemies) I wil discharg the servis of a faithfull subject: And fully displaie the winckinge eye of Achitophel. But my veraie good Lord withall I most humbly besech your Lord to graunt me this peticion, to haue pryvat hearing in the matter ... And so by the same vertue and aucthoritie, that is lent to your Lord (for the preservacionn of so famouse an estate) I besech your Lord to geue me the sooner hearinge, with some mildness and the rather, for so good a mestrisss sake.64

A corollary of oral communication by ‘mowth’ was the obligation of the correspondent to arrange a meeting in an appropriate place where the writer could convey his secret information. If the intelligence was so sensitive that it was omitted from the letter requesting the meeting, it follows that the discussion would need to be in a secure, restricted space. In The Unfortunate Traveller, Thomas Nashe’s Jack Wilton recounts his exploits of teasing the owner of the camp ale-tent:

Coming to him on a day as he was counting his barrels and setting the price in chalk on the head of them, I did my duty very devoutly, and told his aley Honour i had matters of some secrecy to impart unto him, if it pleased him to grant me private audience.65

64 BL MS Lansdowne 31 f.31-32 (enclosed within BL MS Lansdowne 31 f.30-33). Vincent Murphyn to Lord Burghley, 23rd September 1580.
Wilton exploits the tapster’s instinctive desire to hear fresh intelligence, withholding (fictional) information from his quarry until he is ready to hang himself for the end of the full point; and over my neck he throws himself very lubberly, and entreated me, as I was a proper young gentleman and ever looked for pleasure at his hands, soon to rid him out of this hell of suspense, and resolve him of the rest.  

The tapster has translated Wilton’s verbal signals, ‘secrecy ... private audience’, and the physical moment of withdrawal into the back room of the tent into signs that he will be the recipient of intelligence. Wilton knowingly exploits this assumption, and is consequently able to lead the tapster on a merry game.

Depending on the context of the recondite knowledge about to be divulged, the recipient’s retinue would necessarily be pared to a minimum, ensuring the security of the information. An appropriate space for a secret meeting where security and access could be carefully regulated was the gentleman’s closet. Mark Girouard has explored the shifting notions of architectural space and access in regard to the closet, finding that

It was essentially a private room; since servants were likely to be in constant attendance even in a chamber, it was perhaps the only room in which its occupant could be entirely on his own. By the end of the Middle Ages it had acquired two of what were to remain its principal functions: it was a room for private devotions, and a room for private study and business.

Alan Stewart reflects on what the early modern closet represented:

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The closet is thus constructed as a place of utter privacy, of total withdrawal from the public sphere of the household - but it simultaneously functions as a very public gesture of withdrawal, a very public sign of privacy ... Far from rendering relationships and transactions secret, the closet paradoxically draws attention to those relationships and transactions, and marks them off as socially and even ethically problematic.68

A notional and physical space accessed only by initiates, the closet was accorded a tremendous level of sanctity and seclusion, yet provoked anxiety about the exclusivity of both the material contained and the relationships conducted within it. This is where Herle had eagerly directed his secret letters to Burghley. To gain access was a gracious privilege, granted only to close friends and secretaries. Herle recognised the significance of the area:

Your Lord doth Remember that in your littell chamber att White hall by the Tarresse, your Lord & mi Lord of Lecester toke the payne to make an end for me with Thomas Wade for on C\text{li} wherof mi Lord of Lecester payd hym, the same daye that monssieur arrived att Grenewiche 50\text{li}.69

Evoking the privacy and intimacy that the closet represented with 'littet', Herle assiduously linked his request for the payment of a debt to the moment of discussion in a private chamber, to promulgate and extend that feeling of intimacy towards his own petition. It is possible that Herle was indeed present in the 'littet chamber ... by the Tarrasse', and reminded Burghley of the occasion to affirm his client status. If Herle was admitted to such an important space charged with secrecy and withdrawn from the public eye, he would have been

69 BL MS Lansdowne 31 f.22-3. William Herle to Lord Burghley, 9th August 1580.
accompanied only by a select few: Burghley’s private secretaries and perhaps close initiates of his circle.

The early modern secretary was a pillar of discretion and mute loyalty. Privy to his master’s most sensitive business and secrets, he enjoyed virtually unrestricted access to his employer, and an almost unrivalled intimacy in both administrative and personal terms. Sixteenth and seventeenth century treatises characterised the secretary as a trope for the closet itself, regarding him as the repository for secret information, and the embodiment of the architectural space. In his 1592 treatise on the duties of the principal secretary, Nicholas Faunt wrote:

In a principall servant to the secretarie, secrecie and faithfulnes bee cheifly required whatt trust canne therebee reposed in manie, and if manie bee imploied in matters of secrecie, whoe shall thinke himself principal[ in trust in those thinges which are hardly to bee imparted to anie though the most faithfull in the world, but that of necessitie the Secretarie must vse one as his owne penne, his mouth, his eye, his eare, and keeper of his most secrett Cabinett.70

The emphasis was on secrecy, of the secretary occupying an exclusive locus figured in terms of spatial, personal and sensual intimacy; ‘his mouth, his eye, his eare’.

Working for his master’s concerns, almost as an extension of his person, the secretary, in receipt of potent information, had to exercise caution in his sourcing of intelligence and secret knowledge. Robert Beale wrote in his treatise on the matter:

Yow must have a care, that they which be about yow be no aduertisers of anie matters but wher, and when, and to whom yow shall appoint.

Be not to credulous lest yow be deceiued: heare all reportes, but trust not all: weigh them with time and deliberacon: and be not to liberall of trifles: obserue them that deale on both handes, least you be deceived.\textsuperscript{71}

What I am trying to signify here is just how potent the emblems of the closet and the secretary were in terms of arcane political knowledge, and how access to even the periphery of such architectural and figurative emblems might imbue a visitor with a degree of ‘initiate’ status, especially if that visitor was present for secret business.

Herle recognised the symbolic penetration of a private space, and what it represented:

Of ffrawncs Throckmorton, I advertised mr secretorye this last sommer, whatt secrett reports he had to the ffrench ambassader, whatt Long and pryvatt conferencs, seasons suspyecows, & of his beyng att masse their att severall tymes. he is a partye very busy & an enemye to the present State. his kinsman Sr Nicholas’s elldest son, dyned on sonday (yf I mistake nott the daye) with the frenche Ambassader & came att suche tyme as the Table was sett, beyng muchoe made of then & respected, entryng into pryvate conference with the sayd Ambassader after dyner.\textsuperscript{72}

He was alert to the fact that the withdrawal with the ambassador after dinner signalled an exchange of secrets; secrets which were potentially detrimental to the ‘present State’. Yet there remained almost a hint of jealousy in Herle’s avid description of the welcome Francis Throckmorton received, detailing the ‘Long and pryvat conferencs’, the reception at table, and the secret withdrawal by Francis’ cousin Arthur

\textsuperscript{71} Beale, ‘Instructions for a Principall Secretarie’ in Read, (1925), p.427.
\textsuperscript{72} BL MS Lansdowne 39 f.189-92. William Herle to Lord Burghley, 15\textsuperscript{th} November 1583.
after dinner. One senses here that Herle yearned for such privileged treatment, to enter into the private space of an important (albeit possibly treasonous) individual.

If indeed Herle was able to penetrate the mysterious male enclave that surrounded his own patrons' correspondence and administration, he would be accorded a degree of 'initiate status'; one that would bring him closer through such secrecy in terms of his friendship and intimacy strategies. Confiding secrets in a private space by 'mowth' would elevate, even if only momentarily, Herle's client status. Anita Kelly has explored the ritual disclosure of secrets, finding that

The revealing of secrets follows an organised sequence of events. The first step is the secret frame, wherein the revealer indicates that a secret is coming and indicates who should not be told. The second step involves the confidante's accepting the secret nature of the revelation and indicating that he or she can be trusted not to reveal it. The third step is the disclosure of the contents of the secret. The fourth and final step is the confidant's acknowledgement of having received and understood the secret. 73

Such comments are relevant to the sequence in which Herle attempted to reveal his secrets and simultaneously conceal them from uninitiated and unauthorised readers. However, Kelly's discussion concentrates on the physical transfer of secrets at a fixed time. The nature of Herle's indication 'that a secret is coming' was epistolary, and therefore obviated a need for Burghley, Leicester or Walsingham to herald the 'secret nature of the revelation'. The routine exchange of secrets rendered unnecessary the need for the recipient to acknowledge and accept the clandestine nature of its transmission. Kelly's notion of a formal system of secret sharing is here collapsed into the quotidian

practice of the disclosure of secrets, yet the security and ritual transfer remain imbued with a heightened sense of potency and gravitas.

Kelly continues by commenting on the intimacy yielded by the sequence of building up to a shared secret, suggesting that the exchange of secrets

unite[s] the revealer and the confidant ... [and] assure the confidant that the revealer can be trusted even though he or she is sharing a secret.\textsuperscript{74}

The concatenation of the familiar letter requesting private audience, the audience conducted within a private space, and the shared moment of secrecy all combined to enhance and endorse Herle’s client status with his patron whilst enacting a practical and expedient transaction of sensitive knowledge.

By directing his letters and soliciting a visit to his patron’s closet or equivalent private space, Herle was inscribing himself in a role similar to that of a secretary: an appropriate revealer, and conversely, repository and concealer of secrets. Not only did private and secret access accentuate his position with his patron, it endorsed the image of discreet responsibility which Herle was attempting to cultivate; first, through his ‘discovery’ and transmission of secrets, and secondly, through his capacity to keep those secrets. Invoking the image of the closet, therefore, symbolically indicated to the recipient that Herle deemed the information worthy of such a space, and that he would treat it accordingly. The implicit corollary of aligning himself and his letters with the socio-politically symbolic environment of the closet was that some of the exclusivity derived from the conserving and conducting of secrets would rub off onto him, and his status would be consequently heightened in this regard.

The access to this sanctum offered by the exchange of political knowledge was tacitly exploited by Herle who used it as an adjunct to his relentless pursuit of favour and reward. Albeit to use a meeting as a

\textsuperscript{74} Kelly, (2002), p.17.
forum to air his pecuniary concerns would be inappropriate and probably thwart future attempts at securing private audience, Herle nonetheless used such meetings and shared potent moments to cement and boost his standing in relation to the particular patron. Yet Herle was all too aware of the possibility of a meeting turning sour:

Since the tyme mi right honorable good L. that I spake with your Lord in Kent last in your garden, I travailed abowtt mi poore busynes into the Contry, where ever since I have byn sick greviously, even as att this present the Amendment is nott grett. And of I shall saye the truth the vnto your Lord even in the presence of God, the wounds that you spake vnto me then dyd sincke so deepe into mi hart, as have well ny coste me mi life, & whatt shall become of me, being poore wretche in a spyce of consumptyon, God he best knoweth the greff was that your Lord sholld be charged for me by som grett personaige, that you maintayned me to practis abrode. Myne owne estate which is poore & unfortunate dyd never move me, butt I have him uniustly towched ffor me, who is myne only staye & patron, therby to ffeele corrosive for mi sake, for whose helth & contentment, I wold mi life, might shue for a plaster, was a greff above all others, & a mene to discoraige him for cowntenancing & entertayneng me ani longer.75

Conscious of the precarious nature of a private audience, Herle was aware of the need for the intelligence to be potent enough to warrant the meeting, and to be sure that the knowledge wasn’t already second-hand. Robert Beale was anxious to stress the fickleness and self-interest by which intelligencers were motivated:

But take heed they deale not double with you and abuse you with toyes and matters of their owne invencon.76

In a bid to emphasise the integrity and merit of his intelligence, Herle deflected attention away from his faculty as a purveyor of secrets, turning the spotlight on his recipient instead. In 1582 Herle wrote a letter to Leicester containing details of the Prince of Orange’s convalescence after an assassination attempt. The letter is twelve pages long and includes items of intense importance, and in his valediction Herle bid his recipient to treat the letter accordingly:

    Wherwith I very humbly ffinisshe, commendyng the premisses to your secresye as a Cowncellor, Andwerpe, the 22 aprill. 77

This seemingly laudable phrase ‘secresye as a Cowncellor’ initially appears to confirm the recipient’s capacity to keep secrets, according to his important position in the Privy Council. Yet this positive recommendation carried with it an explicit request not to divulge the secret; a recommendation which actually undermines the tribute. By drawing attention to the secret-keeping of the councillor, Herle implicitly expresses a desire for the secret to be kept by the two men, a request corroborated by the secret information contained within the letter. Yet if he was genuinely anxious about the secret contents of the letter, why didn’t he request the letter to be returned or incinerated? Could this be a letter intended for broadcast to Elizabeth’s other ministers, publicly announcing Herle’s capacity to source, communicate and preserve secrets by paradoxically heralding them in a document available to be read by other initiated readers? Was Herle parading his patronage relationship based on and cemented by secrets where the document and the language of familiarity and friendship contained within could be scrutinised by other councillors? 78

Yet in another similar letter to Walsingham, Herle really did warn him to safeguard the letter he proposed to send:


78 For more on letters to ‘show’, and the coupling of potent, secret intelligence and epistolary strategies designed to foster intimacy, see Chapter 2.
Ytt plesed your honor yn the lettre ye wrytt me, to will that I sholld ynforme mi sellf, wherof that brute rysses, that we were yn cyvyll dissencion yn England, & to whatt effect the same was so bruted & from whom it proceded To which purpose I have sett down yn wryteng certayn secrett collectyons of mi observyng from the Last of Aprill to the xvj of maye, which I hope shall satisfye your honor, & discover that which your wisdom shalbe better hable to ludge of than I ether to conceve or expresse, which writeng as it conservnes som mistreyes yn dede, so mene I to send the same with an assured messenger this next weeke, commendyng it to your own honorable secresye.79

This letter illustrates Herle's endeavour to cement and maintain his relationship with Walsingham which was partly based on the value of his intelligence and secrets. The construction of this bond depended on the preservation of the secrets contained within the letters by the recipient, and on Herle's capacity to source the secrets and transmit them responsibly.

Consolidating this position of a trustworthy, discreet correspondent who had potent news to impart was part of Herle's objective to construct and maintain a precious patronage alliance. To signal that he was an appropriate candidate for such status, he indicated to his correspondents that he had had private conversations with important figures, thereby confirming his discretion and reliability. A letter to Burghley of 1583 saw Herle flaunt a leisurely talk with the Earl of Leicester to enhance by association his bond with Burghley:

Right honorable Lord I talked yesternight at good leysure with my Lord of Lecester, after I departed from your Lord of those Italyen Erlles & of other things. which he toke in very good parte.80

79 PRO SP 83/16/34. William Herle to Sir Francis Walsingham, 13th June 1582.
80 BL MS Lansdowne 39 f.194. William Herle to Lord Burghley, 22nd December 1583.
‘At good lesure’: Herle emphasised that the meeting was not rushed or fleeting; that the Earl was content to spend time in Herle’s company discoursing on politically potent topics. Yet while Herle was demonstrating his capacity to keep a secret, he was paradoxically coming close to giving away that secret, or at least signalling its existence and inviting its penetration by Burghley.

Anxious to display his merit as a treasurer of secrets, Herle proudly exhibited his success in this capacity with regard to his embassy to the Prince of Orange. In 1582, after the same assassination attempt discussed above, Herle was able to report that

The Prince of Orenge (thancks be to all mighty God, by whose miracle he is preserved) is hable to walke in his chamber, with whom I was this after noone & Coronell Morgan with me, beyng hartlye demaunded by the sayd Prince how your honor, the Lord Thresuror & the Erille of Leicester dyd, spekyng vnto me without ympedyment of tong: som lyttell contusyon, yett remaynes, which is hoped to becom better shortlye.  

Herle’s coup, though, was a discourse sent to Burghley of conversations held ‘at sondry times’ with the Prince of Orange. Sixteen pages in length, this was an extended and detailed narrative. Herle could write of the discussion:

Which was th’effect of that, which he committed to me by mowthe with grett secresye & charge. to be opened to your Lord & mi Lord of Leicester, & so consequently to the Queens maiestie.  

81 PRO SP 83/15/128. William Herle to Sir Francis Walsingham, 28th April 1582.
82 BL MS Cotton Galba C IV f.381-88. William Herle to Lord Burghley, 11th June 1573. Endorsed and catalogued as ‘The Prince of Orenge his discourse with wth Herle’. Conyers Read has asserted that Herle did not write this letter alone, but collaborated with Burghley on the composition of this extensive document. Nonetheless, if this was the case, Herle used the opportunity to parade his gracious treatment and private discourse with the Prince.
Herle was not reticent in parading his gracious treatment at the hands of such an important figure:

Now vppon these often conferences, which it plesed the Prince to haue with me, for som special ligeng that he had of mi procedings there in mi frynds behalfe, he att laste did enter into som nerer & more secret declaratyon of the State of that Contrey with me, & of his humble devotyon borne allwayes to the Queens maiestie of England.83

The trust reposed in him by the Prince of Orange ratified Herle’s position as a suitable candidate for Burghley and Leicester’s patronage, a commendation Herle meticulously related:

Having conseved verey deeply of me, he sayd, to imparte with me thus faithfully & secretly the state of things as he did, & to desire me even vppon mi allegiance to deliuer vnto her maiestie & your Lord whatt I had harde & sene of hym, who commended by mi mowthe into her maiesties hands ouer more, the entyer possession of Holland & Zeland.84

‘Bi mi mowthe into her maiesties hands’: Herle was the exclusive conduit between the royal personages, not only in terms of his diplomatic status, but figured by his intimate speech with the Prince of Orange which was translated into his dispatch, and delivered to the queen’s hands.

These examples illuminate the methods in which Elizabethan letter-writers were able to exchange secrets with a relative degree of security. From ciphers and codes, cryptic comments and the accompaniment of a bearer, where the information was comparatively concealed; to the open transmission of a secret in a letter destined for the fire or a return to the writer’s ‘deske’, these letters are indicative

83 As above, f.385’.
84 As above, f.386’.
of a system of grading of intelligence into different categories based on multiple variables. Location of the sender and recipient, season, bearer and terrain could all determine the method in which secrets were relayed. Add to this the methods of transmitting information too secret to be written, and a picture appears of shifting strategies and systems of communicating secrets which the correspondent was at pains to negotiate.

As we have seen with Herle's letters, on a purely political level these strategies are pragmatic, intended to thwart unauthorised scrutiny, even up to the level of the recipient's own household. Yet the decision to omit certain items of information within the letter, issuing a request instead to attend on the recipient to impart the information personally illuminates Herle's permanent strategy to engender intimacy with his recipient - not only rhetorically through the discourse of patronage, but physically, through personal access to a restricted space. This method of transmission provides the vehicle for a client to bolster and maintain a patronage relationship based on secrets: the radically restricted nature of the covert material proportionally engendering closeness and intimacy. This secondary, more personal motivation could call the integrity of the intelligence into question, were it not for the fact that the maintenance of such an intimate and important bond could only be ratified by sustaining the potency of the secret news and intelligence. The moment when a request for private audience was met, and the writer could divulge the secret information within a secure and socio-politically significant space was the key point for such a patronage bond to be endorsed, and was a triumph for the correspondent who sourced the information worthy of such precautions.

This study into the nuances of secrecy on and extraneous to the page necessarily reveals an enquiry into Herle's wider concern of his client status. We see that his practical negotiation around restricted information carried the dual motivation of pragmatic diligence in terms of intelligence operations, and the personal interest of a patronage bond consolidated by the exchange of secrets.
CHAPTER 2

‘Familiarietie & nere frendship’: The Language of Patronage in Herle’s Intelligence Letters.

‘There is nothing so covered, that shal not be revealed, neither so hidde, that shall not be knowen; and whatsoeuer they have spoken in darkenesse, should be heard in the light: and that which they had spoken in the eare in secret place, should be publikely preached on the tops of the houses.’

James I, Basilikon Doron.¹

The letters of the Elizabethan agent William Herle, sent to Lord Burghley, the Earl of Leicester and Sir Francis Walsingham during the first thirty years of Elizabeth’s reign contain diverse and potent political intelligence concerning both domestic and continental affairs. They illustrate the Elizabethan state’s struggle for supremacy through surveillance, and the consequent development of a credible bureaucratic intelligence service.²

Yet alongside these political elements, the letters also contain sentiment, personal comment, and emotional petitions to their respective addressees, indicating that this corpus of correspondence is one founded upon familiar affect, and situating (or at least attempting to) both public and private concerns within the epistle. For the Elizabethan government, the epistle was the only administrative form of communication, so it is no wonder that in official correspondence matters of a personal nature flank those of national importance. Yet

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the imprint of personality and character on intelligence and political matters generated by the language of textual affect and friendship questions the integrity of the information, a problem compounded by the constant appeal for favour and credit present in the letters. In this chapter, I aim to scrutinise the letters of William Herle to identify the tension between the union of politically potent knowledge and the posture of humble submission displayed through repeated petition, and Herle's strategy for defraying and deflecting such a tension in his quest for advancement.

The familiar letter, as classified by Desiderius Erasmus in his 1522 *De Conscribendis Epistolis*, was understood as a 'mutual conversation between absent friends'. More liberal and less prescribed than its predecessor, the medieval *Ars dictaminis*, the *De Conscribendis Epistolis* advocated a more casual and intimate approach to writing letters, especially those Erasmus classified as 'familiar'. Gone were the rigid conventions of structuring the letter into component parts - instead, Erasmus suggested an informal ordering of points, and even to exhibit thought patterns:

*In mixed letters in which a mass of almost countless topics is assembled, we shall either pour forth whatsoever comes into our heads, or devise some order from the occasion, the place, the persons, or the subjects, briefly indicating each change of subject by frequent short transitions.*

Above all, the letter should display 'clarity, simplicity and naturalness'. His program of informality and intimate style proposed avoiding using excessive 'respectfulness in titles', and employing 'a

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5 Erasmus, *DCE*, p.65.
more modest way of expressing flattery’. He disliked accentuating the
distance in rank and status:

‘Lord’ is the name of a position, not of an honour, it is
tyrrannical, not honorific; barbaric, not Roman.

Yet this counsel was not easily employed in a society based on hierarchy
and status, and Erasmus conceded:

But if a departure from the practice of the ancients is desirable,
if some concession must be made to the feelings of the recipient
or to current practice, it is permissible as long as the
imperfections are not too obtrusive, that is, the greeting should
not be tiresomely long-winded, or parasitically flattering, or
pedantically affected.

Later Renaissance epistolographers, such as William Fulwood and
Angel Day, were obliged to subscribe to this near-paradox of intimate
familiarity contained in letters between persons of a different rank.
Angel Day in his 1586 treatise The English Secretorie, (much of it
paraphrased from Erasmus) declared:

In accompt of the person, is to be respected, first the estate and
reputation of the partie, as whether hee be our better, our
equal, or inferior, next the lightnesse or gravitie, as whether he
be old, young, learned, unskilfull, pleasants, sage, stately,
gentle, sequestred from affayres, busied: or of what disposition,
sewe, or profession soeuer he be, that according thereunto, the
methode of his Epistle may immediately be ordered.

In these estates of betternes, equalitie, or inferior
calling, the excellence or debasement of eche of them, shalbe
measured to remayne, according to the credit, countenaunce,

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7 Erasmus, DCE, p.53.
8 Erasmus, DCE, p.61.
9 Erasmus, DCE, p.55.
estate, or dignitie of him, from whom the letter is framed, and by so much the more shall surmount or be lessened in just account by how muche the neerer or farther of, eche man is in calling to him, vnto whome hee taketh vpon him to write, wherein a man may assoone ouershoote himselfe by beeing too muche officious, as bewray his ill nurture, in not becomming sufficientlye obsequious. ¹⁰

Day anxiously negotiates the complicated conventions surrounding the correct address, conscious of the consequences of inappropriate salutation and tone. His instructions are similar to those of Erasmus, yet he accords prominence to the acknowledgement of rank. Lynne Magnusson argues that for Day:

The language of the letter is also a function of relative positioning but primarily determined by the social superioriety or inferioriety of the addressee. The world he represents, like the Elizabethan court, is a world of vertical relations, in which one is always negotiating one's position within a graduated hierarchy, and all the while reproducing the forms of symbolic domination and subordination that reinforce the hierarchy. ¹¹

What we see in Day's treatise is the attempt to accommodate both humanist principle, i.e. Erasmus' notion of intellectual equality between letter-writers, and pragmatic contemporary conventions surrounding and emphasising social distinctions. The humanist response of the Elizabethan letter-writer to initiate intimacy through tone, salutation and personal comment was necessarily countered by the exigency of custom and decorum, the writer angling his address and content accordingly. Sending a missive in the intimate and familiar style


beloved by Erasmus to a friend was appropriate - sending the same letter to one's superior verged on impertinent.

These practical contradictions between Erasmus' treatise and quotidian reality were compounded by the 'vertical dyadic alliance' structures on which the Elizabethan community was based.\textsuperscript{12} Patron-client relationships conducted through letters and audience were perilous exercises in intimacy and decorum. These vertical alliances required the construction and maintenance of a socially visible friendship, based on loyalty, trust, and crucially, service and reward. The humanist idea of friendship was rooted in the tenets of Cicero's \textit{De Amicitia}, promoting equality between friends - a complex notion in the rigid social hierarchy of Tudor England. Cicero admitted that friendship could exist between those of unequal social rank, advising the socially superior friend to do everything in his power to raise the inferior to his own position, and reduce himself to the inferior position in a gesture of sympathy. Yet Cicero also acknowledged that this type of friendship, i.e. one based on political and social aspiration was inferior to that between persons of one mind, a mutual unity of thought and a synthesis of reciprocal goodwill. In the Elizabethan period, then, what kind of friendship could flourish between those of unequal rank? Alan Stewart comments:

The friendship debate centered on different and often contradictory definitions emanating from on one side, humanistic theory, and on the other, the social structure it sought to transform, and that an understanding of humanistically defined friendship is essential to an understanding of how humanism saw itself working in early modern England. From the late fifteenth century onwards, humanistically trained men started to move into positions of key importance and influence in English society.

They presented themselves to the established ruling elite as counselors, and forwarded their counsel across a space that they defined in terms of an intellectual equality, an *amicitia* in Ciceronian (and Erasmian) terms.¹³

So where in the Erasmian ideal of friendship based on an emotional and intellectual bond can we situate the ‘friendships’ between patrons and their clients? The cyclical routine of a client performing a service for his patron in order to procure material profit, although expedient, seems an essentially contrived basis for a friendship. Although the common (and often tenuous) attestation of kinship could partly assuage the economic impetus of the relationship, an alliance which was deliberately conducted towards a reciprocal and mutually beneficial profit renders questionable the friendship ‘display’ of patronage discourse. Could a combination of friendship and profit comfortably co-exist? To a modern eye, the construction of these alliances and friendship bonds appears calculated and artificial, yet realistically these alliances formed the machinery of state.

For all Elizabethans, the cultivation of a patronage alliance was essential to preferment. A client would expect advancement, intercession, and pecuniary reward for the service undertaken for his or her patron. In return, the patron could expect absolute loyalty, trust and diligent service from his client, the arrangement publicly indicating his status and capacity to employ retainers. Yet this apparently reciprocal arrangement was fundamentally unequal - the very terms and exhibition of the relationship emphasising the inequality. The fictive construction of friendship in patronage discourse, often through political letters which contained personal comment and intimate feeling, created an environment of simulated *amicitia* - not founded upon equality, but its very opposite. The patron-client dyads pervasive and fundamental to Elizabethan society formed a dense and interconnecting patronage network, extending to all areas of state.

administration. Offices were held by clerks and secretaries interceded for and recommended by their patrons: corporate nepotism at its most basic and primitive. Elizabethan bureaucracy, then, was founded upon the carefully constructed and diligently maintained units of vertical alliances, the self-conscious vocabulary of friendship and intimacy sustaining the administrative machine.

It is in this atmosphere of reciprocal profit and hustle for advantage that we must read Herle’s intelligence letters. Although notorious for his activities as a prison spy, informer, and agent provocateur, he was simply, at various times, a client of Lord Burghley, the Earl of Leicester and Sir Francis Walsingham.

Herle was on familiar terms with Burghley, regularly referring to the bond of their kinship\(^{14}\) (often in the process of a suit), and inserting effusive declarations of loyalty and dutiful service. His letters display a wealth of goodwill:

\begin{quote}
Ffor I protest to the lyveng God, that your Lordship never had any more desirows to serve you than l, nor that with a trew & syncere zele, doth more honor & Love you than I do, which my prayers contynually to God for your Lordship hellth & grettnes, do bere me wyttnes, & my actyons shall shew yt even to the employeng of my lyfe, where yt shall plese yow to use & dispose of it, which my duty & bond to your Lord do comande me to do, & havyng that degre of God, to be a poore member of your lyne, I am tyed by nature the more to expresse it by all the service that I humbly may present.\(^{15}\)
\end{quote}

In 1587, Herle, very nearly destitute (although this was a recurrent crisis throughout his life), sued for a series of offices centred around the Exchequer, desperately seeking employment and sustenance

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\(^{14}\) I have found no evidence that Herle was related to Burghley in any way. He appears to be claiming kinship to ratify his client position, a common strategy in patronage discourse. Similarly, in a letter to the Earl of Leicester in 1581, Herle addressed Dudley as 'good Cosyn', PRO SP 12 148/13, William Herle to the Earl of Leicester, 5\(^{th}\) March 1581.

\(^{15}\) BL MS Lansdowne 25, 129\(^{r}\) - 130\(^{r}\). William Herle to Lord Burghley, 19\(^{th}\) October, 1577.
from any source. He wrote to Burghley, referring to a discussion of the matter with Queen Elizabeth:

In the mene tyme I moved her for the Clerckship of the casuall fynes, which she grawnted, butt the Lord Chancellor vallewing it to basse for me, bestowed it vppon his kinseman ffrancis fflowre. Next I sued by letter for Tussers office of the duchie, whervnto her maiestie (as I was informed) considered, wishheng the same with many good speches had of me, to be worthe muche more than it was yett ones agayn crossed by the Lord Chancellor, in the sute lykewise, & so was I by his Lord in the Clerckship of the Cowncell.\(^{16}\)

In this comment, in which he pointedly referred to his careerist motives in connection with his several royal audiences, Herle revealed he had been passed over for office three times. Ironically, Herle’s indignant reproach of the Lord Chancellor’s overt nepotism in awarding the post to his kinsman Francis Flower directly contradicted his hopes that Burghley would do the very same for him.

In November 1583 Herle sent Burghley a miscellany of information collected from the French embassy in London, intelligence ranging from potential Scottish conspiracy to ‘practisers’ closer to home,

The sayd Archeballd duglasse is to be looked unto, for he is a very practiser: of the scottish Queens factyon, & yett ynsynuates him sellf into an oppynion of her maiesties service, being in truthe a Countermynder (under colowr therof of all the occasyons & secretts that he may Reche unto, for the advauncement of the sayd scottish Queen his mistresse tytell, & her present Raigne yf it might be. He hath dellt conninglye with som men of good sorte, to drawe them to the scottish Queen’s

\(^{16}\) BL MS Lansdowne 54 150v\(^{\text{v}}\) and [verso] 153v\(^{\text{v}}\). William Herle to Lord Burghley, 6\(^{\text{th}}\) August 1587.
parts, & mi sellf have byn offred monney largely, presumyng belyke that I had neede, & theruppon yf I had Tashted ones of that liberalitye, som matter haply might have byn ymparted with me, which otherwise they wolld make me a stranger in. I know som of his Instruments, & part of his Jawnts.¹⁷

This letter, typical of Herle’s missives in terms of making insidious allegations, was essentially a bartering chip. In the reciprocal bond of patron-client alliance, Herle ‘performed’ his service by collecting and transmitting potent political knowledge, securing and reinforcing his relationship with Burghley. The concept here is one of deferred profit: Herle intended to gain reward for the service performed in the shape of a pension, position or other such pecuniary advancement. He was not coy about his desire for such fiscal reward:

Mi sellf have byn offred monney largely, presumyng belyke that I had neede & theruppon yf I had Tashted ones of that liberalitye, som matter haply might have byn ymparted with me, which otherwise they wolld make me a stranger in.

This sentence suggests a supplication by Herle to accept the pay of Archibald Douglas whilst an agent for the Elizabethan administration. Implicit in this superficially glib sentence was a caveat to Burghley. Herle advertised that he was visibly impecunious, ‘presumyng belyke I had neede’, a state which rendered him vulnerable to solicitation by conspirators financed by England’s enemies. Although the sentence alone was not an open question to Burghley, the conjunction ‘yf’ intimated that the matter was unresolved and required attention. The clause ‘presumyng belyke I had neede’ hinted at Herle’s permanently ulterior motive for financial advancement, and exposed the personal entreaty within the political message. In terms of patronage, the

petition was peculiar, requesting permission to pose as a Scottish conspirator. Herle was simultaneously placing Burghley in the position of obligation as patron and consolidating his own position of client by requesting advice and direction. Hence, recognising the prudence of assuring Burghley of his ongoing allegiance to the state, Herle offered intelligence, ‘I know som of his Instruments’.

Yet it was in this moment of patron-client reciprocity that the relationship was temporarily altered by the transaction of intelligence made by Herle. This instant of unilateral tender placed Burghley in a ‘receiving’ position, and compromised his superior rank. His ‘need’ for the knowledge was recognised by both parties, and situated Herle as the primary source of information and knowledge, countering Burghley’s usual position of sponsor and patron. This moment of social instability was an uncomfortable one, and Herle attempted to resolve it by adopting a posture of humble submission. This manoeuvre to reinstate himself as the inferior party took Herle on a complicated linguistic journey of denial and negation. Continuing his list of potential doom in his tirade against Douglas and his fellow conspirators, Herle inserted an apostrophe to God, invoking the natural and fundamental hierarchy, and portraying the action of informing and surveillance as divine:

Butt that God doth miraculously discover & dyvert their malyce, & is the absolute defender of her maiestie.

He then concluded this section of the miscellany with his petition:

The case, & the premisse allso I humbly lay down beffore your wisdom, & do pray pardon for mi bolldnes, butt with condycyon that mi carkasse might serve for a plaster allso, for ani dedlye sore that might conserve the kingdom or magistrate, which in Religyon, God & dutye to her maiestie I utter in all humble zele & truthe.\(^\text{18}\)

\(^{18}\) BL MS Lansdowne 39 f.189v-192v.
The reward Herle ostensibly craved from Burghley was to serve the Queen and preserve the state from her enemies. The maladroit metaphor of applying himself like a plaster to heal the contagious sore of conspiracy accorded him an altruistic posture, willing and intent to martyr himself for the state's cause. Significantly, Herle commenced this letter adhering to the ancient epistolic tradition of *exordium*, inscribing his position as humble, and attempting to secure Burghley's goodwill and benevolence:

*Right* honorable good Lord I have understood by the Erle of Bedfford, (to whose favor & goodnes, I am grettly beholldyng) that he in movyng your Lord of me in so maner, ytt plesed you so to lyke therof, as bothe ye gave him thancks, on mi behallf, & promised of your sellf to do me som speciall good, asswell for som present releeff, & beteryng of mi poore estate, as for som office to be bestowed uppon me herafter, when the opportunitye were offered, ffor the which Right honorable & my deer Patron, I was to have gyven yow mi dew & humble thancks, butt that your grett & weightye affayres, have ymposed vnto me a modestye, that in place of dutye I shall nott be troblesom to your Lord to whom it suffiseth to knowe, that when mi service & nott mi woords, may hath waytt uppon your Lord I will nott be slowe to offer that same, & to parfforme even with mi lyfe all the good offices that so mene a man is hable to perfect, owyng all that I have or am lyke to have to your good Lord only.19

In this letter, Herle explicitly required service as a reward for service (although tacitly aspiring to financial compensation; 'am lyke to have'). In other letters, however, he was not so magnanimous. After many diplomatic excursions through which large debts had accrued, Herle wrote:

19 BL MS Lansdowne 39 f.189r-192v.
Butt trulye mi state is so lowe brought that it can endure no
delaye, ffor mi pencion, the onlye staye & cowntenance of mi
poore lyveng, is now forfeyted for wante of hellp, that before
was morgayged, for the expence of her service, & there is
nothing lefte to sustayne me with, nor had ani peny wheroff from
her these 2. yeres. which in the compassyon of your honorable
favour, & your regarde to those that merite well off her
maiestie's service, I humblye with confidence commend me to
your mediation & wisdom. putting your Lord humbly in mynde
how unsemyng it is, (& unhable a matter) for the servant to bere
the charge of his Soverains weightye comissions, which is mi
case, & then the more resonable to be repayed, wherwith I verey
humbly fynisshe.\textsuperscript{20}

Yet if we figure Herle's knowledge transactions in terms of Alan
Stewart's definition of the equivalent space for the transfer of political
and intellectual knowledge, a problem is manifest. The exchange of
intelligence creates tension in the patron-client dyad because it is
purveyed: the information has a price, and the vendor an ulterior
motive, i.e. reward, however distantly deferred. The knowledge
collected and disseminated by Herle was a commodity, and its exchange
in the form of 'service' by the client ratified the patronage bond
conducted for profit.

Lisa Jardine and William Sherman have explored the idea of
purveyed knowledge in scholarly transactions performed for patrons by
figures such as Sir Henry Wotton and Gabriel Harvey, arguing that the
skills base provided by a scholarly education facilitated the compilation
of sensitive material by the state-sponsored scholar-spy:

This kind of activity, crossing as it clearly does both disciplinary
and professional boundaries, and hovering between the private
and the public realm, we call a 'knowledge transaction' ...

\textsuperscript{20} BL MS Lansdowne 54 150r" and [verso] 153r". William Herle to Lord Burghley, 6\textsuperscript{th}
August 1587.
Wotton offers Lord Zouche his service in a variety of related knowledge transactions ... This kind of 'intelligence' plainly embraces both sensitive and innocuous, scholarly and political knowledge, and elides the functions of information gatherer and spy.  

Although Herle's collateral of knowledge was not sourced from scholarly learning but from his own diverse espionage activities, the process of the gathering and transmission of potent political matter shares features with the example of scholarly research discussed above. What renders Herle's purveying of intelligence significant is his tacit motive for its collection. Although the terms of each particular patronage alliance were unique, the concepts of service and reward were constant; for William Herle, his 'service' and 'duty' were figured in terms of information gathering for Burghley. Entering Burghley's service in the early years of Elizabeth's reign, Herle was given diverse duties that ranged from diplomatic missions to the Dukes of Holstein and the Prince of Orange, to incriminating Catholic conspirators in the Tower and Marshalsea prisons. In a standard patron-client alliance, a carefully placed item of intelligence or news might latently affect the strength of the patronage bond by increasing favour and fostering goodwill, prompting the client to seek the most politically important material for this reason. Yet Herle's 'service' was slightly different - his intelligencing seems not to have been an adjunct to other duties: rather, it appears that he was often sent specifically for the purpose of diplomatic negotiation, on which type of voyage the collection of intelligence was notoriously paramount. He actively searched out the intelligence he could transmit to Burghley, maintaining contact with key figures in the Low Countries for this purpose. It is this active sourcing of intelligence which is problematic: the haste for new intelligence necessitates the compilation of new material - information that is so

fresh that its reliability is suspect. Herle attempted to counter this by adding sources to boost the credibility of his information:

Yff it might plese your Lord to consyder som whatt further of the letter that I shewed you that powell Buis & ortell wrytt me, there might be somwhatt enterayned to the good servyce of her maistie & to the taking awaye of the stomack that owr adversaryes have, & for the generall staye of all spoyles that otherwise might enoye vs & all our neyghbors.\(^22\)

However, the deployment of politically sensitive material to constantly re-affirm the alliance between client and patron is troubling. The motivation behind such pursuit of intelligence may be allegedly to serve the patron and state, but there is always the inherent desire for personal gain - a fundamentally subjective impetus in what should ideally be an objective process.

An added tension at the intersection between these strategies to foster intimacy and critical state concerns was the revealing of the client’s letters to other members of the power base. In the event of the inclusion of potent intelligence, the letter was likely to be shown or read aloud to the other privy councillors. The problem with the letters being shown was the exposure of the carefully constructed friendship, intruding on the ‘conversation between absent friends’, and breaching the intimacy evoked within the letter. A letter read aloud was of less concern, as the personal comments could be edited from the relevant parts. To perhaps circumvent this intrusion of privacy, Herle made verbatim copies if he anticipated the intelligence was of such magnitude that it necessitated public broadcast. In 1582, during his missions to the Low Countries, he sent Lord Burghley and the Earl of Leicester verbatim copies of the same letter, and referred both men to each other should they need to confer over a particular point:

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\(^22\) BL MS Lansdowne 23 f.164' - 165''. William Herle to Lord Burghley, 18\(^{th}\) May 1576.
My dere & Right honorable good Lord I do send your Lord herynclosed, the copies of mi ii last letters written to the Erlle of Lecester verbatim. Wheryn I do towche som part of scottissh affayres, for that I do vnderstand that his Lord is advertised by som other, of assmuche as I do signeffye in mi sayd letters. Butt yf it may plese your Lord to send me spedylye a Cipher, which shalbe peculyer only to her maiestie & your selff, I will vnder the sayd Cipher, advertys yow of a matter that consernes her maiesties Crown & person, wherffore it may plese your Lord with the diligens that is convenyent to send me the same, & I will discharge the part of a lovyng dutifull servant & subiect, which I will seall with mi blood, Butt trulye there most be non more acquwainted with the sayd advertisments butt her maiestie & your Lord alone.

Significant in this letter was Herle's bid to include Burghley in his separate correspondence with the Earl of Leicester, exhibiting a deliberate frankness and relinquishing the privacy of the letters. This frankness is compounded by Herle’s request for a cipher particular only to the tripartite group of Herle, Burghley and the Queen: an essential requirement in the transmission of highly sensitive material, but also an arrangement which would facilitate a radical intimacy and closeness with initiated correspondents.

Yet, this projected correspondence with Burghley would still be available to be perused by another reader (the Queen). In his study of Sir John Harington, Jason Scott-Warren has discussed a letter which Harington wrote to Lady Elizabeth Russell, desiring her to mediate with Lord Burghley on his behalf. Harington writes an intimate and warm letter to Russell, fully expecting, asserts Scott-Warren, the letter to be shown to Burghley. It is in this situation, concludes Scott-Warren, that we perceive

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23 PRO SP 83 15/87, William Herle to Lord Burghley, 1st April 1582. For more discussion of this letter, see Chapter 1.
the outlines of a set of incompletely formalized conventions for dealing with letters, conventions which are now quite extinct. Russell in effect distinguishes between two kinds of letter, one of which is strictly private, the other ‘such as I may shew’.

Scott-Warren argues that it is the self-conscious construction and assurances of intimacy and privacy which persuade him that the familiar letter Harington writes to Lady Russell is ultimately meant for Burghley’s hands. This writing for a third audience alters the interiority of the familiar letter; exposing the close bond engendered by the distinctive epistolary conventions of language, tone, and address. This notion of a personal letter intended for public broadcast explains the intimate and familiar tone coursing through the administrative archive of the Elizabethan state papers. Indeed, when discussing a letter from Sir Ralph Sadler and Sir James Croft to Burghley, (at that time still Sir William Cecil), Magnusson explores the possibility that the advice given within the letter is meant for the Queen rather than Cecil, who Sadler and Croft know shares their opinion:

It may well be that the letter works indirectly, as a solicitation of authority not directly addressed at all, an authority meant nonetheless to overhear and to ‘depely wey it’ in her ‘wisedom and depe iudgement’ so as to reach the determination being urged not only by the letter-writers but also by the nominal addressee.

Yet the dichotomy remains of Herle’s split objectives: to preserve intimacy with his patron, and to perform the elaborate rhetorical display which consolidates his suitability to be retained and patronised

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by Burghley should the letters be shown around to those external to the relationship.

Yet this idea of the deliberate construction of familiar letters to include a third audience fails to explain Herle’s elaborate strategies and efforts to separate his different channels of correspondence, or, conversely, to send exact copies to each of his three major correspondents. His personal mandate was to foster intimacy with his patrons and to retain this despite (and paradoxically through) the successive broadcasts of his letters. One strategy to maintain contact with all three was to send them verbatim copies of his intelligence reports, preventing their exclusion from the exchange of potent knowledge and ensuring that they received their own copy of the letter, obviating the need to forward it to a final reader. This is of key importance in the construction of a patronage alliance and indeed, any epistolary relationship: if a letter is merely ‘passing through’ one’s hands, its transient nature might preclude an attachment or affinity with its writer.

