William Davison and the Mid-Elizabethan Polity

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Abstract

William Davison is a man both familiar and unfamiliar to Elizabethan historians. He is best known for his role in the execution of Mary, Queen of Scots in February 1587 – as Elizabeth's principal secretary, Davison was partly responsible for the dispatch of the death warrant without her knowledge, and was subsequently imprisoned and disgraced. This dramatic episode continues to shape his reputation and legacy, and to overshadow his earlier work as a successful diplomat in Scotland and the Low Countries.

Consequently, Davison's distinct importance within Elizabethan politics has never been acknowledged. He was one of the most influential men in the mid-Elizabethan polity, who, if not for the execution crisis, would have become one of the conciliar heavyweights of the 1590s. His experience was entirely unique among his peers, as he worked at the lowest and highest levels of both diplomacy and domestic government. Davison is therefore key to understanding mid-Elizabethan politics across the diplomatic and domestic spheres, and beyond socio-political hierarchies and categories.

First, this thesis will prove that Davison was an influential and significant political actor within the mid-Elizabethan polity, both before and during his tenure as principal secretary. In so doing, it will uncover hitherto overlooked episodes in Elizabethan history in which Davison played a central role, and offer a brand new perspective on familiar ones. Second, it will reveal the complexity and fluidity of political relationships, and dispense with oversimplified notions of patronage and men-of-business. Third, it will show the cohesion of diplomatic and domestic service, particularly with regard to political creeds, counsel and rhetoric.

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Abbreviations

Add. MS	London, British Library, Additional Manuscripts
Davison's will	Transcription of Davison's will, 18th December 1608, in Nicholas Harris Nicolas, *Life of William Davison, Secretary of State and Privy Counsellor to Queen Elizabeth* (London: Printed by and for John Nicholas and Son, 1823), pp. 205-12
Discourse	London, British Library, Harley MS 290 f. 218 – [14th-20th February] 1587, Davison's 'discourse'
LPL	London, Lambeth Palace Library
ODNB	Oxford Dictionary of National Biography
Relation	London, British Library, Harley MS 290 f. 222 – [20th February] 1587, Davison's 'relation'
SP	London, The National Archives, State Papers

Conventions

Primary citations

The majority of the manuscript sources used have been re-bound and re-numbered multiple times. Citations are given either by item number or first folio, whichever is most consistent, and refers to the recto unless specified. Internal references within longer sources have been given where possible.

For contemporary print, Short Title Catalogue numbers have been given where possible.

Estimated dates or letter senders/recipients are given in square brackets.

Secondary citations

Where a year in double brackets is supplied, this denotes the original year of publication, or, in the case of conference addresses, when the lecture was first given.

In footnotes, Adams always refers to Simon Adams unless another first name is specified.

Dating

All dates are given in Old Style. The year is assumed to begin on 1st January.

Naming

For the names of all people and places, the name by which they are most commonly known in English had been used, for the sake of consistency with the manuscripts and literature. In some cases, this is in English (eg. Henry III, Flushing), and in others, this is the native name (eg. Jean Hotman, Zierikzee).

Francis (1555-84), younger brother of Henry III of France, is referred to throughout as the Duke of Alençon for the sake of consistency with the manuscripts. Francis succeeded his brother as Duke of Anjou in 1576, but contemporaries, including Davison and his correspondents, never referred to him as such, and continued to call him 'Alençon' or simply 'Monsieur'.

Alexander Farnese (1545-92), the governor-general of the Spanish Low Countries from 1578, is referred to throughout as the Prince of Parma, or simply Parma. He is usually referred to in the literature as the Duke of Parma, however, he did not become Duke until the death of his father in 1586, and was always referred to by contemporaries as the 'Prince of Parma'.

Spelling

Original spelling and capitalisation has been used, with two qualifications. Abbreviations – eg. 'Matie' for 'Majestie', and 'yt' for 'that' – have been silently expanded. Where 'i' has been used for 'j', and 'v' for 'u', these have been modernised.

Original punctuation has been preserved, except for the addition of missing brackets, which have been added for the sake of clarity.

Translations

All translations are my own, unless otherwise specified. Original language text is given in a footnote.