But time was not always on Herle’s side, and the production of facsimile letters was a strain on his meagre resources:

Havyng this mornyng Right honorable wrytten this letter ynclosed to my Lord of Lecester, which conteynes matter of the State of Owdenarde, newer than I have certeffied your honor of, & havyng no lesyre to wryte a partycler letter therof to yow, havyng non ayde butt mi sellf, ytt may plese yow to take yn good parte to peruse the sayd lettre & that don to seall it up with hard waxe, & to deLyver ytt to this berer mi servant, ffor mi sayd Lord of Lecester.26

It is not clear in this missive whether Herle was inviting Walsingham to secretly read the letter and furtively reseal it, or whether he advocated open scrutiny before handing it to Leicester. The precise directive to ‘seall it up with hard waxe’ suggests that Herle anticipated that

26 PRO SP 83 16/52, William Herle to Sir Francis Walsingham, 1st July 1582.
Leicester would respond negatively to an unsealed letter. Whether it had been read or not before delivery to the reader’s hands, the ritual of breaking the seal was crucially significant in the reception of sensitive material. Furthermore, if Walsingham sealed Herle’s letter to Leicester with his personal seal, the correspondence route and readership would be radically altered, and the letter’s reception would be figured accordingly.\(^{27}\)

Significantly, Herle took the time to construct the short letter to Walsingham, inserting intimate salutation to create a separate and personal missive from the one he had briefed Walsingham to breach:

\[
ytt may plese yow to take yn good parte to peruse the sayd letter 
... Yf I had a yong honeste ffellow to copye thyngs, I cowd send your honor sondrye wrytengs worthye your perusyng, & yett be hable to yntertayne the partye that sholld wryte to his contentment & commodity, beyng honest & dylygent ... Your honors most humblye with his harte & servyce.\(^{28}\)
\]

An added, albeit lesser, complication with the reception of letters was the sanctioned opening of the letter by the addressee’s secretary. Although private and important letters could be delivered directly to the recipient’s hands, most letters arrived at the recipient’s closet, and were organised, sorted, and often endorsed by the secretary. Nicholas Faunt explains:

\[
It shalbe also convenient to bee prouided of an other [servant] for the dispatch of ordinarie matters, and chiefly for Continuall attendant in the Chamber where the papers are whose perticuler charge may bee to indorse them or giue them their due titles, as they dayly come in of all sortes, which (to reduce them into a
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\(^{27}\) For more on this letter, see Chapter 3, p.132. Of course, it was possible for a seal to be broken and then re-attached to the letter. The (in)famous Thomas Phellippe and his side-kick Arthur Gregory regularly broke and then counterfeited the seals of letters without their final recipients ever realising. See Nicholl, (2002), p.129; Alan Haynes, \textit{The Elizabethan Secret Services} (Stroud: Sutton, 2000), pp.35, 67, 86.

\(^{28}\) PRO SP 83 16/52.
few heads) are noted to be of three kinds namely *home lettres* which are the greatest multitude, *Councell matters* concerninge anye priuate or publique cause, and *Divers matters* which Conteine peticions to the Secretarie discourses, projects, relacions declaracions or informacions of priuate or publique causes etc. 29

This authorised opening of letters further compromised the assumed privacy of the familiar letter, especially when it might contain matters of both a public and private nature.

The concerns and complications surrounding Herle’s intelligence reports deriving from the plurality of address and split protestations of devotion illuminate certain hazards in the construction of an information bureau based on patronage and the highly subjective impetus of micropolitical friendship. The personal motivation of these letters expressed in terms of familiar affect, questions their legitimacy as political, and therefore ‘public’, or open, documents. These (modern) anxieties are to some extent paralleled by the tension the Elizabethan letter-writer experienced in composing his political letter founded upon familiar affect. We have seen that in writing to his hierarchically superior patron, Herle ostentatiously postured himself as humble, and exhibited friendship through strategies designed to promote intimacy and goodwill. In an intelligence letter, this humble posture was problematised by the unequal transaction of knowledge and the resulting power reversal, obliging the writer to re-inscribe his inferiority and humility to restore the balance.

Yet even if Herle successfully negotiated such contrary factors of the personal motivation behind political intelligence, these tensions and the deft manoeuvres to circumvent them were further compromised by the inclusion of advice and opinion on state policy deriving from Herle’s collection of intelligence. Distinct from merely transacting knowledge, i.e. money or office as a reward or impetus for intelligence, the giving

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of advice required more than the assembly of bald facts: the intelligence demanded an added credibility, and rendered the advice-giver accountable for both the transmission of intelligence and the counsel based upon it. The ramifications of the giving of advice based on unreliable information were considerable for the adviser and the policy-maker alike.

In the early part of the sixteenth century, much was written on the question of counsel. Directed and addressed both to princes and the noblemen who served as their counsellors, treatises discussed the appropriate and decorous methods of negotiating the complex process of advice giving. Key to successful kingship was the cultivation of honest and loyal advisers, and the absolute avoidance of any form of flattery. Niccolò Machiavelli suggested:

To keep his minister up to the mark the prince, on his side, should be considerate towards him, should pay him honour, enrich him, put him in his debt, share with him both honours and responsibilities. Thus the minister will see how dependent he is on the prince; and then having riches and honours to the point of surfeit he will desire no more; holding so many offices, he cannot but fear changes.

Flatterers advised their sovereign towards their own ends, which would ultimately abase the realm. Thus Thomas Elyot counselled caution over the choice of friends, followers, and those from whom counsel was elicited:

A nobleman above all things ought to be very circumspect in the election of such men as should continually attend upon his person

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at times vacant from busy affairs, whom he may use as his familiars, and safely commit to them his secrets.  

The optimum adviser was one who offered his counsel frankly, for the benefit of the sovereign and the common-weal, and not for his own self-interest. But such plain-speech was not without its dangers if the prince was already surrounded by corrupt counsellors, explained Hythloday in Thomas More’s *Utopia*:

*If I should propose to any king wholesome decrees, doing my endeavour to pluck out of his mind the pernicious original causes of vice and naughtiness, think you not that I should forthwith either be driven away or else made a laughing stock?*  

Hythloday continued:

*If I should rise up and boldly affirm that all these counsels be to the king dishonour and reproach, whose honour and safety is more and rather supported and uphelden by the wealth and riches of his people than by his own treasures, and if I should declare that the commonalty chooseth their king for their own sake, and not for his sake, to the intent that through his labour and study they might all live wealthily safe from wrongs and injuries ... for how can so strange information be profitable, or how can they be beaten into their heads whose minds be already prevented with clean contrary persuasions?*  

He counselled perseverance:

*So the case standeth in a commonwealth, and so it is in the consultations of kings and princes. If evil opinions and naughty*

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persuasions cannot be utterly and quite plucked out of their hearts, if you cannot even as you would remedy vices which use and custom hath confirmed, yet for this cause you must not leave and forsake the commonwealth.  

Erasmus also had an opinion about counsel, advocating the prince select frank advisers and instigate a system of rewarding integrity to foster and maintain an environment of candour and honesty:

The prince should accustom his friends to believe that they will gain favor by giving frank advice. It is the part of those who are closely associated with the prince to give him counsel that is seasonable, appropriate, and friendly. It will be well for the prince to pardon those whose counsel is crudely given, so that there may be no example to deter his good counselors from their duty.

Machiavelli's advice was similar:

A shrewd prince should adopt a middle way, choosing wise men for his government and allowing only those the freedom to speak the truth to him, and then only concerning matters on which he asks their opinion, and nothing else.

Yet despite these diverse manuals and exhaustive opinions on political strategy, there remained a credible anxiety about how to actually give the advice without seeming presumptuous and arrogant. Magnusson explains:

While advice is not as openly intrusive as criticism, to advise a social equal is clearly to trespass on the other's sense of self, for

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it implies that the person advised would not take a sound course of action without the intervention of the advisor ... The strategies of argumentation are motivated by the politics of politeness, by the requirement to avoid presumption in advising the powerful. Within the situated rhetoric of the letter, even while the ... advisors are those best placed to have the requisite knowledge, they must not presume to know what they know, or to do what they do.\footnote{Magnusson (1999), pp. 18, 97.}

Magnusson contends that the social complexities surrounding the giving of advice to a person of greater rank were circumvented and obviated by the employment of ‘negative politeness’. Magnusson classifies this as a risk-mitigating and ‘face-saving’ technique, the writer subtly altering syntactical and linguistic constructions to posture himself as deferential whilst simultaneously exchanging knowledge and counsel. Yet Magnusson questions the efficacy of this strategy:

Considered from the viewpoint of a central administration’s need for accurate information from the most distant portions of the realm, the personal letter so oriented to the status of the addressee that it may characteristically shape an urgent message into an indirect suggestion - or certain knowledge into qualified opinion - may seem very far from an ideal state instrument.\footnote{Magnusson (1999), p. 100.}

This ‘negative politeness’ explored by Magnusson can be identified in those letters of Herle’s where he gave advice. In the same letter in which Herle offered himself as a plaster to heal the state, he offered advice on the problem of conspirators:

Frawncs Throckmortons brother and on dygby of Lyncollnes Yn, bothe papists & noted of to carye yll & busy myndes, do yntend to depart the Reallme within these 3 dayes as slylye as they may.
who in mi oppynion, wolld be observed well att the hower of their passayge, And thus havyng trobled your Lord overmuche, I crave hartlye humble pardon for the same.\textsuperscript{40}

Here, Herle deflected his position of advice-giver by reversing sentence structure, and putting the advice into an impersonal clause. His assertion of authorship of the advice, `who in mi oppynion', crucially diverted the focus and responsibility back towards himself. He reinforced his `oppynion' with evidence, `noted of to carye yll & busy myndes', and placed the actual advice clause into the conditional, avoiding addressing Burghley directly, `wolld be observed well att the hower of their passayge'.

In a letter to Burghley of 1571, Herle discussed his examination with James Chillester, a factious papist, and concluded:

\begin{quote}
Butt if it may plese your Lord to commande the sayd Chillester after his first examinatyon, to make a Diarye from esther last howe he hath spent the tyme, \& in watt Company \& of the Conferencs \& practises that passed in that space, that yow wold seme vnto hym, that if he swarve butt on Jote from the truthe, that you ar hable to reprove hym therby he is then past all hope of mercy or favor, this in mi oppynion will decipher hym to th'vttermost, for if he fayll, it may be straight bowlled owt, \& compelle hym to revele all.\textsuperscript{41}
\end{quote}

Unlike the previous passage, Herle repeatedly addressed Burghley, `Butt if it may plese your Lord', `that you ar hable to reprove hym', shifting the focus directly onto his patron. To avert the consequent fracture of the relationship hierarchy created by proposing advice to a superior, Herle angled his counsel conditionally: the `Butt if it may plese your Lord', `that if he swarve', and `for if he fayll' suggesting an alternative course of action, and tendering a fictive

\textsuperscript{40} BL MS Lansdowne 39, f.189' - 192'. William Herle to Lord Burghley, 15\textsuperscript{th} November, 1583.

\textsuperscript{41} BL MS Lansdowne 13, 162' - 164'. William Herle to Lord Burghley, 19\textsuperscript{th} March, 1571.
choice to Burghley. Despite his position of advice-giver and the presentation of only one option, by employing the conjunctions ‘if’ and ‘but’, Herle opened up what Magnusson calls ‘a discursive space for the mediation of Burghley’, a strategy designed to recognise Burghley as superior.  

However, there were times when such rhetorical complexities were not practical, in the case of a hastily penned letter, or matters of extreme urgency:

Don Gaston that is come from the Prince of Parma, to go into Spayne to the King from hence is a man reputed of actyon, of the age of 33 yeres, & hath butt on eye, & very resolute. his ffather was a genovoys, his mother a spaniard & by his contry a Sicilyan which is the worst commixture that ever was, & therfor for God sake, lett him be well observed. ffor tomorow is a solempe daye, which owght nott to be withowtt care of her maiesties securitye, her person beyng the highest lewell that christendom now hath. Those solempe dayes have bred danger mani tymes besyde that the commyng of this man att this instant hither, his condycyons allso wayd, hath made me never cesse till I had uttred in humble zele this mi conseytt to your good Lord. & so most humblye I take mi leve. 

Herle commenced his urgent counsel by an uncharacteristic outburst ‘for God sake’, and a direct entreaty ‘lett him be well observed’. He then reaffirmed his submissive posture by providing evidence for his emphatic concern, implicitly enforcing his outburst and volunteering more advice and guidance; the double negative representative of his indirect address, ‘which owght nott to be withowtt care of her maiesties securitye’. Swiftly concluding his advice, and also the letter, Herle re-inscribed himself as unpresumptuous and tacitly apologised for

43 BL MS Lansdowne 39 f.193v. William Herle to Lord Burghley, 16th November, 1583.
troubling Burghley, 'uttred in humble zele this mi conseytt to your good Lord'.

Occasionally, Herle dispensed with elaborate rhetorical politeness entirely, making candid suggestions instead. In a letter of 1585, he wrote to Burghley:

Right honorable good Lord, I haue bynn greuiously sicke, by the space of on month and more, escaping with neare danger, and am yet so lowe, as can scarce walke in my Chaumber, this hath bynn the occation whye I haue not soner sent your Lord the Examinacions of Camiori, prisoner in the Gatehouse ... Wherbie your Lord shall doe well in my simple Judgment, to deliuer him, & to banishe him, which is my humble aduice, & the whole knowledge, that I haue in this cause.44

Frank and to the point, (which is a rhetorical construction in itself), Herle nevertheless ensured his deferential aspect was not compromised by the bald statement of advice, the modest modifiers 'simple Judgment' and 'humble advice' flanking a straightforward option, to detain and banish the Italian prisoner Camiori. As he explained in the first part of the letter, Herle was recovering from a recurrent ague, and his candid and tired tone perhaps explains the distinct lack of manoeuvre normally undertaken to disguise the counsel and posture the writer as inferior.

As a trusted diplomatic envoy to the Low Countries for Queen Elizabeth, and tested agent for domestic state affairs, Herle was effectively licensed to mediate on her behalf, representing the voice and figure of his sovereign. This notable position afforded him multiple audiences with key political figures of England's allies such as the Prince of Orange and the Duke of Anjou during his sojourn on the continent. In his reports and letters from abroad, Herle dispatched news and intelligence of martial skirmishes, victories and losses, accounts of army morale and mutiny, dynastic alliances, births and

44 BL MS Lansdowne 46, f.22'-23'. William Herle to Lord Burghley, 8th July 1585.
deaths in prominent families, and movement of enemy forces. As expected of an envoy, he was a key point of reference for policy makers at home. The trust invested in Herle by selecting him for these sorts of missions confirms that the advice he recommended was expected and not unlooked for; the Privy Council, specifically Burghley and Leicester, required and solicited such counsel and were open to its reception.

Yet despite this state-sponsored franchise to gather information and submit advice, Herle made an elaborate show of his recommendations, framing them in strategically humble and submissive gestures of deference as if they were tedious and impudent. Here we can perceive Herle's problem with the transfer of knowledge over an unequal power base: the acute discomfort of Herle as enfranchised knowledge-seeker and advice-giver necessitating his rhetorical diversion and manoeuvre to re-affirm the power balance and negate presumption.

In contrast to the self-consciously obsequious tone of the missives containing advice to Burghley, Herle's correspondence with lesser members of the state bureaucracy seems more informal and exhibits a significant lack of 'repair-work'. In a letter to Thomas Wilson discussing the most advantageous policy regarding the Spanish conspirator Guerras, Herle wasted no time with a salutation or exordium, embarking on an anti-Spanish tirade:

Spayn touching the Banishment of Gwarras
He vnderstands our kingdome and the members therof better, then anye other of his Cote (for his contynewance hathe bene longe here, and his meanes manye).

Herle's tone was more confident and assured; his counsel was clearly aimed at a person of lower rank rather than his usual correspondents of

45 Magnusson (1999). Magnusson classifies 'repair work' as the strategy by which Elizabethan letter-writers exchanged advice without transgressing the social balance by presumptuous advice-giving; 'repair as conditioned jointly by the relative positioning of the correspondents and the risk level of the business at hand'. pp.92-3.
46 BL MS Cotton Vespasian XIII f. 301r-302v. William Herle to Thomas Wilson, undated copy. The manuscript is not in Herle's hand, (although he has signed and endorsed it) and the salutation has been edited, as has the date and place of writing.
Burghley and Leicester, addressing Wilson directly, and candidly phrasing his advice:

But yf you lett hym lowse nowe, he pretends by the favor & medyacon of his ffrends to retorne solemplie, as the Kings ambassador to the deface of his banyshers, and encoragenge of the yll sorte, & then he hath libertie to practize at large, or otherwyse being reiected, to make yt the grownde of a publicke qwarell.

Herle addressed Wilson with courtesy, ‘your honor’, and succinctly forwarded his advice with no pretensions of deference or submissiveness:

Nowe yf your honor of the Councell, do banyshe hym the Realme, he will not departe from Calyce before he ynstructe the spanyshe ambassador by writinge and message of ech Circumstance, that he would be satisfied in, who attends vppon his dyspatche hence, as dyligent as a bee.

However, further on in the letter, Herle’s casual tone was compromised by an inclusive address to the whole Privy Council, which was comprised of a host of the peers of the realm:

But yf your honors will shutt him into some melancholye place, the dysapointinge of his hopes will ether kill him, (fore he is but heuie harted), and governed by passions, or ells decaye the Remayner of his wytt and memorye, (which are all ready by these late dysgraces grettly dulled and broken, and possessed of a pallsey not recoverable) so as he shalbe smallye hable to negocyate anye more and then maye he be lett lowse to his ffrends, as a lewell, to Serue theyr lornes, which is my opynion towchinge him and his Chawses, in obeynge your honors Commandement made vnto me in this Behallf.
The tone of the letter is dramatically altered by this multiple address, diverting the final readership and rendering the first half of the letter potentially discourteous and presumptuous. The letter was always intended as one of advice and opinion; Herle’s endorsement reads

Answer to mr secretory Willsons letter touching the banishment of Gwarras whither it were necessarype or nott.

It could be simply that Herle was following orders and frankly imparting advice, but the strange shift in address would substantially affect the reception of letter, especially when juxtaposed with the carefully manufactured posture of deference in a letter to Burghley. The shift from earlier direct statements, ‘yf you lett hym lowse nowe’ to the more oblique ‘which is my opynion towchinge him and his Chawses’ suggests that Herle had altered his epistolary focus mid-missive from an answer to Wilson alone (to whom the endorsement points) to a letter of advice and information to the whole council. The unresolved and erratic character of this letter perhaps demonstrates Herle’s uncertain position in relation to his correspondent: was this a letter containing radically arcane information, and therefore a private missive between Herle and Wilson, or an open answer to the problem of the status of ‘Gwarras’?

Both Lynne Magnusson and Jason Scott-Warren have suggested that certain letters were written with the expectation of third-party access: to be ‘shown’ to important officials, and even to the Queen. This is perhaps manifest in the examples discussed above, explaining the strategic and complicated shifts in tone and address. Certainly, Herle’s diplomatic dispatches were of such political magnitude that a significant portion of the content might be revealed or communicated to Elizabeth by Burghley or Leicester. Herle exploited this potential moment of rare epistolary access by demonstrating rhetorical flourish and negative politeness, designed to win favour and advancement, and to parade his intimate alliance with his important patrons. His letter to Wilson (and concomitantly the rest of the Council) concerned
unpleasant and hostile topics: the Catholic threat and Spanish conspiracies to assassinate Elizabeth and place Mary Stuart on the throne. Understandably, this subject matter was unlikely to be directly revealed to the Queen and the tone and content of the letter was consequently less formal and circumspectly politic.

However, it appears that Herle took this concept of third-audience letters too far. A cluster of letters from a week late in August 1585 charts a frantic bid by Herle to re-instate himself as a loyal and reliable client after seriously endangering his patronage relationship with Burghley.

On Monday 11th August 1585, Herle sent a letter to Burghley reporting the latest slanders and accusations levelled at him and his son Robert Cecil. This was nothing new - Herle regularly updated Burghley of the more distasteful gossip about the Elizabethan state administration. However, these rumours and allegations were more malicious than usual:

Vpon the newes of the Losse of Andwerp, the Rayge of men was so grett agaynst your Lord as it exceded bothe mesure & modestye, exclamyng openly & every where: Thatt your honor & your Temporizeng sowght to starve all men: To call in the Enmye of Spayne even to Billengsgate (who was att hand having Andwerpe in his possessyon: And to charge the Government & State wholly: Reiowseng in these poore menes calamities of the Lowe Contreyes, & their Ruyne, whom your Lord only had intertayned somani monethes here, with fayre semblans & with cracked promises & assurances, without end or any syncerity ment, to the dishonor of her maiestie.

Thatt England was becom Regnum Cecilianum, your Bylldengs ynfinite, & eqwall to Kings Palacs: And owr Cowncellors yf they were ani thing, or wolld obtayne ani thing, must addresse them selles as Precarios to you only.47

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47 PRO SP 12 181/32, William Herle to Lord Burghley, 11th August 1585.
Burghley passionately responded three days later in a six-page letter defending his actions. In a mixed tone of righteous indignation towards his accusers and grateful affability towards Herle, Burghley subscribed his letter after four pages, then energetically resumed writing, continuing for another two folio pages:

And therfor as yow shew your self frendly, in reportyng those villanyes to me, so yow might shew me frendshipp in effect to my good, if yow wold advise them to charg me herwith, and if they do thynk me gilty hereof, they will have to accuse me, for I am not worthy to contynew in this place, but I will yeld my self, worthy not only to be removed but to be punished for an example to others that shuld not abuse hir Maiestie and the office I hold. If they can not prove all the lyes they utter, lett them mak of any on poynt wherwith to prove me guilte of falshood, of Iniustycye of bribery, of dissimulation of dooble dealyng in advise in Counsell ether with hir Maiestie or with the Counsellors.⁴⁸

Burghley echoed Erasmus in his desire to suffer as a paradigm to others, who attests:

It will be well to select men for this duty [the prince’s ministers], in so far as it is possible, who are sagacious and trustworthy, and in addition, to impose a restraint on them in their assent by means of warnings and threats and also to use rewards to urge them to discharge their office honorably. This will be greatly helped if anyone who is caught perverting the mind of the prince with biased talk and ignoble complaisance to those things which are unworthy of a prince, would have publicly to suffer punishment (even death, if the crime should call for it) as an example to others.⁴⁹

⁴⁸ PRO SP 12 181/42, Lord Burghley to William Herle, 14th August 1585.
Significantly, Burghley’s vehement response to Herle was detailed and ordered, listing and defending the allegations Herle had revealed:

They that saye that in a rash and maliciouss mockery that England is becom Regnum Cecilianum, may please ther own cankred humor with such a devise, but if my action be considered, if ther be any cause gyven by me of such a nycknam, ther may be found owt in many others luster causes to attribut other names than myn. If my buyldyngs mislyk them, I confess my folly in the expences, because some of my howses are to come if God so please to them that shall not have land to maynteane them. I meane by my house of Theobalds which was begun by me with a meane mesur.\(^50\)

Burghley invited his accusers to level the charges against him officially and to prove the ‘lyes’: ‘lyes’ which he proceeded to refute by repeating and laying them open to scrutiny:

If they can not prove all the lyes they utter ... lett them chardg me, in any poynct that I have not delt as ernestly, for the Queens Maiesty to ayde the afflicted in the low Contrye, to withstand the Incresyng power of the King of spayne, the assurance of the King of scots to be tyed to hir Maiesty with reward yea with the gretest pension that any other hath, if in any of these I may be proved to have bene behynd or slower than any, in a discret manner as becometh a servant and a Counsellor.

What is curious about his comprehensive response is that it appears to be an answer, not to Herle and his report of the allegations, but to the accusers themselves:

\(^50\) For a rigorous discussion on this concept of a Regnum Cecilianum, see Curtis Breight, (1996), pp.1, 242.
leth them chardg me ... may please ther own cankred humor with such a devise ... I thank god I ow nothyng to these backbytors.

Herle's next letter to Burghley on the 21st of August referred admiringly to the extended defence:

Your Lords late long letter is a very glasse to make sclanderers asshamed, that might se theme sellves in the same.51

Then Herle, in a bid to extend his laudatory remarks, observed:

And truly it shall do good to som of mi frynds (not many) of the better sort, that mene well, but waver with the sondry & vehement ympressyon of others, yll grownded in the truthe, wherfore whattsoever is of error & malyce will dye to your gretter honor & justifficatyon, & to the evydent blemmish of your Adversaryes.52

This seemingly innocuous comment, 'it shall do good', triggered a communication breakdown between Herle and Burghley. Herle implicitly informed Burghley of his intention to confront those slanderers with the content of Burghley's letter, his prior remark of 'a very glasse to make sclanderers asshamed, that might se theme sellves in the same' suggesting that Herle would offer the letter for actual scrutiny. It would seem that Herle revealed the contents of the letter in some capacity, whether textually, orally or otherwise, for the content of Burghley's next letter to Herle suggests that Burghley was unprepared for his client's ensuing behaviour:

I am sent for to the Court: and beyng reddy to go out of the[sic] my houss I am frendly informed, that you mak ostentation of your greatness with me and do send all my letters abrod in the Cite,

51 PRO SP 12 181/56, William Herle to Lord Burghley, 21st August 1585.
52 PRO SP 12 181/56.
which I send yow. I am well content that every man shuld know that I lyk yow, but to send and disperss my letters in that sort I can not allow. being desyroos that yow wold retorn them to me. and yet I am to perform all therin wrytten many may think grett levity in me, to have my privat letters in this sort spred abrod. W Burghley. 53

Distinctly different in tone from Burghley’s previous letter to Herle, this missive was austere and impersonal, levelling his accusation and providing little recourse for defence. Paramount in Burghley’s charge was the apparent betrayal of trust by Herle, not only in socio-economic terms of patronage, but also in terms of secret policy, founded upon the privacy of their epistolary exchange.

While Burghley ostensibly intended to remain friendly with Herle, ‘I am well content that every man shuld know that I lyk yow’, his condescending tone and cold disappointment in the letter suggests the very opposite. The reprimand was intentionally brutal, designed to force Herle to question the integrity of his personal bond with Burghley, and to revoke any inappropriate notions of burgeoning status both within the patronage alliance and the state administration, ‘you mak ostentation of your greatness with me’. Ironically, Herle was accused of performing the very act he traditionally displayed anxieties about: revealing letters to those external to the Herle-Burghley dyad. But revealing a letter to an uninitiated reader was symbolically different to circulating the letter around London, and it is this act which prompted Burghley’s formidable reaction, ‘to send and disperss my letters in that sort I can not allow’.

The short missive, a note rather than a letter, exuded an air of finality for their patron-client bond, and invited no further discussion. But Herle, insuperable, replied to the invective immediately that afternoon, desperate to refute the charges and to counter the ‘frendty’ information malevolently forwarded to Burghley against his client:

53 PRO SP 12 181/60, Lord Burghley to William Herle, 24th August 1585.
Right honorable good Lord. even att this instant, beyng well ny ii of the clock, I Receved a Tyckett from yow, wherby I perceve that I am fallen into that, which I ever dyd dread, that in doyng of good offics, I might be crushed bettwen the hammer & the Annevylld: yett I thanck God they are speches of envy & surmise (subject to theme, as mi superyors ar) which I will make appere bothe to your sellf, & to who soever, that shall sinesterly interprete or informe of mi doyng, to mi discredit with your Lord. Thatt I do esteme (as your Lord is fryndly instructed) of your favor, or of ani grettnes that I have with you, it might argue a foolyshe zele & presumptyon in me, thowgh no discretyon, which truly I never dyd.  

Suddenly finding himself on the other side of the informer’s whisper, Herle reacted with virtuous indignation not dissimilar to Burghley’s letter of the 14th August. Initially it seems that Herle was unsure of his defence, baldly stating that ‘in doyng of good offics’, i.e. the sanctioned showing of the letters, his intentions had been misinterpreted. Subsequently though, he hotly denied the charges:

Thatt I have dispersed your Lords letter into the Cittye abrode (as I tolld yow) is a thing most vntruly informed: for never ani went owtt of mi hand, butt on that I shewed Generall Norrys, even att the ynstant, before his departure, thinkyng it necessary so to do (as allso I have vsed mi discretyon in speche with other of mi frynds) that he might edeffye the better his company, from whom sondry malyciows & vehement Rumors dyd spryng.  

Herle stipulated the security of the letters, asserting ‘never ani went owtt of mi hand’, yet immediately contradicted this grave statement with ‘but on that I shewed Generall Norrys’. He attested that he had spoken to his friends only with discretion, (but spoken to them

54 PRO SP 12 181/61, William Herle to Lord Burghley, 24th August 1585.
55 PRO SP 12 181/61.
The sentence ‘as also I have vsed mi discretyon in speche with other of mi frynds’ is reminiscent of a parallel sentence in his previous letter, ‘and truly it shall do good to som of mi frynds...that mene well’, implicitly advertising his intentions to broadcast Burghley’s letter. In attempting to negate the charges levelled against him, Herle managed to compromise himself even further. His written voice began to take on a tone of increasing anxiety and concern as Herle indignantly denied the allegations whilst trying to maintain a degree of humility:

& dare vowche vnto your Lord that I have don you sincere & modest offics in every degree, & with persons of good gwality, who have travaylled to do the lyke.\(^{56}\)

Herle finally recognised that the only way to rectify the impending collapse of his patronage and livelihood was to confront Burghley in person and resolve the dispute verbally. Because of a recurring ague, Herle had not been able to attend upon Burghley for some time. Incredibly, in the process of denying the accusations, he resurrected a former patronage strategy; designating space in this crucially important letter to explain his absence, reciting a litany of his maladies in an effort to elicit Burghley’s goodwill and sympathy:

And God he knowes, that I have small plesure, ether to Bost or loye of ani thing: ffor every other daye, I am browght to despare of mi hellthe, & by wekenes of mi stomack, do accompte mi Body as a lost Relaps, vnles God to rayse it the soner, before Awtomne: havyng byn yesterdaye abrode att a Bathe of herbes, to strengthen and qwycken mi wekenes, wherof followed this daye the contynuall grudgyng of an Agew.\(^{57}\)

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\(^{56}\) PRO SP 12 181/61.

\(^{57}\) PRO SP 12 181/61.
He recognised that he should perform the repair-work personally, distrusting the epistolary medium any further, considering the recent and still-unresolved dispute:

And yett yf I had knowen of your Lord beyng here I woul'd have hasarded the wayteng vppon you, which I knew not, before that mr Secretoryes man signeffyed the same vnto me late yesternight ... Beseyng your Lord therfore to suspend your judgmen't, till ye here me speke, for I will oppose mi selff to any on this behallf, that shall challenge me with these weke Allmayn qwarrelles, yll conseved & worse vttred.58

Herle prudently kept quiet for a couple of days after this urgent request. He risked a visit to Burghley, who was regrettably indisposed:

I was yesterday mornyg to have spoken with your Lord butt was tolld by mr spenser, that ye had taken phisyck which was good reson dutifully to forbere you for.59

No doubt intending to return the next day, Herle's malady made an untimely recurrence, and he was confined to bed in his lodgings. Recognising the need to sustain communication with Burghley, epistolary if not oral, Herle embarked upon another written defence:

This mornyg my indisposityon is suche, as I kepe mi Bed, & cannott waytt on your Lord as I desired beffore it plese God to give me more strengthe: humbly prayeng your Lord in the mene tyme, to examine the cawse better of mi dispersyng of your letters abrode (wheratt I answerd somwhatt by mi Last) & whatt ostentacion I have used that beccomes me nott, of your favor

58 PRO SP 12 181/61.
59 PRO SP 12 181/70, William Herle to Lord Burghley, 28th August 1585.
towards me: vnles it be ostentacion to Reverence your person, &
your merytes to the Comunne weall

However, Herle adopted the inappropriate position of moral probity,
questioning the integrity of Burghley's sources. Impudently suggesting
that his patron source the correct facts himself, he hastily juxtaposed a
humble afterthought:

ytt may plese your Lord further to inquire: To whom, when & how I dispersed your sayd letters, that by the circumstance the truthe or error may appere, & your Lord be satisfyed: hoping that I am tawght att these dayes, how to behave mi self, asswell whatt to speke & do.

Herle compounded his earlier statement denigrating those who
informed against him, 'they are speches of envy & surmise (subject to
theme, as mi superyors ar)' stating:

I am nott answerable to suche, as intermedell to ffar with
doyngs, nott appertayneng to theme, men plesers & servers of
Tyme.

He continued his defence, boldly diverting his acid pen away from his
accusers, and confronting Burghley anew:

I had your Lords own Aworthity, to use mi discretyon in
answeryng the sclanders I hard, & for conferryng with mi frynds
towching theme: which thowgh I saye it of mi self, hath byn don
with discretyon & care, & with a zele that it irreprehensible.
Which doth conforte & assure me, agaynst all Parasites &
Backbyters, whom I contempne & condempne of whatt degree
soever.

60 PRO SP 12 181/70.
61 PRO SP 12 181/70.
62 PRO SP 12 181/70.
And consyderyng the propper Interest that your Lord hath in me mani wayses, I do study how to answer it, by the best degrees that I am hable, not with vayne ostentacion & Lightnes, butt sincerely & dutifully whiles I lyve, which I humbly hope ye will Receiue as a satisfaction of the Reports made vnto you, vnles I be charged with matter & persons indeede, that may towche me worthily without partiality: wherewith commendyng mi zelows devotyon & service to your Lord good & honorable favor I take mi Leve.63

The subservient modifiers return here, ‘sincerely’, ‘dutifully’, ‘humbly’, ‘zelows’, suggesting that Herle’s frantic repair-work had succeeded. His tone had evolved through gripe and tirade to a self-righteous poise; a strategy designed to persuade Burghley of his virtuous intentions and loyal duty. If Herle had finished the letter here, he may have succeeded in his enterprise, re-integrating himself into Burghley’s favour and service.

But, characteristically, Herle took it too far. Not content that his strategy of hyperbolically humble rhetoric had achieved its purpose, Herle attempted to divert his patron’s attention away from himself and towards Burghley’s own household servant:

your Lords man Owen hath a Brother of the other syde that serves the Prince of Parma with intelligence & is director of all the Englyssh spyes intertayned with ii C" pensyon, as diligent & dangerows in his kynde, as Morgan is in ffrawnce, Rowland Yorck who is a condempned knave to this state & cowntermynes with Cowncellors here, Receves Light & Credit att Owens hands. And on thing is specially to be noted, that as strayttly as the Ports be kept yett do englysh spyes arryve dayly on the other syde, & repaire to Owen & to the Prince & ar reformed with new matter & reward. La mote hath the like cowrse, which I advertis your

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63 PRO SP 12 181/70.
Lord as a matter of secrecy & service & the rather in respect of your own Owen.64

As a strategy to focus attention elsewhere, this act of 'informing' would be successful were it not for the fact Herle demonstrated that which he railed against in the first part of this letter, performing insidious surveillance and informing against fellow clients of Burghley. Scrutinising a member of Burghley’s household certainly displayed appropriate concern for his patron’s safety and national security, yet also carried the implication that Burghley was incapable of selecting loyal servants. Herle’s considerable epistolary achievement, in rhetorically transforming himself from wrong-doer to faithful client, was bungled by this ill-chosen nugget of information; deployed to avert Burghley’s disapprobation, but ultimately managing to insult the already-furious nobleman.

Burghley finally broke his silence the same day in vehement response to Herle’s letter. Similar to his previous short note, this missive distinctly lacked any warm regard or goodwill crucial to a patronage alliance, indeed, it confirmed that Burghley regarded the matter unresolved:

That I charged yow with dispersyng my privat letters abrode, I am worthe wise suer, but that they which did se them, yea some that saw them also whan yow sent them to the Court, yea to Counsellors and as ther Creditt is with me, so and in that proportion I am moved to thynk it trew and therfor I desyre to have my letters back, with this offer notwithstandyng, that I do avow all to be trew and much more for mayntenance of my honesty agaynst all dishonest backbytors whom God amende.65

Coldly explaining to Herle that his informers were trusted eyewitnesses to the deed (and implicitly more trusted than Herle after the

64 PRO SP 12 181/70.
65 PRO SP 12 181/71, Lord Burghley to William Herle, 28th August 1585.
misdemeanour in question), Burghley effectively silenced any declarations of innocence that Herle might try to utter. As for Herle's fervent accusations against Owen, Burghley responded with ferocious loyalty in defence of his servant:

For by this that yow wryte which is merely falls that I shuld have a servant named owyn brother to owyn beyond seas, I se the Contynuacion of mens malices. In very truth I have an honest yoman named owyn Thomas that is a trew and ernest protestant, who kepeth my Chamber at the Court, and hath done these dosen yeres I dare affirm, that for the Queens service he wold be a hangman to the other owyn. 66

Significant in this letter was Burghley's accretion of authority;

but that they which did se them, yea some that saw them also whan yow sent them to the Court, yea to Counsellors and as ther Creditt is with me, so and in that proportion I am moved to thynk it trew. 67

Burghley terminated his accusation by implicitly including Herle among the 'dishonest backbytors' against whom he had originally mounted his defence.

In the last of this twenty-letter exchange, Herle finally realised he was only increasing his disfavour with Burghley by textually protesting his innocence, and resolved (again) to present his case orally:

Right honorable Lord your Lords servant Brewer browght me a few lynes from you before dyner: To answer the which effectually I desire to do it by speche, assone as ether your own

66 PRO SP 12 181/71.
67 PRO SP 12 181/71. [My emphasis].
disquietnes for mi good Lady, or your leysure with mi wekenes, will permitt. 68

However, rather than simply expressing a wish to see his patron, and then signing off, Herle thought it appropriate to affirm his good character and prepare Burghley in advance for the prospective meeting:

Yf I discharge nott mi sellf towards your Lord as I owght, you ar to conseve of me accordingly. Butt yf I have don good offices to mi capacity & power, in the cowrse I have hollden, I hope that your wisdom will interprete theme to the best. 69

Yet in doing so, Herle included a sentence which threatened to reverse all of his previous repair-work:

Your Lord as greved & possessed haply with an oppynion contrary to this, doth require to have your letters agayn that ye have plesed to wryte me (which ar so honorable, as they may be exposed to the vyew of the whole worlld) ... hopyng that mi papers therewith shalbe restored me. 70

For Herle to suggest that Burghley's letters were worthy to be revealed to the 'whole worlld' whilst he was under investigation for committing the same indiscretion was surely an illogical manoeuvre. One wonders if it was panic which prompted Herle to utter these reckless statements, or if he literally failed to realise the import of what he was writing.

Herle swiftly retracted his former allegations against Owen, confessing he had gathered the information from an untested source:

Towching your Lords servant Owen: Truly I protest to God, that he is all mennes judgements (& yn mine especially) as honest a person as ever served noble man, & the other party no stayne att

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68 PRO SP 12 181/72, William Herle to Lord Burghley, 28th August 1585.
69 PRO SP 12 181/72.
70 PRO SP 12 181/72.
all vnto hym, of whom I never hard before yesterdaye, butt by on newly com from the Prince of Parmas Camp, & hath by the way observed Rowland Yorck, & others, which I thought mi parte to advertis your Lord of, in all symplcitye & duty, & not otherwse.\textsuperscript{71}

One would think that in attempting to re-inscribe himself as a loyal and humble client, Herle would check his sources before levelling such accusations. The backtracking he was forced to perform, ‘(& yn mine especially)’ only highlighted his indiscretion, and questioned his integrity to act as a government-sponsored informant in the future. The irony is that if Herle had indeed ‘shown’ the letters abroad in the city, it was only to display and make ostentation of his alliance with Burghley in order to advertise his status. It is this self-interested motivation that is problematic; the proud display of his patronage bond accorded as equivalent significance as the desire to serve the state. The subjective impetus which problematised the collation of sensitive material can again be perceived here - the undercurrent of personal ambition jeopardising yet also giving momentum to Herle’s political career. Judging by the tone of Burghley’s curt messages, Herle’s position as favoured client of Burghley was indeed seriously compromised, which would have eventually affected his financial status. It was not only Herle who stood to lose; Burghley’s temperate choice of followers reflected directly back on him, and the wrong selection could have considerable political ramifications.

Conyers Read has labelled this exchange of letters a set-up by the Earl of Leicester and Walsingham in a bid to discredit Burghley, unhappy with his policy over intervention in the Low Countries. He remarks:

Their chief instrument for this purpose, apparently, was William Herle, one of Burghley’s old secret service men. Herle’s share in the business apparently was to pose as Burghley’s friend and in

\textsuperscript{71} PRO SP 12 181/72.
that guise to retail to him the various criticisms that were levied against him.\textsuperscript{72}

Their strategy to discredit Burghley comprised of a simple bribe. Intervention with the Dutch would yield the Queen £120,000 per year, with a cut for Burghley of £12,000. It seems Herle was instructed by Walsingham to broach the prospect of this revenue to Burghley. He wrote a letter to Walsingham on the 25\textsuperscript{th} July to confirm that he had revealed the offer and sought further instructions:

\begin{quote}
I haue don Right honorable to the full, assmuche as your instructyons ymported, deleyverd me by mr Candisshe, & this daye shall I Receve answer to the same, wherfore ytt shalbe necessary, that ye furthwith dyrect me whatt I shall say towching the x\textsuperscript{m<li} a moneth, to be payd her maiestie & on m\textsuperscript{li} monethly to him sellf, ffor I wrytt that a personaige of Awhority (as in deed it is trew) had broken with me heryn, vnder the seall of confessyon, & that the matter sholld passe scylently bettwen theme \textit{ij nottwithstanding} ffor I wold presume to know no further in the same matter./ So as I know that ether of polycye or inclynatyon, he will seke to vnderstand to mistery it conteyynes, & that her maiestie shalbe made aqwainted with the whole, wherfore I attend your present answer. ffor the partye I say of Awhority, that hath broken with me, shalbe he whosoeuer that your honor, ether of the deputes or otherwise, shall appoint, to dele in the cauase, for no dowtt the other syde will desire to here him.\textsuperscript{73}
\end{quote}

In the end, Burghley rejected the offer, soberly announcing to Herle:

\textsuperscript{72} Conyers Read, \textit{Mr Secretary Walsingham and the Policy of Queen Elizabeth} (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1925) p.117. See also his \textit{Lord Burghley and Queen Elizabeth} (London: Jonathan Cape, 1965) p.315f.
\textsuperscript{73} BL MS Harleian 286 f.68'-69'. William Herle to Sir Francis Walsingham, 25\textsuperscript{th} July 1585. The letter where Herle informs Burghley of this bonus in aiding the Dutch seems to be lost.
how I can be tempted with allowance of a devise, to gayn to hir 
Maiesty $x \text{m}^{11}$ monethly, and to my self or other $j \text{m}^{11}$ so as hir 
Maiesty will help the stats I do utterly refuse ether such or a less 
some. thynkyng it more charite to yeld of myn own to the Comen 
cause, than to receaue a penny.\textsuperscript{74}

Read points out that it is not clear whether Herle was genuinely 
assisting Walsingham to discredit the Lord Treasurer, or whether he was 
‘playing up to Walsingham in order to reveal his trickery to Burghley’.\textsuperscript{75}

Knowing this ‘apparent’ subterfuge by Herle, does this alter our 
reading of the above sequence of letters? If Read’s assertion is correct 
(and the Harleian letter seems to confirm the fact), then Herle was 
simultaneously broaching the subject of the increased revenue while 
furthering his own patronage bond by loyally informing him of the 
rumour and gossip circulating in the city and at court. The ambiguity, 
intrigue and confusion displayed in these letters reflect the maelstrom 
of factionalism, sabotage and vacillation pervasive and inherent in the 
Tudor political system. Herle’s genuine motive in this situation is 
obscure, requiring cautious consideration by the uninitiated reader. 
Burghley’s sudden altered tone after discovering the broadcast of his 
private letters might signal a conscious decision to distance himself 
from Herle and his financial suggestions; indeed, this letter was sent 
just before Herle notified Walsingham that he had forwarded the 
proposal to his patron.

Francis Bacon was aware of the potential dangers when selecting 
friends and followers:

There is a Kinde of Followers likewise, which are Dangerous, 
being indeed Espials; which enquire the Secrets of the House, 
and beare Tales of them to Others. Yet such Men, many times, 
are in great Favour; For they are Officious, And commonly 
Exchange Tales. The Following by certayne Estates of Men,

\textsuperscript{74} PRO SP 12 180/45. Lord Burghley to William Herle, 24\textsuperscript{th} July 1585. 
\textsuperscript{75} Read, (1965), p.316.
answerable to that, which a Great Person himselfe professeth, (as of Soldiers to him that hath beene Employed in the Warres, and the like,) hath ever been a Thing Civill, and well taken even in Monarchies; So it be without too much Pompe or Popularitie.

(Of Friends and Followers) 76

This sequence of politically and emotionally fraught letters highlights certain aspects of the crisis between public and private letters in this period. Herle’s ‘service’ of transmitting uncomfortable information to Burghley and his patron’s grateful reply straddled the boundary between public and private concerns, and it was this tricky moment of duality which created the fracture of friendship and trust witnessed in the above exchange. The familiar and intimate narrative of patronage carefully fostered and maintained by both Herle and Burghley was forced into a wider context when the letters were revealed around London. To Burghley, Herle’s letters were political tools, stuffed with sensitive information and potent intelligence, privileged over the accompanying expressions of intimacy and friendship. To Herle, the political content of Burghley’s letters was merely the vehicle for their patron-client bond; a bond given impetus by the exchange of the sensitive material contained within. Unusually, in the above sequence it was Herle doing the ‘showing’, and despite Herle’s claims of discretion, Burghley’s anger suggests the letters were intended to be strictly private. Yet the tone and address of Burghley’s answer to the slanders against him does indeed suggest that he intended Herle to confront the accusers, exhibiting those elaborate strategies which imply a third audience; displaying curious shifts between nebulous and aggressive defence, and congenial goodwill towards Herle.

Robert Beale displays anxieties about this intersection between public and private concerns:

In the Collection of things I would wish a distinction used between the public and private, that is, a separacion between those things which are her Majestie's Recordes and appertaines unto her and those which a Secretarie getteth by his private Industrie and charge. Heretofore there was a chamber in Westminster where such things towards the latter end of King Henry 8, were kept and were not the Secretarie's private Custodie; but since, that order hath beene neglected and those things which wear publicke have bine culled out and gathered into private bookes wherby no meanes are left to see what was donne before ... therfore I would wish a Secretarie kept such things aparte in a chest or place and not to confound them with his owne.77

Beale's exhortation to the secretary to separate his channels of correspondence into the appropriate 'chest or place' reveals the contemporary confusion engendered by administrative concerns addressed within familiar epistles, or conversely, the language of intimacy and friendship interrupting political and corporate letters. The tension occurs at the place between 'her Majestie's Recordes' and 'those which a Secretarie getteth by his private Industrie and charge'. Herle's letters feature in this grey area, where familiar affect flanks significant political intelligence.

The above examples of William Herle's intelligence letters expose the attempts of an Elizabethan letter-writer to sustain intimacy engendered by the familiar letter despite and motivated by its ulterior content of political intelligence. We can discern the tensions attendant to the exchange of familiar letters to a superior: problems of the necessity of decorum, presumption, and agency of broadcast. Frustrated at times by the advertisement of the letters' contents, we note the verbatim missives and the markedly 'negatively polite' tone of

those third-audience letters. Charting Herle’s uneasy syntactical manoeuvres to re-position himself as humble after the inclusion of potent knowledge or advice on policy, we can discern a very real tension over the split intentions of the familiar and ‘political’ letter. Crucially unsure of the unspoken status and imprecise nature of his friendship bond with Burghley, we watch Herle overstep the mark by revealing his patron’s private letters around the city to avert conspiracy and counter rumour. Continually exploring and redefining the parameters of this bond, Herle textually subsumes grave political concerns within the informal epistle which he strategically manipulates to evoke and exhibit a certain kind of friendship. His incessant attempts to accommodate both private and public concerns within the traditionally equivalent and exclusive space of the familiar letter raises compelling questions of the integrity and efficacy of Elizabethan political correspondence, displaying as it does such a personal and subjective impetus. Despite the intense stratification of rank in Tudor society, and the availability of a series of codified formulae to construct a credible and decorous communication, we see in the example of William Herle a problem deriving from the union of the conventional and public systems of information exchange with the more discreet, radically arcane and politically private correspondence around which intelligence and its transmission revolved.
CHAPTER 3

‘Men more vnffurnysshed with money (vnles ytt be my sellf) I never sawe’: Herle’s diplomatic ‘service’.

An ambassador is a man sent to lie abroad for the good of his country. ²

As Sir Henry Wotton coyly suggested in his epigram, ambassadors and other agents were not only sent abroad to effect diplomatic negotiations, but to provide the sender monarch and state with an invaluable vantage point to the mechanism of other courts and nations; forwarding vital intelligence about military prowess, economic wealth, intellectual progress and dynastic manoeuvres. From this information, the home monarch could assess his own strength amongst the European princes, and aid and alter the fashioning of an international and national identity based upon shifting conceptions of ‘other’. ³

William Herle was a frequent envoy and visitor to various European courts during his long and varied career. The earliest of his letters in the archives derives from Antwerp in 1559, where he was en route to Westphalia in the North East Low Countries. ⁴ The early years of Elizabeth’s reign saw Herle employed repeatedly overseas; to locations which included Hamburg, where he was a special envoy to the Dukes of Holstein and Brunswick. Between 1563 and 1580 Herle remained for the most part in England, making only a couple of trips to the continent, but spent much of the last ten years of his life abroad as special envoy

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1 PRO SP 83 15/36. William Herle to the Earl of Leicester, 3rd March 1581.
4 PRO SP 70 10/24. William Herle to Sir William Cecil, 14th February 1559. Few dispatches survive from Herle’s actual early diplomatic posts, saving those where he seems to be en route to his destination, or returning to England.
and ambassador, first to the Prince of Orange during the conflict in the Low Countries, and later to Count John of Emden in the northern provinces of Germany.

Herle’s qualifications for the tasks of diplomatic negotiation seem to derive mainly from his language skills and legal training. Able to read, write and speak French, Dutch, Flemish, Spanish, Portuguese, Italian, Latin and German, this linguistic dexterity enabled Herle to converse with his foreign hosts in their own tongue - an invaluable aid to both diplomatic negotiation and intelligence-gathering. Yet Herle’s rather lowly and dubious position as intelligencer (particularly after his prison antics in 1571) may have hindered his chances of a prestigious embassy post; his employment seems to have been restricted to that of special envoy rather than resident ambassador.

Embassy figures were expected to be virtuoso orators, a skill deployed to speed up (or hinder) diplomatic procedure and negotiation, and represent the home monarch in the highest regard. Judging from Herle’s epistolary legacy, his command of rhetoric was better suited to the reports and dispatches sent home to his patrons and sovereign rather than the open stage of court. Rather than demonstrate oratorical ability, his letters record in minute clarity detailed information potentially crucial to the formation of Elizabethan state policy, no matter how apparently trivial or prolix.

Herle was sent repeatedly abroad on missions to European princes and nobles, making at least ten trips abroad during his life, some instructions for which are still extant.5 In 1585/6 the Privy Council wrote a memorandum (drafted by Burghley) to the Earl of Leicester requesting a suitable candidate for an embassy to Count John of Emden. Burghley suggested to Leicester:

That you dispatch william Herle gent or if shuld not be in case fitt than some others vnto him as one best acquaintid and of sufficient credite already with him. yf yt please him then in

5 BL MS Royal 13 B 1. See also BL MS Egerton 279 f.71', and BL MS Lansdowne 155 f.306'-308', a copy. See also Introduction, footnote 13.
company of the sayd William Hearle or otherwyse to send some one vnto yt fully instructed and authorised from him in that behalf vppon which occasion you maye also geue direction vnto William Herle to acquainte him self particularly with the present state of the sayd Countes Contrye and affaires to thend you maye vse the knowledge therof for the better advantag and futheraunce of her -maiestie's service aswell. in the sayd negotacian as in any other accordeng that may happen and if by chance of sycknes or other lett William herle can not be vsed herin than your Lord is to choose some other mete person: though it will be hard to fynd any meter for this purpose.⁶

It is clear that Burghley regarded Herle as the best man for the job, capable of both representing Elizabeth at the court of Count John, and of acquainting himself `with the present state of the sayd Countes Contrye'. Indeed, HerLe had already visited the Count a year before Burghley’s memorandum, a legation which must have been successful to warrant his patron’s commendation.⁷

But before the envoy could impress his intended audience with his oratorical or language skills, he had first to contend with the practicalities of travelling to his destination. Any English representative sent abroad to a foreign court necessarily had to cross the Channel, often having to wait at port before the weather permitted a safe crossing.⁸ Legates were occasionally held up for weeks at a Channel port if the weather was bad, and might often seek alternative shipping arrangements from another port further along the coast. In a letter to Lord Burghley in 1584 Herle wrote:

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⁶ PRO SP 84 7/42. Privy Council to the Earl of Leicester, 20th March 1585. The italics denote superscript text.
⁷ The Queen, however, was not wholly convinced of Herle's abilities; a note from a Privy Council meeting records, 'Her pleasure is that his lordship doe dispatche out of hand the said William Herte unto the Cownte, and to give him especiall charge, for that her Majestie (though otherwise she conceive well of him for his sufficiencie) hath noted some slacknes in him in execution of the charges that have heretofore ben committed unto him by taryinge longe in the places to which he hath ben sent.' JR Dasent, ed. Acts of the Privy Council of England, xlv, (1586-7) (London: His Majesty's Stationery Office, 1893), pp.32-3.
⁸ Apart from those ambassadors and diplomatic representatives travelling to Scotland.
I have had sondry impedyments yn the begyneng of mi lorney towards Est frizeland, which have byn the occasyon that mi service is nott so farr advancëd, as I desired & indevord ... I had att London hired ij shippes on after another, to transporte me to Emdon, & bothe faylled me when it cam to the poyn, attendyng belyke the company of those englyshe shippes that were stayed att London, & sholld haue com to Emdon. The wynde allso hindred me som while, butt lastlye I was fayne to make of necessitye a vertew, & putt mi sellf ouer in a hollands vessell, who with grett danger cam into the mowthe of the mose, the wether beyng Tempestyows, & the place very dangerows to falle with: from whens I arryved att dordrecht ... Thens I cam to Rotterdam & to delfft ... & had mi chargs deffrayed by the Town, & provyded of free waggen to bryng me to Amsterdam, where the contrary wynde hellde me by the space of ix dayes, & now am att the seas att Ancker a thwart of Inck husen, hoping on frydaye att night to be within Emden.

Here we glimpse an otherwise unremarkable journey from London to Emden become a hazardous voyage which necessitated a circumlocutory journey around the maritime and river ports of the Low Countries. Herle was diligent in portraying the dangers encountered on his journeys, drawing attention to the personal peril he faced in order to heighten his regard with his formidable patrons.

This delay and extra journey would have cost Herle financially - money which he was obliged to spend from his own pocket and unlikely to be reimbursed for months (if at all). In the same year, Etienne Lesieur, a French agent working for the Elizabethan government, recorded in absolute detail the expense of his peregrination around the Low Countries in a document which offers a glimpse of the likely charges Herle would similarly have accrued. Apart from his meals and

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9 BL MS Lansdowne 43 f.24v-25r. William Herle to Lord Burghley, 29th July 1584.
10 Indeed, Herle was continually petitioning his superiors for the restitution of debts incurred on various diplomatic excursions.
lodgings, other expenses recorded by Lesieur include the charges of a trumpeter to ride with him between Mons and Brussels (10 shillings), the washing of his shirts in Antwerp (10 shillings and sixpence), the transcript of the examination of a prisoner (5 shillings), and his crossing from Dover to Calais (5 shillings). In roughly eight months (of much travel around the Low Countries), Lesieur laid out a total of £112.11

Herle was braver in taking to the seas than some of his compatriots. In 1563 whilst negotiating mercantile rights in Hamburg, Herle wrote to Sir William Cecil to apologise for the long delay between dispatches, and to inform him that he was returning home as soon as possible, accompanied with the principal clerk of the ‘contractor’ he had been dealing with:

The Contractor him self had willingly com in person, butt being a weake bodye to vndertake suche a vyage, & of mueche indisposityon vppon the sea, was agayne disswaded tyll the spryng, butt specyallye he semes to staye with fame of the greatt plag[e].

Accordingly, Herle’s dispatches regularly mention the weather, (especially when inclement), providing explanation for delays or failures in postage and shipping. The spring of 1582 was notable for its harsh weather, prompting Herle to comment:

Butt as the season hath bin the sayd postes ar deteyned on this syde as yet with the troblesomest wether that hath bin herde these 40 yeres & with a contynuall contrary wynde that hathe bothe hindred many things & caste awaye above 50 sayll of shippes here & in Holland, & broken downe the dykes & walles of the contrey & therwith Monsieurs armes that were fastned att

11 BL MS Lansdowne 36 f. 116" - 170". Etienne Lesieur’s expenses, 1582. The Calendar of State Papers, Foreign, states that Lesieur was ‘to become in the next reign Sir Stephen [Lesieur] and hold important posts - now a mere useful young Frenchman, attached apparently to Philip Sidney’s service, and employed in delicate diplomatic jobs’, Arthur J Butler, ed. CSP Foreign, Eliz. 1581-1582 (London: HM Stationery Office, 1907), p.li.
12 BL MS Lansdowne 7 f.71'-72’. William Herle to Sir William Cecil, 13th October 1563.
the keye gate of this towne, & with the vyolens of the separation
of the said armes from the place they were tyed vnto browght
with them a grett parte of King Phillips crowne & memorye,
which were dyrectlie vnder the scutchyon of the sayd Monsieurs
armes.\textsuperscript{13}

Following the Duke of Anjou’s triumphant entry into Antwerp, and the
continuing conflict in the Low Countries provinces, the bad weather
seemed to be a reflection of divine displeasure. Herle’s next sentence
was more cosmographical than meteorological:

Consequentlie hathe bin sene ferefutL bLooddy Et firie
impressyons in the ayre in the night tyme, which hath ministred
matter of muche speeche here, aswell of apprehensyon in som,
as of callculatyon in others, what these tokens may portende to
Monsieur & the King of Spayne by the waye of yll presayge.\textsuperscript{14}

Tycho Brahe also observed this comet on the 12\textsuperscript{th}, 17\textsuperscript{th} and 18\textsuperscript{th} of the
month, on the island of Hven near Denmark.\textsuperscript{15} Comets and other
celestial activity were regarded as proof of human sin, heralding great
political changes, and often accompanied by severe weather.\textsuperscript{16} A
contemporary book proclaimed:

\textit{Cometa} is a Starre beclipped with burning gleames, as Beda doth
say, and is sodeinly bred, & betokeneth changing of kings, and is
a token of Pestilence, or of war, or of winds, or of great heate.\textsuperscript{17}

\textsuperscript{13} BL MS Cotton Galba C VII f.201'- 204'. William Herle to Lord Burghley, 15\textsuperscript{th} March
1581. It seems here that Herle deliberately linked the bad weather with the significant
disclosure of the true allegiance of the citizens of Antwerp.

\textsuperscript{14} BL MS Cotton Galba C VII f.201-4.

\textsuperscript{15} JLE Dreyer, \textit{Tycho Brahe, A Picture of Scientific Life and Work In the Sixteenth
Century} (Edinburgh: Adam & Charles Black, 1890), p.161; John Robert Christianson On
Tycho’s Island: \textit{Tycho Brahe, Science and Culture in the Sixteenth Century}

\textsuperscript{16} C Scott Dixon, ‘Popular Astrology and Lutheran Propaganda in Reformation

\textsuperscript{17} Anglicus Bartholomaeus, \textit{Batman yppon Bartholome his booke De propietatibus
rerum, newly corrected, enlarged and amended etc.} trans. John Trevisa, rev. Stephen
Batman (London: Thomas East, 1582), Sig. 2A3'.
Herle was familiar with the linking of severe weather and momentous events:

The wensdaye abowtt the howre of 5. yn the evenyng, dyd aryse so vehement a storme, & Tempest (which allso we had here) of thonder, lyghtnyng, wynde, hayll, & Rayne: The daye therewith beyng changed as it were ynto night, & the hayll stones were of the compasse of englysh shyllengs, yn proportyon fflatt, yett thyck & hollowed on the on syde: In which Boystrows storme, hope of the Enmyes that were within the Ravellyng & gate, beffore the new Trenches of the Town, entred that parte whiles the gardes were with drawen to give place to the storme, & vppon this opportuniti ministred (the harkebusurye & grett ordynance standyng theme withyn small steede) becam masters therof, beffore they cowd be Repullsed. 18

In this account of the fall of Oudenaard, a town which had been under siege since March, Herle accorded the storm an integral role, taking the time to record the precise size and shape of the hailstones, ‘of the compasse of englysh shyllengs, yn proportyon fflatt, yett thyck & hollowed on the on syde’. 19 The association between the ‘compasse’ of the hailstones, the vehemence of the storm, and its inextricable role in heralding (and assisting?) the fall of the town are explicit in Herle’s account.

Herle was unequivocal in connecting celestial occurrences and political ramifications:

A hydeowse & a most vnwonted Comete apperd here the xv. of this moneth in the north north west, who ryseng lyke a spowtt & fallyng down agayn, dothe occupye halff the Element, of colowr as yett obscure, & declynes towards the other hemisphere,

18 PRO SP 83 16/58. William Herle to Sir Francis Walsingham, 7th July 1582.
abowtt on of the clock after mydnyght, I pray God save her maiestie & all her well willers.20

It is clear that Herle accorded the extreme weather as much significance as the more terrestrial intelligence and occurrences occupying his focus at this time.

It was not only legates and their journeys which were affected by the weather - the post both overland and overseas depended on the same clement conditions for speedy passage. For letters travelling between diplomatic figures and the English court, the ‘ordinary’ post was used. A royal service, the letters were taken from stage to stage from London down to the South coast port of departure (for Antwerp, where Herle spent his longest term abroad, this was Dover), where the postmaster entrusted the packet with the captain of a suitable vessel making the next crossing.21 One assumes a similar stage-to-stage journey upon reaching the continent, although it is possible that a special ‘post’ man accompanied the letters.22 In the mid 1570’s the weekly English post left Antwerp on a Sunday night or very early on Monday morning. The packets were carried in a trunk, and travelled via Bruges, Newport, Dunkirk and Calais.23

If the ‘English post’ had already departed, or was delayed, the envoy could utilise another ‘foreign’ post that had been running since the early part of the century. The Merchant Strangers had established their own postal system, with riders, foot-posts and post-masters; a

22 The sources on the cross-continental post are frustratingly vague. Herle frequently mentions the ‘English post’, and it is not clear whether this was a person especially employed to accompany the packets at least to the port of departure, or a specific route heading towards the coast. Considering the journey from Antwerp-Dunkirk-Dover-London only took an average of four days, I conclude that this route was taken in stages.
service available to those willing to pay. Some of Herle’s letters from Antwerp in 1582 are endorsed on the back ‘per William Page post’, as are several of Thomas Cotton, another envoy based in Bruges. William Paige had been the postmaster for the Merchant Strangers in the 1560’s, and was now based in Middelburg.24

The frequent passage of men (and occasionally women) between England and the continent offered the correspondent the option of employing one of these travellers as a bearer to accompany the letters. A picture emerges of familiar faces travelling between England and the Low Countries - early modern ‘frequent flyers’ - who were accustomed to the dangers and pitfalls of travelling with the post, and could therefore attempt to circumvent delays, over-inquisitive post-masters, and petty officials at the ports. Herle often sent his ‘man’ and sometimes his brother-in-law Lawrence Johnson with his letters, requesting that the bearer be granted an audience with his correspondent at the end of his journey. It makes sense that only important letters were sent with an exclusive bearer, as costly delays in shipping, reception and reply were met by the letter-writer.

Accompaniment of a packet by a bearer may have been expensive, but it was a relatively secure method of ensuring the letters’ safety. Requests and pleas for the acknowledgement of the receipt of letters abound in the archives, testifying to the uncertainty of delivery once the letter left the writer’s hands. Herle often wrote with increasing concern to ascertain whether his letters had reached their destination:

My dere & Right honorable good Lord I have wrytten to yow sondrye lettres synce mi arryvall on this syde, & will contynew the same effectually, prayng humblye the assistance of your good

favor & that I may here that mi lettres be com saffelye to your hands. 25

I Received yesterbaye Right honorable a lettre from yow of the 24. of this present signeyng therby the Receipt of on packett of myne delivered yow by the poste, Butt there is another which your honor sholld have had sithens, by on Lyvetenant Denys, vnles he be to long stayed by the waye. 26

It is difficult to determine whether any of Herle's letters were in fact intercepted or lost, as there are many interruptions in the archive which do not necessarily signify intercepted or stolen letters. Attempting to track the passage of letters from the spring and summer of 1582 is made easier by the existence of Sir Francis Walsingham's postal journal, in which he recorded the dispatch and receipt of letters from both within England and abroad. The above letter, which confirms the receipt of Walsingham's letter of the 24th - delivered within four days - also records that Walsingham had obligingly confirmed the receipt of a letter of Herle's sent through the ordinary post. A survey of his letter journal reveals that Walsingham received post from Flanders on the 7th, 23rd, and 30th of June that year. 27 Assuming that Herle's previous letter was received in the Flanders mail of the 23rd, this may be PRO SP 83 16/40, written by Herle to Walsingham on the 20th of June. This posits a travel time of four days, with favourable winds and passage, and is a realistic possibility. That we are able to partially trace these letters so long after their dispatch and reception suggests that the rudimentary system for tracking sent letters by noting their arrival was at least effective and practical, if not particularly sophisticated.

Why were early modern diplomats so paranoid about their letters going astray and failing to reach their destination? Many early writers

25 PRO SP 83 15/74. William Herle to Lord Burghley, 15th March 1581.
26 PRO SP 83 16/44. William Herle to Sir Francis Walsingham, 28th June 1582. (Endorsed incorrectly as 26th June 1582).
27 PRO SP 30 5/5 Journal of Sir Francis Walsingham. Walsingham began the journal by noting the sender and recipient - by these summer months of 1582 he had ceased this practice, and merely noted the location.
had written about the immunity held by ambassadors and their train, goods, and person whilst abroad, an immunity which also covered correspondence. Later Renaissance writers wrestled with this question of diplomatic immunity, acutely conscious that legal mores were regularly undermined by practical necessity. The envoy was not subject to the criminal jurisprudence practiced in the host country, although he could be sued in the civil courts, particularly regarding the recovery of debts. He was sent abroad only to further his country's interests and to promote peace, and by no means to stir up dissension, conspire against the host sovereign or engage in clandestine activity. Yet with vital information commonly controlled and kept from the ambassador, he was usually obliged to recover the intelligence he needed from alternative sources. These sources could range from a bribed official to a discontented malefactor, and the boundaries where the gathering of intelligence shaded into clandestine activity are appositely obscure. 28

Yet the immunity of the ambassador's correspondence was nonetheless sacrosanct, claimed the contemporary writers. Hugo Grotius, in his De lure Bellis ac Pacis of 1602 stated firmly:

The train ... of an ambassador, and all the plate belonging to him are entitled to a peculiar kind of protection ... Neither can the moveable property of an ambassador, nor any thing, which is reckoned a personal appendage, be seized for the discharge of a debt, either by process of law, or even by royal authority. For, to give him full security, not only his person but every thing belonging to him must be protected from all compulsion. 29

Yet for all these grand statements about the inviolability of the post pertaining to the envoy, there were still credible concerns about the safety of epistolary communication. Letters were routinely opened.

by post-masters, and intercepted along the route. As EA Adair comments:

In practice so tempting was the possibility of finding out the real views of an ambassador or of his government that despatches were intercepted and read whenever it could be done with safety, and couriers were always liable to be arrested so that their despatches might secretly be opened or some diplomatic advantage might be gained by their delay ... It was so easy to cast the blame on an over-zealous official and so preserve the illusion of immunity intact.\(^\text{30}\)

Moreover, despite the ambassadors' complaints about the loss and delay of letters, they weren't averse to perusing those letters that had been intercepted from enemy or hostile nations. Whilst hanging around the French embassy in late 1583, Herle reported to Burghley that the embassy staff were convinced

that mr Secretarye Wallsingham open the scottish Queen's packett, before it cam to the Ambassadors hands, & imported the secretts therof to the Queen's maiestie.\(^\text{31}\)

During one of his earliest missions, to Hamburg in 1560, Herle wrote to Sir Thomas Parry to inform him that

My next lettres shall follow the forme of this Alphabett, for the more secresye if they shold be intercepted by the waye: having further entended for the more assurance also, of sure recepites to send the copie herof verbatim to mr Secretorye by a specyall messenger hired for the same, as far as Anwerpe & thence to be


conveyed by mr Greshams order, praieng god to vnderstand shortly, of theyr good delyuerye.\textsuperscript{32}

Hence Herle and his fellow envoys abroad accepted that their letters might be subject to unauthorised scrutiny if sent through the ordinary post. As discussed above, the envoy could circumvent this illicit perusal by the employment of a bearer - an expensive method, and largely inappropriate for quotidian correspondence. After the assassination attempt upon William of Orange, Herle explained in a letter to the Earl of Leicester:

\begin{quote}
In the generall lettre written to your Lord yesterday, I thought good to omitt this that followith, as matter of more ymportance & secresye, to be cowched a parte.\textsuperscript{33}
\end{quote}

Herle continued to confide that there was apparently little hope of the Prince of Orange's survival - damaging intelligence which was indeed 'important' and 'secret'. Accordingly, he noted:

\begin{quote}
Therfore do I send this berer mi servant John Morgan of purpose, to signeffye the same to her maiestie by your Lord's honorable menes, & will not ffayll from ynstant to ynstant (havyng the ynsynuatyons that I have) to advertys whatt allteractyon, ether his person, or the matters of State do suffer here.
\end{quote}

Together with the above letter, John Morgan was also entrusted with a separate dispatch to Lord Burghley. In this letter, Herle explained,

\begin{quote}
Att this present I do send this berer mi servant of purpose to my Lord of Leicester, with advertisments of ymportance, ynclosyng heryn the copye of eche thyng that I do wryte to mi sayd Lord of Leicester Verbatim, omitteng not on syllable, assuryng mi sellf
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{32} PRO SP 70 13/29. William Herle to Sir Thomas Parry, 7\textsuperscript{th} April 1560. No other letters bearing the 'Alphabett' survive. It is the only occurrence of a cipher in Herle's letters.

\textsuperscript{33} PRO SP 83 15/73. William Herle to the Earl of Leicester, 21\textsuperscript{st} March 1581.
that mi dutye & care borne to her maiesties servyce, will lyke your Lord.\textsuperscript{34}

The concept of sending 'verbatim' letters containing potent and sensitive information was a pragmatic one, especially if the bearer, or 'messenger of purpose' could carry several letters at once, thereby evading extra expenditure on mail charges: In general terms, if the verbatim letter was sent separately from the original, the contents of the letters had double the chance of reaching their destination safely.\textsuperscript{35}

Herle’s letter to Burghley (PRO SP 83 15/74) is a single page - a kind of cover note - reaffirming Herle’s continuing devotion to Burghley and the Queen, and requesting his patron’s aid in financial matters. The letter to Leicester containing the important intelligence possibly heralding the demise of William of Orange was accompanied in the packet with two transcripts of the confession of an accessory to the assassination attempt, one of which seems to be attached to the Leicester letter, and the other a separate copy (PRO SP 83 15/73a). The letter to Leicester is the copy sent to Burghley: there is no endorsement by Herle on the verso, nor is there evidence of a seal or damage from its route through the post. These four pages in the Public Record Office comprise the entire packet passed to Burghley (or his secretary).\textsuperscript{36} That we have the letters together as they were sent in 1582 suggests that these letters were read together, and then filed together, the composite parts remaining united in Burghley’s secretariat.\textsuperscript{37}

Another aspect of the verbatim letter, apart from safety and convenience, is that it offers the second recipient a glimpse of the dialogue between the two original correspondents. The second, peripheral reader, who has not only been authorised to peruse the letter, but has a copy of his own, is offered exactly the same

\textsuperscript{34} PRO SP 83 15/74. William Herle to Lord Burghley, 21\textsuperscript{st} March 1581.
\textsuperscript{35} For more on Herle's dispatch of 'verbatim' letters, and his various reasons for issuing them, see Chapter 2.
\textsuperscript{36} The cataloguer has noted after the Leicester letter (SP 83 15/73) 'Copy? Enclosure in No.623 [PRO SP 83 15/74 - the letter to Burghley]. Endd. by Herle 3 pp.', CSPF 1581-3, p.574.
\textsuperscript{37} Unless the Public Record Office archivists have been especially diligent in piecing these letters together.
information and intelligence as his political peer. In the above case, Burghley could be reassured that he had not been excluded from the exchange of information, although he still remained nominally separate from the exchange. The window that Herle offered Burghley the spectator not only replicated the information (literally ‘verbatim’), but also showcased his skill of information-gathering, and situated Herle in a distinctive place between two of his patrons.

It is difficult to ascertain just how ‘verbatim’ this letter is in relation to the original, as Burghley’s copy is the only extant version. As a rule, however, Herle’s verbatim letters tended to be uniformly exact, with variant spelling and endorsement on the verso. Yet how did Herle figure the sending of a ‘verbatim’ letter (the copy of a letter explicitly written to another) and the sending of a duplicate letter (a copied letter written to more than one correspondent with no acknowledgment of the duplication)?

In October 1563, he sent identical letters to both Burghley and Leicester, with no mention of the fact that they were duplicate. The letter to Burghley (at that time Principal Secretary) has a short postscript about the apprehension of two strangers at Antwerp, and each endorsement is altered appropriately towards its recipient; but, with the exception of a few rogue words, the content of the two letters is identical. 38 Another instance appears in April 1582 when Herle sent the same letter to all three of his patrons - Burghley, Walsingham and Leicester. 39 The fact that Herle didn’t mention that these letters were the same, or that he had sent the same information to three different correspondents suggests that when he did draw attention to a copy, he had a clear reason for doing so.

The act of enclosing the copy of a letter to someone else within a packet renders the status of that letter distinctive. In the case of

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38 BL MS Lansdowne 7 f.71’ - 72’. William Herle to Lord Burghley, 13th October 1563; BL MS Lansdowne 7 f.77’ - 78’. William Herle to the Earl of Leicester, 13th October, 1563. Both of these letters are holograph.
39 BL MS Cotton Galba C VII f.235". William Herle to the Earl of Leicester, 25th April 1582; BL MS Lansdowne 36 f.177’ - 178’. William Herle to Lord Burghley, 25th April 1582; PRO SP 83 15/125. William Herle to Sir Francis Walsingham, 25th April 1582. The letters mention the enclosure of a list of those loyal to William of Orange, a copy of which is catalogued with and appended to the PRO letter.
Herle’s epistolary practice, there were two situations wherein he might have included others’ letters in a packet. On more than one occasion, he enclosed a letter of his own to be forwarded to a final reader, to be perused along the way by the recipient of the other letter in the packet. This practice could have several purposes, the primary one being the saving of time and resources. But the impact of sending a notionally private letter to be read by another reader (often with the instruction to seal it after perusal) was significant. During his embassy to Antwerp in September 1582, Herle wrote to Burghley to notify him that

I have written to mr Secretorye the state of all things here very playnly of whom it may plesse your Lord to take the knowledge that I do send hym. Which lest his leysure cannott serve to do, I do send you copyes pryvatelye herwith of the whole, to peruse.40

Herle was clear about his purpose of enclosing the letters; for Burghley ‘to take the knowledge’. Yet he offered Burghley two options in this letter: to enquire of Walsingham the ‘knowledge’ Herle had sent (either textually or verbally), or to ‘peruse’ the letters himself. Significantly, Herle noted ‘I do send you copyes pryvatelye herwith’[my emphasis], but it is not clear to whom the ‘pryvatelye’ applied; to Burghley, in keeping his survey of Walsingham’s letter a secret, or in a wider context, to be kept private from others outside the Herle-Walsingham-Burghley triad.

Yet there were instances when Herle routed an original letter intended for a specific recipient via another reader first. Before Herle’s diplomatic service in the 1580’s he had written the following to Leicester:

I have written a lettre & enclosed ytt heryn mi Lord for mr Secretary Willson, ytt partye concerns som good servyce of her maisties & partye the answer of his lettre sent me by Turner. Ytt is leffte open of purpose that your Lord may vowchesave to

40 BL MS Lansdowne 36 f.197'- 198'. William Herle to Lord Burghley, September, 1582.
peruse it & then to seal up the same with my own seal which
this bearer shall deliver you.41

The principal secretary at the time, Dr Thomas Wilson, had lately
written a ‘bitter’ letter to Herle, who evidently wanted Leicester to
appraise his reply. What is of interest here is Herle’s inclusion (with the
bearer) of his personal seal to fasten the letter after Leicester’s reading.
The letter would arrive at Wilson’s desk or hands sealed normally,
without necessarily exhibiting the fact that it had been previously read.
Indeed, Leicester was sanctioned (actually requested) by Herle to read
the letter, yet the inviolability of the dyadic exchange (especially if
Herle was trying to regain or re-establish a patronage bond with Wilson)
would be penetrated and violated by the third reader. The unbroken
impression of Herle’s seal would testify to the apparent sanctity of the
letter, and Leicester’s application of the seal would create a fiction of
the exclusive nature of the epistolary exchange.42

The reception of a letter with a curious seal (i.e. one that
belongs to someone other than the letter-writer) would prompt the
reader and recipient to treat that letter differently than a letter where
the seal matched the hand which had addressed the fly-cover of the
postal packet. Would Wilson have reacted differently to a letter from
Herle exhibiting Leicester’s seal? In 1582 Herle sent Walsingham a short
letter, enclosing other letters to Leicester, which letter is here fully
reproduced:

Havyng this mornyng Right honorable wrytten this lettre ynctosed
to my Lord of Lecester, which conteynes matter of the State of
Owdnearde, newer than I have certeffied your honor of, &
havyng no lesyre to wryte a partycler lettre therof to yow, &
havyng non ayde butt mi sellf, ytt may plese yow to take yn good

41 HMC Bath, Dudley Papers, II.189. William Herle to the Earl of Leicester, 3rd
September 1578.
42 This argument is based on the assumption that Leicester a) did use Herle’s seal to
fasten the letter, b) did pass the letter to Wilson, and c) did not inform Wilson that he
had read it. However, I am more inclined to believe that rather than participate in the
charade of using another man’s seal, the busy Leicester would have simply passed the
letter straight to Wilson’s hands.
parte to peruse the sayd lettre & that don to seall it vp with hard waxe, & to delyver ytt to this berer mi servant, ffor mi sayd Lord of Leicester. Yf I had a yong honeste ffellow to copye thyngs, I cowd send your honor sondrye wrytengs worthye your perusyng, & yett be hable to yntertayne the partye that sholld wryte to his contentment & commodity, beyng honest & dylygent.43

Here, Herle made no mention of sending his seal with the bearer for Walsingham to participate in a fictional sealing ritual. His directive to the principal secretary to ‘seall it up with hard waxe’ contained the implicit request that he use his own seal (either personal or official). For Leicester to receive a letter from Herle bearing Walsingham’s seal, the implications are clear. The routing of Herle’s letter via Walsingham’s secretariat afforded the dispatch a certain authority - it had been seen and verified by another member of the Privy Council. Walsingham’s mark bore witness to the authorised prior reading, yet Leicester was ultimately the final and primary reader.

Paramount in this exercise was Herle’s implied reproach that he should have to engage in such thrifty practice, ‘If I had a yonge honest ffellow’. Herle dangled the prospect of extra material and intelligence in exchange for ready money, the lack of which prevented such material due to time and economic constraints. Crucially, the provision of an assistant to copy out the ‘sondrye wrytengs’, such as advertisements, speeches, and printed matter, would enable Herle to send Walsingham documents of his own. In this letter, therefore, Herle could not lose: in routing the letters to Leicester via Walsingham he was enhancing his reputation as an intelligencer, and by highlighting his lack of money he was encouraging Walsingham to consider an increased credit, motivated by the prospect of more intelligence.

Many of the ‘sondrye wrytengs’ mentioned by Herle still exist in the archives, often accompanying the letters with which they were originally sent. These enclosures comprise the bulk of the intelligence gathered by agents and emissaries abroad; raw data which could be

43 PRO SP 83 16/52. William Herle to Sir Francis Walsingham, 1st July 1582.
sifted and analysed by the statesmen back home. Ephemeral material such as advertisements, ‘advises’, lists, confessions, and accounts of momentous events contributed to the development of foreign policy and modification of domestic administration. Also enclosed were ‘private’ letters written to the agents by their own intelligence contacts and friends who included petitions and valuable information; letters whose return was often requested. These ‘sondrye wrytengs’ occupy a peculiar place in the archives. They exist as peripheral to the letters they were originally sent with, and if those original letters have been lost or destroyed, or have been separated from the enclosure, then the enclosure remains unattached, unreferenced, and isolated from the context in which they were sent. They are explicitly connected to the letter they are dispatched with, a connection which is altered, if not partially lost, once the documents are divided.

The enclosures were often written in a different hand to the letter-writer (‘yong honeste ffellow’), and usually endorsed on the verso by the sender. If the letter and enclosure were written by the same hand, they share a further bond, and are visually and notionally linked. Different hands, albeit with a holograph endorsement, create a different relationship between the documents for both the sender and the recipient. The annotation of the enclosure by the letter-writer further complicates these inter-textual associations.

Herle was diligent in sending extra information separate from that included in his letters. Easy to locate, due to endorsements in Herle’s distinctive hand, the scope of his ‘sondrye writengs’ offers an invaluable insight into the secondary role of the agent abroad - to collect and disseminate wide ranges of information.

The spring and summer of 1582 were months of intense epistolary activity for Herle, when he sent enclosures with nearly every letter. The survival of many of these enclosures, filed and bound into manuscript volumes by later archivists, gives us an idea of the original

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44 Much work remains to be done on the matching of enclosures to original letters. For instance, in a volume of Treaty Papers in the Public Records Office, at least thirteen documents exhibit endorsements or annotations by Herle, and one document is holograph; PRO SP 103/33.
appearance of the packets Herle sent. In one particular folio volume in
the British Library, (Cotton Galba C VII), more than twenty documents
other than his fourteen holograph letters are associated with Herle,
either bearing his holograph endorsement or annotations, being
addressed to him, or referring to him in some way.\textsuperscript{45}

It is also significant that there are many letters in this volume
which are addressed to Herle. The general lack of letters to Herle in the
archives suggests that Herle's personal archive of correspondence was
destroyed or lost after his death, or is the result of a routine culling of
paperwork during his life. Yet the number of letters addressed to Herle
in this volume is inconsistent with the relative absence of letters
received in Herle's larger corpus of correspondence. It appears that the
existence of these letters in this volume derives from the fact that they
were sent as enclosures by Herle to accompany his letters; to verify and
enhance the intelligence he was offering, and to confirm the validity of
the information source.

Also of significance is the recurrent hand used for the
advertisements and lists sent separate from Herle's holograph letters.
Usually written in French, this hand is distinctive and immediately
recognisable; with a trademark flourish in the title and thick quill marks.
This suggests that Herle may indeed have had an 'honeste ffellow' doing
extra clerical work during his mission in Antwerp despite his tacit
appeal to Walsingham for a person to undertake such work.\textsuperscript{46}

What significance did Herle attach to the enclosure of these
documents? The ready supply of extra information - submitted
marginally but connected to the letter - testified to Herle's skill as an
intelligencer, and verified and corroborated the analysis and reports he
presented in epistolary form. Although he made passing reference to

\textsuperscript{45} BL MS Cotton Galba C VII. The documents endorsed, annotated, addressed by or
referring to Herle include letters from notable Low Countries figures, crudely-drawn
maps and lists of data.

\textsuperscript{46} This hand occurs frequently amongst Herle's dispatches, often bound after his
letters in the manuscript volumes. See BL MS Cotton Galba C VII f.225"", 236" - 239",
265" - 267", 114" - 122", for evidence of this hand. An alternative explanation for the
consistency of Herle's enclosures bearing this hand is that he may have been
purchasing copies of the articles, lists and other ephemera from an official clerk
associated with the Antwerp authorities.
the existence and inclusion of the enclosure, Herle rarely alluded to the information contained within it in detail.\(^47\) Rather, he alluded to the enclosure as a physical artefact, constructing a textual exchange with which he could maintain a constant epistolary relationship with one or several recipients:

"I have ynclosed heryn the copye verbatim, of the lettre written from Andwarp, by a Cowncellor of this Town, to the Burghers & the rest of the magistrats here, of the state that the Prince of Orenge ys yn, & of other circumstancs conteyned in the same, fytt for her maiestie & your Lordships to peruse & vnderstand."\(^48\)

Where can we situate the inclusion of extra material in this textual exchange between Herle and his correspondent? Just how close is the bond between the raw data and the carefully-crafted letter? The separate-yet-linked nature and positioning of the two documents within a letter-packet forms a peculiar relationship between the two, and encourages a different application of the packet once it reaches the correspondent’s hands. A letter which contains news, intelligence, and processed information might be edited verbally or textually to be broadcast to another reader or listener, yet the epistolary constructions and social strategies may hinder a quick reading and efficient retrieval of information. The notification of negative events or bad news might be couched in positive or apologetic terms, concealing sensitive knowledge or rhetorically polishing adverse occurrences in order to maintain positive favour and status with the correspondent. Herle was aware of such necessary negotiation around the exchange of sensitive information; in the summer of 1582 he made a request to Walsingham:

"I shall humblye desire your honor to ympart this mi lettre with mi L of Lecester, to whom I have nott presentlye wrytten, by reson

\(^47\) I would have assumed that Herle would pose a ‘reading’ of the enclosed material (which is often largely unrelated to the report Herle proffers), to accompany and be associated with the reading that the recipient would necessarily perform. This, surely, would enhance by proxy Herle’s patronage attempts and relationship strategies.  
\(^48\) PRO SP 83 15/95. William Herle to Lord Burghley, 2\(^{nd}\) April 1582.
of the hastye departure of william payge, & allso for that mi L wryt to tolld me ones that he desired nott to here to sone of yll newes.\textsuperscript{49}

In his treatise `Instructions for a Principall Secretarie', Robert Beale noted that where there was

anie unpleasant matter to be imparted to her Maiestie from the Councell or other matters to be done of great importance, let not the burden be layed on you alone but let the rest ioyne with you ... for if anie thinge be misliked, it wilbe saied that it was the secretarie's doinge, that they signed for companie, that the lettre was brought to them \&c.\textsuperscript{50}

Deflecting potential negative reception was a key concern when imparting bad news. A separate document detailing such unfortunate events, therefore, could present the information in a relatively artless format, where the knowledge had been processed to a minimum, and the rhetorical requirements obviated by the associated-yet-separate presence of the accompanying letter.

The detachable nature of a letter-enclosure composition facilitates the act of separation and preferment of information. The enclosed document can be shown around and copied with ease and speed, and may even survive the letter which had first accompanied it. This calls into question the relative status of the letter and the enclosure within the packet. Which is the primary document? Does the letter merely accompany the separate document of information, or does the enclosed data support and corroborate the strategic missive? The fact that many of Herle's letters point to enclosures which are

\textsuperscript{49} PRO SP 83 16/58. William Herle to Sir Francis Walsingham, 7\textsuperscript{th} July 1582. The words in italics indicate superscript text.

either lost or exist elsewhere in the archives suggests that an enclosure might have had a different ‘after-life’ and ‘end-care’ than a letter.\(^{51}\)

In March 1582 Herle sent Leicester an enclosure containing at least 25 folio pages: two copies of a letter to Leicester which were each over ten pages long, a list of the Councillors in the States General in the Low Countries, and a list of the officers of the city of Antwerp for 1582, a document annotated by Herle. Moreover, it seems that Herle originally included more documents than are present:

I am entred into the familiaritie & nere frindship of vj or vij of the principall state men of this contrey, wherby I am hable to informe my self of sondrie secretts, & of the knowledge of their state, from time to time the more, to the good service of our contrey, & the satisfaction of her maiestie & of yow, having a lettre to your Lord here inclosed from on of that foresayd nomber, who from time to time wilbe redie to do yow anie service he can.\(^{52}\)

I have inclosed herein the names of those that ar as yet of the former cowncell of the ffinances, that ye may beholld vppon this allteration, what diuersity of persones ar intromyttted. Likewise in an other paper inclosed be the names of the magistrates & principall officers of this Cittie of Andwarpe, & of the Coronelles & Gillds, with the nomber of armed men & enseynes, that ar now trayned & appointed in Redines, within the Cittie.\(^{53}\)

\(^{51}\) It is to be expected that enclosed documents would peregrinate in the archives, not only because they encounter a different type of distribution than their attendant letter, but could also be catalogued separately, say if Herle's endorsements are not immediately recognisable to the archivist, and if Herle had omitted the date. I refer again to the volume of Treaty Papers (PRO SP 103/5) where the archivist has catalogued relevant papers together, whose associated letters may still exist in the State Papers Foreign.

\(^{52}\) PRO SP 83 15/36. William Herle to the Earl of Leicester, 3\(^{rd}\) March 1582. The letter to which Herle refers is not present.