Introduction

The final years of Elizabeth I's reign were led by a new generation of councillors. Her old friends, faithfuls and favourites, such as William Cecil, Lord Burghley; Robert Dudley, Earl of Leicester; Sir Francis Walsingham; and Sir Christopher Hatton had all predeceased her. The ship of state was now steered by their political heirs – Robert Cecil; Thomas Sackville, Lord Buckhurst; and Charles Howard, Earl of Nottingham. But one name was missing – the only man of the old generation still living, one whose experience could have helped to shape Elizabeth's fin de siècle. Instead, he lived away from court, in disgrace, at his house in Stepney.

William Davison is a man both familiar and unfamiliar to Elizabethan historians. He is best known for his role in the execution of Mary, Queen of Scots in February 1587 – as Elizabeth's principal secretary, Davison was partly responsible for the dispatch of the death warrant without her knowledge, and was subsequently tried in Star Chamber. He was sentenced to a fine and imprisonment in the Tower of London, after which his career never recovered. This dramatic episode continues to shape his reputation and legacy, and to overshadow his earlier work as a successful diplomat in Scotland and the Low Countries. Yet Davison was no mere scapegoat – in fact, he was one of the most influential men in the mid-Elizabethan polity, who, if not for the execution crisis, would have become one of the conciliar heavyweights of the 1590s. His experience was unique among his peers, as he held junior and senior positions at home and abroad, climbing from the lower ranks of diplomacy to the highest level of government. This thesis will restore William Davison to the heart of the political system, as we cannot understand the mid-Elizabethan polity without understanding Davison.

***

Despite many of his papers surviving, almost nothing is known about Davison's youth and the origins of his career. This may be because, as his papers were inherited, acquired, and

sold multiple times, the more personal material may have been deliberately been weeded out, with collectors only keeping the more 'important' state papers.[1] Based on the beginning of his career, the birth year of his first child and the ages of his contemporaries, Davison was probably born some time in the 1540s. Nothing is known about his parents, but he had at least one sibling, a sister named Anne.[2] He may have been of Scottish descent, as he told Sir James Melville of Halhill, on his mission to Scotland in 1574, that he was 'com of Scotismen and was a Scotisman at hart'.[3] Nothing is known about Davison's education either, as there is no trace of him in the records of the universities or the Inns of Court. If he did have a formal education, it is most likely, out of the available options, that he attended Gray's Inn, as it was traditional for sons to join the same inn as their fathers, and his eldest son was admitted there in 1593.[4] The original Gray's Inn admission records from 1521 to 1580 years are no longer extant, having probably been lost in one of the three fires of the 1680s.[5] Only the copies made by Simon Segar remain, so, though these were apparently thorough, there remains a possibility that mistakes or omissions were made.[6] Whatever the route, Davison was certainly well educated – he wrote, read and spoke fluent French; could read and write Latin, if not speak it too; was familiar with different rhetorical styles and structures; and was well versed in the classics.

Davison married Catherine Spelman around 1570. Catherine was the daughter of a Norfolk squire, Francis Spelman, who was the nephew of the Henrician judge and law reporter

[1] Simon Adams, 'Davison, William (d. 1608), diplomat and administrator', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford University Press, 2008 (2004)) <https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/7306>, pp. 1-2.
[2] Nicholas Harris Nicolas, *Life of William Davison, Secretary of State and Privy Counsellor to Queen Elizabeth* (London: Printed by and for John Nicholas and Son, 1823), pp. 205-212, at p. 208 – 18th December 1608, Davison's will (hereafter 'Davison's will).
[3] T. Thompson (ed.), *Memoirs of his Own Life by Sir James Melville of Halhill* (New York: AMS Press, 1973, repr. of 1827 ed.), p. 328. This encounter must have been during the 1574 rather than the 1575 mission to Scotland, as in 1575 they were forced to stop at Berwick before entering Scotland.
[4] John Considine, 'Davison, Francis (1573/4–1613x19), poet and anthologist', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford University Press, 2008 (2004)) <https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/7300>, p. 1.
[5] William Ralph Douthwaite, *Gray's Inn: Its History & Associations, Compiled from Original and Unpublished Documents* (London: Reeves and Turner, 1886), pp. 99, 244.
[6] Harley MS 1912 – Simon Segar's copy of the Gray's Inn admission records, 1521-1580. Davison is not listed with the others of that name (inc. his son Francis) on f. 26. On Segar's accuracy, see Douthwaite, pp. xxii-xxiii.