\(^{53}\) These two lists are present in the enclosure.
I have sent your Lord herewith in like maner, the generall occurents that com from Rome, which for many respects ar worthie the note, & conserves our cowrtt to observe theme, wherof I will furnishe yow euery weke with the like, as things that do com from persons of judgement. and Calling, I would have sent your good Lord a new Gwiciardyn, butt that I vnderstood since, that your Secretorye had provyded yow of on here att his goyng awaye. But in place therof (according to the poore myte of my habilitye) you shall Reseve ij peecs of Monsieur’s new coyne, the on of x styvers price, & the others of v stivers & a pece of his golld coyne of 54 stivers of which sorts if your Lord wilbe furnisshed of any more I will humblye do ytt.\textsuperscript{54}

I send your Lord rude drawght therof drawen with the pen, that ye may beholld the scituacion of the place, & the importance that ytt is of, with the Skantz or lyttell ffortt that mr Norrys made vppon the River to retyre his men into, & his ordynance eche nyghte.\textsuperscript{55}

Of the five documents incorporated with the (original) letter in the packet, two are extant. This would have been a huge delivery of information, weighing a considerable and expensive amount.

The items Herle sent through the diplomatic post route were mainly coins, maps, letters, pamphlets and books. It appears he had little financial recourse to provide small gifts, let alone pay for their

\textsuperscript{54} There are no ‘occurents’ from Rome present. The ‘Gwiciardyn’ is probably Lodovico Guicciardini’s new book Descriptione de Touts les Pais-bas (Antwerp: Christopher Plantin, 1582). Herle claimed friendship with Guicciardini, informing Leicester in 1582 that the Italian had forwarded intelligence to him: “which advertisment the sayd Gwiciardyn deliuered vnto me as a secret of ymportanc that conserned the Queen to consyder of", BL MS Cotton Galba CVII f.208’ - 210’. William Herle to the Earl of Leiceser, 25\textsuperscript{th} March 1582. Yet it seems that Herle was later in Guicciardini’s debt, as suggested in a letter from Guicciardini to Walsingham requesting the restitution of Herle’s credit so he could be paid, PRO SP 83 22/14, 30\textsuperscript{th} June 1584.

\textsuperscript{55} This ‘rude drawght’ of ‘Brunkhurst’ is not calendared with this enclosure. However, there is a crude representation of the castle of Brunkhurst and a scene of the River Issel in the British Library, BL MS Cotton Galba C VII, f. 232b, which is annotated and partly drawn by Herle.
postage back to England. Instead, he ensured the provision of the maximum amount of intelligence in paper form. In March 1582, Herle wrote to Burghley promising him extra material in the future, commenting:

I send your Lord also herewith the occurrents of Italye, which ar delivered me by a personaige of accompt & therwith a mynute of Monsieur's entraye & awguration here, & when yt comes furthe in print your Lord shall have the fyrste drawght that shalbe sene therof sent yow by me, yf I were riche (as these things do cost money) yow sholld have more things, but your Lord will bere with this in the mene tyme, ffor I have no ayde here, butt god & my self yow know best my habilitye.

Herle took the act of securing copies of printed books very seriously during his time on the continent, mentioning and referring to many items within his dispatches, and sending the books (somehow linked to the letter-packet) back to England. Some of these books were of considerable weight and expense - enormously heavy folio volumes - and others of a smaller, more ephemeral nature.

In March 1582, nearly two weeks after Francis, Duke of Anjou's lavish entry into Antwerp, Herle wrote to the Earl of Leicester to confirm that

The entrée of monsieur into this contrey: & his receving & awguration here, wilbe sett furth in printe att large, & is by monsieur's appointment, dedicated speciallie to your Lord with all the shewes, pagents, Arches, tryvmphants, & their

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56 Apart from these gifts of books, Herle was unusually slack in the presenting of gifts to his patrons. The one recorded instance was long after his residence in Antwerp, on the 20th March 1585, possibly between his later commissions to Emden, when he presented the gift of a dog to Leicester, for which he was rewarded with twenty shillings. See Simon Adams ed. Household Accounts and Disbursement Books of Robert Dudley, Earl of Leicester, 1558-61, 1584-86 Camden Fifth Series, vol. 6 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995) pp.232-3.

57 BL MS Cotton Galba C VII f.201'-204'. William Herle to Lord Burghley, 18th March 1582. The document containing the news from Italy is not extant.
significations to be expressed fullie therin, which by the middel of the next weeke I shalbe hable to send vnto your Lord.\textsuperscript{58}

The book to which Herle referred was printed by Christopher Plantin at his famous print-shop in Antwerp, entitled \textit{La loyouse \& Magnifique \textit{Entrée de Monseigneur Françoys, Fils de France}}.\textsuperscript{59} Herle also promised to send a copy to Burghley, omitting his usual formal, if brief, salutation:

\begin{quote}
Your Lord shall have the Ioyows entrye yn ffrenche, that monsieur was sworne vnto att his commyng ynto the Town, butt yn the mene tyme, yow have on of your own that I presented your Lord in ffolio \& yn written hand, with a translatyon of myne yn the margent owtt of dutche \& latten of mi procurement among the things I exhibyted to yow of the state of holland.\textsuperscript{60}
\end{quote}

Herle was also anxious to direct a copy to Walsingham, partly, it seems, to strengthen a petition to aid him in a civil lawsuit. He wrote:

\begin{quote}
(Butt yf yow will gyve me leve from hence furth to make yow acqwaynted with that I know, I will ffaythfullye \& willinglye yndevor mi self to content yow in som good sort, ffor I have the mene, \& that is to dele theryn all the service I can. I have sent yow for noveltye a new Gwicardyn simpleffied muche \& corrected \& a pece of monsieur's new coyne of x styuers your Lord shall have his loyows entrye with the first ympressyon, beffore it com to publyck shew.\textsuperscript{61}
\end{quote}

\begin{footnotes}
\begin{enumerate}
\item \textsuperscript{58} PRO SP 83 15/36. William Herle to the Earl of Leicester, 3\textsuperscript{rd} March 1582.
\item \textsuperscript{59} (Antwerp: Christopher Plantin, 1582).
\item \textsuperscript{60} PRO SP 83 15/46. William Herle to Lord Burghley, 6\textsuperscript{th} March 1581. It seems that Herle had had an account of the triumphal entry of Anjou into Antwerp drawn up privately, or had bought a copy which was circulating about the town, and forwarded it to Burghley 'among the things' he had enclosed previously. This tells of a desire to secure and transmit the freshest news and intelligence, in numerous types of media.
\item \textsuperscript{61} PRO SP 83 15/50. William Herle to Sir Francis Walsingham, 8\textsuperscript{th} March 1581. Herle does not elucidate on how he can secure a copy of the book before it be on 'publyck shew'.
\end{enumerate}
\end{footnotes}
Both the Guicciardini and the Joyous Entry seem to be linked in Herle’s mind and administration; both books valuable and important not just for their physical aspects, but for their content. The Guicciardini is a region-by-region summary of the Low Countries, detailing geographical, economic and political information beneficial to the formation of the English policy of aid and assistance in the ongoing conflict against Philip of Spain. The Joyous Entry is a less academic volume, although the information on how Anjou was received into Antwerp was valuable for assessing the attitude towards a ‘foreign’ noble presence in the Southern provinces of the Low Countries.

The Joyous Entry is a thick folio exhibiting lavish and detailed woodcuts, which cost at least 30 stuivers to buy from the Plantin shop. Herle could have opted to send his patrons the cheaper quarto edition which lacked the expensive illustration, retailing at only 2 stuivers. The woodcuts were designed and engraved by Abraham de Bruyn, and the customer could pay extra for Bruyn or another artist to paint the woodcuts.

The Guicciardini edition was retailing at 7 florins for an illustrated copy, and 2 florins 10 stuivers without illustrations. The title page, featuring Pomona and Neptune, is identical to that of the Joyous Entry. Indeed, Herle was promising these huge and costly books whilst simultaneously pleading fiscal crisis. To send three people the Joyous

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63 There was also a Dutch edition available (priced at 2 stuivers), De blijde ende heerlijche Incomste van ... Franssols van Vranckrijk ... in syne zeer vermaerde stad van Antwerpen (Antwerp: Christopher Plantin, 1582), Voet (1980), p.954.
64 J Landwehr, Splendid Ceremonies, State Entries and Royal Funerals in the Low Countries, 1515 - 1797, A Bibliography (Leiden: AW Sijthoff, 1971), p.81. Landwehr states that Bruyn painted 2 copies of the Joyous Entry. There are four copies of the French folio in the British Library, two of which have been painted, apparently contemporaneously. The most lavish copy is shelfmark C.22.C.12, whose woodcuts are all extant, and finished in gold paint. The other copies [576.M.I.(2), C.46.I.8.(2), 156.I.32] have plates missing, and are in poor condition. Copy [716.K.6(5)] consists only of plate I: all text and other plates are missing. In the Plantin-Moretus Museum Library in Antwerp, the illustrated plates in the corresponding copy (MPM R 44.13) closely resemble those in BL C.22.C.12, suggesting that they may have been coloured by the same artist.
Entry alone would have cost him over 4 florins, and to include postage (a trunk and suitable wrapping), would have further increased the price.

Yet there was a considerable delay between Herle’s promise of the books in the first week of March, and the date of dispatch. Mid-March, Herle still attended delivery:

Towching the entrye of the Duke ynto this Town with all the ceremonyes & circumstancs that belongs thervnto ytt is nott as yett fffinishsed butt wilbe this weeke that commes yn, & then shall your Lord Receve the fffirst of theme, fffor it is dedicated only to yow.66

At the end of March, he was still waiting to secure the printed copies, writing to Leicester:

The same morninge was the Cassyer and the Iacobyn fffryer (conffessor to lohn lawringi) executed. your Lord shall have there examinacions by the next Post in prynt, and Monsieur’s entrye into Andwerpe with the same.67

But it was not until the end of April that Herle could write to Walsingham stating:

I am bolld herwith to present a booke vnto yow of Monsieur’s loyeowse entry into this Town & of his negociatyon ffurnished with the Representations of the Theaters & pagents then shewed att his Awguratyon, which contyayns things besyde, mete for your wisdom to consyder of. namelye I note that yn all their procedyngs, they desire to yntangle the Queen with this actyon, & so is it spred all abrode. Wherwith prayeng humblye the good acceptance of mi speciaR dutye borne to your honor, I ffynisshe, desyreng onlye by your good ffavor & cowntenance agayne. &

66 BL MS Cotton Galba C VII f.194r. William Herle to the Earl of Leicester, 11th March 1582.
67 PRO SP 83 15/88. William Herle to the Earl of Leicester, 31st March 1582.
yow shall well perceve whatt trew & sufficyent servyce I will do to yow & to her maiestie withowt her charge or yowres. 68

Note the explicit matching of the dispatch of the book, the strategic insertion of intelligence 'I note that in all their procedyngs', and the proposal of further intelligence work 'withowt her charge or yowres': Herle drew these three aspects together in his attempt to further foster an intelligence-patronage connection with Walsingham and the Queen. Herle's purchase and transmission of books which were aesthetically and politically desirable formed an ancillary component to his intelligence 'service' - similar to the dispatch of bare facts, the gift of a book was a more complex and sophisticated form of intelligence-gathering. 69

One wonders whether Herle bought the copies of the Joyous Entry and the Guicciardini direct from Plantin's printing house in the Vrijdagmarkt in the city of Antwerp. A comment from elsewhere in the archive suggests a level of acquaintance with the works:

Monsieur growes verye popular, & was att Plantynes shopp a ffote to se his presses, vsyng grett familiarity to all those that approched hym goyng a ffote through the streetes. 70

Herle was well-placed for the timely transmission of printed material between England and the continent. Books both 'contraband' and innocuous were routed through Antwerp from Cologne, Leiden, Rheims,

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68 PRO SP 83 15/128. William Herle to Sir Francis Walsingham, 28th April 1582. There exist no letters by Herle which similarly 'present' copies of the Joyous Entry to Burghley or Leicester. The record book for the sales of Plantin's shop in the Vridgmarkt at this time records that the Joyous Entry did not go on sale until the 17th of April 1582. Guicciardini's Descriptione had been on sale for quite some time, Archive 491, Museum Plantin-Moretus. A copy of Guicciardini's Italian edition of 1581 was sold in an auction of the Cecil Library in 1687, T Bentley & B Walford, Bibliotheca Illustris: sive Catalogus Varorum Librorum... bibliotecae ciri cujsdam praenobilis ac honoratissimi olim defuncti (William Cecil) (London: Willis, et.al, 1687) p.61.


70 BL MS Cotton Galba C VII f.222v - 223r. William Herle to the Earl of Leicester, 14th April 1582.
and even Rome, towards the licit destinations of the English administration and the less legitimate hiding-places of Catholic and recusant readers. Herle was also keen to source his books direct, travelling to Frankfurt to attend the famous book fair. He wrote to Walsingham to inform him that:

The Bishop of Rosses genealogie & his booke withall in Latten of the scotissh tytell to the Crown of England, hath byn grettlye axed for & solld att this ffranckfords mart, which of mi knowlege I dare affirme, ffor I provyded my sellf there of som ffew bookes, & had trew advertisment hereof.  

In his *Post for Divers partes of the World* of 1576, Richard Verstegan had noted with the information about Frankfurt:

This citie in tyme obtained a great and accustomable Marte, for the repaire thether of all marchants in Europe, twise in the yeare, namely in mydlent, and in September ... at which Martes there is greate trafique and resorte from all places of the world.

As Herle wrote to Walsingham on the 5th of May after he had returned to Antwerp, it follows that he had attended the mid-Lent book fair, where he had not only purchased 'som ffew bookes', but had taken the opportunity to observe the popular and notable book sales in intelligence terms; the signifiers 'knowledge', 'provyded' and 'advertisment' indicating a conscious process of surveillance.

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71 PRO SP 83 16/2. William Herle to Sir Francis Walsingham, 5th May 1582. Herle's reference to 'the Bishop of Rosses genealogye' is John Leslie's *De Titulo et jure ... Mariae Scotorum Reginae &c.* (Rheims: J Fognaeus, 1580).

The printing and distribution of contraband and illegal books on the continent was a constant source of concern for the Elizabethan government, as was the drain on the treasury coffers in attempting to police such contraband and prevent its transmission across the Channel. Searchers and pursuivants were employed to maintain surveillance at the ports, creeks and havens of England, to search cargoes of boats for prohibited books. Herle kept a vigilant eye on the books circulating between Antwerp and England, attempting to secure copies of the imprints, or having them copied out by hand. He discussed forthcoming and current imprints with his correspondents, making recommendations for reading and commenting on readings of his own. In September 1581, on his way to Dover from Lambeth, Herle wrote to his ‘dere and approved frynd Mr Huddilston’, stating:

The booke ye writt vnto me for called Le secret des finances de France, I have, & conteynes grett matter in ytt, & so care for the habilitye to discover somuch as the sayd booke dothe, & for the secrett of secretts that the same doth penetrate ynto, as I most confesse never to have sene the lyke. yow shall have it according to your own request, & I will mi sellf God willeng bryng the same to yow before xiiij dayes be com about att the yttermost. 73

It appears from these comments that Herle was lending or supplying books to his acquaintances, in this case proposing to deliver the book in person, perhaps because of the ‘secrett of secretts’ that he claimed the book revealed. This exchange of both books and the analysis of them continued in the letter, where Herle made an abrupt request:

I wissehe yow to Rede whytakers booke agaynst Campyon. 74

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It seems that these two men were reading political and religious material for intelligence reasons; researching the traffic of cross-channel imprints and reading printed answers to prohibited books such as the above. Yet even this legitimate reading of unauthorised and illegal books by agents eager to locate and penetrate information was subject to official scrutiny. Herle informed Huddilston:

I do ryde in poste to dover in the mornyng, & do send this berer to se purposelye how yow do, with mi good Ladye, your wife, thanckyng yow for your Late commendacions maryl contynewyng mi complaynt & clayme for mi bookes that (as a sheryff ye do detyne from me) which is the more extremitye, *Nihil enim magis iniquam, quam iusticia, In instici armata*. Butt mi Lord Tresuror shall devyde it betwwen vs.

Herle did not state which books were being held by Huddilston in his capacity as sheriff, but it is likely they were of a provocative nature. What is remarkable is the continuing exchange of book reviews offered by Herle to his ‘frynd’ Huddilston despite his official interference in the collection and transportation of sensitive books.

Many references which Herle made to books are too opaque to decipher, while others can be determined by process of elimination. In late March 1582, Herle described a book to Leicester:

There is an oracyon dispersed among the mallcontents, to yntertayne theme in corayge & dutye the more to the King of Spayne sett furthe yn ffrenche yn the name of the Lord Chancellor of England, as a speche of his debated yn Cowncell, whither it were necessarye for her maiestie to gyve ayde to this syde or no. A thing penned by Monsieur Dowaye, projeted by d’assonvill, & aworthised by the Prince of Parma, pyrnted & solld in Tornaye, though named to com from Colleyn ... I am
perswaded that mr Secretorye wallsyngham hath the booke, otherwise I wolld send your Lord on onlye copye that I have.\textsuperscript{75}

The title of this book remains unclear, despite the multitude of information noted by Herle; of content, language, both fictional and real print locations, and the author ‘Dowaye’. Other references are not so obscure:

... the booke that Carter printed, within your owne Kingdome, of the self same matter, and worthelie suffered for it, this last winter at Tyborne.\textsuperscript{76}

The book to which Herle referred was printed by William Carter, and written by Gregory Martin, entitled \textit{A Treatise of Schism}, printed in London in 1578, (but purportedly published in Douai). For its heretical content, Carter was executed at ‘Tyborne’ in the winter of 1583.

Not all of the books mentioned by Herle were inflammatory or prohibited. His position as a cross-channel conduit of information worked both ways. In the above letter which mentioned the unfortunate demise of William Carter, Herle explained to Queen Elizabeth:

I brought ouer hither in latin, ffrenche and Italian, a twoo dozen of those bookes which my Lord Treasorer is awthor of, touching the lustice in England executed vpon those lesuites and Seminaries not for religion but for treason. Of which bookes, I haue well distributed sondrie, and are maruailously lyked. In so muche as the Archebishoppe of Coleine (A prince truely, well qualified and greatly devoted to your maiestie, whome I found at Delft) doth cause the same to be translated to high duche that

\textsuperscript{75} BL MS Cotton Galba C VII f.208\textsuperscript{v}-210\textsuperscript{v}. William Herle to the Earl of Leicester, 25\textsuperscript{th} March 1582.

\textsuperscript{76} PRO SP 83 22/53. William Herle to Queen Elizabeth, 22 July 1584.
it may be dispersed all Germanie ouer, and the same in uttering the truth so wiselie, is lykely to do greate good."77

Herle explicitly acknowledged his role of transmission and distribution of the propaganda, and relished the successful exchange with the Archbishop of Cologne who had promoted a Dutch edition. That he wrote to the queen with this information rather than Burghley, the supposed author of the multi-lingual editions, was explained in a letter written to the Lord Treasurer seven days later:

Mr Secretorye tolld me that it was her maiestie's plesure I sholld dyrect mi packet to her alone, wherfore I humbly refferre your Lord for knowlege of the particularyes that I have collected in mi vyage Through holland to the same. And yf I be spare in wryteng of things to your Lord duryng mi abode in these parts, ytt may plese yow to attribute it onlye, to the obedynce I carye to her maiestie's wyll & nott to want of dutye, to do that which becomes me to on of your sorte, whose humblye I am with the best service I can yelld herinclosed ys a lettre to her maiestie of som particuler matter, which wolld be pryvatelye delyverd into her own hands, & therfore do recommend it to your self.78

Similarly, Herle wrote to Burghley in late 1582:

My Right honorable good Lord ytt maye plese your Lord to pardon me, yf that I have nott the leysure att this present for the sodayn

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77 PRO SP 83 22/53. The English Short Title Catalogue suggests that Burghley's Execution of Justice had been entered in the Stationer's Register in January 1584 [STC i.4902]. The Dutch edition was purportedly printed in Middelburgh D'executie van iustitie (Middelburgh: R Schilders, 1584) [STC i.4905]. The editions Herle claims he brought over are Justitia Britannica, Per quam liquet perspicue &c. (London: T Vautroullier, 1584) [STC i.4904], L'execution de Justice faict en Angleterre, Traduite en langue Françoise (London: Thomas Vautroullier, 1584) [January 1584] [STC i.4906], Atto della Giustitia d’Inghilterra, esseguito, per la conservazione della commune & christiana pace, &c. (Londra: G Wolfio, 1584) [May 1584] [STC i.4907], AW Pollard and GR Redgrave eds. A Short-Title Catalogue of Books printed In England, Scotland and Ireland and of English books printed abroad 1475-1640 vol.1 (London: Bibliographical Society, 1986), p.220.

78 BL MS Lansdowne 43 f.24'-25'. William Herle to Lord Burghley, 29th July 1584.
departure of the poste, to wryte vnto you att large as I wolld, 
butt I have desired mr Secretary to ympart with your Lord suche 
matter as I have sent him, which consernes very ample 
advertisment of the state of the Imperyall dyett & of the affayres 
of these contreys. Lyke wise I have sent to Mr Beall Clerck of the 
Cowncell sondrye papers in the highe duche towching that which 
we communicatted with yow in & with all a booke in englyssh 
*hexa metrum* verse of part of virgyll, don by on Stanihurst an 
Iryssh man remayneng at Lyden in Holland which for the Rarenes 
of the thing I thought mete to be perused by your Lord howbeit 
in mi symple censure it is a towgh pece of worck. & harshe ioynes 
with obscuritye ytt may plesse your Lord to take mi humble 
menyng in good parte.79

Due to the imminent departure of the post, Herle referred Burghley to 
Walsingham's letter for more information, to Robert Beale's 'sondrye 
papers in highe duche', and the book which he had included in the 
packet. 'Stanihurst[']s part of virgyll' is easily identifiable as Richard 
Stanihurst's translation of the first four books of the Aeneid into 
'heroical' verse, a thin quarto printed by Jan Paedts (John Pates) at 
Leiden in 1582. This is the only mention of literature in Herle's entire 
correspondence: the conclusion 'in mi symple censure it is a towgh pece 
of worck' his single brief foray into literary criticism.

Only two Leiden editions of Stanihurst's Virgil survive. The copy 
in the British Library (despite being sent initially to Beale) bears the 
inscription on the title page, in Herle's holograph hand, 'To ye R 
honorable ye L highe [.]. 80 That Herle directed Burghley to the Stanihurst 
via Robert Beale, clerk to the Privy Council, both significant 
government figures, suggests that he deemed the book as politically 
important as it was a desirable item. Stanihurst was an Irish Catholic

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79 HMC Hatfield Cecil Papers 12.52 (BL M/485/13). William Herle to Lord Burghley, 
c.12th August 1582. The letter sent to Walsingham which Herle directs Burghley to 
read is PRO SP 83 16/100.

80 The title page, (which is 'mutilated' according to the British Library Catalogue), is 
torn across the bottom right hand corner. It is clear, however, that this is a dedication 
to Burghley from Herle, as every address Herle writes to Burghley follows this pattern. 
(Shelfmark BL C.56.d.3). See Plate 1, p.151.
exile on the continent, under surveillance by English agents, and Herle perhaps regarded such literary provenance with suspicion.

The 'knowledge' Herle submitted, whether in a complete, finished format such as a book or pamphlet, or roughly compiled data such as 'advises' or brief lists, represented a vital part of his diplomatic mission abroad. His diplomatic dispatches were crammed with seemingly miscellaneous facts and observations - but how were they characteristic of Herle's personal/diplomatic modus operandi?

Taking the above letter from the period whilst he was in Antwerp, it is appropriate to scrutinise in detail Herle's diplomatic epistolary strategy to understand his position as intelligencer/client. The letter is neither unusual, nor mundane. Rather, it is characteristic of his foreign dispatches, and reveals many of Herle's epistolary traits:

My Right honorable good Lord ytt maye plese your Lord to pardon me, yff that I have nott the leysure att this present for the sodayn departure of the poste, to wryte vnto you att large as I wolld, butt I have desired mr Secretorye to ympart with your Lord suche matter as I have sent him, which consernes very ample advertisment of the state of the Imperyall dyett & of the affayres of these contreys. Lyke wise I have sent to Mr Beall Clerck of the Cowncell sondrye papers in the highe duche towching that which we communicated with yow in & with all a booke in englyssh hexa metrum verse of part of virgyll, don by on Stanihurst an Iryssh man remayneng at Lyden in Holland which for the Rarenes of the thing I thought mete to be perused by your Lord howbeit in my symple censure it is a towgh pece of worck. & harshe ioynes with obscuritye ytt may plese your Lord to take mi humble menyng in good parte.

Vppon ffryday last the Townesmen of Lyre were sworen to be trew of Allenson the Prince of Oreng & to all adherents ffavowres, & succowres which is materyall for her maiestie to vnderstand with whom most humbly I beseke your Lord to yntertayne a remembrance of me poore sowll. There was a dromme of this
Town present att the Acte of the othe, which was don publycklye in the markett place, herewith I may make synce which tyme, I have byn informed by others that were present att ytt. Herewith I most nott over passe that which is wrytten in grett lettres vpon the gate of Lyre viz. *Di stat van Antwerpen is tho hueren thryen Balmes*. The Towne of Andwarp is to be lett or hired towards mychellmas mart. hereby they make of warehowse of ytt, & prepare ytt for new marchants.

The King of Spain hath by the advertisments owtt of Germany given these Lowe Contreyes in dowrye with his elldest dowghter to the Emperor, butt yf the Emperor be ympotent (as is affirmed in procreayon then is the same a playn abuse, to seem more plawsible to England & Ffraunce.

The sayd King hath written sondry lettres to the Baylye of Fflushing, ynducyng him with large promises, to betraye the sayd Town, which lettres he hath faythfully communicatet with the Prince or Orenge from tyme to tyme, yett it is thought meet for more surety to remove him owtt of the Island to som other charge, to avoyd often temptacions.

The report that the Queen's maiestie is conspirayd agaynst to be murtherd, encreseth, which is gravely to be loket vnto, & by mi next I will procure som partycularyes of it And so I humblye take mi leve for this tyme. Andwerpe, *Fidelis servus nonnunquam negligitur.*

[verso] To the Right honorable mi very good Lord the Lord highe Thresuror of England &c, gyve these with speede att the Cowrt/ William Paige post. 81

Herle began by situating this letter in a larger nexus of correspondence which included the letter in Dutch to Beale, and the more 'ample advertisment' sent to Walsingham with which Burghley could cross

81 *HMC Hatfield MS Cecil Papers 12.52 (BL M/485/13). William Herle to Lord Burghley, c.12th August 1582.*
reference his own letter. This linking of his letters to prominent council figures elevated the status of Herle and his letters, creating a continuing network of correspondents and an intelligence archive to which the recipient could refer at his own discretion. This exhibition of epistolic connections was a classic Herle manoeuvre - ostentatiously parading his epistolary output whilst apologising for the concise nature of the letter, 'have not the leysure att this present ... to wryte to you att large as I wolld'.

Herle's method of imparting varied intelligence was to break it into small relative paragraphs, sometimes with little or no link between them. 82 This logical, almost scientific, separation of his narrative enabled efficient information retrieval should the correspondent need to consult the dispatch towards a particular end or in case of urgency. Herle was not consistent in attempting to construct a narrative or linking the pieces of information together. It is occasionally possible to observe the connections he made between the different parts of 'intelligence' he had collected, as in this earlier letter:

_Monsieur_ was muche amased yesterday mornyng att his goyng to Masse, when the newes were browght hym of Owdenard, wherwith he lefte Masse & all & went sodenlye to confferre with the Prince att the Castell. The olld & new Bands of the ffrenche yn our Camp, were lyke to have byn yn Armes among theme sellves, abowtt difference of Religyon. Mr northes companyes att St Barnards ar yn mutyny & have reffused to marche with the Rest ynto the Camp. His lyvetenant Salisbury is arryved here this after noone owt of England havyng browght over sowdyors. 83

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82 See Chapter 2, p.69, for Erasmus' suggestion of the informal ordering of points, _DCE_, p.65.
83 PRO SP 83 16/58. William Herle to Sir France Walsingham, 7th July 1582. This six page letter contains 25 paragraphs, most of which are seemingly separate, as above.
Prudently, Herle endeavoured to substantiate the intelligence he transmitted where possible, citing sources or indicating a lack thereof:

The King of Spain hath by the advertisments owtt of Germany given these Lowe Contreyes in dowrye with his ellldest dowghter to the Emperor.
The sayd King hath written sondry lettres to the Baylye of Fflushing, ynducyng him with large promises, to betraye the sayd Town, which lettres he hath faythfully communicated with the Prince or Orenge from tyme to tyme.

Significantly, the application of a source to the intelligence imparted partially absolved the intelligencer from fault should the information turn out to be false. This act of distancing culpability occurs frequently throughout Herle’s diplomatic correspondence, and was pragmatic, considering the amount of bogus rumour disseminated for propagandist reasons. Herle could wryly comment after the failed assassination attempt on the Prince of Orange:

The Prince of Parma hath caused Brutes to ron amonge his followers, that the Prince of Orange was slayne owtright with the Bullett, and the Princesse of Pynoie to save him, was allsoe slayne, her howsband hurt, and his princypall Councellor ron madd, bothe his secretaryes fledd to the enemye, and the rest of his people dispersed.\footnote{PRO SP 83 15/88. William Herle to the Earl of Leicester, 31st March 1582.}

Yet despite this act of distancing himself from the intelligence, Herle nevertheless took pains to align himself with it, to mark it as his own product, in order to take credit for the assembly, and engage in an act of self-promotion. If Herle distanced himself too far from the information, the illusion of a tightly-woven intelligence report resembled instead a jumble of senseless facts. Thus, amongst the bare details, Herle’s voice can be discerned - emerging from the letter to
ensure recognition for the assembly of intelligence. The hazards of
drawing attention to the writer of the intelligence report are clear:
Herle’s inserts interrupted his own narrative of knowledge, detracting
from the importance or sensitivity of the information. Yet these letters
were Herle’s only recourse to securing a viable patronage bond, hence
the visible tonal shifts. His narrative strategy comprised the
transmission of undiluted information - the clear representation of facts
without interruption - culminating in a brief comment designed to
refocus attention onto Herle, the letter-writer:

Vpon ffryday last the Townesmen of Lyre were sworn to be
trew of Allenson the Prince of Oreng & to all adherents ffavowres,& succowres which is materyall for her maiestie to vnderstand
with whom most humbly I beseke your Lord to yntertayne a
remembrance of me poore sowll. There was a dromme of this
Town present att the Acte of the othe, which was don publycklye
in the markett place, herewith I may make synce which tyme, I
have byn infformed by others that were present att ytt.

Herle interrupted the transmission of information, that Lyre (Lier?) had
sworn allegiance to Alençon (actually Anjou) and William of Orange,
with graphic advice to the Queen, ‘which is materyall for her majestie
to vnderstand’. The subsequent appearance of Herle’s personal voice
palliated such candid and plain advice, and further emphasised Herle’s
‘authorship’ of the intelligence. Moreover, the combined intelligence-
advice structure in this single sentence offered Herle the opportunity to
commend himself to his sovereign, ‘with whom most humbly I beseke
your Lord to yntertayne a remembrance of me poore sowlle’.

Interestingly, in drawing attention to himself by interrupting his
own narrative with his personal voice, the intelligencer aligned himself
closer to the untested and potentially false information he was
imparting, fully aware that it could result in damaging rumour. Herle
attempted to verify and consolidate his sources to avert such damage:
The report that the Queen's maiestie is conspyred agaynst to be murtherd, encreseth, which is gravely to be loked vnto, & by mi next I will procure som partycularityes of it.

Herle often coyly couched the act of intelligence-gathering in abstract terms of 'service' and 'duty'. Indeed, it is often unclear as to what particular purpose Herle was sent or allowed abroad. Ostensibly to parley with primary statesmen of the host country, Herle nevertheless regarded his 'commission' to be as much the extraction and transmission of intelligence within his diplomatic reports as details of negotiations. Yet he was hesitant to state his intentions explicitly, as this letter from June 1582 confirms:

Yf I may have your cowntenance here in som good maner, I will do her maiestie suche service, as she shall have cawse yn deede to thanck yow. ffor suche is my poore credite &t accesse, as I can penetrate ynto their secretts i't have assmany menes with repputacion to decipher things, as ani on of my cote may presume, which yf I were Riche, her maiestie & yow sholld perceve yn a Larger sorte. 85

Candidly offering his services for Walsingham's advantage and benefit with Elizabeth, Herle baldly staked a claim for increased credit to assist the flow of information. Herle was consistently insolvent, and vacillated between desiring to remain abroad to avoid his creditors, and requesting to return home to evade the special charges accruing from his mission, for which he was not guaranteed to be reimbursed. Hence, in valediction, Herle ruefully commented 'Fidelis servus nonnunquam negligentur', dispensing with his usual request for increased credit.

This dispatch to Burghley is a typical Herle letter. A salutation which excused delays or shortfalls of recent letters, together with the promise or presentation of his continuing 'service', followed by the exchange of information upon which Herle had attempted to make his

85 PRO SP 83 16/44. William Herle to Sir Francis Walsingham, 28th June 1582.
mark by way of small comments and drawing attention to himself. Intelligence or time ran out, and his valediction reminded his recipient of his insolvent status, whilst reaffirming his consistent loyalty and fortunate position as client.

Herle's diplomatic letters are only different to his other (domestic) letters in his corpus of correspondence in terms of the sheer volume and type, i.e. continental, military, etc. of intelligence content. The interrupted narrative, pointed reference to other readers, and regular assurances of future 'service' were recurrent features of Herle's letters from both home and abroad. Aspects of Herle's diplomatic sojourns partially inhibited his patronage attempts, deriving from his enforced absence from the Elizabethan court and his patrons' presence. Yet this absence afforded Herle a different type of audience, in a semi-official intelligence capacity which he characteristically and expediently tried to exploit to his maximum advantage. Using the delays in the post as an opportunity to refer his correspondents to others' letters in a bid to create an information network based on his transmission of knowledge, sourcing and copying sensitive material to incorporate into his letter packets, and acting as a crucial conduit of contraband and prohibited books, Herle attempted to further his patronage prospects from afar, by making himself an invaluable source and gatherer of information.
CHAPTER 4


‘Truly I am of oppynion, that this their enterprize (whatsoever it be) was first hatched here, & closely brought over to the Enmye by Sarmentas the Spaniard, who hath most lewdly deserved of her maiestie your Lord & of the whole Realme which be the frutes of trust repposed in papistical strangers.’ ¹

At a time when religious difference was indistinguishable from political dissent, and consequently regarded as treason, the repression of Catholics and other, more marginal groups by the Tudor authorities was a strategy designed to ensure domestic peace and reduce potential internal assistance in the event of an external invasion organised by the massive Catholic powers of Spain or France. Successive laws and alterations to the liturgy stripped the English national religion of its centuries-old rites and sacraments, radically transforming traditional worship into a virtually unrecognisable format. Elizabeth and her councillors obliterated the more extravagant and ‘superstitious’ parts of the service, returning much religious practice to its Edwardian precedent and later altering it further, yet they were nevertheless wary of being pushed too far by the demands of the more Puritan members of the clergy. In trying to steer the eponymous via media, Elizabethan religious policy was dogged by these polar opposites of ancient ritual and zealous reform, and was consequently anxious to maintain surveillance and intelligence on both.²

¹ PRO SP 12 197/12, William Herle to Lord Burghley, 10th January 1586.
Hence the practice of any religion outside the ecclesiastical mandate of Elizabeth's administration was considered a political offence, and responsibility lay with the clergy to instruct their flock in accordance with the changing religious reforms. Rather than an ideological offence, adherence to practice and beliefs other than the articles set down by Elizabethan reforms was primarily perceived as politically seditious, opposed as it was to state legislation. Open religious dissent, (either Catholic, 'Puritan' or other), was conceived as action against the sovereign; treasonous, and punishable by death. Elements of prior religious practice such as ornate vestments, elaborate funerary ritual and the raising of the host were demonised as political offences, and efforts to uncover and penalise the continued practice of the 'old religion' were accompanied by increased vigilance and furtive surveillance by men like William Herle. The Tudor authorities were alert to, if not paranoid about the threat posed by a religious uprising, a paranoia which caused an occasionally violent repression of the faith, although somewhat more moderate than the horrific penalties enacted upon dissenters in the reigns of Elizabeth's immediate predecessors.\(^3\)

English Catholics were perceived as a particularly sinister and subversive threat to the state, not specifically because of their stubborn refusal to conform in terms of religion, but because of their disobedient and seditious status arising from their divided spiritual and temporal allegiance. Michael Questier comments that the anti-Catholicism practised by the authorities and the vigilance exercised by common people

may not have been motivated exclusively by high religious principle, but their combined efforts to prosecute a range of offenses, some religious and some commercial, were not ideologically passive. The practical antipapists stressed certain quasi-secular aspects of antipopery more heavily than a puritan

preacher might do in the pulpit. For them, popery destroyed social cohesiveness and the foundations of the commonwealth as much as it threatened the relative purity of true particular churches.⁴

Threatening social and economic stability by its subversive disobedience to state policy, Catholicism was regarded as a political menace motivated by and enmeshed in recalcitrant religious ideology.

In the limited biography that is available on William Herle, he has been labelled a ‘radical’ Protestant, implying that his efforts to pursue and expose religious dissent were motivated by his personal faith.⁵ While he did indeed demonstrate an adherence to the reformed religion of Elizabethan England, carrying the new-issue prayer book and uttering conventional protestations of state-sanctioned religious fervour whilst avidly tracking down Catholic plotters against the Queen, I would argue that rather than religious fanaticism on a personal level, this zeal originated from an abiding desire to perpetuate his favour with his politically heavyweight patrons.

Herle was eager to locate and identify those who were marginal to the contemporary politico-religious dictum. His letters are studded with information concerning the persistent adherents to the outlawed religion; letters which possess a righteous and often disgusted tone when discussing ‘papists’. In 1572 he informed Burghley of an Englishman whom he perceived to be a credible threat to the Protestant Tudor administration:

This Mowlyns is an englishman verey stowtt in Papistry, & studyes the Lawes ether in new In or Lyons In; he cam owtt of ffrawnce of late & was warned he sayth by certayn lesuytes bothe of the troble there (wherby he cam away in tyme) & of troble that is

like to be here & in Scottland, & is partaker of ani sedicyon that
is towards vs, or knownen by the Scotts & thervpon hath led
Hammellton to be after the maner of a Scolemaster till thinges
be in better tune, ye with suche a party they remayne, as bi his
perversnes doth troble the whole Contrey & by his sedycyows
mynde wold turne the state vp so downe, therefure most
necessary to haue his howse serched aswell for them as
wrytengs, which may bryng som farther matter to light, as surely
on thing is diligently to be observerd, that a grett sight ar
scattred abrode of scotts & frenchemen in the Contrey, who ar
retyned by the like men, even to sowe whatt poysnon they can, &
to espye owtt the secretts of the state.  

In order to accentuate his apparent unease and ensure Burghley’s
attention, Herle circumspectly magnified the threat posed by Mowlyn's
and his conspiratorial brethren, ‘is partaker of ani sedicyon that is
towards vs’, ‘bi his perversnes doth troble the whole Contrey’, and
augmented the threat Mowlyn's personally presented, ‘by his sedycyows
mynde wold turne the state vp so downe’. He expressed his concern
about the safety of the realm:

Butt further there is on principall matter that ought presently to
be provyded for, & that is of ij Scotts that ar comming over,
bothe of the frenche kinges garde, & do bring with them a grett
som of monney, who to colowr them selves the better here, will
procure on Marchand a scott who is of the Religion to com over
with them, & therby to sett hym att safetye, & they to be
estemed honest men therby, wherfore if it might plese your Lord
to give spedy order along the Coste, for the arrivall of these
men, they ar surely to com thither furthwith, wisheng that all
other of the Ports had taken so good a waye for discernyng of

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6 BL MS Lansdowne 15 f.180v - 183v. William Herle to Lord Burghley, 28th September
1572.
men that com over as Rye doth, butt the same care were as nedefull to be vsed owttward as inward.\textsuperscript{7}

In this example we can perceive Herle's characteristic patronage strategy. Coupling intelligence about itinerant conspirators with advice on how to prevent their access into England, Herle presented the information/advice in a peculiar form. He confidently explained the two Scots' plan to journey to England accompanied by the Protestant Marchand to divert the glare of the port authorities and 'colowr them selves the better'. His concise rendition of the plot was an apparently objective account which flanked his advice to Burghley to increase the number of searchers along the South Coast ports. The lack of prejudiced intonation usually characteristic of Herle's dispatches was designed to authenticate the information and measures to be implemented, and to lend it a composure befitting his status as an advice-giver. The forthright advice given by Herle 'wherfore if it might plese your Lord to give spedy order along the Coste, for the arrivall of these men', a sentence which had been manipulated and distorted in order to avert any direct counsel, was further set into relief by Herle's evidentiary 'they ar surely to com thither furthwith'. Followed by the contingent and indirect 'wisheng that all other of the Ports had taken so good a waye for discernyng of men that com over as Rye doth', Herle then reverted back to his role of advice-giver by issuing a blunt yet cryptic warning, 'butt the same care were as nedefull to be vsed owttward as inward'. The word that stands out here is 'wisheng', dramatically transforming Herle's advice from impartial and presumptuous to impassioned, diligent and energetic, emphasising to Burghley his grave concern in this matter.

Herle had a clear idea of the threat these militant Catholics posed, conflating their religious ideology and political subversion to create demonic and furtive figures capable of orchestrating the downfall of the sovereign. He rarely neglected the chance to denounce those under his surveillance:

\textsuperscript{7} BL MS Lansdowne 15 f.180-3.
There is also a French Denizen dwelling in crooked lane, a man that hath bin a long contynuer here, & of grett experience, who doth advertys over verye dangerows thinges, & his is so sowre a Papist withall, as he wold adventure A [8] do-ani-thing to offend this tyme & government, wherein I mene to dele with the Bishop of London, that accordyng to the man & cause he may consyder of it.9

In writing to Sir Edward Horsey, soldier, diplomat and governor of the Isle of Wight, Herle recounted with approval Elizabeth's decisive action against the domestic Catholics:

The Queen's Maiestie is sharplye bent agaynst the papists, & is resolvd that the othe shalbe mynistred to the Recusants of her procedyngs. the fyrst denyall wherof is a Premunire, & the second yf it be mynistred the daye followyng, is Treson to theme that persiste, which will galle theme yndede, & is the dyrect waye to mete with their devisyon sedicion & practis att homes & to discorayge their setters on abrode.10

Interesting here is the striking through of 'devisyon' and substitution of 'sedicion': both words confirming that Herle was thinking specifically about the social disruption caused by the prohibited practice and practisers of Catholicism.

William Cecil, Lord Burghley, was also fervently outspoken in his vituperative denunciation of the missionary priests sent to England to reassure wavering native Catholics and convert those who persisted in Elizabeth's 'heretic' religion. This was an unabashed piece of propaganda which was translated into Dutch, French, Latin and Italian,

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8 This word is unfortunately partially obscured by the margin of the manuscript, but might read 'murder'.
9 BL MS Lansdowne 15 f.180-3.
10 PRO SP 12 144/49. William Herle to Sir Edward Horsey, 13th December 1580.
and distributed on the continent, as well as an English imprint intended for domestic circulation:

_The Execution of Justice in England, for Maintenaunce of Publique and Christian Peace, against certeine Stirrers of Sedition, and Adherents to the Traytors and Enemies of the Realme, without any Persecution of them for Questions of Religion, as is falsely reported and published by the Fautors and Fosterers of their Treasons; xvii December, 1583._

Inveighing against this religious army, and alert to the detrimental effect of the foot-soldiers' power, Burghley took pains to emphasize that the censure was not aimed at the religious aspects of such practices, but at the treasonous efforts of the priests to undermine the government:

It was devised to erect up certeine schooles which they called Seminaries, to nourish and bring up persons disposed naturally to sedition, to continue their race and trade, and to become seedemen in their tillage of sedition, and them to send secretly into these the queene majestie's realmes of England and Ireland, under secret masks, some of priesthood, some of other inferior orders, with titles of Seminaries: for some of the meaner sort, and of Jesuites, for the stagers and ranker sort, and such like, but yet so warely they crept into the land, as none brought the marks of their priesthood with them; but in divers corners of her majestie's dominions these Seminaries or seedemen, and Jesuites, bringing with them certeine Romish trash, as of their hallowed waxe, their Agnus Dei, many kinde of beades, and such like, have as tillage-men laboured secretly to perswade the people to allowe of the Pope's foresaid bulles and warrantes.

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12 Cecil, _Execution of Justice_, p.139.
Here the repetition of significant words, 'sedition', 'seedemen', 'secret maskes', 'warely they crept', and 'laboured secretly', evoke images of insidious and sinister subversion, subliminally warning the reader of the social and religious damage perpetrated by these pedestrian priests in England. Yet Burghley's evocation of subversion and counter-mining so despised by the Tudor authorities is curiously inconsistent with and undermined by his attempt to belittle and cheapen the attributes of Catholic endeavour, his 'certeine Romish trashe' and 'stagers and ranker sort' incongruous with the danger they allegedly presented. Yet his vilification of the holy articles carried by these militant Catholics does suggest to the reader that his primary concern lay with the social disruption and illegitimacy of the priests' presence rather than the theological principles to which they adhered and preached. A tract written to indemnify the government against accusations of the persecution of seminary priests and Jesuits, by negating the ideological aspect of their endeavour Burghley aimed to neutralise the charges levelled against himself and his colleagues.

Correspondingly, Herle denounced this section of Elizabethan society not for their religious ideology and its theological implications, but for the impact these implications effected upon domestic harmony and control, in terms of the deviants' failure to conform to the nationally prescribed religion.

It was not only Catholics that came under his suspicious scrutiny. In 1571, whilst imprisoned in the Tower of London during an attempt to incriminate Charles Bailly, Herle sent Burghley a report of a conversation held with Doctor Lopez, then in the Tower on suspicion of conspiring to poison one of his debtors. Herle tentatively informed Burghley that he was unsure of Lopez's allegiance, either temporal or spiritual:

Wherunto he presumes further that beeing King Phillips subiect he is bound to gratify th'embassadur in what he commands & to be respected for the same, yet I finde him contrary in many
things, & that he is borne in *Lusbone* more nerer indeed to an *Hebrewe or Galienist* then to any *christian*, confessing to me that this state of *Englund* cannot endure, the devisioun is so great among the *Nobles* & the subiectes, & the religion so variable at home, with so manye enemies abroade, Neither is it possible the *Queen's Maiestie's* life can long continue whome *God* gratiously preserue ... very inquisitiue hereuppon of the state of *Germany*, commending the Countrey the people & the magistrates mervaylously: Inquisitive withall whether they could brooke strangers or no whereby your *Lord* in wisedome may see the better what he is.\(^\text{13}\)

Lopez apparently confided these clearly hazardous and dangerous comments to Herle, whose guise of a dissident sympathiser to Mary Queen of Scots had evidently fooled Lopez into this ‘conference’. Herle was unsure of Lopez’s religious affiliation, dubbing him a ‘Hebrewe or Galienist’ rather than a Christian, implying that he was a New Christian or ‘Marrano’ - a convert from Judaism to the Christian faith.

Jews occupied a complicated place in the English imagination. Moreover, the automatic association of Judaism with Iberia compounded this complex status. As J Hillingarth states:

> Throughout the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, to non-Spaniards Spain and Portugal seemed Islamic and Jewish countries.\(^\text{14}\)

Implicitly associated with money-lending and usury, Iberian merchants were also symbolic of a dangerous luxury, trading in Eastern and exotic commodities such as amber, musk and pearls.\(^\text{15}\)

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\(^{13}\) BL MS Cotton Caligula CIII f.82'- 85'. William Herle, ‘Collections made by William Herle of his conference with Dr Lopes in the tower of London out of the Originall’, 17\(^{\text{th}}\) May 1571.

Their heritage and continued mercantile and political links with Spain and Portugal forced Jewish residents in England into an uncomfortable position when hostilities between their homeland and England increased in the late-sixteenth century. Obligations of nationhood were offset by the need and resolve to secure trading rights and monopolies from their host Elizabeth, questioning their fidelity and allegiance. Moreover, many such Iberian merchants, including Lopez, were utilised by Elizabeth’s councillors in matters of Spanish intelligence, compromising their loyalties even further.

The very nature of their prohibited religion, however, produced even more problems for resident Jews. Legally proscribed from the practice of Judaism, Jews who professed conversion to Christianity were forced to worship their true religion secretly in their own houses. The dual threat that Jewish residents represented; ‘Hispanic’, and heretical, was of enormous concern to both Elizabethan government and society. As Peter Berek questions, when faced with an Iberian merchant, whom were the authorities really seeing?

A person whose life could be inferred from visible behaviour, or a person whose real life took place behind closed doors and within a heart whose mysteries defied interrogation? As chooser of his own religion, as well as merchant, trader, money-lender and foreigner, the Marrano played a series of roles, all of which were associated with social and economic innovation and change.\textsuperscript{16}

The anxiety experienced by the Tudor authorities derived from the inability to see behind the closed door, to penetrate and police the secret devotion practiced in private. Similar to the fierce concern about Catholics secretly celebrating and receiving mass, this opacity of religion practiced marginally and peripherally alarmed the authorities. The duplicity which Jewishness evoked; of mixed and complicated

\textsuperscript{15} Taken from a lecture given by Dr Alan Stewart, ‘Portingales and Pearls: Englishness and Jewishness in the case of Dr Lopez’, Queen Mary Postgraduate Seminar, 10\textsuperscript{th} October 2002.
allegiance and secret religion, posited the Jew as symbolic of distrust and suspicion; characteristics memorably immortalised in the dramatic characters of Marlowe's Barabas and Shakespeare's Shylock. In a gradual movement towards nascent ideas of nationhood, anxieties and concerns were projected onto these marginal groups such as Roman Catholics, Jews and Anabaptists as figures of 'otherness and enmity'.

Recounting the sensational treason trial of Dr Lopez in 1593, an early Jacobean broadsheet gleefully conflated these ideas of a dangerous, seditious 'other':

But now a privat horrid Treason view
Hacht by the Pope, the Devil, and a Jew;
*Lopez* a Doctor must by Poison do
What all their Plots have fail'd hitherto:
*What will you give me then, the Judas cries:*
*Full fifty thousand Crowns, th'other replies.*
'Tis done - but hold, the wretch shall miss his hope,
The Treason's known and his Reward's the Rope.  

Combining the disparate and conflicting entities of the Pope, the devil, and the Jew in a device which mocks the holy trinity, we observe the curious associations between Catholic Spain and Iberian Judaism. Hillingarth continues:

Given the contempt generally entertained by English Churchmen for both Jews and Catholics, it was satisfactory to be able to link the two together and to believe that at heart the great Champion of Catholicism, Spain, was run by skeptics who were secretly addicted to another religion than the one they publicly professed.

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19 Hillingarth, pp.319-20.
This conflation of attributes, which Berek calls a 'very traditional lumping together of villainies'\textsuperscript{20}, and the mistrust of all things Spanish, Catholic and Jewish, uniting them in a diabolic trinity, was also practised by William Herle. Herle's inability to pinpoint Lopez's genuine religious affiliation, coupled with the unbridled discussion of the state of the country and the areas where security might be breached, specifically in reference to rebellion and assassination of Elizabeth, prompted the lengthy 'collection' from the Tower - eight folios long - to inform Burghley of this delicate and serious subject and provide as much information as possible about this potentially traitorous character.

Although in terms of domestic matters Herle seemed uninterested in the distinguishing characteristics of deviant religions, lumping all deviance under the rubric of sedition regardless of the minutiae and incompatibility of these faiths; when abroad and discussing continental affairs he projected an apparently impartial and objective perspective befitting his diplomatic status:

\begin{quote}
This daye shall Monsieur have the answere of the Magistrates & commune cowncell of this Towne, towching the churche reqwyred for the exercyse of the mass, they are somuche pressed vnto ytt, as they ar resolvled among theme sellves to grawnt ytt, wheryn the Prince & St Alledgond ar the principall perswaders and vrgers, & the magistrates with grett displeasure & Regrett of mynde ar constrayned vnto ytt, which in the end will brede disorder. Butt thoughe they haue mass, mattens, christening, & buriall, yett shall they be excluded as I here, the preching. They desire our Lady churche, butt yett is denied, & ytt semes that St Michells shalbe permytted to that vse, which is verie nere vnto Monsieur & to the wall of the Towne. ytt is proposed that the papistes that will enioye the beneffyte of this masse shalbe fyrst registred & sworne to abiure theyr allegyance for ever to the King of Spayne {& to swere vnto Monsieur of new} which will
\end{quote}

Yet Herle radically undermined this initially impartial report of the religious concessions awarded to the Antwerp Catholics which depended on their swearing allegiance to ‘Monsieur’, the Duke of Anjou rather than King Phillip of Spain by craftily juxtaposing the consecutive sentence detailing the insidious perfidy of the Antwerp citizens. Herle’s significantly placed revelation that the Catholics were concealing the arms of King Phillip beneath their wooden depiction of Anjou’s crest on the town gates and hall was symbolic in his opinion of their duplicity and untrustworthiness. Furthermore, his emphasis that they would not be trusted with making the ‘Rownd’ or ‘admytted to watche [and] warde’ (yet still obliged to contribute payment for these services) signalled his approval of the restriction of the Catholics’ rights and authority.

Herle’s rancorous comments reveal a deep-rooted intolerance of ‘papists’ and the practice of Catholicism, endorsing the measures taken in the control of such worship, ‘which will halter them shrowdye & be

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21 BL MS Cotton Galba C VII f.189r - 190r. William Herle to the Earl of Leicester, 7th March 1581. This letter is not in Herle’s hand, but is endorsed and signed by him, with the marginal notes in his hand. The marginal notes are represented in brackets.

22 It seems that Herle had informed Leicester beforehand of this dissimulation in an earlier letter which appears to be lost.
of grett moment, for other causes’. He accorded great significance to the symbolic masking of their genuine allegiance in terms of supplanting Spain’s stone arms with those of Anjou, ‘which hath som gretter misterie’. Herle emitted palpable relief in reporting that the Antwerp Catholics will be excluded as I here, the preching’, despite the sanctioned worship at mass, traditional christening and burial. Preaching was notoriously difficult to police and control, as demonstrated in England by multiple proclamations against the practice of unauthorised address, and could be used as a dissemination point for radical and subversive ideas.23 Herle’s experience of English Catholics and related deviant behaviour deeply coloured his continental information-gathering and reports, despite an attempt to deliver accurate and relatively impartial information to aid the shaping of Elizabethan foreign policy.

In 1571, following his recent discharge from the Tower of London and in need of fiscal reward and employment, Herle offered his services towards a specific cause:

Having wrytten to your Lord whiles the Queen’s Maiestie was att Lees: a certayn note towchyng the survey of strangers, desiereng then if your Lord wold so haue vowchesaved, to have had it bestowed on me. Whervnto it plesed you to answer that it was a new thyng, & not necessary to be granted, whervpon consydring better of the matter since, I have humbly presumed to drawe owtt certayn notes towching the same in forme of a supplication, to th’end that your Lord might behold the zele that moved me thervnto, & the resons that might perswade the same, assuring your Lord that the grudge of our people doth encrese daylye against them, & the lewd demenour of the strangers, doth mani wayes deserue it, for ther be of them Papistes, Anabaptistes, Libertynes, dronckards, Commune women, & Brothell howses. allso espyalles, murtherers, theves, & Conspirators, with suche a

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confusyon as may reqwire a spedy order therin, which I take to be mi dutye to revele this far vnto your Lord as well for the preservatyyon of the good, as the clensing of the rest.24

What is significant about Herle’s request is the blanket intolerance of any seditious person loosely collected under the umbrella category of ‘stranger’. Herle unreservedly classified the Papist together with the murderer and spy and the Anabaptist with the brothel house and conspirator, with total disregard for compatibility in terms of individual ideology and creed. He considered the Catholic or Anabaptist faith of these strangers as ‘lewd demenour’, deeming their religion a political choice, equivalent to thieves’ contempt for the law and ‘dronckards’ disregard of temperance.

Yet those ‘strangers’ who entered the country to escape persecution for the practice of Protestantism and offered refuge by Elizabeth were not included under this rubric of ‘lewd demenour’:

Yett is it charitable that those which be good neighbors & sincere marchants, shold be favorably receved & cherished, butt specially to embrace & def fend those which be the afflicted members of Christe repayreng hither for their conscyens even to the Queen’s Maiestie’s most gracyous bosom & protectyon: which by this survey wilbe discerned truly from the rest, so as the skabbed sort may afterwards be disposed of, as shall seme metest to your honorable wisdom.25

Significantly, Huguenots and those of the reformed religion were welcome, despite their stranger status.

Attacks against and suspicion of strangers were a recurrent topic of Tudor discourse, embodying as they did uncomfortable ideas of

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24 PRO SP 12 81/34. William Herle to Lord Burghley, 3rd October 1571.
25 PRO SP 12 81/34.
otherness and liminal status. As Doreen Rosman comments, England had

a long-standing aversion to foreigners reinforced by Mary’s marriage to the unpopular Philip of Spain. The growing association of Protestantism and patriotism was strengthened by threats of Spanish invasion and suspicion of French collusion with Mary Queen of Scots, the Catholic heir to the throne.

Herle was clear about his fears in a letter similar to the above passage: addressed to the Queen, and written around the same time:

Wheras your excellent highnes, of grett zele to Religion & native pittie to all strangers, hath permitted to suche as repaire for reffluge or traffick to these your hignes domynions, suche assured protectyon, as may be dowted whither the‘example be of gretter lustice, or of more comfort. Butt in regard of these gelowsyes risen in all estates, presaigeng som mete fere to be had, there may rise an humble care in your good subjécts, lest the contynuall repaire of somani strangers planted along the coste side, & in the bowelles of the Land, might ether for their nomber be dangerows, but their profission infective, or by their malice vndermynders of the publick qwyett of the state, seing somani suborned & desgised men to swarme every where, deserving for the weightiness therof to haue grett consyderatyon had of them.

28 PRO SP 12 81/35, William Herle to Queen Elizabeth, undated, c.October 1571.
But at the point where Herle commenced his extensive list of insalubrious characters, he was prudently more circumspect:

Again Religion shold be the more assured, & mani execrable sectes eschewed, which kindle men dangerously bothe against God & their Soveraigne, & this may crepe to far (I speke nott withowtt vehement motyon) in Libertynes, Anabaptistes, & others, wherof there is more than a suspicion allredy growen.

It is necessary to be wary in ascribing opinions to Herle where there was the promise of fiscal profit, and the passionate fervour he displayed could be interpreted as pecuniary desire for the surveyor’s post rather than a genuine concern about alien mobility. The decreased intensity of Herle’s list in his letter to the Queen compared to the list directed to Burghley was an exercise in decorum - designed to offer a solution to the queen with minimum graphic illustration, and demonstrates Herle’s diverse tactics to manipulate his correspondents:

Libertynes, Anabaptistes, & others. [Herle to Queen Elizabeth]

Papistes, Anabaptistes, Libertynes, dronckards, Commune women, & Brothell howses. allso espyalles, murtherers, theves, & Conspirators. [Herle to Lord Burghley]

The detail which he offered Burghley emphasised his anxious concern to monitor and penetrate the murky and liminal area populated by aliens in England; an anxiety which was manifested in his letter to the Queen in a more decorous and sedate manner, taking the opportunity to flaunt his legal training:

Wherby certaynty more practises wold be discoverd, which your forein adversaryes do suttlye devise & the ille myndes of those that be att home be the better mett with; which concludes

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29 Although these are not mutually exclusive.
withall that this cannot be called an Innovatyon that provydes for the saffetye of our Soveraigne & the State according to the season & cawse: nether is it ani breche of intercowrse, which sekes a playne sincere menyng in mennes delyngs: ffor so no good Lawe (whose beginnengs ar new) might be provyded, to represse the malice of ille persons, which invent new mischeffs daylye. And Consequently, for mi entercowrse, no Prince by the Civill Lawe is bownd to observe more, than proves profitable in tyme to our people, muche les if it be preiudycall to his state & governement. And to this then be lawes of our owne to maytayne & encouraige the grawnt of this survey, which in effect wold cesse grett grudge of the Commune people, & take awaye mani abuses of the strangers.\[30

Note the significant absence of any mention of ‘papists’ to the Queen - illicit figures usually uppermost in Herle’s checklist of seditious conspirators.

The problems policing and monitoring the traffic of strangers, both Protestant and Catholic (and other), were understood by Herle. Sporadic observations of and references to the movement of suspicious or noteworthy people appear in his letters, often accompanied by an exhortation to keep the said person under surveillance. In 1572 Herle diligently informed Burghley of such a person:

I wold humbly wishe your Lord to like Conto Colburne the Scott better, for that he is a desgised fellow & vnderstands som true & certayn particulariyes of actyons that ar to be don aswell here as in Scottland, which words spoken to Aske the goldsmith may prove, & those words ar the sayd Aske redy to avowche to his face, Butt where he hath vsed the like words in the Cowrt, those are more generall than these, & even his own behavyyour & bashfullnes may bewray hym, if he be obserued, but there be here that do laye to his charge that he receved 400 crowns of the

\[30 PRO SP 12 81/35.\]
king att his departure, besyde that there rests a gretter mistery in his dooble Pasport, than he well can excuse.\textsuperscript{31}

We can glimpse the discomfort experienced by Herle from this appraisal, which derived from his misgivings about Colburne’s ‘desgise’ and double passport, and compounded by his furtive conversation to the goldsmith, vague words at court and substantial payout by King James of Scotland. Herle signalled his concern with the signifier ‘gretter mistery’ - a caveat to Burghley that Colburne’s actions merited scrutiny.

In the same letter, which mentioned Mowlyns the ‘papist’ as discussed above, Herle’s warnings and pleas for increased surveillance reached their peak with an outburst against the Italian strangers and residents in England:

Beseeching your Lord for God sake to loke specially to the Italyens, as men of all other most dangerows in ani Reallm, butt here hable to do most harme as the season is, & seing that they are discoverd in their own humors, which wholly tendes to mischeeff, so is the care more necessary in repressing that they do or wolld do, before the harme ronnes further, yett therbe som good Italyens who wold advise the Queen’s Maiestie to loke well abowtt her & to serche the fidelity of her own trayne, lest the mischeeff be nerer than is loked for, marvayleng that she is mani tymes so sclenderly accompanied when she rydes abrode, which is obserued aswell bi her maiestie’s ffoes as her frynds, & that she gives verey easi accesse vnto her, which is an opportunity for som gretter harme.\textsuperscript{32}

Not content with this tirade against Italian nationals, Herle became more specific:

\textsuperscript{31} BL MS Lansdowne 15 f.180-83, William Herle to Lord Burghley, 28\textsuperscript{th} September 1572.
\textsuperscript{32} BL MS Lansdowne 15 f.180-3.
But for Giraldo the mongrell Italyen, it is more than tyme that he were hence. having pretended long inowgh a counterfete benefyte for this Realme, who was within this lyttell whyle mett muffled towards Romford I will not saye towards mr Peters howse butt the people that he hath in his howse, & the brode words that they vse, may presume a farther matter then this is. Then for lutio his man, is certaynly another Ridolphi, sent from Rome by the Pope & Cardinall Ridolphi to fflorence.\textsuperscript{33}

The significant names have been underlined for emphasis in different ink to that which Herle wrote the letter - maybe by Burghley himself or his secretary. In an attempt to convince his recipient further, Herle continued

The third Italyen is Cavalcant, & in degre the worst of all, for if according to scripture a man cannott serve ij masters faythfully, muche les can he serue the Pope, the frenche King, & the Queen's Maiestie of England at ones, being so contrary in them selues & having liveng bi them all: with this his Religion is so knownen, as he conforms with his other masters muche more than with this, & now he deffends the frenche kings perfidye & monstreows tyranny with suche ernestnes, as though he were his Champion he condemnes all those that ar slayne in ffrawnce, he cryes owtt vpon the treson of all the Protestants, & will not vnderstand that ani thing is ille intended against the Queen's Maiestie finally he & Acerbo Vellutelliz, be the Ambassadors cheeff & derest instruments, to perswade whatsoever may serve the tyme, till they may have their practises brought to a full maturity as they wold.

In this letter, Herle took the opportunity to denounce a total of twenty-one men, not including his general invective against Italians, Scots, Catholics and the French. Whether he was motivated by a renewed bid for the post of survey of strangers, or alerted by the sudden movement and activity of these significant individuals, the letter is remarkable for its intense focus on this particular section of society.

Later in his career, Herle was more amenable to the Italian people, claiming friendship with many, yet he retained a distrust of those who were not of his acquaintance:

Yesterday arryved on don Gaston a Sicilyan here owt of the Prince of Parmas Camp, who att his departyng was att Ecklow 7 Leages beyond Brugs in flanders. The sayd Gaston departs from hence into Spayne directly to the King.  

The next day Herle could report:

Don Gaston that is com from the Prince of Parma, to go into Spayne to the King from hence is a man reputed of actyon, of the age of 33 yerers, & hath butt on eye, & very resolute. his ffather was a genooya, his mother a spaniard, & by his contray a Sicilyan which is the worst commixture that ever was, & therfore for God sake, lett him be well observed.

Confirming his own worst fears of Don Gaston, Herle's portrayal of the Italian's heritage was symbolic and symptomatic of the Iberian/Italian distrust endemic in Elizabethan society. Gaston's pedigree of Sicilian and Spanish ancestry so repulsive to Herle, combined with his status as diplomatic/military envoy to Spain rendered him an ideal candidate for surveillance; Herle frantically sending two dispatches on consecutive

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34 BL MS Lansdowne 39 f.189'- 192'. William Herle to Lord Burghley, 15th November 1583.
35 BL MS Lansdowne 39 f.193'v. William Herle to Lord Burghley, 16th November 1583.
John Bossy (2002) suggests that the mole in the French embassy, Henry Fagot, passed this information about Don Gaston through Herle to Burghley, claiming that the epithet 'the worst commixture that ever was' derived from 'the voice of an Italian informant who was neither Genoese nor Sicilian', p.31.
days. Relations with Spain were initially cordial upon Elizabeth’s accession to the throne; King Phillip II accepting her legitimacy as sovereign and colluding with England against the French until the Treaty of Cateau-Cambresis in 1559. Until nearly 1570, a Habsburg marriage candidate was considered a possibility for Elizabeth - either King Phillip himself or his cousin Archduke Charles. Trade disputes throughout the early years of the reign caused quarrels between the countries, whilst Elizabeth’s envoy at Madrid was recalled after being refused access to the Spanish Court. More trade disputes and grievances together with accusations of piracy and flouting trade restrictions culminated in Elizabeth seizing £85,000 of bullion from Spanish ships sheltering in English waters on their way to the Netherlands. The money had been lent to Phillip by Genoese bankers, and Elizabeth and her councillors decided to appropriate the loan for themselves. A diplomatic scuffle ensued which saw English merchants at Antwerp arrested and their goods impounded, which Elizabeth countered by imprisoning Spanish traders and removing the bullion to the Tower.36 The rift these disputes and diplomatic scuffles caused was ostensibly healed by 1573, when Elizabeth signed the Treaty of Nymegen and paid back the sum she had stolen from the seized ships.37

Meanwhile, the Netherlands were in a state of revolt. In 1566 the Northern provinces had rebelled against the attempted centralisation of Spanish rule over the countries, superseding and undermining the traditional rights and authority of the nobility under the administration of the Council of Estate. Elizabeth watched nervously as Spain attempted to quash the rebellion: worried about Spain’s overwhelming power if Phillip was triumphant, yet condemning the act of rebellion led by the Protestant Prince of Orange over the divinely-appointed sovereignty of King Phillip of Spain. At the same time, she was content for France to remain peripheral to the struggle, similarly nervous about

the proximity of a Catholic superpower to England. However, the intervention of France in 1578 when the Duke of Anjou was invited by disaffected Dutch nobles to replace William of Orange prompted Elizabeth to reopen marriage negotiations with France in order to remain in control of French intentions and pressure Spain to come to a reasonable settlement with their rebels. Unsure of whether France intended to return the Netherlands to independent rule or subject the states to French sovereignty, Elizabeth still vacillated on the margins of the dispute, although she was content to allow English mercenary soldiers to travel to the Low Countries to aid Orange's forces.  

In response to the renewed threat of Spain regaining control of the Netherlands, Elizabeth finally accepted after years of indecision and hesitation that England would have to intervene more radically than in the previous decade. After the assassination of the Prince of Orange in 1584, and under the provisions of the Treaty of Nonsuch, she sent the Earl of Leicester to the Low Countries with 5000 troops and 1000 cavalry. Although at this point she still hoped for a compromise with the Duke of Parma, the Governor-General of the Netherlands, relations soon broke down between the countries, and by 1587 Spain was making military preparations for the invasion of England.  

Hence although diplomatically and commercially cordial, English relations with Spain were dangerously fragile. England's polar enemy in terms of religion, and active suppressors of Europe's other main Protestant movement in the Netherlands, Spain was the ultimate threat. Phillip II's tacit acquiescence with Pope Gregory XIII's continued efforts at inciting plots and fostering internal rebellion coupled with his overwhelming capacity to invade for himself under the flag of religion meant that the Spanish were feared and mistrusted. Reports of Spanish cruelty filtered back to England from the Low Countries: the Duke of Parma and his compatriots gaining an infamous reputation for their brutality in battle and against Dutch citizens.

William Herle’s reaction to the Spanish nation was inevitably influenced by his experiences in the Netherlands. His reports are peppered with derogatory comments and blunt accusations revealing a fiercely anti-Hispanic attitude, perhaps as a result of witnessing the trail of destruction and slaughter enacted upon the Low Countries by Parma and his predecessors.\textsuperscript{40}

In 1581 Herle informed Walsingham of the latest breaking news from Antwerp:

A grett conspiracye hath byn discoverd att Brugs intended agaynst Monsieur \& the Prince of Orenge, for the which one Sergedo a Spaniards son born in Normandye, is apprehended as hed of that platt.\textsuperscript{41}

As usual, Herle was careful to provide as much evidence as he could to verify his report, explaining that Sergedo

\begin{quote}
lyved Ryottowslye, \& havyng wasted his patrymony & goods, fell to Robbyng by the highe waye syde, in which tyme he committed suche horrible murthers, vyolencs, burnyng of howses Rapes, \& other vyllanyes, as were wonderfull, \& Lastlye his Castell being searched for hym (he escaping by a postern) they fownde clyppengs of golld \& syllver coyne, there, \& ynstruments with matter allready prepared to fforge monny, yppon which they proceded in lustyce agaynst hym, \& sentenced that he sholld be boylled to dethe, which was executed att Roan yn pretence a vj monethes past, synce which tyme he hath served with the Prince of Parma, \& offred to do notabell service for the King of Spayn so he were ynhabled with mayntenance.\textsuperscript{42}
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{40} For more on the negative reputation of Spain at this time, see William S Maltby, \textit{The Black Legend in England: The Development of anti-Spanish sentiment 1558-1660} (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1971).
\textsuperscript{41} PRO SP 83 16/87, William Herle to Sir Francis Walsingham, 29\textsuperscript{th} July 1582.
\textsuperscript{42} PRO SP 83 16/87.
Herle's litany of the moral and political offences committed by 'Sergedo' (Nicolas Salcedo) spans an incredible range of crimes, encompassing prodigality and general felonies committed country-wide in France in this tumultuous period of violence, and culminating in the illegal coining of money. From Herle's report it appears that it was upon this final offence that Salcedo was brought to trial, the inconsistency of the fact that the defendant was not present evidently no cause for concern.\textsuperscript{43} In fact, the trial was performed and concluded without him ever having been present, the judgement deciding the death penalty - a judgement which was also bizarrely carried out in his absence - 'which was executed at Roan yn pretence'. The particularly horrific type of execution of boiling the defendant to death was commonly enacted upon poisoners and those found guilty of illegal coining, and its performance in the absence of the accused (one wonders how they accomplished the act) suggests that the French authorities attached great social significance to the ritual execution. Herle's vivid account of Salcedo's past and the discovery of the conspiracy demonstrates his fascination with the perpetrator, the lurid details comprising the majority of the four-page letter. His interest, as ever, was stimulated by the sensational catalogue of misdemeanours accomplished by Salcedo, and Herle's comprehensive account of his capture signalled his relief at the safe delivery of the Prince of Orange from the intended assassination.

Herle was also dedicated to scrutinising those emissaries and agents of European nations resident or visiting England. Firmly identifying them as the loci of illicit activity, he tended to mention Spanish nationals and other aliens in conjunction with accusations of complicity in plots to effect the demise of Elizabeth. In 1580, Herle wrote to the Earl of Leicester detailing his meeting with the French ambassador the previous weekend:

\textsuperscript{43} Herle mentions the fact that there was evidence for this last crime of illegal casting of money (with presumably no evidence for his other misdemeanours); however, one could surmise that the authorities deemed this offence more significant than the others which were primarily against personal property and thus a civil offence, not against the King's mint, which was a crown offence.
On Sunday I went to visit the French Ambassador, where I found Sir William Drewrye & his wife, after whose departure, the sayd Ambassador yntertayne me a grett while, marvayleng where I had byn so long, & in the end (knowing that I vnderstod before of the Spanish Ambassadors suppyng that night with hym, wolld noles yntreatt me to accompany hym att supper, sayeng that Iacob manntio, & Caponi wolld be also there butt I excusyng mi self vpon other occasions, told hym verily that it was a good sight to se the ij Ambassadors agre so well together abrode, that cowd nott abyde another att home, wheratt he sware by the bodye of God, that he had byd hym selfff, & yett was no supper man, commyng thither thrise a weke, ffayneng occasyon to se his wife & to yntertayne her, & selldom spake to hym att all, which as he thought was only of a certayne spaynisshe yndustrye to bryng hym into gelowsye with the state here (he & his master being so yll lyked of as they were) so cowd nott he honestlye avoid hym, having byn Awnncyent frynds on with another & sowdryers olld together, whervppon entryng into deeper discowrse, he was glad he sayd, that he sawe owr Cowncell now, even whollye & generallye affected to further the ffrenche mariauge, wherof an ynvincible coniunctyon sholld be deryved, to the good of bothe Reallmes, to the brydlyng of Spayn & of all Adversaryes.\textsuperscript{44}

The French ambassador, Michel de Castelnau, Seigneur de Mauvisière, attributed the Spanish ambassador's frequent visits to the embassy as an excuse to flirt with his wife and sow the seeds of discord between France and England. Yet Herle was alert to the dissimulation of foreign envoys, wryly commenting on the apparent amity between the Spanish and French ambassadors, 'I ... told him verily that it was a good sight to se the ij Ambassadors agre so well together abrode, that cowd nott on

\textsuperscript{44} PRO SP 12 144/1. William Herle to the Earl of Leicester, 1\textsuperscript{st} November 1580.
abyde another att home'; stimulating Castelnau's later expostulation and defence.

Significantly, Castelnau endorsed the cold reception Mendoza received by the Privy Council and Elizabeth, evincing a clear strategy to ingratiating himself with Herle and encourage goodwill; on a personal level by inviting Herle to supper, on a diplomatic level by alluding to the marriage negotiations between Anjou and Elizabeth, and by invoking the repression of Spain's power, 'brydlyng of Spayn & of all Adversaryes'.

The distrust and outright fear experienced by many towards Spain and her people was compromised by the shifting attitudes and policies towards Spain pursued by members of the Privy Council. A continued amity, however artificial, was necessary for trade to persist, to maintain general diplomatic relations, and hold off the very real threat of a hostile Catholic superpower. Anxious eyes watched avidly for evidence of the disposition of important government figures, prompting frenzied speculation about prevailing political tendencies. Herle was well placed to observe and report these vacillating positions, luxuriating in the opportunity to divulge important information about his significant superiors to their equally significant peers.

In early August 1582, a year of conspiracy and tumult in the Low Countries, Herle could advertise the rumour circulating on the continent about Queen Elizabeth's intentions:

Villyers delles mysceveslie with the Quene and our states ynsynuatinge that she is Spanishe and that she vndermynds Monsieur's accons here layinge stoppes to his greaterenes, and that she was occasion of the losse of Old Owduardo by not accomplishenge What she promysed in mony.  

In a letter to the Earl of Leicester at a time when relations with Spain were particularly awkward after Phillip's victorious invasion of

45 HMC Cecil Papers, Hatfield MS 162, f.52' - 57' (BL M/485/43), William Herle to Lord Burghley, 3rd August 1582.
Portugal and continued military presence in the Low Countries, Herle reported a conversation he had held with the French ambassador:

He was made a frayd som dayes past, that your Lord was becom spaynissh, butt knowing the honorable mynds ye bare allwayes to fffrawnce, & the vertue of constancye that was in yow, he cowd nott be ynduced to beleve, that yow wolld prefferrre the fryndship of Spayne to fffrawnce, which dyd better agre with vs than with ani other, & was more convenyent for ether estate.46

Herle continued:

Ffor his parte he sayd, he was more englyssh than ffrenche (his masters service sett a syde) & had this honor of a frenche man, nott to be hispaniolated, which natyon of Spayne he hated with his hart, & the more, for the practises & enterprizes that they had addressed agaynst this Reallme of late, & agaynst Ireland.

In this fervent exclamation in which the nationhood of the two leading European powers (including his own) were denied and rejected by Castelnau in favour of an English identity, we are offered a glimpse of diplomatic obfuscation and rhetoric about which Herle thought fit to inform Leicester in an apparently verbatim narrative account. Herle related the ingratiating strategies employed by Castelnau with a certain wry detachment:

And here pawsing a while, toke me hand by the hand, & with a grett othe sware, that he was nott bownd to gyve me or ani other accompt of his doyngs, butt for the speciall lykeng that he had of me, he wold make me partaker of a grett secrett. which was that he was offred 50,000 crowns to becom spaynissh & to breke of the mariayge, that was pretended by a

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46 PRO SP 12 144/1. William Herle to the Earl of Leicester, 1st November 1580.
Catholyck prince with an ynffamows Lutherane, which monney he might have tomorow, yf he wolld consent to this platt.

In a speech to Parliament in 1576, Sir Nicholas Bacon fervently spoke out against the allegiances of England’s French residents:

If the ffrench denizens hart continue naturally ffrenche and lovinge to his owne Cuntrye Then can he not love our Cuntrye nor be meet to be amongest us, yf he be unnaturall and can find in his hart to hate his owne Cuntrye then will he not be trustie to our Cuntrye and so more unmeet to Lyve amongst us. 47

Herle had no illusions about the French ambassador’s true allegiance. In the same letter he revealed Castelnau’s illicit movements:

He & the spanish ambassador have grett intelligens, & on dothe serve anothers torne as proffessed brethern & the sayd french Ambassador visites hym secrettye 4. or v. tymes a weke, beyng ynwardlye knitt together, by their masters appoyntment, to abuse the Queen’s maiestie & to practis all they may together agaynst this state, namely to noryssh devisyon & irresolutyon among vs. Beyng most trew that the ffrenche King hym selff dyd work Giraldo to becom spaynissh & therfore yntertaynes hym att his Table & otherwise with grett ffavors.

In these letters, Herle revealed his anxiety about the bias of leading political figures, a concern which frequently surfaced throughout his correspondence:

Here is agrett Brute, which is grownded vppon advertisments com to Monsieur, that England is in Armes agaynst the Queen.

The papists grown strong, The Queen perplexed with force & difficulty: The Earl of Leicester & Sussex banded in great Trowpes on against another: Both of them commanded to their houses, Mr Hatton & the Earl of Sussex became Spanish, your self in there to fall with the Earl of Leicester, Great Leges made among the nobility & those party clery named: That the time is come that the Queen most know her self to be but a woman, & to have need of a head to govern thyngs: whereupon Monsieur wisshing himself there to aye her maiestie.48

The unease about the threat posed by Spain and the distrust of Phillip's intentions, partly manifested in the vigilant scrutiny of political figures for signs of their inclinations, was tempered by the need to maintain diplomatic amity with Spain in order to sustain crucial trading rights and routes, and to deflect the threat of Anglo-Spanish conflict. Yet the increasing conflict in the Netherlands and insurrection in Ireland forced the Tudor administration to rethink attitudes towards Spain. Elizabeth was obliged to take a more proactive role in aiding the Dutch 'rebels' in response to the threat of Spanish victory in the Netherlands and the collapse of the French marriage negotiations in 1583.

The menace posed by both the continental hazards of Spain and France and from individual conspirators within the realm were considerable. William Herle was assiduous in his endeavour to identify and advise his correspondents of the dangers to both the security of England and the safety of Elizabeth's person. Plots to assassinate Elizabeth were abundant and fantastic. Poisoning featured highly, as did swift dispatch with a dagger or pistol. Access to the queen was not difficult to secure - Elizabeth was notoriously negligent of her own security, as evoked in Herle's previous comment about the Italians' statement that the queen was lax in her personal protection:

48 PRO SP 83 16/2. William Herle to Sir Francis Walsingham, 5th May 1582.
There be some good Italyens who would advise the Queen's Majesty to look well about her & to search the fidelity of her own train, lest the mischief be nearer than is looked for, marveling that she is many times so slenderly accompanied when she rides abroad, which is observed as well by her majesty's foes as her friends. 49

Due to the efforts of spies and informers like William Herle, these plots were foiled, and the main contender to replace Elizabeth, Mary Stuart, was kept firmly under lock and key with her illicit correspondence largely monitored. The assassination of a monarch or chief political figure could cause catastrophic disruption, effecting social, economic and dynastic imbalance. Thus Herle was diligent in ensuring the enduring safety of his monarch and realm through the securing of potent intelligence, much of which related to religious conspiracy.

During his visit to the Low Countries in 1582, Herle was ideally situated to record the events surrounding the attempted assassination of the Prince of Orange in mid-March. His letter to the Earl of Leicester two days after the attempt reported the incident in detail. He related that on his progress from dinner with other nobles the Prince paused to appraise a tapestry:

& in beholldying the Tapistrye as he went, was ready to have entered the second chamber, having his eyes still fixed upward when suddenly a person of small stature, & lesser representation (of the age of 3. or 24. years, in clad, & of face pale, drawing to a black melancholy colour, shaven saveyng the upper lippe, when a thin black here began to yssew) presented him self as though he had some request to exhibyte, & ones being put backe by a halbarder, still persisted & sodaynly discharged a pistoll (that he helld vnsene) att the prince, which by reson of overchargeyng reculed in his hande, & made the peece & pellett to mount upwardes

49 BL MS Lansdowne 15 f.180-3.
Interestingly Herle’s account closely resembles a pamphlet describing the incident, entitled *A Briefe discourse of the assault committed vpon the person of the most noble Prince ... of Orange*, translated from a French version issued by Christopher Plantin at his printing press in Antwerp. The corresponding passage whereupon the assassination is attempted reads:

> A while after dinner the said L. Prince repaired toward his withdrawing chamber, meaning to haue gone to his chamber with the said Lords & gentlemen, & going by he shewed them by the way a peece of tapistry wherein the spanish souldiers were liuely set forth: at the verie instant wherof a young man of low stature, shot of a dagge at him which was charged with one onlie bullet, & smote him vnder the right eare, which

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50 BL MS Cotton Galba C VII f.205-207. William Herle to the Earl of Leicester, 20th March 1582; and BL MS Lansdowne 34 f.10-13. William Herle to the Earl of Leicester, 20th March 1582. Both these letters are copies: although the Cotton manuscript is addressed to Leicester and bears fold marks, there is no evidence of a seal and it is a clean copy, with few strikethroughs. The Lansdowne MS bears the endorsement ‘Copie of mi discowrse, towching the accydent that hapned to the Prince of orenge the 18th marche in Andwerpe 1581’. I am most grateful to Professor Lisa Jardine for showing me an early draft of her forthcoming book *The Awful End of William the Silent* which discusses the historical legacy of the assassination of the Prince of Orange in 1584 with a flint-locked pistol.
bullet passing through his pallate the said bullet came forth at
his left cheeke neere vnto his upper iaw: the said Lord (as
since he hath often reported,) wist not what the matter was,
but suppossed that some part of the house was fallen down,
for he felt not himself to be stroken & yet notwithstanding his
sight was for a while dazeled. Immediatlie some of the Lords &
gentlemen, as were then next at hand stroke the said young
man twise or thrice into the bodie with their swords, & so the
said L. Princes gard drawing nigh made an end of him with
their haulberts. In the meane time the said Lord being
aduertised what had happened, & the rather by feeling the fire
that had taken hold of his hayre, & hearing the noise about the
murderer cried out, kill him not, I forgieue him my death...

Certain sections of both Herle's account and the printed pamphlet
exhibit remarkably similar phraseology. Herle related the search made
of the perpetrator's person after his death:

Abowtt him were had ij dryed todes, & som powder of muske,
which was judged in the beginnyng to have byn poyson. A
Bulle of the popes promiseng pardon for all fawtts bothe don &
to be don whatsoever. A charme wherbye he was perswaded to
have byn invisible after the ffacte. A shyrte of superstytion
sett with crosses and characters hallowed att our Ladye of
Charters to kepe hym from dethe, wownde & ymprisonment. A
wryteng expressyng his enterprise to be don agaynst certayne
sedycywos fflemishe heretyckes, ffyrst for the glorye of god,
next to revenge his kyng, thyrdlie to delyver certayne godlye
men owt of prison, ffowrthlye ffor the honor of his natyon,
lastlye for his own ymmortalitye (ytt was not trew that he had

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51 A Briefe Discourse of the assault committed vpon the person of the most noble
Prince the Lord Prince of Orange, Earle of Nassau, Marques de la vere &c. By John
lauregi Spanierd (London: Thomas Dawson f. Thomas Chard & William Brome, 1582)
Sigs. A3' - A3'', a verbatim copy of Bref recueil de l'assassinat, commis en la personne
du tres illustre Prince, Monseigneur le Prince d'Orange...par lean lauregui Espaignol
(Antwerp: Plantin, 1582).

52 The paper of the Cotton Manuscript is eroded at this point.
any lettre abowtt hym of the Spanish Ambassadors resydeng att Parys, but he had ij Bylles of exchange, the one of ij m crowns & the other of 86s addressed to on Casper Amastro a merchant of this towne.

Similarly, the printed version details the search made of the would-be assassin’s corpse, the examination finding:

papers, certaine crosses, and an Agnus Dei with a candle of green waxe, & two peeces of skinne like Beuers skinnes, which caused diuers to report that hee had about him Toades and inchauntments. Then began the said servuant to reade the first papers, which he found to be partly prayers and partely vowes, and afterward brake vp the couer of a pacquet of letters, which he found to be written in spanish from one Spaniard to another, whereof he assured al men, but he would not alone open the rest ... soone after came in the Lord of St Aldegone ... and the said Lord opened the rest of the saide pacquet, wherein they found two letters of exchange, one of 2000 crownes, the other of 877. with letters of aduise, all in Spanish, and written by Spaniardes: the bookes were of seruices to be performed at certaine set houres; also one lesuites Catechisme, and writing tables, written from one end to another.53

In perusing the two accounts together, the likenesses are striking. The clear, ordered narrative voice in Herle’s letter to Leicester and its resemblance to the ‘official’ report above suggest that Herle’s dispatch was at least a second-hand report, and his intelligence was therefore informed by a received version of events circulating in Antwerp at the time, and which later appeared as a printed pamphlet. The printed

version of events was not entered in the Stationer's Register until a month after the incident, and Herle's written account was one of the first to arrive in England.\textsuperscript{54} Other reports sent around the time of the incident were not as detailed as Herle's, presumably relying on verbal report to divulge the sensational detail. The details of such an event were crucially important, and vocal rendering would not only require an intimate and secure forum for these sensitive details, but would also grant the agent valuable access to the formidable policy-makers of Elizabeth's administration. Walsingham received a letter from Etienne Lesieur dated a day after the accident, which stated:

> On the 18\textsuperscript{th} between noon and 1 o'clock a strange rumour arose of the wounding of the Prince of Orange. The details of this I will excuse myself from writing to you, several gentlemen having been there who by this time are on your side, besides that I am sure you will hear it in detail from those who know how it all happened.\textsuperscript{55}

John Norris expanded his account further than Lesieur in his letter to Walsingham:

> I persuade myself that ill news fly faster than any letters can pass; yet I could not but advertise you of the villainous treason invented and executed against the Prince of Orange, who on Sunday last, as the castle, retiring from dinner to his chamber,

\textsuperscript{54} Licensed to William Brome and Thomas Chard 'The discours of the assaulte Comitted upon the person of the prince of Aurange', 20\textsuperscript{th} April 1582. Three days later, another entry in the Stationer's Register records the licence to William Wright to print another version, never printed: 'a briefe reporte of the Treason attempted on the persone of the prince of Orange', 23\textsuperscript{rd} April 1582. Edward Arber ed. \textit{A Transcript of the Registers of the Company of Stationers of London: 1554-1640}, vol.2 (London: Private Imprint, 1875), p.188. Herle wrote in a letter dated the 25\textsuperscript{th} March 1582 that he had actually not sent his letters of the 20\textsuperscript{th} and 21\textsuperscript{st} until the 22\textsuperscript{nd}, a Thursday, dispatching his man to bear the letters to Leicester; PRO SP 83 15/78, William Herle to the Earl of Leicester. There are few written accounts of the assassination attempt in either the State Papers Domestic or Foreign, suggesting that the official envoys and agents at the Orange court (other than Herle) had rushed back to England to impart the news personally.