Sir John Spelman (d. 1546).[7] Sir John and several other Spelman family members attended Gray's Inn, so this could possibly offer another clue to Davison's education, if he met his wife through the Gray's Inn connection. Catherine's mother was Margaret Spelman, née Hill, through whom she had even higher connections. Margaret's mother, Elizabeth Isley, was the cousin of Jane Guildford, the mother of the Earl of Leicester, and her sister Mary married the scholar Sir John Cheke. [8] John Cheke's sister Mary was the first wife of Burghley, and mother of his eldest son Thomas Cecil. Davison therefore had family links, albeit distant, to two of his future patrons; however, Leicester (and perhaps Burghley too) was unaware of the connection before Davison was brought to his attention through his service in Scotland in 1575.[9] Davison and Catherine's first child, Francis, was born in 1573/4. Including Francis, the couple probably had six children who survived to adulthood.[10] Davsion entered Walsingham's service around this time, in 1572 or 1573, and the earliest surviving record of him was penned in 1574.[11]

Walsingham's household and clientage was distinctly protestant in character, and Davison was no exception.[12] His religious views were Calvinist, and he believed that Elizabeth's religious settlement had not gone far enough – in particular, he favoured presbyterianism, and opposed the sole use of the Book of Common Prayer.[13] Of his patrons, colleagues and correspondents, the majority were renowned for their reformist beliefs – for instance, his other main patron Leicester, and his friends and colleagues Henry Killigrew and Laurence Tomson. Davison and his colleagues would not have referred to themselves as

[7] Considine, 'Davison, Francis', p. 1.
[8] Adams, 'Davison', p. 1. Adams mistakenly writes that Catherine Davison's mother was called Mary Hill, but this was in fact her sister.
[9] SP 52/26/2 f. 207 – 8th August 1575; SP 52/26/2 f. 196 – 17th August 1575. Both Killigrew to Leicester.
[10] See pp. 132-3.
[11] In early 1597, Davison wrote that he had 'some foure or five and twentie yeares, the best part of my poore life, in her Majesties service abroad and at home' – Stowe MS 145 f. 132 – [early] 1597, Davison to Essex. Davison was in Walsingham's service before Killigrew's, as Walsingham referred to him as 'a man of myne yt I lent Mr Kyllygre' – Harley MS 6991 f. 94 – 26th July 1574, Walsingham to Burghley. Conyers Read mistakenly wrote that Davison was sent to Scotland in 1572, but this was actually William Drury – Conyers Read, *Mr Secretary Walsingham and the Policy of Queen Elizabeth*, Vol. 2 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1925), p. 122.
[12] Read, *Walsingham*, Vol. 2, p. 261.
[13] This is evidenced by his support of Walter Travers, and of the exiled Scottish ministers – see Chapters 3 and 4.

'puritans' – as Hannah Coates has explained, it was the 'insulting opposite' of 'papist', and they may instead have used the term 'godly' to describe themselves.[14] Nevertheless, it can be a useful term for making the distinction between conforming and reforming protestants, and has been used often in the literature, particularly when describing cohesive groupings of zealous protestant men at court or in parliament – for instance, Simon Adams has written about Leicester's puritan clientele, and J. E. Neale about the 'puritan choir' in the House of Commons.[15] The term is therefore useful for placing Davison within this broader context of politicised puritanism across the government and the clergy, and will be used throughout this thesis as short-hand for a godly, reform-minded protestant.

Davison served two missions to Scotland as secretary to Henry Killigrew, in 1574 and 1575, before being sent to the Low Countries in March 1576. This was the beginning of a long and close association with the Dutch, throughout one of the hottest periods of the Dutch revolt. By the mid-1570s, the protestant Dutch states were engaged in full-blown war against the Catholic Spanish monarchy, represented in the Low Countries by a succession of governor-generals – first the Duke of Alba, then Don Luis de Requesens, and from 1577, Don John of Austria.[16] The protestant rebel states were governed by the States-General, the legislative assembly comprised of representatives of each state, but were in reality led by William, Prince

[14] Hannah Susan Coates, 'Sir Francis Walsingham and Mid-Elizabethan Political Culture' (University of Leeds: unpublished doctoral thesis, 2017), pp. 146-7.