\textsuperscript{55} CSP Foreign, 1581-2, #617. Etienne Lesieur to Sir Francis Walsingham, 19\textsuperscript{th} March 1582. For more on Lesieur, see Chapter 3, footnote 11.
was shot through the cheeks by a Biscayn, who also was presently killed by the Prince’s gard and others. He had about him a letter from Paris, dated the 5th inst., two dried toads, and a paper whereon was written Jesus Maria, etc. supercribed in Spanish ‘To all those that favour this holy enterprise, greeting’. Of his confederates and other particulars when we know more you shall be advertised. Presently we had a hot alarm through the city, with great lamentations, and posts dispatched to the cities about to stay all sudden tumults and innovations. The Prince, fearing death, highly commended Monsieur, and the country to his protection. His surgeons as yet find no apparent tokens of death.\textsuperscript{56}

In the Low Countries, at least four pamphlets were issued from the Plantin Press relating the incident, together with an illicit imprint circulating under Plantin’s name yet bearing the distinctive type of a Parisian printer of this period. An unregistered copy of an Antwerp issue was available in England, which included details of the confessions by Jaureguy’s associates, but the date of this impression is not known.\textsuperscript{57}

Both Herle and Norris accorded great significance to the items secreted about the perpetrator Jaureguy, Herle listing them in detail. Especially interested in the Catholic accoutrements and sigils, both Herle and the writer of the \textit{True Discourse} itemised the ‘superstitious’ collection. Of particular gruesome fascination for Herle were the dried toads and the various papers and letters held about him. Keith Thomas comments that the providers of such superstitious items did not invent their own charms: they inherited them from the medieval church, and their formulae and rituals were largely derivative products of centuries of Catholic teaching. For, in

\textsuperscript{56} CSP Foreign, 1581-2, #618. John Norris to Sir Francis Walsingham, 20th March 1582.

\textsuperscript{57} \textit{Bona fide} pamphlets issued by Plantin include \textit{Discours sur la blessure de monsiegneur le Prince d’Orange} (Antwerp: Christopher Plantin, 1582) and \textit{Verhael op de quetsure van mijn heer den Prince van Oragnien} (Antwerp: Christopher Plantin, 1582); Leon Voet ed. \textit{The Plantin Press (1555-1589): A Bibliography of the works printed and published by Christopher Plantin at Antwerp and Leiden}, 6 Volumes, (IV), (Amsterdam: Van Hoeve, 1980), pp.1791-94.
addition to the prayers officially countenanced, there was a large undergrowth of semi-Christian charms which drew heavily on ecclesiastical formulae. 58

The wearers of such amulets as rings and metal sigils cast at astrologically propitious moments were assured of protection for hazardous enterprises; indeed, Queen Elizabeth gave a talisman to the Earl of Essex before his expedition to the Azores in 1597. Yet dried toads pointed towards a more sinister kind of superstition, and were simultaneously associated with witchcraft and a preservative against the plague. 59

These sigils and Catholic paraphernalia were certainly widespread. In 1600, the Earl of Gowrie attempted to assassinate King James VI by luring him back to his castle from hunting and attempting to stab him with a dagger. Both Gowrie and his accomplice were cut down before they could fulfil their intention, and James was anxious to have the traitors' corpses searched:

In case any letters that might further the discoverie of that conspiracie, might bee found therein. But no thing was found in them, but a little close parchment bag, full of magicall characters, and words of enchantment, wherein, it seemed, that he had put his confidence, thinking him selfe never safe without them, and therefore ever carried them about with him. 60

These personal talismans concealed about Gowrie's person tell of a common trust placed in supernatural and religious power, yet with the changing religious codes suspicion was firmly focused on inappropriate

and prohibited objects. Upon examination after the event, Gowrie's servant was asked:

For what cause my Lord kept the characters so well?  
Depones, that to his opinion, it was for no good, because he heard that, in those parts where my Lord was, they would give sundrie folks breeves.\(^\text{61}\)

The English government was hostile to the Catholic trade in 'trinkets' and 'trumpery', proclaiming after the Papal Bull of excommunication in 1570 that the following items were forbidden:

Any token or tokens, thing or things, called by the name of an Agnus Dei, or any crosses, pictures, beads or suchlike vain and superstitious things from the bishop or see of Rome ... which said Agnus Dei is used to be especially hallowed and consecrated, as it is termed, by the said bishop in his own person, and the said crosses, pictures, beads and suchlike superstitious things be also hallowed either by the said bishop or by others having power or pretending to have power for the same.\(^\text{62}\)

Lord Burghley recognised the potent symbolism of such talismans in his tract The Execution of Justice:

In divers corners of her majestie's dominions these Seminaries or seedemen, and Jesuites, bringing with them certeine Romish


trash, as of their hallowed waxe, their Agnus Dei, many kinde of beades, and such like.\textsuperscript{63}

Herle knowingly tapped into this discourse of suspicion and mistrust with his itemisation of Jauregu\'s Catholic paraphernalia, relishing the gruesomely illicit inventory, confirming the guilt of the perpetrator by the evidence he carried in his pockets. Interestingly, Herle was one of those whom the printed pamphlet asserts was moved by the Catholic symbols and beaver skins to report that Jauregu\'y carried `Toades and Inchauntments'. If we assume that Herle had learned of the assassination attempt and its details second-hand, then Herle\'s source had placed as much importance upon these symbols as Herle then transmitted to Leicester. The significant shift from `beuers skinnes' to `toades and inchauntments' suggests that these religious symbols were implicitly associated and conflated with the occult, and that the practice of Catholicism was regarded as equivalent to and as deviant as the practice of sorcery and witchcraft.

Herle\'s personal mandate was to identify the perpetrators of dissent and sedition, boldly disregarding boundaries of status, nationality and diplomatic immunity. In 1581 Herle wrote to the Earl of Leicester to inform him that the Spanish ambassador

dare nott att ani tyme negociate with her maiestie & Cowncell, beffore he be first well shrywen, absollved, & hollyewaterd, & att his commyng ynto the Cowrtt gate, to arme his forhed, brest & back, with the Tripell signe of the crosse.\textsuperscript{64}

It was no accident that Herle juxtaposed this image of bold Catholic symbolism and ritual at the margins of the Court with the revelation that

\textsuperscript{63} Kingdon, (1965), p.6.
\textsuperscript{64} PRO SP 12 150/59. William Herle to the Earl of Leicester, 7\textsuperscript{th} November 1581.
he hath (as ytt wilbe proved by his own speche) A 100,000 credite, for monny to serve here to corrupte lynstruments of yntertaynment & practises for his master agaynst her maiestie. I know advisedlye whatt I saye, & som of his Brokers. And now vpon Monsieur’s commyng, he brethes nothyng elles butt hotte passyons of threttnyngs of warre & revenge yf I had hability, her maiestie sholld knowe hym throwly & all his secretts: & whatt soever practis or practiser, that he & others have.

As inappropriate and impolitic as a Catholic gesture at the entry to a Protestant court might have been, the ambassador’s diplomatic status absolved him from religious harassment by the authorities, although his sophisticated and energetic measures of subversion and conspiracy ensured that diligent scrutiny of him and his followers were maintained.

In terms of information about domestic dissidents, Herle could be unreservedly lyrical in his denunciation of suspicious characters. In early 1571 whilst in prison in the Marshalsea for alleged complicity in piratical activities off the Isle of Wight Herle was sent ‘undercover’ to Essex to organise an operation to retrieve a dangerous criminal and bring him back to the prison whereupon he would question the felon and elicit information. The offender was called James Chillester, and Herle’s report was damning:

He is a grett enmye to the Queen’s Maiestie a vehement Papist in his religion (if he be of ani) desirows of innovatyon, & a reporter of prophesyes to perswade men the better to rebellyon & to the desire of new thinges, he knowes all the Traytors & Papists that wish ylle to the state, & is cownted a

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65 Somehow Herle managed to orchestrate this without becoming known to the felon, thus, upon their return to London, Herle could play agent provocateur and discover incriminating secrets. For more on Chillester, see Chapter 5.
grett Cowncellor among them, he was a grett Companyon to Mather. 66

Crucially significant here is Herle’s analysis of Chillester’s religious affiliation. Observing his antisocial activities, such as counterfeit coining, ‘lewd devises’ and collusion with ‘Mather’, Herle concluded that Chillester had Catholic tendencies. His comment, ‘a vehement Papist in religion (if he be of anij), confirms that Herle regarded Catholicism as equivalent to atheism and therefore heresy, and illustrates the fact that he had yet to positively identify Chillester’s religion, simply associating his social deviance with religious subversion. Chillester’s social deviance was substantial. Not only a common criminal and a heretic, Chillester was an outspoken critic of the Elizabethan political machine, much to Herle’s outrage:

He is a grett iarser att the whole Cowncell, publisheng to those that be of his leven how weke the governement is that now we have, as though it were in his hed to frame a better polycye & to dele more wisely, butt verey sutlly (as he supposeth, wherin Mather & he agreed in oppinion) he will conferre butt with on att ones, being thought to be a grett discowrser of the state of Ireland, & by his mapper it shold appere (for that they discover only the sea cost & sondry havens therupon) that he perswades whatt places were mete to be landed att for the hurt of the Reallm, which God long preserue. 67

It is evident from the catalogue of felonies committed by Chillester that he had Catholic sympathies, paying the bond for releasing a Catholic doctor from the Marshalsea, informing a linen draper of the imminent restoration of Catholicism to England, and having links with Catholic

66 BL MS Lansdowne 13 f.162' - 164'. William Herle to Lord Burghley, 19th March 1571. ‘Mather’ was a conspirator involved in a plot to assassinate Burghley and kidnap his son Robert, a conspiracy which Herle may have been ‘involved’, i.e. encouraging the plotters whilst gathering evidence against them. See Conyers Read, Lord Burghley and Queen Elizabeth (London: Jonathan Cape, 1965), p.45, and Introduction, p.14.
67 BL MS Lansdowne 13, f.162-4.
Spain. Yet a week or so later, Herle revealed that he was still uncertain about whether Chillester was Catholic or not:

Being as ranck a papiste (if he be of any religion, for he as mother sayd, dothe he use his conversation as a nose of waxe to wyn favour of every company) as may be in this land, practiseng butt with on att ones, butt every morning he was wont in Powlles to disgorge his rebellious stomach against the Queen’s Maiestie & the Cowncell, with those Papistes & ille men that he found there, which I se to be dayly a Custom with a grett sight of other.⁶⁸

Yet he could not resist repeating the accusations of illicit faith, proclaiming that Chillester was involved with

another mannes wife (as is sayd) whome he stolle from her husband & as his neighbors generally exclame agaynst hym, kepes other mennes wyves besydes, & hath gotten ij of his maydes with chylde, butt they ar more offended with hym in that he is so sedicyows a fellow & so ranck a Papist even vnrecoverable.⁶⁹

Herle was incensed by Chillester’s public treasonous statements:

And for the changing of the state & of the Religion, these words dyd he expresse in grett choller to Cowper, who hath maryed with one Gods dowghter a verey ille man & a grett papiste, telling Cowper that these puritane knaves shold be brougght to the sea of Rome or it were long agayn, & that he and the rest shold be well hampred for their wyckednes & abuses, expressing this in the open strete whatt change of governement & Magistrates that he loked for…. & these be the

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⁶⁸ PRO SP 12 86/1. William Herle to Lord Burghley, 1st April 1572.
⁶⁹ PRO SP 12 86/1.
(rattes) of Chillesters religion, whom all the world knowen to be a Papist & versipeller whattsoever he wold heare now to the contrary, yett to wyn som oppinion of duty & honesty, he father Godwelles translatyon to be his, & hath dedicated yt to the Queen's Maiestie being more familiar with the sayd Goldwelles wife than was mete, wherby after her husbands decesse he gott the sayd worke. 70

From this explicit example of a notorious and dangerous felon energetically pursued and examined by Herle, we can gauge the force of Herle's anti-papist sentiment and the zeal with which he executed both his furtive espionage activities and his reports of them. It is this zeal which has been misread as radical Protestantism on a personal level: rather, these letters reveal that the pursuit of Catholic and other marginal dissenters was stimulated by a loyal adherence to state policy and policy-makers, usually overseen by his primary patron Lord Burghley.

In these letters of William Herle we see a very real suspicion of deviance and sedition, the said agent pinpointing potential areas where this subversion might be manifest, whether it be within the ranks of strangers, discontented citizens, or rogue merceners. Blanket suspicion of any kind of 'irregular' behaviour, Catholic or otherwise, characterises Herle as a dedicated instrument of the developers of state policy such as Burghley, Walsingham and Leicester. Herle pledged allegiance to these political heavyweights by buying into and attempting to contribute to the discourse of treason and deviance pervasive in Tudor England. Curtis Breight explains:

Once intelligence evolves from limited foreign operations associated with embassies and diplomacy to the construction of a siege mentality in Elizabethan England, replete with paranoid visions of Catholic conspiracy and endless assassination plots hatched by traitorous Englishmen corrupted in foreign

70 PRO SP 12 86/1.
seminaries, a justification for vast domestic persecution becomes conveniently available. All discontent is able to be transformed into treason in the Cecilian culture of surveillance, and the historical consequences of an evolving ‘discourse of treason’ are immeasurable.⁷¹

Significantly, Herle’s letters betray little individual devotion; his prayers and fervent apostrophes were directed towards his patron, queen and country:

> And for mi part, I have that faithfull & humble regard unto your Estimatyon, & personage, as uppon mi sowte I wold not ones motyoy it, vnles bothe every parcel were most certayn of prooff, & fre of conscyens euery way to your honour: for so mi christiany to God, & duty to yow wards doth well Comande me.⁷²

> Mi carkasse might serve for a plaster allso, for ani dedlye sore that might conserve the kingdom or magistrate, which in Religyon, God & dutye to her maiestie I utter in all humble zele & truthe.⁷³

> By his mapper it shold appere (for that they discover only the sea cost & sondry havens thervppon) that he perswades whatt places were mete to be landed att for the hurt of the Reallm, which God long preserue.⁷⁴

The juxtaposition in the first excerpt of his personal piety with his loyalty to his patron, ‘so mi christiany to God, & duty to yow wards

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⁷² BL MS Lansdowne 9 f.10⁰-11⁴, William Herle to William Cecil, 15th February 1565. These invocations are most often featured in the valediction of the letter.

⁷³ BL MS Lansdowne 39 f.189⁷ - 192⁴, William Herle to Lord Burghley, 15th November 1583.

⁷⁴ BL MS Lansdowne 13, f.162⁰-4⁰, 19th March 1571.
doth well Comande me’, suggests that Herle’s individual religious experience comprised a complex mixture of national pride, cliental devotion and royal protection. Yet rather than manifest itself in protestations of fervent piety, it seems that Herle’s private religion defined itself by what it was not, i.e. by identifying marginal dissident groups and individuals. The xenophobia and automatic suspicion of unsanctioned activity exhibited by these letters were features of Herle’s perpetual mandate to enhance his patronage bond through the transfer of intelligence and information. For Herle, the licit religious existence was an adherence to the law and order set down by the sovereign: the deviance from which policy was simultaneously heresy and sedition.
CHAPTER 5

‘Noe one jot can be espyed’: Herle in the Marshalsea Prison, Spring 1571.

Wise men ought circumspectly to see what they do;
To examine before they speak;
To prove before they take in hand;
To beware whose company they use;
And, above all things, to whom they trust.¹

In a sequence of letters dating from spring 1571, a glimpse is offered of an altogether different facet of William Herle’s career as a state sponsored intelligencer than the routine collection of objective information gathered from a distance. A record of Herle’s attempts to decipher a Catholic suspect, the letters vividly reveal Herle’s spectacular activities as a prison spy - an agent provocateur dutifully passing information to the Elizabethan government.

In response to the failure of the Northern Rebellion of 1569, and the vehement Protestant reaction to the Papal Bull of Excommunication the following year, Rome continued to foster and finance plots and conspiracies to restore England to the Catholic fold by placing Mary Stuart on the throne. Roberto Ridolphi, a Florentine banker, used as an agent by the Roman authorities and to whom the infamous Bull had first been sent while he was in London, was formulating a plan to depose Elizabeth. Troops were to be requested from the Duke of Alva, which would join up with Catholic supporters in England, who would then storm London, take Elizabeth hostage, and place Mary on the throne with an English husband, the Duke of Norfolk. Ridolphi was

¹ Inscription in the Beauchamp Tower at the Tower of London, made by Charles Bailly in 1571. source?
communicating with Mary's ambassador to Elizabeth, John Leslie, the Bishop of Ross, sending plans containing ciphered messages. In early April Ridolphi's bearer and Leslie's servant Charles Bailly was stopped at Dover under suspicion of carrying treasonous material in his portmanteau by the deputies of Lord Cobham, warden of the Cinque Ports. Bailly was sent to Cobham's house at Blackfriars, and his travelling trunk retained by his captors, where ciphered letters were found amongst his belongings. Bailly was examined by Cobham, and entrusted to the custody of Legot, a porter in the Marshalsea prison. Legot was directed by Cobham to keep Bailly in his own house, but for some reason he put Bailly in the Marshalsea, maybe because his house wasn't adequately secure, or perhaps ordered to do so by a higher authority. Bailly therefore made his entrance to the Marshalsea on the thirteenth of April 1571, where William Herle was waiting for him.

On the 13th of November the previous winter, the Privy Council had commanded that Herle and three other prisoners be sent to the Marshalsea, to be held incommunicado. Probably there due to a charge of piracy levelled against him, Herle bitterly protested his innocence to the Lord Keeper, Sir Nicholas Bacon, to whom he wrote the following January:

Having bin thys whole sommer with worshipfull fryndes of myne, & employed in honest actyons, yett som ill suggestion made to


\footnote{J R Dasent ed. *Acts of the Privy Council of England*, vii (1558-70), (London: His Majesty's Stationery Office, 1893) pp.400-1, 'A letter to the Knight Marshall to receve into his custodye John Keele, Avery Phillippes, John Poole and William Hearle, whom he is required to kepe in several wardes. Suffering none of them to have conference with another, and withall to haue regard that he suffer no other to haue conference with them until he shall receve other order to the contrary', p.401.}
the right honorable Cowneell, caused them to send for me & for
certayne other abowtt the wight addressing their lettres to mr
horsey, wher vppon I was committed from Hampton Cowrt the
xiiiijth of November last to close prison here, where I remayne this
long noles miserably consumed, than bothe vnhard & vnpittied, &
withall no due cause to be obiectd vnto me. As surely
whosoeuer they be that first moved the Cowneell herevnto, have
fowllly abused them, & deserues mi example to be sharply tryed.
which is the whole somm of mi cause, & more knowe I nott in
offence, whom mi thought herin cannot ones accuse, & yett mi
detaynemnt is so bitter (where the State of a Land committes
ani) as all frinds ar excluded, & all reteeff cutt of, inough to kille
the verey sowle.4

It appears that Herle remained in the Marshalsea until the Bailly
episode, although he was allowed out of the prison compound (probably
on bond, and sanctioned by the authorities).

In what appears to be the first historical analysis of Herle, James
A Froude emphatically labelled Herle as a perfidious individual wholly
appropriate for this prison affair. He described him as a ‘dissolute
cousin of Lady Northumberland ... poor, cunning and unprincipled’.
Erroneously naming him ‘Thomas’ HerLe instead of William, Froude
unremittingly passed judgement on Herle’s role in the episode, noting:

Statesmen who have to grope their way among plots and treasons
soil their hands with the instruments which they are compelled
to use.5

4 PRO SP 12 77/1. William Herle to Sir Nicholas Bacon, 8th January 1571. Herle wrote a
letter in Latin to Burghley after this date, which letter is badly damaged and virtually
illegible, PRO SP 12 77/13. A selection of letters from Herle to Burghley and the
Bishop of Ross from this sequence are fully reproduced in the Appendix.
5 James A Froude, The History of England from the Fall of Wolsey to the Spanish
Armada vol.10 (London: Longmans, Green & Co., 1870), p.213 f. Froude is convinced
by Herle’s remark that he was a kinsman of the Northumberland family. Herle stated
in a letter of 1571 that he had conversed with his quarry Charles Bailly, telling him of
‘ij speciall frynds I had among the rebelles, whose chance I lamented grevously,
desirous only to know how they dyd, and whatt life they led and where; th’one was
the Cowntesse of northumberland, whose pore kinsman I was by the Somerssets, and
On the 19th of March he dispatched information to Lord Burghley about James Chillester, a supposedly iniquitous figure wanted for a host of misdemeanours. From his account, it appears that Herle was sent to Essex to deliver Chillester back to the authorities in London. He carefully assured Burghley that, despite his recovery of the suspect, he was still not known to Chillester. The remark appears to be a recommendation to Burghley that his anonymous status placed him as an ideal candidate to question Chillester further and endeavour to elicit secret information whilst incarcerated with him in the Marshalsea:

Butt this it may plese your Lord to remember by the waye, that Chillester nether att his apprehensyon, nor in his conveying vp dyd se me, nor vnderstand of mi being there, for I sent hym vp by water with the keepers of the marshalsea. with ij men that I brought with me, & which ij men he had of his owne, & I returned vp by horseback.6

From this letter, which details points on which Burghley could interrogate Chillester, and suggests that Herle was returning to prison, it is clear that Herle was in the custody of the Marshalsea, but, like many inmates, was allowed to leave the shambling confines by prior arrangement with the keeper.

Access and measures to control it within the Marshalsea prison depended on the nature of the inmate’s reason for incarceration. The Marshalsea, under the auspices of the Knight Marshal, was a crumbling

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6 BL MS Lansdowne 13, f.162-4, William Herle to Lord Burghley, 19th March 1571. For more on James Chillester, see Chapter 4, p.199.
and relatively insecure complex of buildings housing diverse sorts of prisoners indicted and remanded under the administration of the Court of Westminster. Licence to leave the grounds could be obtained on production of a bond, and often with a prison escort. A level above the ordinary prisoners were those confined to 'close prison' - either to prevent escape, or to limit access to the prisoner usually incarcerated for religious and political offences. Indeed, the Marshalsea was one of the chief holding-prisons for Catholics.  

Although unable to firmly determine the real reason for Herle's original imprisonment, by the beginning of April we can assume that his detention had moved to a different level. On the fourth of April, Herle carped at Burghley:

> Butt touching the servyce I am here for, the tyme consumes and I do nothyng & the liuetenant hath no warrant to suffer ani accesse unto me, nor somuche as paper and inck unles I will write to your Lord or the Cowncell whereby the cheeff purposer do decaye, ffor if in this beginneng I do nott entertayne a wise oppinion with mi causses abrode, I mar all.  

Bearing in mind that at this moment Charles Bailly was still in Brussels, and yet to be intercepted with the incriminating letters and literature, Herle's later comment is curious:

> Desireng your Lord that I may speke to you tomorow mi self, for that I have sondry thyngs to say unto you by mowth, and this mi open bryng to the Cowrt will make the better oppinion of me with the Bishop and lastly that I may have the keper of the marshallsea and mi man to repayre unto me, wheruppon rests mi grettest enterprise, and to understand your Lords plesure whither I may certeffye the Bishop that I was examined iff I had euer accesse unto hym, or whither ever I practised bettwen Charles

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8 BL MS Cotton Caligula C III f.60. William Herle to Lord Burghley, 4th April 1571.
and hym ether by letters or messinger, which I most nedes denye to have confessed ani of this, or elles I cannott attayne to the end, which is to appere gilltles to the Bishop of ani overture or yeldyng of mi side, wherby only I may enter into his former grace moreouer it may plese your Lord to wryte me or cawse mr Blithe to do it whatt artycles I shall saye that I was examined uppon by the Cowncell, that I may be throwly armed, lest he perceue a further haltyng in the matter than before.  

Anticipating the Bishop's reaction to his future overtures and offer to pass letters between him and Bailly, Herle was doing his preparation carefully, endeavouring to leave a visible trail that marked him as a bona fide prisoner, having been examined and brought before the Council, and returned to the Marshalsea to be put into solitary confinement. Francis Edwards claims that Herle's requests for guidance on the matter 'reveal the limited extent of Herle's imagination, and also the completeness of his dependence on Cecil':

> It may plese your Lord to wryte me or cawse mr Blithe to do it whatt artycles I shall saye that I was examined uppon by the Cowncell, that I may be throwly armed, lest he perceue a further haltyng in the matter than before.  

Yet surely this comment reveals Herle prudently aligning the two ends of the operations together, and preparing the plan beforehand whilst there was little pressure or scrutiny from suspicious eyes? Moreover, at this point, it is likely that Burghley would be still unresolved as to what information he wanted Herle to source from Bailly and the Bishop. Aside from Herle's contribution to the operation, it is clear that events were relatively well planned out. Bailly was still about a week away from

9 BL MS Cotton Caligula C III f.60.
10 BL MS Cotton Caligula CIII, f.60. Edwards, (1968), pp.45. Offers to spy on prisoners were not uncommon; see BL MS Lansdowne 99 f.163'-164'. Robert Hammond [alias Harrison] asked Burghley to: 'vouchsafe to ymploy me in some prison for the discoverie of the papists practises, or for Spaine, France, Italie, or anye other place', November, 1591.
being arrested, yet Herle was already diligently (and somewhat irritably) researching and sourcing information about which he could question Bailly. He had been briefed to discover the cipher used between the Bishop of Ross and Charles Bailly, and to elicit information about the plot to dethrone Elizabeth. Herle knew his role, and the three letters at the beginning of this sequence see him rehearsing it thoroughly with Burghley.

However, this notion of a planned outline of Herle’s operation is challenged by a letter written after Charles Bailly’s incarceration ten or so days later, in which Herle appeared to describe Bailly without any prior knowledge of him or his practises:

There is on committed yesternight to the marshallsea, whose name is Charlles and pretendes to be a Brabander borne at Bruxelles, but indede I understand hym to be a scott and a minister to the Bishop of Rosse, of whom grett thyngs might be drawen, if he had bin a close prisoner, for it is a dangerows fellow, and conteynes a whole masse of their secretts, but now he is very tymerows, vppon which poyn the more might be wrought if he were alone.\(^{11}\)

Compared with his later confident strategies to assure the Bishop of Ross of his fidelity, and the means to prove his own suspect nature outlined in the previous letter, this description of Charles seems tentative and appears to display no prior knowledge of Bailly’s imminent arrival. He continued:

This day on that is a skott of my acqwaintance was sent to hym from the Bishop of Rosse with instructyons, by whom haply I cowld lerne somwhat, as happy is he that in suche wretched

\(^{11}\) PRO SP 53 6/36. William Herle to Lord Burghley, endorsed by a later hand as c.10\(^{th}\) April 1571.
practises do ani service to his Prince and State, wherof it may please your Lord to lett me vnderstand your will furthwith.\textsuperscript{12}

The next day Herle repeated his findings, innocently suggesting a course of action as if one had not already been pre-arranged:

Touching Charlles, he is the skottish qwenes man, and pretendes to be of the Lowe Contrey, butt as I lerne secrettly, is indee a scott, speking sondry langages, yett esely deciphered. he is one of the only and secretest Ministers that the Qwene and the Bishop of Rosse hath, and a practiser in all their ill delings in fflanders and that way, wherin he hath contynued these iiiij yeres wellny, bothe verey dere to his mistres and the Bishop, as also with the spanishe Ambassador. he hath dellt now and doth from tyme to tyme with our Rebelles beyond the seas, and with the Duke of alua and is privy as may appere with all their Confetherats of this side. bringing over nowe sondry writengs which be dangerows as I here and intercepted by the Lord Cobham, wherfore yf your Lord do presently committ hym to close prison with some secrett token to the keper that I may have accesse vnto hym, I hope to discover ani parte that is in hym. which in wayeng of his nature and disposityon for so short a tyme, I suppose easely compassed, for he is farefull, full of words, gloryows, and given to the Cup, over whome I have allredy won some good degre, wisheng me beyond the seas, or if I wold go I shold want no frynds of the grettest sort.\textsuperscript{13}

This complete extract regarding Bailly, in a letter which details Herle’s investigations of three other prisoners in the Marshalsea, evokes the notion that Herle’s encounter with Bailly had not been pre-empted. Herle professed that his knowledge of Bailly and his devices to decipher him were impromptu, ‘As I lerne secrettly’, ‘which be dangerows as I

\textsuperscript{12} PRO SP 53 6/36. William Herle to Lord Burghley.
\textsuperscript{13} PRO SP 53 6/37. William Herle to Lord Burghley, 11\textsuperscript{th} April 1571.
here’, ‘I hope to discover ani parte that is in hym’. This letter seems to be a proposal to Burghley to secure his consent to uncover Bailly’s suspicious attributes.

Is it possible that Herle wrote these later letters in which he appeared to encounter Bailly ‘blind’ for a readership extra to Burghley? Did Burghley want a third reader (or several readers) to think that Herle’s offer to spy on the new prisoner was somehow an ingenuous, organic process, untouched by the intervention of the authorities, and generated by Herle’s convenient residence in the Marshalsea? The three letters from Herle to Burghley before Bailly’s imprisonment are notably missing that crucial part which refers to the honour of being in the Queen’s service, rarely absent from Herle’s letters, especially if he thought Burghley might not be the only reader. His letter of the day after Bailly’s arrival at the Marshalsea, in which Herle innocently described his fellow prisoner saw a return to this practice, almost certainly marking this letter as a letter to be ‘shown’:

I haue som new matter to saye vnto your Lord, which may att lest wise expresse mi humble good will and dutye, though no grett workes, Lastly Comending to your Lord mi hard Case, desirows to spend mi life in ani thing her Maiestie and your Lord wold employe me and bicause there is nothyng more dere vnto me than to be restored to good oppinion and name, I humbly desire your Lord to be mi good Lord therin, which may be an argument that while I esteme that dutye, mi reverens to god and mi Prince cannott decaye nether can I committ ani vncomly thyng otherwise.14

The altered tone and content of this letter suggests that Herle’s prior arrangement and situation with Burghley was known to few, perhaps only to Walsingham and the keeper of the Marshalsea. Considering Herle’s references to Charles and the Bishop in his letter of 4th April, before Bailly was even in England, it would seem that Burghley was

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14 PRO SP 53 6/36. William Herle to Lord Burghley. See also Chapter 2.
expecting him, and had already arranged for his arrest. The tonal shift of Herle’s letters suggests that Burghley was concealing his agent’s prior briefing and position, no doubt alert to the political and ethical ramifications of deliberately ensnaring a diplomatic courier.

Burghley’s intention to mask Herle’s part in the affair by restricting access to him and continuing his spurious detention is offset by the perceptible modification of tone and content of Herle’s letters. Herle was ‘writing for show’, but it remains unclear whether Burghley was broadcasting (albeit warily and to a select few) this intelligence about Charles.

Burghley’s plan appears to have been for Herle to communicate with the Bishop of Ross via a Scot called William Barthlett. After Bailly’s close imprisonment on April 16th, Herle was to set up a system in which he would collect Charles’ letters and give them to Herle’s servant and Barthlett, who would then convey them to the Bishop. Herle confidently stated:

Butt now reqwireng my ayd, I told hym yf he wold vse fidelity and secresy, I wold hasard mi pore fortune to conveye polytyckly ether messaige or letter vnto hym, wherupon with grett contentment he departed, menyng to retorne tomorow, beside that oppinion is suche of me, as he is to be perswaded to anithyng.

Yet the Bishop and Charles were understandably wary of Herle’s generous offer to forward the letters, Charles preferring to wait for his confederates to write to him first. Herle was obliged to try and accelerate matters, emphasising that time was pressing:

I further haue shewn hym the trust committed to me by william Barthlett, which hath won hym marvaylously, promiseng hym

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15 Edwards, (1968), suggests that Burghley had been tipped off by William Sutton of Charles Bailly’s imminent departure from the continent, p.38.
16 Barthlett was an agent whose loyalties now seem to be uncertain.
17 PRO SP 53 6/40. William Herle to Lord Burghley, 16th April 1571.
paper and incke to vtter his mynde, butt he wold haue som of his fellowes wryte first, whervnto I sayd that tyme most work that, butt in hym, for that I cowd not tary ani longe talke for the danger which was grett, he most vse tyme and occasion as they were presented to hym, a felicity that hapnes seldom to men in his Case, wherwith he was contented.\textsuperscript{18}

The two correspondents were reluctant to entrust their ciphered letters to a stranger. To counter this, Herle touted an alter ego of a disaffected malcontent, arranging a description of himself to be bandied around the Bishop's followers. This description was relayed back to him by the unsuspecting Malachias, also a prisoner in the Marshalsea, who had been recently examined before Burghley:

For the speche your Lord had of me, it was passingly handled, confirmeng his oppinion the more than euer it was beffore, for sayth he to me, you ar in extreme ill conceytt with the Lord of Burghley, bothe to be a prodigall man, withowt governement, having good parts and abusing them vtterly, And that Iohn poole and you wold have betrayed the Cardinall and have becom Pirates at the seas.\textsuperscript{19}

This description given by Burghley had no doubt been prearranged, but a later sketch traced by the Bishop seems to have been an impartial and independent source. Herle commented that the Bishop had

Ciffted me mani wayes, and enquired of me abrode, butt the generall oppinion is that I am a discontented man and factyows, which loyned with mi trobles doth perplexe his other suspicyons,

\textsuperscript{18} BL MS Cotton Caligula C III f.176-7. William Herle to Lord Burghley, 18\textsuperscript{th} April 1571.
\textsuperscript{19} BL MS Cotton Caligula C III f.178-81. William Herle to Lord Burghley, 19\textsuperscript{th} April 1571. Note that Herle considered Burghley's participation in the 'drama' of the operation was 'passingly handled'.
as he is certayn in non of them, driveng him to the uttermost corner of his witt.\textsuperscript{20}

It must have been unsettling for Herle to voice these unsavoury portrayals through his own pen, despite their supposedly fictive nature. Yet this predetermined character assassination emphasised the suitability of Herle’s marginal and penurious status for this devious role of prison spy.

To complement this assumed character of malcontent, Herle required seditious and illegal paraphernalia to convince his targets. Five days after his arrival into the Marshalsea, the querulous Bailly made a request for some comforting reading matter. Herle immediately wrote to Burghley that he had asked for

The lone of some frenche booke, which I promised, butt I haue non here butt the psalmes and service of the reformed religion, and that may brede mi discrèdite with hym, if it might plese your Lord therfore bi this berer to send me som story or prayer that may serue the torne, which shalbe reserued for you agayn.\textsuperscript{21}

Conscious that his cover would be blown if he were to supply Bailly with his own Protestant devotional literature, (it is surprising that he had kept it with him), Herle was aware that a supply of Catholic material would further cement Charles’ allegiance. Moreover, he took this opportunity to cement his own patriotic and religious fidelity by assuring Burghley of the seditious material’s return at the end of the ‘operation’.\textsuperscript{22}

With his assumed conspiratorial identity complete, and with access to a ready supply of Catholic contraband, Herle was slipping into his persona with dubious ease. His letters record with satisfaction his

\textsuperscript{20} PRO SP 53 6/53. William Herle to Lord Burghley, 29\textsuperscript{th} April 1571.

\textsuperscript{21} BL MS Cotton Caligula C III f.176-7. 18\textsuperscript{th} April 1571.

\textsuperscript{22} Nicholl, (2002), states that a few years later in 1584, there were three chambers in the Marshalsea prison associated with clandestine Catholic worship, where ‘mass-hearers’ could be found alongside ‘vile books’ and ‘abominable relics’, p.159, citing PRO SP 12 155/27, 24\textsuperscript{th} August 1582 and JH Pollen, ed. Miscellanea (London: Catholic Record Society, 1906) vol 2, pp.221-2.
dramatic efforts to persuade Bailly and the Bishop of his loyalty and the government’s suspicion of him:

Abowtt midnight mi Lord, I cam to Charlles chamber dore, alleging that the gentillman his neighbor was haply com that night to lye in his Chamber, which had opened the occasyon to me so to haue free accesse vnto hym, yett shewing grett fere to mi self, but comfortyng hym in that I might, reserving of purpose the Bishops letter, whose cipher I gaue your Lord yesternight, till I might fully know hys mynde towchyng those poynts the Bishop reqwired me to know att his hands, yett tellyng hym that I had a letter for hym, cowd nott finde it in the darke and durst nott seke it for my chamber ffellowes, which vnhaply I had forgotten to putt a part beffore night, wheratt he was importunate to haue it by and by, butt I told hym there was no remedy tyll the mornynge.\(^{23}\)

They observe me streightly and deale with great rudenes with me, having this morninge beside my Irons I had a payer of shackells added so as I can scarce move.\(^{24}\)

These expressions were simultaneously designed to secure the trust and continuing co-operation of Bailly and the Bishop, and to sustain Burghley’s confidence and interest, but the glib recounting of his exploits to Burghley intimates that Herle was relishing his role and enthusiastically assuming his new identity. The injection of such spectacular and vivid incidents into his narrative was intended to remind Burghley of the dangerous nature of the enterprise. Yet the sprinkling of the dramatic encounters throughout Herle’s letters impacts upon the intelligence he was sending. If he could simulate and dissimulate on demand with Bailly and the Bishop, he might easily reverse the circumstances towards the Elizabethan government. Herle’s


\(^{24}\) BL MS Cotton Caligula C III f.69-70. William Herle to the Bishop of Ross, 27\(^{th}\) April 1571.
already precarious position of intelligence was further problematised by this self-indulgent bid for a belated audience to his performance; his desire for attention jeopardising his anonymous and peculiar position.

Herle made frequent requests for a simulated examination to be arranged; to underpin his assumed seditious character, which would simultaneously be a vehicle for repeated protestations of his fidelity towards the Bishop, and to provide a forum for Herle to divulge his latest intelligence. These requests began even before Charles' arrest, and escalated in urgency:

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Butt your Lord most in ane wise send for me to be examined, for that is aswell observed within dore as without, which requires speed, if your graver business so permitt it, having more to say vnto your Lord by mouth. 
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But they all depend on my examination, so as my Lord, it is greatly necessary that your Lord doe send for me forthwith vpon your first leasure and that I speake further with you.
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However, Herle's blustering and over-confident performance designed to assure Bailly of his allegiance may have been his undoing. Ten days after Charles' entry into the prison, and after his return from a harrowing interrogation in which Burghley had threatened to cut off Bailly's ears, Herle came to his chamber and examined him further 'in the Bishop's name'. Yet Herle may have pushed Bailly too far or asked a suspicious question, for the unfortunate prisoner had reached breaking-point:

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Demanding of hym in the Bishops name whither he had byn examyned who gave hym the male, and whither he had confessed it was hammellton and lastly whither his examinatyon entended not to know whatt delyng he had with the english rebellles at
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which word he was so astonyed, as albeit there were no light his alteracion was apparent and falling into A sodein trembling and to suche a ffaltryng of his tong, as in som whyle he cowd expresse nothyng well, butt in th'end he axed, whye then hath nott mi Lord his letters? which I answerd yes, butt that before he had received them, he wrytt me a letter to this end, and vsed the like speche by mowth or he had deciphred the sayd letters, and this was th'occasyon, yett half stamryng he sayd that he had confessed nothyng of hammellton, butt for the rebelles he detested them, and knew no one of them, vseing suche vehement passion in speking of them, as though they had byn fellowes to the devyll.27

Charles became uncommunicative. Herle was unable to probe him further, and despite his confident claim that he ‘left hym contented’, Charles seems to have become even more suspicious of Herle. That night he wrote to the Bishop:

Je suis este en tres grande peine et soucy jusques à ce matin que j’ay reçeu vostre lettre escripte Dimanche à six heures du soir, et pour par icelle avoir entendu qu’aviez reçeu mes trois Lettres, et ce par ce que je pensois seurement que ce porteur Maistre Erle n’avoit deliure icelles, ains a quelcung du conseil, (comme je suis esté advisé par ung vray homme de bien et prestre qui est icy prisonnier pour la Religion Catholique) et qu’il ne fault pas trop fier à luy, en aucune maniere, comme j’ay faict jusques à ceste heure, encore qu’il m’aye faict plusieurs demandes que je ne puis penser quelles viennent de lui ains de quelcun du conseil, comme de me demander apres la Contesse de Northumb. et apres ung sien grand amy callid Janvier, qui luy avoit porté un petit mot de Lettre. A quoy je luy ay incontinent respondu comme je vouldrois à ceulx du conseil, l’assurant que je n’avois aucune cognoissance d’Anglois en Flandres. Monsieur, il ne se

fault pas confier en lui, et quant escripuez à Madame de Northumberland, qu’elle se garde de lui escripre quelle m’a veue.\textsuperscript{28}

The Bishop was put on his guard. Two days after Bailly’s midnight encounter he wrote an aloof note to Herle:

\begin{quote}
I heare you haue beene before the Councell and charles face to face what you haue said to him or he to you in their presence I am ignorant therefore yf you will advertise what the same was in effect I will geue you my best advise, I am sory of the handling which doth not pretend of any of my house I mervayle not little that you did keepe such letters beside you so long, I heare also charles is committed to the tower Let me haue answere with diligence that I may the more playnly make answere to those thinges which shalbe demaunded for you.\textsuperscript{29}
\end{quote}

To which Herle immediately replied:

\begin{quote}
I thanck your Lord for your answere, which hath much releeved me, but I haue not beene face to face with Charles, nor out of this chamber since I was committed ffor they observe me streightly and deale with great rudenes with me, having this morninge beside my Irons I had a payer of shackells added so as I can scarce move.\textsuperscript{30}
\end{quote}

It is unclear here whether Herle was denying ever meeting Charles, or if he was declaring that he had not seen Charles recently. This was a peculiar claim to make if he had dutifully delivered Charles’ above letter to the Bishop in which Charles had warned Ross not to trust Herle. The depths of intrigue and confusion in which Herle, the Bishop

\textsuperscript{28} HMC Cecil Papers 5/113. Charles Bailly to the Bishop of Ross, 24\textsuperscript{th} April 1571. Also in Murdin, (1759), pp.6-7.

\textsuperscript{29} BL MS Cotton Caligula C III f.70. The Bishop of Ross to William Herle, 27\textsuperscript{th} April 1571.

\textsuperscript{30} BL MS Cotton Caligula C III f.69-70. William Herle to the Bishop of Ross, 27\textsuperscript{th} April 1571.
and Charles were enmeshed were evidently knotty even to the participants.

Herle's new strategy to maintain his link with the Bishop was to incriminate Charles and deflect unwanted suspicion from himself:

The like also is said to me that Charles hath confessed the whole of my dealing and conveyance with him, threatning me to the tower and Rack, which I hope that Charles is not of so weake a kinde to yeald so filthily to any examinacion they can make.31

He renewed his bid to ingratiate himself with the Bishop the next day:

And as wisdom is to suspect lykely causes, and to give eare to true Rumors: so it is gretter nysenes to condempne ffryndship so truly ment and so dangerowsly tryed; ffor I am a partye and no beholder, which may move ani wyse judgement to depe consyderatyon, otherwise gretter servyce wilbe discouraged, when so grett a wekenes is discoverd in the principall, loking for consolatyon at your Lords hands, elles yow do me more wrong than ever ye may redresse, protestyng to yow, yf ani will mayntayne that I procede otherwise than honestly, I will make them lyers in their throte.32

The following day Herle attempted to assure Burghley of his continued success:

The Bishop my Lord affter som grett pawse hath answerd mi letter, which is enclosed herewith, he is entred into gelowsi of mi doings, as playnly may appere, therfore the remedy most be accordingly provided, and yett his gelowsi is not somuche, as the mistrust of his owne practises, to be discoverd by Charles which hath driven hym to suche raiges att home, as nether wold he

31 BL MS Cotton Caligula C III f.69-70.
32 PRO SP 53 6/52. William Herle to the Bishop of Ross, 28th April 1571.
eate nor slepe iij ij dayes wellny, nether yett permitt ani knowne
man were he englishe or stranger within his gates, mary mi man
and Barthlett had secrett accesse vnto hym, yett with som
difficultye or they cowd com to hym.\textsuperscript{33}

Yet later in the letter Herle was obliged to admit that the Bishop was
unsure of his fidelity, quoting a message sent via Barthlett:

\begin{quote}
But if mr Herlle (saith he) will assure me, that he hath not
delyuered mi iij tycketts written to Charles to be copyed by the
Lord of Burghley, I will do asmuche for hym, as for myne owne
brother, which shall appere in verey few dayes, butt in the mene
season, I will nether receve nor wryte letter to hym, commending
all to his tryall.\textsuperscript{34}
\end{quote}

The Bishop was ultimately unconvinced by Herle’s claims of devotion,
instigating the surveillance of Herle’s contacts. Herle complained to
Burghley that

\begin{quote}
My man is followed in every place by some espiall of his, even by
5 of the clock in the morninge.\textsuperscript{35}
\end{quote}

Once more, Herle anxiously attempted to divert the glare of suspicion
firmly directed on himself towards Charles, reporting a conversation
had with Barthlett to Burghley:

\begin{quote}
I sayd lamentably that mi keper had told me how Charles had
accused me of the whole matter, and how it was mi inventyon to
devise his allphabet and to wryte his ciphred letters, exhortyng
me to pacyens for that he loked for a warrant to remove me to
the Tower, whervnto I added that he had vppon fayth assured me

\textsuperscript{33} PRO SP 53 6/53. William Herle to Lord Burghley, 29\textsuperscript{th} April 1571. OED lists ‘gelowsi’
as ‘suspiciously watchful, careful’, www.oed.com, ‘jealous a’ (3).
\textsuperscript{34} PRO SP 53 6/53.
\textsuperscript{35} BL MS Cotton Caligula C III f.71-2. William Herle to Lord Burghley, 1\textsuperscript{st} May 1571.
of on comfort, that nether Charles was racked, nor likely to be
racked, which speche of myne was vttred in suche pyteos forme,
myne Irons gingling vp and downe by mete occasions, as the
fellow wept and sobbed, having indede confirmed the Bishop by
the hering of myne irons the first tyme, in a more assured
oppinion of mi trust.\textsuperscript{36}

It seems that the keeper was recruited to aid this effort:

Robinson another of the Bishops men mett with the keeper of the
prison, affirming that Charles had beene seene brought to the
Rack and at his returne was scarce able to goe, discoloured as
pale as ashes, provoking by a certen manner some speeche of
me, who said, I was in a heavy plight, in greater displeasure with
the Councell, commanded both to most strayte ward and to irons
yet affirming that by no meanes he could perceave me to be gilty
of any participation with Charles, ether for letters or practise
which he was then sure for the ancyent experience he had of me)
that I would both stand in and yeald to noe vntruthe, Whereunto
Robinson obiecting that I was buisy in many matters and very
factious, it could not likely haue any good end seeming thereby
as though he knewe me not at all but by here say.\textsuperscript{37}

Herle was characteristically confident and optimistic of the outcome,
despite the recent mishandling of Charles:

If the matter may be so handled as I appeare gittles, I shalbe able
to creepe further into his grace, then any of my sorte ever did
which proceeding is so vsed of my side (I speake it modestly) as
bothe in the purpose and direction in every motion that my self
or my man proceedes by noe one iot can be espyed.\textsuperscript{38}

\textsuperscript{36} PRO SP 53 6/53.
\textsuperscript{37} BL MS Cotton Caligula C III f.71-2. William Herle to Lord Burghley, 1st May 1571.
\textsuperscript{38} BL MS Cotton Caligula C III f.71-2.
Herle's claim that 'no one iot' of his actions could be 'espyed' was *braggadocio*; designed to assure Burghley of his continued results from his practices in the Marshalsea. Yet not only did Herle have to evade suspicion from his intended targets, he was also obliged to circumvent the attempts of the prison staff to limit illicit behaviour. As his identity of *agent provocateur* needed to be protected from the intermediate officials and lower ranking staff of the Marshalsea to prevent the operation being exposed, the measures of security surrounding Herle were comparable to his fellow inmates.

Yet the ingenuity of the prisoners and easy corruptibility of the guards ensured the security measures surrounding close prisoners could usually be evaded. Letters and other items could be distributed with a little imagination. Thus Herle's arrangement with Bailly and the Bishop of Ross was convenient for the suspected conspirators, providing invaluable access to Bailly, and the encoded letters affording a certain degree of privacy and safeguard against Herle's prying eyes. Charles explained to the Bishop how the transfer could be effected:

My chamber where I am prisoner doth open vpon the streete and vnder the wyndowe ther ys a lyttel house of som poore man. Almost in the topp of the house inwarde, ther is a hole that comith to my chamber, wherin I may easely thrust my hand. I think that with a small mater, George Robinson or borche might gett acquayntance with the poore man, and by that meane throughge the hole might be conveyed to me any letters, or else I might easely speake to any body, yf they wold com into the streate or place. I shew my seife at the windowe at viij of the clock in the mornyng, and At noone, at after dynner at iiij of the clock, and in the evening betwene seven and eight. There is allso a lyttle Tauerne wher all men resort vnto.\(^{39}\)

Bailly's plan was to push his letters through the hole, which would then be conveyed to the Bishop by any number of messengers. Charles

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\(^{39}\) HMC Cecil Papers 5/108. Charles Bailly to the Bishop of Ross, 20\(^{th}\) April 1571.
recommended Robinson, but it was crucial for Burghley’s plan that the letters passed through Herle’s hands first. Somehow, Herle had to ensure that he was the only point of collection and deposit from Charles so that no letters escaped contact with Burghley. He suggested to his patron soon after Bailly’s incarceration:

Yf your Lord do presently committ hym to close prison with some secrett token to the keper that I may have accesse vnto hym, I hope to discover ani parte that is in hym.40

The simple ingenuity of Burghley’s plan of using Herle as the intermediary between Charles and the Bishop of Ross was that Herle could divert the letters straight to Burghley to be copied, then collect and forward them to their originally intended recipient. Herle made his arrangements with the Bishop via Barthlett:

The sayd Barthlett might repayre vnto me, with messaiges from tyme to tyme, and to be the mowth bettwen Charlles and hym, which this way might be don clenly, and voyd of all suspicyon.41

Herle’s accounts of the delivery and collection of these illicit letters are worthy of an Elizabethan drama, and he relished reporting the dramatic episodes of his detention:

Vsing his repaire now and then to the garden, which I seme to gett of the keper, by order as it doth mesure all the rest by due degrees, he having theruppon written to your Lord this supplicatyon inclosed whose receitt doth minister good occasion to send secrettly for hym.42

Now this mornyng knowing whatt tyme he shold com furth I conveyed mi sellf secretty beffore into the privey in the gardein,

40 PRO SP 53 6/37. William Herle to Lord Burghley, 11th April 1571.
41 BL MS Cotton Caligula C III f.176-7. William Herle to Lord Burghley, 18th April 1571.
42 PRO SP 53 6/40. William Herle to Lord Burghley, 16th April 1571.
where I delyuered hym the Bishops letter, who with grett loye receving it, promised answer in th’affter noone ... repaireng in the aftter noone to Axe alley, where he cast me owtt of the grate an answer to the Bishops letter, which I present herewith and menyng to have caste vp a letter of myne owne, whose copi is here. 43

This was the kind of illicit behaviour frowned upon by the prison authorities, but which they could do little about:

Also I was espied by a bakers wife who obiected to me ytt cowd be no honest matter that I offred in so vnffytt a place, which she wold declare vnto the keper, butt I gave the best words I cowd, and so departeng delyuered the sayd letter vnder Charles stayres dore to hys own hands, who within a whyle after delyuered me an answer to the same, which also I have here with me. 44

It wasn’t just the prisoners who were under intense scrutiny: their visitors and correspondents were often under suspicion and diligently observed. One of the Bishop of Ross’ questions to Barthlett during the early stages of Charles’ imprisonment was

Whither ani of mi Lord Cobhams men, or ani other were appointed ether secretly or openly to observe suche as cam to inqwire for the sayd Charlles, and to describe how they proceded in it, and who they were by name.45

Indeed, the Spanish ambassador’s servant Melchior and Robert Mackinson, followers of the Bishop and frequent visitors to Baily, were thrown into jail for trying to make secret visits to Charles. This was a bonus for Herle, who could foster their indignation and elicit furious

45 BL MS Cotton Caligula C III f,176-7. William Herle to Lord Burghley, 18th April 1571.
protests against Elizabeth’s administration.\textsuperscript{46} He wrote approvingly to Burghley:

The keper of this place mi Lord, hath receved your warrant for Charlles close imprisonment, and for the staye of all suche as desire to speke with hym, who is to execute his charge as zelowsly as truly, for that he wisely forseeth the matter by the importance of the words to towche the state, which Charlles hath bin visited all this daye of a grett sight of his fellowes, tyll a lyttell before your Lords warrant.\textsuperscript{47}

Yet, just as they had methods of thwarting official scrutiny within the prison confines, measures were taken by conspirators to placate and confuse their surveillance and surveyors. The Bishop dissembled to the authorities that he was barring his doors against unsavoury visitors, Barthlett informing Herle that the Bishop would

Nether yett permitt ani knowne man were he englishe or stranger within his gates, mary mi man and Barthlett had secrett accesse vnto hym, yett with som difficultye or they cowd com to hym.\textsuperscript{48}

The strategies of circumventing surveillance and secretly conveying letters did not cease once the letters had reached their intended destination. Papers could be secreted in diverse places, and often had to be hidden from random searches by the prison staff. Herle’s prison chamber was searched, although this seems to have been a convenient and inconspicuous method for Herle’s letters to Burghley to be delivered:

\begin{flushleft}
\textsuperscript{46} For the arrest/imprisonment of Melchior and Robert Mackinson, see BL MS Cotton Caligula C III f.178-81, William Herle to Lord Burghley, 19\textsuperscript{th} April 1571; Edwards, (1968), p.56; BL MS Cotton Caligula C III f.2-39, Diary of the Bishop of Ross, from 11\textsuperscript{th} May 1571 to 18\textsuperscript{th} October 1571.
\textsuperscript{47} PRO SP 53 6/40. William Herle to Lord Burghley, 16\textsuperscript{th} April 1571.
\textsuperscript{48} PRO SP 53 6/53. William Herle to Lord Burghley, 29\textsuperscript{th} April 1571.
\end{flushleft}
I have copyed owtt mi Lord, the Cipher butt it was nott abowtt me when those that cam which your Lord sent to me, to whom I made grett difficultye to delyuer ani writeng, the more to cover mi delyng, having ment for that I never cowd close up Charles letter, to have broken it in ii or iij parts, yett in suche sort as they might well have bin peced agayn together.\textsuperscript{49}

Herle was also aware of the strategies used by the conspirators to conceal correspondence and other material:

It may plese your Lord to serche his cap well, and that I may know (yf your Lord so vowchesaffe) whatt writengs were fownd abowtt hym.\textsuperscript{50}

And he was not averse to exploiting such opportunities to ensnare his victims:

I wold convey vnto hym att his next commyng som monney sherts and suche other necessaryes as he wanted, (vnder which I suppose som secrett wrytengs or discouery of their mynds might be conteined).\textsuperscript{51}

But the most efficient method of concealment was for the information to be completely hidden: invisible or intangible. During the long wait before Charles Bailly’s arrest at Dover and his consequent imprisonment in the Marshalsea, Herle had occupied his time with devising methods to discover secret practises. Investigating a fellow Irish prisoner, Herle suggested to Burghley:

\begin{flushleft}
\textsuperscript{49} BL MS Cotton Caligula C III f.68. William Herle to Lord Burghley, 26\textsuperscript{th} April 1571.
\textsuperscript{50} PRO SP 53 6/51. William Herle to Lord Burghley, 27\textsuperscript{th} April 1571.
\textsuperscript{51} BL MS Cotton Caligula C III f.176-7. William Herle to Lord Burghley, 18\textsuperscript{th} April 1571.
\end{flushleft}
If your Lord wold help me with som receytt for hym to wryte by som luyce to cover his secretts the more, I dowtt nott butt ani hydden practis or entent of his wold easely be discoverd at full.\textsuperscript{52}

Bailly, however, had the right idea when it came to the concealment of intelligence. The elusive cipher that Herle was placed to extract was not written in any of his letters, and Herle discovered:

The scott told lohn pole in secret that Charles had 3 or iiiij ciphers by rote, and on principle he vsed to kepe no wrytengs by hym, so as he fered no interceptyon ether of letters abowtt hym, or of ani discovery of his alphabett, which rather was in hys hed than in ani paper, which partly might appere in that he was serched att Dover and the same nott fownd.\textsuperscript{53}

During his time in the Marshalsea, Herle regularly reported his discoveries to Burghley, both by letter, of which there are thirteen in the space of twenty-six days, and by personal visit. It is not clear whether his access to Burghley was overt, in the guise of examination in case of counter-surveillance, or whether it was conducted secretly. It is probable that Herle was able to deposit and collect the letters directly to and from Burghley, as well as his chamber being searched and items retrieved by the keeper, who would have needed to be an initiate in the enterprise.

Herle described how a person might come unobserved to Burghley:

Touching Malachias, he shall wryte vnto your Lord to desire that he may com to your presence for so he hath entreated of hym self before, alledging that he hath somwhatt to say vnto your

\textsuperscript{52} BL MS Cotton Caligula C III f.174-5. William Herle to Lord Burghley, 10\textsuperscript{th} April 1571.

\textsuperscript{53} PRO SP 53 6/51.
Lord wherupon your Lord sending for hym secrettly by the back waye, with gentillnes he is to be won.\textsuperscript{54}

These precautions were vital to prevent the plotters becoming suspicious and discovering the operation. Herle was aware of the necessity of speed when it came to making copies of the letters he was passing to Burghley, to quash any suspicion the conspirators might derive from tardy letters. He was obliged to remind Burghley of this:

If I may have Charlles letter which I delyuered your Lord yesternight, to give Barthlett this mornyng, they being so made vp, as no suspicyon growe that they of have bin broken their openyng, I may do from hence furth whatt I wil, Butt if they be differed till the affter noone, the tyme will brede mistrust.\textsuperscript{55}

Herle's operation to intercept and deliver the letters without being caught by either the conspirators or the authorities was impeded by the leaking of knowledge abroad; knowledge which might thwart Herle's mission to discover the cipher, but also knowledge which may reveal Herle's true identity of agent to Lord Burghley. Thus he was understandably concerned when he suspected that there was seepage of intelligence from the highest source - the Privy Council. He wrote in unease to Burghley that his visits to Charles were being openly observed:

Mary iff there honors of the Cowncell have descended so partyclerly to describe by markes mi commyng to hym, there is a grett hole made, which had bin better stopped. I alledge it dutifully, and so I know your Lord will take it whom God preserue.\textsuperscript{56}

\textsuperscript{54} PRO SP 53 6/37. William Herle to Lord Burghley, 11\textsuperscript{th} April 1571.
\textsuperscript{55} PRO SP 53 6/45. William Herle to Lord Burghley, 21\textsuperscript{st} April 1571.
\textsuperscript{56} PRO SP 53 6/53.
Herle staked his disaffection with their proceedings, indignantly reproaching the leak, 'descended so partyclerly', but quickly remembering his precarious position, retracted his complaint and re-inscribed his humility, 'I alledge it dutifully'.

Herle made it clear that it was necessary for Burghley to maintain his role in the operation:

Butt if these matters be nott plyed and assisted, I shalbe discouerd to the world with a perpetuall enfamyę, and your Lords displeasure may rise to condempne me, the circumstances nott well handled, desireng rather vpon mi knees that your Lord will vse me no further, than suche a mischeef shold rise, and having mi liberty (towards the which I haue putt in suretyes) I wilbe redy verey humbly to ani thyng I may.57

Conscious of the scrutiny directed towards his behaviour, Herle's strategy to circumvent it seems to have been deceptively simple. 'Routine' searches of Herle's chamber by the keeper or his officials could produce letters which would then be forwarded to Burghley, eliciting minimum suspicion. But an everyday search was neither particularly convenient nor subtle, especially considering that Herle's reason for imprisonment was kept deliberately vague to both his keepers and his fellow prisoners. Recourse to Burghley to speak in person was much more practical, as the meeting could be presented as an informal interrogation. Safer than letters, which could be perused by enemy eyes, a visit moreover provided Herle with valuable access to his patron:

I have mi Lord browght this matter to a full issue, desirows your Lord wold vowchesaffe to appoint me a certain' tyme when to make repport therof, which requires spede, if your weighty affayres wold permitt the same, yett hoping your Lord doth vnderstand by mr Blithe that I have bin there sondry tymes,

which may excuse ani negligens that otherwise might be imputed to me."\textsuperscript{58}

Lastly your Lord sees whatt a Charge ye haue given me for Charlles and hym, wherin if I haue resonable advise from yow, and secrett reppaire when soeuer the cause requires to your Lord with mayntenance to go forward with mi busines, (for I spend and toyll and haue nott wherewith) I shalbe hable to do the Queens Maiestie and your Lord good service, wherin I conseve suche further matter, as deserues grett Care and diligence, and shall shew in travayll to be noles zelows than Commendable.\textsuperscript{59}

The importance Herle laid on these personal visits, and the frequency with which he requested them emphasises his inclination to impart information by 'mowth'. Not only was this method of communication more secure, it provided the interaction Herle craved and required for his enduring client status with Burghley. The intimacy of speech, exchanged in a private, enclosed room, added to the anonymous nature of his task, would enhance his bond with Burghley; a secret relationship which would be heightened and accentuated by the danger and political drama of the delicate and crucial enterprise:

Prayng God for your Lords prosperity, and wisheng if I shold com ani more vnto yow ye wold prescribe when and how, for mi open repayre to your Lord may hinder gretter thyngs than ar yet expressed.\textsuperscript{60}

Yet, knowing what we do of Herle and his persistent efforts to parade and make ostentation of his important friendships and alliances, it must have been frustrating not to be able to demonstrate this intimate, secret relationship with his patron to those uninitiated with Herle's primary purpose. Fundamental to his patronage strategy was the

\textsuperscript{58} PRO SP 53 6/36. William Herle to Lord Burghley, c.10\textsuperscript{th} April, 1571.
\textsuperscript{59} BL MS Cotton Caligula C III f.178-81. William Herle to Lord Burghley, 19\textsuperscript{th} April 1571.
\textsuperscript{60} PRO SP 53 6/40. William Herle to Lord Burghley, 16\textsuperscript{th} April 1571.
exhibition of his friendship and client status with his patron. In those letters directed to Burghley during this episode (it appears that his only other correspondent was the Bishop of Ross), Herle’s claims of service and duty were effusive, emphasising his humble regard and fidelity as frequently as possible. Not only re-affirming his delight in his loyal service, it was a position deployed to assure Burghley and other readers of his continued allegiance to the state while dealing with the suspicious conspirators in the Marshalsea:

Comending to your Lord mi hard Case, desirous to spend mi life in an thing her Maiestie and your Lord wold employe me and bicause there is nothyng more dere vnto me than to be restored to good oppinion and name, I humbly desire your Lord to be mi good Lord therin, which may be an argument that while I esteme that dutye, mi reverens to god and mi Prince cannott decaye nether can I committ ani vncomly thyng otherwise.  

Commending to your Lord mi necessity which is so extreme, as I cannott hold vp the hed longer, without som ayde and yett mi will desires dethe where mi prince may be served by it.

Herle’s usual strategy, to advertise his relationship with his patron, in letters to his patron which he assumed would be broadcast to important members of the council, was necessarily foiled by the strict secrecy surrounding his enterprise. Operating on the assumption that at least a few important figures might see the letters, even if only after this particular episode had reached its conclusion, Herle vaunted his habitual protestations of humble duty and service:

But yet vouchsafe my good Lord to commend my humble minde to the Quenes Maiesty that yet one day I may be the more able by her goodnes to any greater commandement wherein I desire

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61 PRO SP 53 6/40.
62 PRO SP 53 6/40.
to ymploy mi life and all the rest And herein that you will likewise enterteyne a good opinion of me with Mr Comptroller, whose care is greate of me, and yet hath not heard from me in a great space Lastly I beseeche your Lordship to remember your good speech of me if you see the Bishop of Salisbury.  

Yet even whilst operating under the guise of discontented conspirator, Herle was provided with an opportunity to display his knowledge of Burghley, if only in the form of a limited relationship. In his conversations with Malachias, he revealed that he was privy to Burghley’s method of examination and could give him advice on how to disport himself during the impending interrogation Malachias would endure:

Malachias vppon his retorne from your Lord told me wonders of your affability and wisdom describeng to hym whatt he did till the howre he was taken, which he confessed to be true, opening som other matters to your Lord butt so ffar as you wold haue had don, wherupon you committed hym back agayn, concluding that his liberty and prefferment was in his own hands, nott medlyng with his Conscyens att all, but for discovery of suche practises as were made against the State ... thancking me that I had given to suche sownd advise, as to be playn with your Lord and true in those thyngs, which you shold axe of him (only his religion and Conscyens reserued) wherin for the speche your Lord had of me, it was passingly handled.

Was this a self-indulgent and subtle method by Herle of exhibiting his relationship with Burghley in the prison context? Was he unable to resist even this minute level of ostentation in a display of knowledge about how Burghley would act and react to Malachias?

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64 BL MS Cotton Caligula C III f.178-81. William Herle to Lord Burghley, 19th April 1571.
The lack of available ostentation and display afforded by Herle's subterfuge was no doubt countered by the intensely private and crucial relationship between Herle and Burghley founded upon Herle's illicit mission to ensnare Charles Bailly. The decreased opportunity for the exhibition of this public bond prompted Herle instead to demonstrate and apply his affective writing, capturing the drama of the moment, and taking perverse pleasure in the precarious and perilous situation. Simultaneously convincing the Bishop and Charles through his persuasive speech, and Burghley through his textual account of such persuasion, the modern reader has only Herle's textual record of these extraordinary attempts to penetrate the conspiracy, and it is a testament to his peculiar style (and daring) that these letters are extraordinary to read, the gripping drama unfolding on each page. Yet this spectacular episode and Herle's eager participation raises questions of his integrity and the credibility of his intelligence: the ability to 'spin' a yarn so well, with the additional and sophisticated textual constructs of indirect advice, ostentatious compliment and complex narrative challenge the traditional method and format for the transmission of bald intelligence.

This sojourn in the Marshalsea was doubtless an exhilarating and hazardous time for Herle. Indeed, Burghley seems to have extended his services further, for at the end of May he was transferred to the Tower, where Charles Bailly had been held since the 27th April. There is no record of why Herle was moved to such a significant prison, and only an accounts sheet drafted by Sir Owen Hopton, the Lieutenant of the Tower, remains as evidence that he was actually a prisoner there, rather than just a visitor. The accounts sheet records Herle's entry into the Tower as the 30th May, remaining until the 26th June, his charges being 3l 14s 6d. He is listed above Bailly in the document, whose charges extend until the 21st June (although he was a still prisoner in the Tower after this date), and who was banished from England the following year.65

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65 PRO SP 12 78/44. Accounts list of Sir Owen Hopton for the ‘dyets and chardges of certain prisoners’, 24th June 1571.
It is unlikely that Herle was moved to the Tower for his own misdemeanours, rather that he was placed to uncover (or counterfeit the misdemeanours of) another intractable prisoner like Charles Bailly. Although Bailly was in the Tower with Herle, by this time Burghley had squeezed him of information, and he had not trusted Herle since the damage orchestrated on the night of the midnight encounter. The infamous Dr Story was also resident briefly during Herle’s imprisonment, although he was executed at the end of May. Only one of Herle’s existing letters relates from this period whilst he was in the Tower; a document entitled ‘Collections made by William Herle of his conference with Dr Lopes in the tower of London’. From the ‘collections’ made, we can deduce that Herle was continuing his practice of agent provocateur, inveigling his way into his target’s confidence, and passing the resulting information directly to Lord Burghley.

It seems that Herle was discharged from prison soon after, for in October he wrote to Burghley as a free man. He enquired after the reception of his previous letter, in which he had requested the office of the survey of strangers, a topic about which he was vehemently concerned:

Assuring your Lord that the grudge of our people doth encrease daylye against them, and the lewd demenor of the strangers, doth mani wayes deserue it, for ther be of them Papistes, Anabaptistes, Libertynes, dronckards, Commune women, and Brothell houeses. allso espyalles, murtherers, theves, and Conspirators, with suche a confusyon as may reqwire a spedy order therin, which I take to be mi dutye to reveLe this far vnto your Lord as well for the preservatyon of the good, as the clensing of the rest: ffor their nombers do growe more and more.66

66 PRO SP 12 81/34. William Herle to Lord Burghley, 3rd October 1571. For more on this letter see Chapter 4.
Ironically unaware (or in denial) of his own candidacy as an ‘espyalle’, Herle had evidently recognised both an aptitude for his recent undertaking in prison, and the necessity of preventing the need for such episodes in the future. Advertising Burghley and the Queen of his intent to continue such practices in the fight against the threats to the Elizabethan regime, Herle was outspoken in his bid for the creation of the office of survey of strangers; an office, moreover, which if awarded to him, would offset the debts accrued during his detention.
CONCLUSION

‘As surely your Lord shall finde me in all mi procedinges bothe diligent & secrett, which be the prefferers of an humble fayth the more.’

In a letter from late 1583, William Herle divulged some politically sensitive information to Lord Burghley, revealing that a relative of the Lord Henry Howard’s had received

lettres & Reliqwes from beyond the seas, & hath att this present a notable lesuite desgysed in his servyce, of whose name & the particularityes besyde, your Lord shall with conveyent speede be secrettlye & faythfully advertised, ffor when it ymports her maiestie to be well informed therof, & so do I delyver it to your Lord. a grett Cowncellor. {I do send on into the contry specially about this} sub sigille confessionis.

Characteristically, Herle took the opportunity of linking the transmission of potent and important intelligence with protestations of his service, ‘so do I delyver it to your Lord’. This notional and physical association of intelligence and service was a recurring feature of Herle’s personal mandate to secure and maintain patronage, as evidenced in the previous chapters. This notion of ‘service’ - tacitly required and implicitly rewarded in Herle’s case by his patrons through preferment to such posts as the Rhagler of Cardiganshire and appointments abroad - with its cyclical and reciprocal modus operandi formed the basis for the Elizabethan political network based on complex and organic systems of

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1 BL MS Lansdowne 39 f.189r-192v. William Herle to Lord Burghley, 15th November 1583.
2 BL MS Lansdowne 39 f. 189r - 192v. The brackets indicate where a marginal addition has been made by Herle.
patronage. For Herle the pursuit of patronage was not figured through costly gifts like many patronage connections, but through the timely and considered transmission of sensitive information. The implications of this gift-giving, which had social and cultural importance, are significant. In the gift-economy of early modern England the gift held an important role in the marketplace. Associations of profit, reciprocity and barter accompanied the giving of gifts to patrons. As Jason Scott-Warren remarks:

In the court culture of early modern England, the line between gifts and bribes was becoming harder, and hence more important, to draw ... The early modern gift looks increasingly self-interested in the light of recent studies of patronage and corruption. ³

The mutual and economically-fuelled environment of gift-giving in the Elizabethan period was complicated when the gift being given was intelligence. The patronage bond conducted for profit and based upon rewarding the transmission of fresh intelligence placed the two participants in a problematical dynamic. The patron must reward the client for his gift of intelligence or be in a state of obligation to the client. But to perpetually reward the client for his intelligence might ultimately degrade the quality of the intelligence, as the bid for fresh news accelerated. Here we encounter the key problem when reading and analysing intelligence letters; the mutability of and motive behind the collection of their contents.

For Herle, whose letters of intelligence were his chosen route to preferment and solvency, the calculated exchange of usually unsolicited information marks him as an informer rather than a spy in his long periods of unemployment. Alan Marshall distinguishes between the two:

An informer ... could be distinguished from a spy by the fact that he or she was normally connected with the legal system and had personally initiated his or her investigations and accusations, usually for financial gain. Informers might later come under the control of the government but invariably initiated their careers by themselves.\(^4\)

This self-promotion through political intelligence placed Herle in a difficult position. He had to verify and corroborate his intelligence in order to produce copious information of high quality and veracity. He had to transfer the information discreetly and/or secretly, yet simultaneously manage to publicly advertise his precious status with his patron. This self-interested impetus driving Herle to constantly collate and source sensitive intelligence renders the material he presented in his letters radically suspect. The archive must be regarded as fallible, and necessarily challenges any conclusions and assumptions made by the modern reader.

Such is the nature of research into intelligence letters. Negotiating self-interest and false or carelessly collated data to penetrate the information with an eye to cultural, social, historical or political analysis encounters myriad dangers. The highly subjective and suspect motives for the collection of political intelligence forces the reader (both early modern and otherwise) to consider the integrity of the material. For the early modern recipient, a letter stuffed full of sensitive news was simultaneously a bonus and a nuisance, containing information which was unable to be immediately verified. Obliged to operate on largely uncorroborated data, the early modern policy-maker conducted his daily business amidst a body of untested facts and

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\(^4\) Alan Marshall, *Intelligence and Espionage in the Reign of Charles II* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), pp.4-5. Figuring Herle as an 'informer' rather than spy does not detract from the furtive and dubious associations connected with espionage as an enterprise. Geoffrey Elton reminds us of the informer's half-share in any fine imposed on a wrong-doer brought to the attention of the Star Chamber, 'Informing for Profit' in *Cambridge Historical Journal* 11 (1954):149-67, p.157. A Tricomi However, it remains very difficult to distinguish between 'spy', 'informer', 'agent' and other nomenclature relating to the gathering of information as the boundaries between these labels are so subtle and inspecific.
information. Add to this the idiosyncratic methods of transmission befitting the secret intelligence, and a picture emerges of an administration rich with intelligence sources, yet unable to function with the confidence that the intelligence was reliable.

Let us turn from the difficulties facing early modern recipients and question those encountered by the modern reader, uninitiated into the quotidian miscellanies proffered by countless intelligence sources. Many banal remarks regarding treasonous practices are now quite lost to us, and it is the trademark of the informer and spy to deliberately partially conceal or obscure much of his information to prevent leakage should the intelligence fall into the wrong hands. Much information is more routinely lost through the preference of the exchange of this material to be verbal: records of such meetings rarely surviving. Intricacies of allegiance, loyalty and agency are obscured by non-documentation and the passage of time - the systems of counter-intelligencing and double-agency expediently disposing of the majority of their paperwork.

Faced with this mutability of intelligence letters and their writers, the modern reader must approach this material with a different sort of attention than that demanded by other epistolary studies. The nature of the material and its transmission has resulted in a peculiar and particular type of end-care. Unlike personal and private letters which tell of familial news and events, social gossip and contain affective strategies to promote and extend kinship and/or friendship; intelligence letters (which are paradoxically also often private and personal letters) unite momentous political news with similar textual affect, demanding different storage and end-care, and possibly even requiring destruction. Letters which contain politically important material might be 'shown' to others in the administration, and even copied and circulated, resulting in a diverse distribution over different archives. Consequently the modern reader might have a partial and dispersed archive of an individual letter-writer's epistolary legacy to work with, materially affecting any enquiry and its conclusions.
In addition, an enquiry into the circumstances and experience of an intelligencer based upon his letters is always going to encounter partial evidence and questionable objectivity. Information, often confected and designed to promulgate favour and reward, is always altered to the author's bias. The atmosphere of deception and furtive activity surrounding the collection of intelligence has an inevitable impact on the letters as vehicles for that intelligence, and must radically alter their reception and readership.

With the awareness that an investigation into an intelligence letter carries a complex host of caveats and pitfalls, what can this type of material offer the reader? Where shall we situate William Herle's letters within the corpus of Elizabethan correspondence? Intelligence letters have been largely overlooked by the recent spate of epistolary studies, perhaps due to the persistence of the romantic notion of espionage espoused by JA Froude and others, who regarded this type of material as inferior, linked as it was to the furtive, dangerous and arcane activities of its writers. The letters reject standard analytical practices due to the difficulty of interpretation, problems with the durability of the archive, and the indefinable and unverifiable content. If intelligence letters have been denied recognition as a valuable resource because of their perceived dubious status, then they urgently need to be rescued and reconsidered.

I do not pretend to have explored all the avenues offered by letters which contain potent intelligence, nor have I produced an exhaustive survey; rather, this thesis marks the beginning of my enquiry into Herle's letters. That there is so much breadth of application in just one intelligencer's correspondence in terms of social, economic, cultural and epistolary content proves that there is more to this type of material than just political analysis. Herle's letters alone provide a valuable entry-point into the study of espionage activity, its link to the patronage structures within the Elizabethan administration, and a letter-writer's epistolary strategies to further his prospects via the transfer of sensitive information.
There is still much that can be done with the archive of Herle’s letters. Most of the letters are in Herle’s distinctive crabbed hand which is difficult to understand and transcribe. Thus even before they can be read, the letters must be converted into a legible format to enable a wider audience. The exclusivity of the letters as they exist in the archives may have prevented a wider distribution than they have hitherto received. Nevertheless, even in a transcribed physical and textual form, the letters still present some difficulty in interpretation and analysis. Individually, each letter is valuable in terms of historical content and epistolary forms, but together the nearly three hundred letters in various archives across England, with some letters twenty or more folio pages in length, present a considerable task for the reader wishing to mine the letters for information and utilise the corpus of correspondence as a resource for a further historical understanding of Elizabethan England. A central searchable resource such as an online electronic edition of Herle’s letters would enable efficient and rapid information retrieval, and afford the letters a wider audience than they currently receive whilst contained within exclusive manuscript archives. Search functions which could be refined and adapted to fit Herle’s individual ambit, such as ‘patronage strategies’, ‘language of advice’ and ‘linking of intelligence and patronage’ would allow the reader to immediately access Herle’s characteristic epistolary methods, while broader searches such as ‘religion’, ‘London locations’, and ‘the post’ would provide a more general approach and could benefit a wider audience.

William Herle’s letters chart a formidable career of duplicity and dissimulation sanctioned and encouraged by the Elizabethan administration, and given impetus by a conventional patron-client alliance with key political figures. Remarkably varied and spectacular in terms of their intelligence content, the letters are nevertheless restricted to a recurring format: the construction and maintenance of a patronage bond through the evocation of intimacy and goodwill, crucially centred and anchored upon actions and information pertaining to matters of political and national importance.
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12. BL MS Cotton Caligula C III f.68r-v. William Herle to Lord Burghley, 26th April 1571.
16. SP 53 6/52. William Herle to the Bishop of Ross, 28th April 1571.
Mi Lord [top of MS missing] forni[ture] knowes I have no mene to com by ani, & to [endure] [suche?] fleyes, and have nott somuche [sto]le to sitt on, nor a table to wryte on nor yett a clawtt to wipe on, which is more than I can endure Butt touching the servyce I [am] here fore, the tyme consumes and I do nothyng & ffor the liuetenant hath no warrant to suffer ani [acc]esse unto me, nor somuche as paper and inck unles I will write to your Lord or the Cowncell [w]hereby the cheeff purposer do decaye, ffor if in this beginneng I do nott entertaine a wis[e] oppinion with mi causes abrode, I mar all, as no dowtt Barthlett is ether fere redy [to] ron awaye, having no encoragement from me, or elles may give over ani further deling in the contrary passions that thus mete together, And withall I most have monney to go threw with the busy[nes in] sondry wayes, otherwise it is vayne to procede in it, for as I speake only the good oppinion of mi Prince, & her preservatyon, so is it nott xli nor a Clii can do me good, butt in the end as I deserue well, so lett me have well, oweing Barthelett a 3li 15s which he most nedes have presently, elles this mi committeng will make hym in dowtt of all together, and to breke of wholly in the busynes. It may plese you therfore to send me viijli which makes up xxli, and I will make you true accompte as I laye it furthe, being ashamed that I shold thus dayly importune your Lord, but that mi hability is nott egwall to mi good will being entred into suche a discredite with mi frynds ar com up to this parlyament, that where they had ment to have don largely for me, I am now wiped of all, and scarce a rag of myne own to mi back but borrowed. Desireng your Lord that I may speke [to] you tomarow mi self, for that I have sondry thyngs to say unto you by mowth, and this mi open bryng to the Cowrt will make the better oppinion of me with the Bishop and lastly that I may have the key of the marshallsea and mi man to repayre unto me, wheruppon rests mi grettest enterprise, and to understand your Lords plesure whither I may certeffye the Bishop that I was examined whither iff I had eue[r] accesse unto hym, or whither
ever I practised betwixt Charles and him either by letters or messinger, which I most nedes denye to have confessed ani of this, or elles I cannott attayne to the end, which is to appere gilltles to the Bishop of ani overture or yeldyng of mi side, wherby only I may enter into his former grace moreouer it may plesse your Lord to wryte me or cawse mr Blithe to do it whatt artycles I shall saye that I was examined uppon by the Cowncell, that I may be throwly armed, lest he perceive a further halltyng in the matter than before desireng your Lord to consyder of mi state here and how willingly I wold do ani thyng that were servisably, mary I lye on the grownd, which my yll leg cannott bere. So most humbly taking mi leve, and most ernestly desireng to speke with your Lord. iiiij april 1571. Your Lords verey humbly To the Lord Burghly her Maesties principall Secretary
I have bin mi Lord to speke with the Frenche skolemaster, who hath declared vnto me of a certyane iiiijth frind, that the Irisheman hath, beside the iij Ambassadors, who by all likelihood is som grett partye, and therfore I durst not be to Curyows in enqwireng of his name, butt on Thursday I shall know all, promiseng that all his frinds shall loyne in on, bothe towards his releeff and towards his delivery sending by me certain paper, pen and inck horne, waxe and seling threde so as now if I had a masse booke and certain furniture for the same, I shold wyn hym throwly. Again if your Lord wold help me with som receytt for hym to wryte by som luyce to cover his secretts the more, I dowtt nott butt ani hydden practis or entent of his wold easely be discoverd at full, who makes this accompte that it cannot be ani rebellion ether in Irishe or englishe mane, to intend the destructyon of an vsurper, an excommunicated person, or suche a on as the Pope hath given awaye her kingdomes allready, namely Ireland to the King of Spayne, wherby all those that favor religion in his Contrey, are throwly perswaded to owe no dutye nor allegiance to the Queens Maiestie, but rather ar bownd to roote her owtt and her posteritye for ever. I enqwired in his name of the frenche skolemaster whither the Bishop of Rosse departed also with this skottishe Lords: which shold happen verey displeasently I sayd to malachias, he being his cheef pillar and hope sondry wayes, and if he departed, whatt the Cawse shold be: and whatt comfort there remayned to those good thyngs he has in hand; whervnsto he answerd that the Bishop only went to the Qwene his mistres, with the Lords of Galloway and Leviston and was to retorn agayn withowt dowtt, with good assurance that all things shold succede well, mening to Commend this his care to the Bishop of Rosse before his departure and then with som hevye pawse he declared that a certain Castel[ in scottland was surprized in the night and mani worthy personaigs in the same, butt that the newes were com prively to the Bishop of Rosse, that it was taken
agayn, and that the other parte shold not enioye long this scope and grettnnes that they had, Now I entertayne still that hope of his escape hence, and according as your Lord with which makes hym lye in grett assurance, and according as your Lord willed me, I haue told hym that I haue bin in hand with som well disposed Catholickes mi secrett frinds, who will bestowe their devotyon uppon hym, which act haue ffeed hym from daye to daye with the hope therof, so it were well d[one?] that your Lord wold send me presently a 30 or 40\(^5\) to give hym in that be half, which he wold certeffye the skolemaster straight of, and so shold I Insinuated mi self the deper into their secretts, as allredy I have given hym a gowne and bowght hym ashert, which cost 5\(^5\) for he is utterly owtt of monney, sayeng that those which toke hym in the ship robbed hym of all he had, And withall I most humbly entreatt your Lord for that mi state is nott only bare, butt extreme, bothe without garments and owing a 15\(^{11}\) in the howse, to haue a consideratyon to me, whose good will doth nott fere a C dethes, for his Soveraignes servise and in this x dayes it hath cost me 4 or 5\(^5\) a daye with mi keper and otherwise in going abowtt this busines, and now can borowe no more, which I comment to your Lords goodnes, whom God preserue for ever having bin twise to seke losepho at Acerbo velutellis howse, and mene thys daye to go again, assuring your honor of on thing, that if bettwen this and Thursday we cannot gett large discovery of th’embassadors delings herin, I haue thought of a waye, which [if] your Lord will allowe, that the partye shall make sute to your Lord to be hard, and in vsing hym gently, to have all things reveled by his own mowth, wherin and in the rest, I beseche your Lord of som present answer and where I wrytt to yow ones that Richard Huddilstone might be brought in as a wyttnes, I thinck the same might rayse som gelovsye to the partye whyles he shew a certayn simplicitye, as though he vnderstod nomo tongs but englishe, which it may plese your Lord to resolue me in, Lastly there is grett matter to be Ciffted owtt of the ij Irishe students, which having som ayd of monney to follow the busynes, I wold decipher to mi vttermost power, thus expectyng to know whatt your Lord wold Commande me
beside, I humbly take mi leve. Att the marshallsea the xth of April 1571.
Raptim. Your Lords porest well wisher. W Herlle
To the right honorable mi good Lord the Lord of Burghley, her Maiesties
Principall secretorye give these
Wm Herle the Irishe prist the french scholmaster.

I have mi Lord browght this matter to a full issue, desiriows your Lord wold vowchesaffe to appoint me a certain tyme when to make report therof, which requires spede, if your weighty affayres wold permitt the same, yett hoping your Lord doth vnderstand by mr Blithe that I have bin there sondry tymes, which may excuse ani negligens that otherwise might be imputed to me, withall there is on committed yesternight to the marshallsea, whose name is Charlles and pretendes to be a Brabander borne at Bruxelles, but indee I vnderstand hym to be a scott and a minister to the Bishop of Rosse, of whom grett thyngs might be drawen, if he had bin a close prisoner, for it is a dangerows fellow, and conteyynes a whole masse of their secretts, but now he is verye tymerows, vppon which poynt the more might be wrought if he were alone, and this day on that is a skott of my acquaintance was sent to hym from the Bishop of Rosse which instructyons, by whom haply I cowd lerne somwhat, as happy is he that in suche wretched practises do ani service to his Prince and State, wherof it may plese your Lord to lett me vnderstand your will furthwith, as further I haue som new matter to saye vnto your Lord, which may att lest wise expresse mi humble good will and dutye, though no grett workes, Lastly Comending to your Lord mi hard Case, desirows to spend mi lyfe in ani thing her Maiestie and your Lord wold employe me and because there is nothyng more dere vnto me than to be restored to good oppinion and name, I humbly desire your Lord to be mi good Lord therin, which may be an argument that while I esteme that dutye, mi reverens to god and mi Prince cannott decaye nether can I committ ani vncomly thyng otherwise, wherin for that mi Lord of Salisbury is a verey lewell of this land, I beseche your Lord as I requested yow erst[?] that his oppinion ones conseved of me, may nott by this imprisonment and extremity be decayed / So prayng humbly for your Lords prosperity I take mi leve in haste from the marshallsea 1571 your Lords porest well willer. W Herlle.
To the right honorable mi good Lord, the Lord of Burghley, her Maisties Principall Secretory att the Cowrt in haste, hast, hast
maiij 1571
Wm Herle about 10 april 1571
Touching Malachias, he shall wryte vnto your Lord to desire that he may com to your presence for so he hath entreated of hym self before, alledging that he hath somwhat to say vnto your Lord wherupon your Lord sending for hym secretly by the back waye, with gentillnes he is to be won, and with promis of his former promotyon for he is ambicyows and obstinate and hath entred into som displesure with the spainishe ambassador, insomuche as he wold vtter all he said, yf he reffused now to helpp him for whose causse only it is, which displeasure of his might be aggravated (yf your Lord thought so good) ministring as it were some sharpnes and contempt proceding from the spainish ambassador.

Touching Ramsdon, no dowtt he is an apt man to do some gretter feact against the late Erle of Westmerland or ani other if he be cherished, which may nott only discoraige ani rebell, when he is no where saffe from his prince, butt expresse a wonderfull vigilancye in every actyon that her Maiesty and your Lord doth intend, only he hath bin a long suter from Awgust hither, lesing all that he hath, and is yett differred supposing that mr Governor hath reped the frute and prayse of their travayles without desert of his side.

Touching Charlles, he is the skottish qwenes man, and pretendes to be of the Lowe Contrey, butt as I lerne secrettly, is indee a scott, speking sondry langages, yett esely deciphered. he is one of the only and secretest Ministers that the Qwene and the Bishop of Rosse hath, and a practiser in all their ill delings in fflanders and that way, therin he hath contynued these iiiij yeres wellyn, bothe verye dere to his mistres and the Bishop, as also with the spainishe Ambassador / he hath dellt now and doth from tyme to tyme with our Rebelles beyond the seas, and with the Duke of alua and is privey as may appere with all their Confetherats of this side. bringing over nowe sondry writengs as—in—so short—a—tyme which be dangerows as I here and intercepted by the Lord
Cobham, wherfore yf your Lord do presently committ hym to close prison with some secrett token to the keper that I may have accesse vnto hym, I hope to discover ani parte that is in hym. which in wayeng of his nature and disposition for so short a tyme, I suppose easely compassed, for he is ferefull, full of words, gloryows, and given to the Cup, over whome I have allredy won some good degre, wisheng me beyond the seas, or if I wold go I shold want no frynds of the grettest sort.

Touching Swavinghamm, there apperes to be som owttward discontentment bettwen him and the spanishe ambassador, which is connyngly fed, for to desgise som matter therby as is thought, / nowe to discover hym fully mr Gilpine hath as a zelows man to his state and of good experience in the Lowe Contrey men shewed som good desire to enter in with hym, with whom he hath awncyent familiaritye, and is grettly requested to be still with hym, In all which parts it may plese your honor to give me instructyonns and Commandment what I have to do, and when to repaire to your Lord agayn.

To the right honorable my singuler good Lord, the Lord of Burghley, her Maiesties Principall Secretory. in hast haste.
11 Aprill 1571. Wm Herle.
5. SP 53/6/39 The Bishop of Ross to Lord Burghley.

My good Lord I praye yow most hartly to furder me to Rosover The pacqwett taken at Dover, which as I onderstand has bene taken be my Lord Cobhams servades, It is not ye first tyme that these who doeth bring any thing to me has bene so narrowly shifted be my Lordes deputeis at his comands, Wherupon It shuld proced I can not saye for I do not beleve he has any such commands from your Lords of ye counsell, and therfore it doeth appere it is done as much for malice borne to my mistres caus as for dewty to the Quene his own mistres, wherin I pray your honour beare with me yf my lugement be sinistre, And that your Lord will mak ye best of this, for as I told yow ye treuth this pacqwet is taken at this tyme both agains my will and wisheng, for now is not ye dew tyme to haue such thinges sett abrod, And I will promes yf they shall com to my handes there shall never one of them be vsed but as your honour shall think good// I do only Employ your Lord in this mater, and therfore Repose me whole vpon your goodnes principaly that the Quenes maiestie your souerane be not moved to contrave any offence against me, considering I wold so fayne please her maiestie in all thinges to me possible. Thus Refferring to your Lords wisdome I committ yow to goddes protection at my logeing this monday the xvij of aprile 1571 your Lords affectionat at command lohn Rossenn

To the Right honorable my verey good Lord My Lord off Burghley 16 Aprill 1571 B. Ross to my Lord.
The keper of this place mi Lord, hath receaved your warrant for Charlles close imprisonment, and for the staye of all suche as desire to speke with hym, who is to execute his charge as zelowsly as truly, for that he wisely forseeth the matter by the importance of the words to towche the state, which Charlles hath bin visited all this daye of a grett sight of his fellowes, tyll a lyttell before your Lords warrant. and even now was with me the same william Barthlett mi mannes hoste, whom I mencyoned to daye, to have spoken with hym, sorrowing the Chance to be so sodayn, and to be happned so vnsasonably for mi Lord of rosse saith he is allso commanded to kepe his howse, whose wisdom was to have forsene this soner, butt now reqwireng my ayd, I told hym yf he wold vse fidelity and secresey, I wold hasard mi pore fortune to conveye polytyckly ether messaige or letter vnto hym, wheruppon with grett contentment he departed, menyng to retorne tomorow, beside that oppinion is suche of me, as he is to be perswaded to ani thyng, telling me of ij skottishe shippes belonging to ffife in scottland as who vale downe this tyde to black wall, and might seme by hym as though there were some partye or som matter in them, which is worth the serrche, but then your Lord may remember on thing, that if they send ani speciall partye, he most be loked for aswell benethe gravesend, as of this side, for therin restes a polycye of suche delyngs, with all he told me that on Morgan who had bin in spaigne, was a dere and secrett frind of the Bishops, and so was Thomas Cobham, butt that was spoken in suche manner as though he were a vewer of things to currye more favor, exclamyng that Donbarten was won by treson, wherof they had somtyme dowted whither it were taken or no, and now against all religion and honor the Erllle of Lennowx had hanged vp the Bishop of Saint Andrewes, even the wisest man of all scottland, puttyng the Lord flemmyng and other to strayt and hard keping, which had so moved the Lord of Grawnge the keper of Edinburgh Castell, as he had lustly seyzed
bothe the Castell and towne against all men into his own hands tyll the
kyng shold com to full ripenes, fortifieng the abbey called holy Roode,
and the Cathedrell Churche, which loyned with the Castell, was a
warlyck possessyon of bothe the endes and the myddell, loking vnder
this pretence thus honestly gotten bothe for releeff of men and money
owtt of ffrawnce to the Qwenes behooff, with this he told of certayn
prodigyows and monstreows tokens, presaigeng grett fyre to fall owtt of
heven vpapon this Realme shortly, and these certainly be thyngs that ar
awgmented from hand to hand in this towne, who souere ffeedes them,
adding strainge birthes and wonders to bring the people into an
astonishment, and so consequently into mislike of the present
governement, butt it may plese your Lord to instructe me how to
procede further, for as these matters be grett, so reqwire they
prescriptyon and awthority, having this day lefft (as your Lord
Commanded) a rapport in wryteng of that I sayd to yow by mowthe, and
may reqwire a knowlege of your Lords plesure to euery poynt, and that
presently, for that tyme is the cheeff observatyon of all, wanting only
hability to mi pore good will, being Codrus hym self.
I have told Malachias that his frinds forsake hym, and that his own
advise was nott ill to have written to your Lord wherby haply he might
gett more liberty, and vnder the same our flight might be the easier, so
vsing his repaire now and then to the garden, which I seme to gett of
the keper, by order as it doth mesure all the rest by due degrees, he
having therupon written to your Lord this supplicatyon inclosed whose
receitt doth minister good occasion to your to send secrettly for hym,
mary it may plese your Lord that as mi oppinion was to dele gently wyn
hym gently, so if yow thought good that I shold say beffore hand that
the Bishop of Rosse were Commanded to kepe his howse, it wold so
temper hym before hand, as your myldnes to hym wold appere verie
clemencye / Commending to your Lord mi necessity which is so
extreme, as I cannott hold vp the hed longer, without som ayde / and
yett mi will desires dethe where mi prince may be served by it / prayng
God for your Lords prosperity, and wisheng if I shold com ani more vnto
yow ye wold prescribe when and \textit{where} how, for mi open repayre to your
Lord may hinder gretter thyngs than ar yet expressed, from the
marshallsea in hast the xij of Aprill 1571 Your Lord most hummbly W
Herlle

To the right honorable mi good Lord the Lord of Burghley her Maisties
principall Secretory in hast haste
xvj Aprill \textbf{1571}
Wm Herle

yesternight mi Lord, was with me the same william Barthlett the Scott which is hoste to mi man, excusing that he had told me the day befoore an vntrue tale, of the Bishop of Rosses committeng to his own howse, which he had hard of one he sayd of the contrary side, butt that the Bishop he thancked God was never better, having bin with the Queens Maiestie on Monday att night till after x, of the Clock, determyneng now to remayne here till as his mistresse cawse were ended, which bi her commandment he was willed to do.

Thus I most write playnly and directly to your Lord suche speche as passeth in handling of this Cawse, be it true or no, to th’end the judgement therof be your Lord only, who is to se by their haltysing or playnesse whervnto they tend the more, yett craving verye humbly, for thatt I haue to dele with a suttil partye the Bishop of Rosse from whose fforge mani connyng inventyons may rise, that I may have instructyons from your Lord the better to gide the Cawse, so then will I procede in the same, being told by william Barthlett that the Bishop wayes nott ani thyng the Cowncell may do, and towching the letters saies he, that be intercepted from Chariles, their Contentes ar so hydden from them by Ciphres and other conveyance, as they ar brought to a gretter mase, than ani way satisfyed by them, Butt he hath entred to a leage with me, promiseng mowntaynes, so I stand frindly in this behalf, well assured he saith, of mi good will towards hym, and of mi willingnes to ani that be distressed wherupon he had iij requestes he sayd to make th’one was to know by whose commandment of the Cowncell, or by how many, and whatt their names were that directed the warrant for Charles close imprisonment, and if it were possibell to gett the Copye of the sayd warrant: The second was, whither ani of mi Lord Cobhams men, or ani other were appointed ether secrettly or openly to observe suche as cam to inqwire for the sayd Charlles, and to describe how they proceded in it, and who they were by name: The third was, that the sayd Barthlett
might repayre vnto me, with messaiges from tyme to tyme, and to be
the mowth bettwen Charlles and hym, which this way might be don
clenly, and voyd of all suspicyon, desiereg that I wold comfort hym, lest
he were weke and tymerows, and that I wold convey vnto hym att his
next commyng som monney sherts and suche other necessaries as he
wanted, (vnder which I suppose som secrett wrytengs or discouery of
their mynds might be conteined, whervnto with grett circumsance and
promis—of—his—side—of—fidelity I consented mary so inresing the
difficultyes and dangers herin, as if soleymne fayth and secrecye were
nott vset of their side, I were undon for ever, which he confirmed with
suche reverens and assurance as that it shold turne beside to the best
gayne that ever I had, whervnto repflyeng that I most vse grett warynes
and policye in this beginneng, so might I nott staye long in talke with
Charlles, butt that uppon mi perill, I wold convey a paper and ink vnto
hym, wherby he might the better declare his mynde, and I repaire the
lesse vnto hym, which with grett thanckes he liked, shewing that he
cowd Cipher his menyng vnknown to ani butt to the Bishop hymself,
and so departing, he wille thys mornyng agayn with me I therfore wold
know of your Lord whatt to answer to hym in euery parte, and whatt to
minister beside. Off thother side I have bin allredy twise att a secrett
hole with Charlles, som tymes aproching and somtymes starting aside,
as on in grett fere to surprised thare hasarding mi life as it were for his
comfort and ayd, and yett adding suche causses of suche dread to hym
(for that he is ferefull beyond mesure) as may work hym the more
which—hath to ani purpose intended, I further haue shewn hym the trust
committed to me by william Barthlett, which hath won hym
marvaylously, tellying hym promiseng hym paper and incke to utter his
mynde, butt he wold haue som of his fellowes wryte first, whervnto I
sayd that tyme most work that, butt in hym, for that I cowd not tary ani
longe talke for the danger which was grett, he most vse tyme and
occasion as they were presented to hym, a felicity that hapnes seldom
to men in his Case, wherwith he was contented muche, perswading me
to leve this vile and effeminate state, and I shold haue beyond the seas
ether in ffrance, spaigne, or fflanders whatt degre I cowd wishe, requesting the lone of some frenche booke of-me, which I promised, butt I haue non here butt the psalmes and service of the reformed religion, and that may brede mi deiscredite with hym, if it might plese your Lord therfore bi this berer to send me som story or prayer that may serue the torne, which shalbe reserued for you agayn and that your Lord wold remember to say somwhat to mi former letter. so humbly taking mi leve, as your living servant to the dethe. att the marshallsea the xvij\textsuperscript{th} of Aprill 1571 in all hast. Your Lord verey humbly W Herlle

To the right honorable mi good Lord the Lord of Burghley her Maiesties principall secretorye. in hast. hast.
18 April 1571
Wm Herle Bertlet Charles
yesterday mi Lord, vppon the stay of Melchior and Mattinson, I communed with Mattinson (with whom I was famillier vppon Charlles first apprehensyon) who wondred he sayd of so grett iniustice and extremitye as was used, contrary to all forme of Lawe, and contrary to reson her self, which occasion ministred, I axed the cawse of Charlles committeng, whye the matter was so hevye against those that only cam to se hym, confirmeng that our eqwitye was small, wherof I and another gentyllman were good examples, having bin so long detayned for no cawse, and hable to be charged noway, nott yett knowing whye we shold thus violently be punished. By my trothe sayth he, if ani knavery be rife in the world and communely excersised vnder the habite of lustice and State, it is here in England, and for Charlles I will shew you the whole truthe, which may satisfye you the more. The sayd Charlles is borne in Bruxelles and hath serued the Queen and the Bishop well ny these vij yeres, and especially employed, in these latter yeres very much in the Queens busynes, for as he is a propper man, so is he very diligent and faythfull, suche vertues as Princes most embrace, which Charlles desirows now to visite his frynde in the Low Contrey (where he hath had nott bin of long tyme) and partly to supply som wants that he had, axed leve (saith he) of mi Lord of Rosse to reppaire thither, who w[as] contented licensed his departure, Butt Charlles being of the other syde, mett with on hamellton a servant of the Queen who intreated hym in the Queen’s name, whatt busynes soeuer he had otherwise, to retorne with a certayn male into England and with some speciall messaige, which conserved the Queen muche to have, wherupon Charlles as a zelows servant to his mistres, Lefft his own cawses, bringing the male over and yett ignorant whatt it conteyned, who att his arrivall was stayed and brought to the Lord Cobham and examined, which Lord findeng small cawse against hym, mynded to discharge hym, yett till he had pawse further sent hym to on Legos howse the porter of
the Marshallsea, to be kept there on night vnder payne of xl' pretending therby as though it were som actyon against Charlles, butt the Porter contrary to the Lord Cobhams order, brought hym straight to the marshallsea, wheratt he was noles moved, than thought som grett wrong don to hym, to have his prisoner committed close, butt marvaileng more whence this sodain intelligence shold procede to the Cowncell, whom otherwise he had ment to have discharged afther a daye or ij att th'vtttermost, and being sollicited by mi Lord of Rosse and vs (saith Mattinson) he sent in grett choler for the Porter, who excused he had non other place than the Marshallsea to kepe hym in safely and that he was ignorant how he was made close prisoner butt by a warrant from the Cowncell as he hard by the keper, of the prison. Now proceeds he for the thyngs that were in the male they were only bookes, and suche as mi Lord of Rosse avowed to the Queens Maiestie to be his own doing, nether was it new matter, butt well knownen a xij moneth since, wherof on booke treated of the Skottishe rebelles, and of the dutye of the subiect to the Prince, and what poyson it was to mayntayne them or partake with them, inveighing against the Sturrers of Commothyons and directyng the markes to our mistres (as it shold seme bi his speche) Another booke was, of the Scottishe Quenes titell to the Crowne of England, which was so stuffed with good arguments, grett reson and plenty of our Commune Lawes, as mi Lord Keper shold say vnto the Bishop of Rosse in waye of examinacyon, mi Lord he was skillfull in our Lawes that made this booke, which yf your Lord so avowe for your worke ye had good ayd thervnto, and were verey necessary to be knownen, to whom the Bishop repplyeng that this was his own worke withowt ayd of other, alledging that no Lawes nor scyens was so hard, butt that as diligent a man might attayn to, therfore tyme had towght hym and the frowardnes of mennes proceding to lerne the best deffences and helpes that he cowd to a good cawse Then I enqquired whatt other bookes ther were, which he answerd that there were sondry, butt he passed them over in suche maner, as though he wold kepe that to hym self, which by good occasion I sought twise or thrise to
vnderstand, but he still turned to som other matter. Affter supper I was in hand with hym agayn marvayleng that the scottishe Queen was so long detayned having so grett frinds and her delyuery so offten att hand and yett still defferred; whervnsto he sayd that the Queen of England had broken so mani promises, and abused her so-offten and the ffrenche king so offten as there was nether honor nor fidelity in her, and yett can your Queen say (saith he) God forbid that mi Cosine of Scottland shold be kept prisoner by me, or her right to this crown and revenewes, butt ffye (saith he) and assart withall for those words, which ar so full of vntruthe and infidelity, ffor she and the Cowncell haue caussed the ffrenche ambassador to wryte vppon all honor, faith, and assurance, that the Queen shold be delyuered, and that she shold be sett into her kingdom with a grett power to repos[] her own, and to chastise all her rebelles, thus temporizeng from tyme to tyme and putting of the ffrenche power that shold haue bin sent into Scottland, wherby whole sommers haue bin deffered, and euer when as ani ffonce was prepared, she straight wayes vsed new pollicyes and promises, in suche solempne maner as might perswade ani good menyng to beleue it, whiles she had nether regard to God nor Religion, nether to lustice nor Lawe of her self, which all Princes know att this day, butt she can abuse them no longer he concluded. And in the mene tyme (he proceeded) suche an effusyon of blood in scottland, is to be required att her hands, and now ar we grownen into that extremitye that we most destroye on another, which scorge being procured by you, take hede you scorge follow nott vs, your mistresse sent in with grett force the Erle of Sussex to destroy and kill all he might, overthrowing townes, Castells, and gentyllmens howses where he cam, as a most extreme enmy, and these be the frutes of your peace and fair promises. ye repplied I, there was grett reson and eqwity in that deling, for it is on thyng to receve a fugitive and for his saffety to harber hym, (which the Privilegs of eche Contrey doth reverently observe) and another thing to Receue your Allyes rebelles, comming in with armed hand, and from your contry to invade the Queens borders, to sturre Comмотyons, and
to løyne with them in so yll part, as men Confetherats, which is a playn condempnatyon of ani excuse that may be made, and an open breache of ani leage or promis ye wold haue observed to yo. Butt (saith he) whatt had they then to do with the Lord hammelltons howse and Lands, and with sondry other who medled nowaye, beside that the Bordrers of eche side or men given to spoyle and small obediens, whose loyneng with ani syde shold not have bin so hardly revenged. Well sayd I there was a brute amongst vs, that your Queens right shold have bin established in this parliament for the succession and her liberty determined withall No saith he, there is nott a word mencyoned therof (as we vnderstand, butt rather there is som devise to barre ani speche of it, and thus is she dallyed of every side, And to this may also be applyd the comming of the Erlle of Morton, who procured by the Cowncell here, to putt in sondry things which being disputed with grett arte, and drawn furthe att lengthe, att last was fayne to retorne for lack of sufficent comission, wherby you may [ ] throw, the good delyng and menyng that is vsed, and whatt luste cawse of complaint, so good a Qwene hath, so humble a prince, so bowntifull, so faire a Creature, and so valiant a mynde, endued with singuler Constancye and wisdom, butt her true Cawse and good frinds, will nott se it long vnredressed. Being spoyled by her Rebelles of such a masse of Plate and lewelles, as never Scottland was master of, wherby they haue bin mayntayned with her own against their Soveraigne, and brought hither into England to be sold, so as mi self hath sene (saith he) on lewell of hers in gold smiths hands valued at 5000l and your mistres likewise had her share, namely a Perlle among other things, which our Qwenes dere father, harry the french king had given her, estemed att a marvaylous price. / ¶

Now Barthlett mi mannes host, hath told me that the Bishop of Rosse toke the staye of his men verey displesantly, butt muche more in that the Ambassadors secretory, was in the sayd Company, which might brede grett suspicyon to the Cowncell of som privy luggling bettwen them, as allredy their familiarity was vehemently noted, butt (saith he) it may be excused the better in that the sayd Secretory, is of the same
Contrey that Charlles is of (where inde Charllles is a naturall scott, brought vp in bruxelles, and yett this part do they marvaylously defend, whattsouer the mistery be) alledging that the Stowttnes of the Bishop of Rosse is suche, as he wayes nott whatt may be don to hym, pretending som grett assurance he hath of mani sides, insomuch as he pronownced openly, that if the Cowncell wold fall to stayeng of his men, they shold staye hym also, and so the game wold begin, wherupon the Bishop went straight to the Cowrt to travayll abowtt them, fully perswaded that these were only tragedyes raised to hynder the Queen his mistresse cause, butt that he had sent iiij presently into ffrawnce, which shold prevent the worst, and shutt off suche abusive delayes and mockryes as Princs had byn led with to long, and that Duglas shold be dispatched to the scottish Qwene furthwith, from whom they loked for a Poste this night. And that it was well known whatt supplye of monney the Queens maiestie had sent after the Erille of morton, to th'end it whold be the better colourd, and thercfore was garded also with englishmen, so likewise was were all our practises discoverd to the Bishop who was the vigilantest and bowntifullest party a live desrireng me to dele in this matter of Charlles, as a mediator bettwen bothe, and it shold be the best office that euer I did, which he wold mayntayne with suche fayth and secrecye as shold plesure me butt never hynder me, shewing how polityckly the Bishop had vsed the matter whyle he was close prisoner att the Bishop of Londons, where scarce a flye had accesse vnto hym vnsene, and yett monney and wise coveyance won all, receving letters and discowrses from his frinds, and retornyng the like to them, which was ordred in this sort, that on wold com with an open scedute, contayneng nothyng butt officiows and frivolows matter, specially suche things as might plese in sight and hering which brought to the Bishop of London and perused, wold send on of his men with the party to the Bishop of Rosse, then had the sayd party redi to deluyuer with the sayd scedule owtt of his shert sleve a rolle, which order the Bishop obserued again, answering openly the schedule for forme sake, deluyuering his rolle, and thus was the Bishop of
London abused and his turne serued. declaring further that Thomas Cobham was on tewsdai att night with Talking with the Spanish ambassadors Secretory, I finde hym Bishop of Rosse and certeyn other gentyllmen with hym, and that the Bishop hath grett and secrett repayre vnto hym of sondry gentyllmen and frynds, whom I hope to bowlle owtt, moreouer I haue iij thyngs to vtter towching this matter and partye, which only I wold revele to your Lord by mowth.

Talking with the spainish ambassadors Secretory, I finde hym to haue good likeng of me, but he is more warye and modest in speche than the rest, mesuryng well euery word and sentence with a pawse, I axed hym whatt hope was of these contentyons and differencs bettwen us and the Lowe Contreyes for th’entercowrse, he answered that he sawe nothyng butt devises and delayes, now fayneng on thing and then another with small menyng of ani conclusyon, butt (sayth he) we are still spoiled in the mene tyme by your natyon and by those rebelles that ye mayntayne, as though it were don vppon a good reckning tyll the paye daye, Butt now saith he that the mores ar all destroyed, and the leage concluded bettwen the Pope, the king and the venetians, against the Turke, if so might an enmye were somwhatt stayed, mi master estemes nott England, nor all these matters more than the wayght of a flye, whervnto the king hath good menes to make his own satisfactyon, loyneng in those spoyles and offencs in a maner off speche as it were the frenche king with his master as though the greeffer of th’one were commune to bothe.

Malachias vppon his retorne from your Lord told me wonders of your affability and wisdom describeng to hym whatt he did till the howre he was taken, which he confessed to be true, opening som other matters to your Lord butt nott so ffar as you wold haue had don, wherupon you committed hym back agayn, concluding that his liberty and prefferment was in his own hands, nott medlyng with his Conscyens att all, but for discouery of suche practises as were made against the State, wherin he answerd (as I perceve butt verey coldly and far from the matter) sayeng that he had never sene the Bishop of Rosse butt ones, Butt he hath
commended hym self wholly to mi Cowncell and directyons, to do or say
whatt I wold haue hym, thancking me that I had given to suche sownd
advise, as to be playn with your Lord and true in those thyngs, which he
shold you shold axe of him (only his religion and Conscyens was
reserued) wherin for the speche your Lord had of me, it was passingly
handled, confirmeng his oppinion the more of me than euer it was
beffore, for sayth he to me, you ar in extreme ill conceytt with the Lord
of Burghley, bothe to be a prodigall man, withoutt governement, having
good parts and abusing them ytterly, And that Iohn poole and you wold
have betrayed the Cardinall and have become Pirates at the seas, Also
that your Lord axed hym who whatt gowne it was he ware and whatt
compani he had, Butt he bad me be of good chere, for he had answerd
in mi behalf, sayng that I was a good man and that Prodigality had some
spaice of Charity in it, and therfore nott ytterly to be condempned,
where Covetowsnes had nether deffence nor hope att all Now to bring
Malachias hym to a full discouery, there remaynes butt on of iij wayes,
which by your Lords advise when I com to you, may be effected. ¶
Lastly your Lord sees whatt a Charge ye haue given me for Charlles and
hym, wherin if I haue resonable advise from yow, and secrett reppaire
to you when soeuer the cawse requires to your Lord with mayntenance
to go forward with mi busines, I shalbe hable (for I spend and toylle and
haue nott wherewith) I shalbe hable to do the Queens Maiestie and your
Lord good service in this, wherin I conseve suche further matter, as
desurses grett Care and diligence, which if it may and shall shew in
travayll to be noles zelows than Commendable. Butt if these matters be
nott plyed and assisted, I shalbe discouerd to the world with a
perpetuall enfamye, and your Lords displesure may rise to condempe
me, the circumstances nott being well handled, desireng rather vpon
mi knees that your Lord will vse me no further, than suche a mischeef
shold rise, and having mi liberty I wilbe (towards the which I haue putt
in sureties) I wilbe redy verey humbly to ani thyng I may, so prayng God
for your preseruatyon and prosperity long to contynew, ffrom the
marshalsea the 19. of Aprill. 1571 your Lords most humbly. I shold
nedes speke with your Lord presently howsoever I do, for the haste and the importance is grett. W Herlle

To the right honorable mi good Lord, the Lord of Burghley, her Maiesties Principall Secretory giue these Cito ito ito
W Herle Charles Malachias the booke etc. Lord Cobham pur
Att mi retornne from your Lord yesternight, I found William Barthlett to spake with me, for the Bishop attending some answer from Charles, with suche assurance giuen me of the Bishops syde, as ether for the trust he conseves, or the trust he menes to committ vnto me, I am in that degre with hym, as I may worke grett and secret thyngs, nott only for the present, but for the tyme to com, iff now the matter be handled clene, wherein he pressethe me for an answer from Charles, thersfore it may plese your Lord to consider therof, for his likeng of me (which surely is muche) may serve yow to exceeding purpose mani wayes, and if I may have Charles letter which I deliuered your Lord yesternight, to give Barthlett this mornyng, they being so made vp, as no suspicyon growe that they of have bin broken their openyng, I may do from hence furth whatt I wll, Butt if they be differred till the after noone, the tyme will brede mistrust. withall if they contynew to wryte in cipher, whither it be your Lords plesure I shall still send them to your Lord or elles deliuer them streight where they be addressed. And finally whither I may repayre to the Bishop with suche messaige, as I receve from Charles by mowth, which may brede the gretter trust in travaileng in that manner, and may discover the more matter by entring into nerer familiaritye with hym, changing writeng haply into messaige, and bringing them by menes to wryte both vnto me, wherby I enter into a hope, that I may lerne Charles Cipher, pretending therby to wryte the more secretty. I haue talked with Charles abowtt mydnight who hath deliuered me another letter for the Bishop in cipher, which I send herewith and conteynes as I suppose his examinatyon before your Lord and the Lord Chamberlain, wherin he sayth that he hath bin hard handled by yow in groping hym verye nere, and that he was demanded whatt liveng he had in the Lowe contreyes, for that he alledged whatt his going over to be to visite his frinds and to recover somwhat there, his answer was a C crownes by the yere, then was replyed why he whold serue a Bishop
being so well hable to lyue of hym self, which he excused uppon the Duke of alua detayneng the same. fffurther he was charged that Melchyor cam to hym, which he sayd was of fryndship, being bothe of on contrey. allso with mackinson, Barthlett and other, enqwireng whatt messaige they brought hym from the Bishop butt he denied that they brought ani, desireng me ernestly to tell mackinson therof, for that he and melchior shold be brought before the Cowncell to day, Now if it be your Lords plesure that I go vnto the Bishop it might also plese yow to give me som matter to minister vnto hym, to wyn the more grace and to hale hym on the more, vnderstanding even now that the Bishop menes to be att the Cowrt to day and therfore wold haue Charlles instructyons beffore hand, and this requires your Lords present resolutyon and answer, whom God preserue to his holy will, in haste from the marshallsea this sonday mornyng 1571 Your Lord verey humbly W Herlle

To the Right honorable mi good Lord, the Lord of Burghley, her Maiesties principall Secretory give these in all hast hast haste
Je suis este en tres grande peine et soucy jusques a ce matin que j'ay reçeu vostre lettre escripte Dimanche à six heures du soir, et pour par icelle avoir entendu qu'avez reçu mes trois Lettres, et ce par ce que je pensois seurement que ce porteur Maistre Erle n'avoit deliure icelles, ains a quelcung du conseil, (comme je suis esté advise par ung vray homme de bien et prestre qui est icy prisonnier pour la Religion Catholique) et qu'il ne fault pas trop fier à luy, en aulcune maniere, comme j'ay faict jusques à ceste heure, encore qu'il m'aye faict plusieurs demandes que je ne puis penser quelles viennent de lui ains de quelcun du conseil, comme de me demander apres la Contesse de Northumb. et apres ung sien grand amy callid Janvier, qui luy avoit porté un petit mot de Lettre. A quoy je luy ay incontinent respondu comme je vouldrois à ceulx du conseil, l'assurant que je n'avois aucune cognoissance d'Anglois en Flandres. Monsieur, il ne se fault pas confier en luy, et quant escripuez à Madame de Northumberland, qu'elle se garde de lui escripre quelle m'a veue.

Abowtt midnight mi Lord, I cam to Charlles chamber dore, alledging that the gentillman his neighbor was haply com that night to lye in his Chamber, which had opened the occasyon to me so to haue free accessse vnto hym, yett shewing grett fere to mi self, but comfortyng hym in that I might, reserving of purpose the Bishops letter, whose cipher I gaue your Lord yesternight, till I might fully know hys mynde towchyng those poynsts the Bishop reqwired me to know att his hands, yett tellyng hym that I had a letter for hym, cowd nott finde it in the darke and durst nott seke it for my chamber ffellowes, which vnhaply I had forgotten to putt a part beffore night, wheratt he was importunate to haue it by and by, butt I told hym there was no remedy tyll the mornyng. And demanding of hym in the Bishops name whither he had byn examyned who gave hym the male, and whither he had confessed it was hammellton and lastly whither his examinatyon entended not to know whatt delyng he had with the english rebelles at which word he was so astonyed, as albeit though there were no light his allteracion was apparent and falling into A sodein trembling and to suche a ffaltryng of his tong, as in som whyle he cowd expresse nothyng well, butt in th’end he axed, whye then hath nott mi Lord his letters? which I answerd yes, butt that before he had receved them, he wrytt me a letter to this end, and vsed the like speche by mowth or he had deciphred the sayd letters, and this was th’occasyon, yett hallf stamryng he sayd that he had confessed nothyng of hammellton, butt for the rebelles he detested them, and knew no one of them, vseing suche vehement passion in speking of them, as though they had byn fellowes to the devyll, and that the executyoner had bin by to have promised som present fawtt, like to escape his mowth sayeng in ded that your L had threttned hym dethe or att lest wise the losse of his eres, and this stickes depe in his breste, wherupon your Lord may worke dowttles the whole discoverye namely if I be committed close
prisoner and examined upon these articles, which I exhibyt herewith a matter noway deniable by mani proffes. And in this place I glawnsed att some secrett kinde of wryteng, to passe by his mene bettwixt vs, butt he gaue verey close answer. Then I told hym of ij speciall frynys I had among the rebelles, whose chance I lamented grevously, desirows only to know how they dyd, and whatt life they led and where; th'one was the Cowntesse of northumberland, whose pore kinseman I was by the Somersetts, and the other a companion of myne Thomas lenny, butt he cowd endure no motyon of them att all, protesting he never knew them, nor vnderstod what names I ment by them, wheratt reconcileng hym with more plawsible and sweter matter I left hym contented and so departed for that night. Now this mornyng knowing whatt tyme he shold com furth I conveyed mi self secretly beffore into the privey in the gardein, where I delyuered hym the Bishops letter, who with grett loye receving it, promised answer in th'after noone, butt still harping upp on a certayn fere to lese his eares I confirmed hym agayn, but in being espyed com from the privey by lohn grey that attends upp on hym, I was sharply reproved by hym, which I excused by medecine and by the solublenes of mi body that risse therof, repaireng in the after noone to Axe alley, where he cast me owtt of the grate and answer to the Bishops letter, which I present herewith and menyng to have caste vp a letter of myne owne, whose copi is here also I was espied by a bakers wife who objected to me ytt cowd be no honest matter that I offred in so vnffytt a place, which she wold declare vnto the keper, butt I gave the best words I cowd, and so departeng delyuere the sayd letter vnder Charles stayres dore to hys own hands, who within a whyle after delyuere me an answer to the same, which also I have here with me.

24 April 1571
12. BL MS Cotton Caligula C III f.68. William Herle to Lord Burghley.

I have copyed owtt mi Lord, the Cipher butt it was nott abowtt me when those that cam which your Lord sent to me, to whom I made grett difficultye to delyuer ani writeng, the more to cover mi delyng, having ment for that I never cowd close up Charles letter, to have broken in ii or iij parts, yett in suche sort as they might well have bin peced agayn together to th’end that I might haue declared to the Bishop that I was serched, and had so broken them before hand hydeng them away and now sent them to hym that he might be the better armed, wherby a second trust might rise in hym and mi purgatyon appere sufficient, reqwireng hym as he is wise and noble, now to shew it and neuer to confesse of my being with him, wherupon I am sure he will write to me and further matter may be discovered menyng in th’affter noone to send your Lord the Cipher I drew, therfore yf it seme good vnto you, it may plese you to retorne Charles cipher to be vsed as I entended wherof no dowtt gretter service is to ensue, that allso your Lord wold vowchesaffe to lett me know whither in the serche they have fowd Charles Cipher or no. Lastly having the sayd Charles letter back agayn to delyuer to the Bishop I mene to tell hym that I were Irons and that fer no torment (being threttned the Rack) I mene to disclose the Bishop or Charles for that mi extremity rests thereuppon even of deth or perpetuall prisonment, desirows to know of your Lord if I be examined how I shall behave mi self and whatt I shal yeld vnto and whatt nott. They have I have enclosed here certayn notes of myne owne, and that pece of paper which is closed vp after charles manner conteynes nothyng but myne owne practis how to make vp a letter after that sort so commending mi self humbly to your good Lord I take mi leve 26 of April in close prison 1571 Your Lord verey humbly W Herlle.
13. BL MS Cotton Caligula C III f.70. The Bishop of Ross to William Herle.

I heare you haue beene before the Counsell and charles face to face what you haue said to him or he to you in their presence I am ignorant therefore yf you will advertise what the same was in effect I will geue you my best advise, I am sory of the handling which doth not pretend of any of my house I mervayle not little that you did keepe such letters beside you so long, I heare also charles is committed to the tower Let me haue answere with diligence that I may the more playnly make answere to those thinges which shalbe demaunded for you Which I will doe as apperteyneth in honesty after I haue heard from you God preserve you This morning after the receipt of your letter ymediatly.

I thanck your Lord for your answere, which hath much releewed me, but I haue not beene face to face with Charles, nor out of this chamber since I was committed ffor they observe me streightly and deale with great rudenes with me, having this morninge beside my Irons I had a payer of shackells added so as I can scarce move, And for this speech of my beeing at Court, is only their finesse and devise to wring some matter foorth, The like also is said to me that Charles hath confessed the whole of my dealing and conveyance with him, threatning me to the tower and Rack, which I hope that Charles is not of so weake a kinde to yeald so filthy to any examinacion they can make as I for my parte am resolved to abide 5000 deathes before any thing proceed from me vnworthy the name of a man, Nowe therefore it may please you to vse your comfortable advise and counsell, and your Lord shall here continually from me of all that passeth very glad that this proceeded from none of your house which doth confirme an assured minde in me to stand stiffe in the rest, And for keeping of Charles letter by me was don of good purpose to have deliuered it my self, and to vse the more surety and secrecy to the cause ffor that also I would haue conferred with you by mouth of matters not meete to haue beene comitted to letters And as for Charles comitting to the Tower, I heare nothing only praying to God to geue him constancy ffor these are but certen thundrings amase him, ffor that he is young, But I haue a good opinion in his faithfull promise to me, and in his good education and experience of the world expecting your Lords answere ffor in honesty you shall haue good cause to make a good accompte for me beseeching God to prosper your honorable proceedings writte ymediatly after the receipt of your Lord schedule at x of the clock in the morning / what I writt yesterday vnto you will I keepe inviolably, Send me a quire of fine paper I pray you, and some hard waxe if you any /
I hope mi Lord that these things will procede well, for yesterday I writt to the Bishop enclosing Charles cipher all to torne in the same, and this monryng he receveth the same them, making grett nicenes niseses to answer me, butt in the end he hath written with his own hand as ye may se herin, and I presently sending another letter, do attend for his reppylye wherby your Lord shall perceve how far he deles with me, and where he may hallt with yow and the Cowncell for bi this present yow have the copy of all thyngs passed bettwen vs, desirows to know your Lords likeng as I go forward, and to be holpen and amended, where the same may seme necessary.

The Irishe Bishop wold fayne go into the Commune gaole, pretending som want of monney as this berer can tell yow (and yett I am privey to xx£ he hath in his purse) butt your Lord most se to that, ether in taking order with the keper or removing hym to the Towre, for otherwise grett matter wilbe discoverd. likewise there is on Dethick a verey ranck and busy Papiste, is contynually conferring with mackinson the scott and sending abrode, so as for example sake ether by words or workes, he is to be restrayned, for he blustres owt whattsoeuer he thynckes, and carpes a verey ill mynde to the state. I toke a pere of shackelles on yesterday of purpose, whyles I went into the gardeyn, and that hath astonied the Scott and all those of the house mervaylously. The scott told lohn pole in secret that Charles had 3 or iiiij ciphers by rote, and on principle he vsed to kepe no wrytengs by hym, so as he fered no interceptyon ether of letters abowtt hym, or of ani discovery of his alphabett, which rather was in hys hed than in ani paper, which partly might appere in that he was serched att Dover and the same nott fownd, butt yett it may plese your Lord to serche his cap well, and that I may know (yf your Lord so vowchesaffe) whatt writengs were fownd abowtt hym. I haue no monney, nether to feede mi man nor to send hym to and from the Bishop muche les to vse in other necessary parts appertayneng to this service, having sent your Lord yesterday in the
bondell that I sent by mr Tremayne and mr Wynneback had, a recknyng how the latter 5th was bestowed, wherof there is som surplaising commyng to me. Thus humbly taking mi leve. from Close prison the 27 of aprill 1571 Your Lord most humbly W Herlle.

To the right honorable mi good Lord, the Lord of Burghley, her Maiesties principall secretary give these with all spede Cito ito ito 27 Aprill 1571 Wm Herle
My Lord, your sodein letter amased me wholy, seing mi sellf bettwen the hard Annevylld and the hammer, butt I will comffort yow as I loke for comffort att your hands, which is all that I desire, and is the prooff I will shew, with hasard of myne own lyfe. And fyrst, for the trust ye have commytted me, this right hand shall playe rather Mutius parte, than ether breke with yow, or shrynck therin. And for a last confirmatyon, they shall rather rent this pore carkasse, than I bewraye the lest tytell of that that hath passed in these affayres: wherin as I speke it with grett sorow of mynde, so will I seale it with mi blood yf nede be, estemyng no torment gretter than the vniust gelowsye conseved of a true ffrind, ffor they be even droppes of dethe in every motyon, mary yf I wayed them nott, the matter were sone passed, so as now ye have a grett instrument in hand, yf ye know to vse hym well weyeng honor more than wellthe and truthe aboue lyfe, remayneng yowres, be it humbly spoken though ye wold nott, ffor so mi loving dutye, hath bin zelows long since, nether can fforce nor prefferment remove me, having cared lesse for gretter temptacyons or now, as to be playn, I do ambycyously affect to be somwhatt or nothing: therfore stand boldy to the Cowncell and (yf they charge me) in mi honest cause, for this tong and pen shall nether com agaynst yow And as wisdom is to suspect lykely causes, and to give eare to true Rumors: so it is gretter nysenes to condempe ffryndship so truly ment and so dangerowsly triedy; ffor I am a partye and no beholder, which may move ani wyse judgement to depe consyderatyon, otherwise gretter servyce wilbe discoraged, when so grett a wekenes is discoverd in the principall, loking for consolatyon at your Lords hands, elles yow do me more wrong than ever ye may redressed, protestying to yow, yf ani will mayntayne that I procede otherwise than honestly, I will make them lyers in their throte, challenging the Acte it sellf for my tryall and no glose, which if it were nott, wold sone appere, as your sellf hath written, beseching your Lord humbly to kepe this wryteng for an
involvable fflythe bettwen vs, and to resolue me ye or naye of your trust, having secretly hard by mi dere ffrynd and companion Iohn poole thatt the keper here hathbyn att the Cowrt, and that the Cowncell stormes that Charles will ytter nothing, wherin his remoue to the Towre is nott somuche I thinck, for ani extremitye, as to devyde vs a sonder, the suspicyon riseng of a Bakers wyfe that sawe me talking att a wyndowe with him. So our Lord preserue you, and comffort vs in troble, ffor truly mi legges are galled with Irons, butt mi mynde muche more with pensive thoughts, butt yf your Lord be satisfayed, I am well, having wrytten a letter to William Barthlett to this end, willeng him to shew it you. this satterday morning att x of the clock, forsaken of al mi ffrynds.

To the Bishop of Ross 28 aprilis
The Bishop my Lord affer som grett pawse hath answerd mi letter, which is enclosed herewith, he is entred into gelowsi of mi doings, as playnly may appere, therfore the remedy most be accordingly provided, and yett his gelowsi is not somuche, as the mistrust of his owne practises, to be discoverd by Charles which hath driven hym to suche raiges att home, as nether wold he eate nor slepe iij ij dayes wellny, nether yett permitt ani knowne man were he englishe or stranger within his gates, mary mi man and Barthlett had secrett accesse vnto hym, yett with som difficultye or they cowd com to hym. wherupon to salue the matter, I writt a letter of som greeff to Barthlett, complayneng muche that he had brought me first to the Bishop and now being plonged into the depthe of all wretchednes, I was hatefull to mi Prince and mistrusted by mi frind, desiring nomore butt true constructyon, and to be advertised wherupon to stand, and I wold swallow vp myne owne sorowes, with suche constancye in the rest, as might give a good proof of me to all sorts, And to enter the further I wrytt another letter to the Bishop whose copie is herin, butt he was so scrupulows that he wold never receve it, yett on satterday att night abowtt xj of the Clock, he sent Barthlett to me with a messaige and the like by myne own man who was yesterday with hym, that he never hurt ani english man vnles they hurt them selves, nether was ani on of all partyes brought to mishap which delt with hym, and this was the advise and comfort he wold give me, adding that Charles had bin racked on friday and so brought before the Cowncell, and on satterdaye racked agayn, which was nott so rufull as vniust, and their fawtt was grett which procured it thatt allso the Cowncell had told hym, there were secrett practisers and factiows fellowes reppayred to hym to be his instruments, werby he wold remove the repaire of ani vnto hym, for he was here only to sollicite the Queen his mistres deleyuery and had non other Imaginatyons in his hed, wherof when he were resolved by the Queens Maiestie and her Cowncell of a playne answer ether ye or no, which he most haue, his Commission were att an end, and his departure as present, But if mr
Herle (saith he) will assure me, that he hath not delievered mi ij tycketts written to Charles to be copied by the Lord of Burghley, I will do as much for hym, as for myne owne brother, which shall appere in verey few dayes, but in the mene season, I will nether receive nor wryte letter to hym, commending all to his tryall, notwithstanding this night att midnight was Barthlett to comfort me agayne, having byn with the Bishop a grett parte of the after noone, to whom I sayd lamentably that mi keper had told me how Charles had accused me of the whole matter, and how it was mi inventyon to devise his alphabett and to wryte his ciphred letters, exhortyng me to pacyens for that he loked for a warrant to remove me to the Tower, whervnto I added that he had vppon fayth assured me of on comfort, that nether Charles was racked, nor likely to be racked, which speche of myne was vttred in suche pyteos forme, myne Irons gingling vp and downe by mete occasions, as the fellow wept and sobbed, having indede confirmed the Bishop by the hering of myne Irons the first tyme, in a more assured oppinion of mi trust / Butt your Lord most in ani wise send for me to be examined, for that is aswell obserued within dore as without, which requries spede, if your graver business so permitt it, having more to say vnto your Lord by mowth, butt this is the state I stand with the Bishop who is not so wholly lost, as ferefull for his men, lest he by ani extremity be induced to a confession, having ciffted me mani wayes, and enquired of me abrode, butt the generall oppinion is that I am a discontented man and factyows, which loyned with mi trobles doth perplexe his other suspicyons, as he is certayn in non of them, driveng him to the vtttermost corner of his witt. Butt surely (I speke it God is mi ludge with the humblest and truest zele that may procede from a subiect) that if I had wherwith, I wold know whatt he did in his bed Chamber and wyn ani credite with hym, I wold mary iff there honors of the Cowncell have descended so partyclerly to describe by markes mi commyng to hym, there is a grett hole made, which had bin better stopped. I alledge it dutifully, and so I know your Lord will take it whom God preserue. / this monday mornynng 1571 Your Lord most humbly w.h.
29 Aprilis 1571 Wm Herle of the Bishop of Ross gelousie for Charles
MANUSCRIPTS

BL MS Additional 15,891
BL MS Additional 48,023

BL MS Cotton Caligula C III
BL MS Cotton Caligula C VIII
BL MS Cotton Galba C IV
BL MS Cotton Galba C VII
BL MS Cotton Galba C IX
BL MS Cotton Galba C XI
BL MS Cotton Galba D II
BL MS Cotton Galba D IX
BL MS Cotton Galba D X
BL MS Cotton Nero B I
BL MS Cotton Titus B II
BL MS Cotton Titus B V
BL MS Cotton Titus B II
BL MS Cotton Vespasian C XIII

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BL MS Lansdowne 58

BL MS Egerton 2790
BL MS Sloane 3299
BL MS Royal 13 B 1
BL MS Harleian 286
BL MS Harleian 6035

HMC Bath Dudley Papers II

HMC Salisbury Cecil Papers

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PRO SP 12 83
PRO SP 12 86
PRO SP 12 103
PRO SP 12 136
PRO SP 12 139
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