[15] Simon Adams, 'A Godly Peer? Leicester and the Puritans', *History Today*, 40(1) (1990), pp. 14-19; Simon Adams, 'A Puritan Crusade? The Composition of the Earl of Leicester's Expedition to the Netherlands, 1585-86', in his *Leicester and the Court: Essays in Elizabethan Politics* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2002 (1988)), pp. 176-195; J. E. Neale, *Elizabeth I and her Parliaments, Vol. 1, 1559-1581* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1953), pp. 91-240.

[16] The classic account of the Dutch revolt is Pieter Geyl, *The Revolt of the Netherlands, 1555-1609* (London: Ernest Benn Ltd., 1958 (1932)). For an overview, see Geoffrey Parker, *The Dutch Revolt* (Harmondsworth: Pelican Lane, 1979). On Anglo-Dutch relations, see Charles Wilson, *Queen Elizabeth and the Revolt of the Netherlands* (London: Macmillan, 1970); Simon Adams, 'The Decision to Intervene: England and the United Provinces 1584-1585', in José Martínez Millán (ed.), *Felipe II (1527-1598): Europa y la Monarquía Católica,* Volume I (Madrid: Editorial Parteluz, S. L., 1998), pp. 19-31; Simon Adams, 'Elizabeth I and the Sovereignty of the Netherlands 1576-1585', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 14 (2004), 309-319. See also various essays in Philip Benedict et al. (eds), *Reformation, Revolt and Civil War in France and the Netherlands, 1555-1585* (Amsterdam: Royal Netherlands Academy of Arts and Sciences, 1999).

of Orange, the Stadtholder of Holland and Zeeland. The protestant rebels desperately sought military and financial assistance from England; however, Elizabeth and her government disagreed about the necessary course of action. The more staunchly protestant of her councillors, including Walsingham and Leicester, favoured intervention in the wars; however, Elizabeth and Burghley did not want to aggravate Philip II, and were deeply concerned over the cost of providing aid. Though Elizabeth agreed to send financial aid in late 1576 (which paid for mercenary troops), she repeatedly wavered over sending English troops, under the leadership of the Earl of Leicester. This idea was discussed from 1576 onwards, but no decision was reached until 1585. The Duke of Alençon, the Catholic younger brother of the French king Henry III, was also a key player throughout the 1570s, as a suitor to Elizabeth and as a potential governor-general for the Low Countries. Searching for political influence independent of his brother, Alençon had been linked with William of Orange since 1574, and made several offers of aid throughout the 1570s, before eventually being offered the position of sovereign in 1580.[17] It was into this hotbed of diplomatic, political and religious tensions that Davison was thrown in the late 1570s.

In total, Davison undertook five missions to the Low Countries throughout the course of his career. After a brief, possibly secret, second visit in spring 1577, he was dispatched on a long resident embassy from August 1577 to May 1579. This was followed by a further two brief missions to Scotland in the early 1580s, after which Davison was again dispatched to the Low Countries in 1584. Over the next two years, both at home and abroad, Davison helped to negotiate aid for the Dutch rebels in the form of the Treaty of Nonsuch, and led the seizure of three Dutch towns under its terms in autumn 1585. He became embroiled in the Earl of Leicester's acceptance of the Dutch governor-generalship in early 1586, but this did not hinder

[17] Mack P. Holt, *The Duke of Anjou and the Politique Struggle during the Wars of Religion* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), esp. Ch. 5.

his career in the long term, as he was soon promoted to the role of principal secretary that September. He was not long in the position before he became involved in the execution of the Queen of Scots, which ended his political career.

Despite the longevity of his diplomatic career, and the comparative brevity of his stint on the Privy Council, the execution crisis has nevertheless come to dominate the historiographical view of Davison, to the detriment of his earlier achievements and future potential. This reputation, and erasure of Davison's own agency, owes much to the historian William Camden (1551-1623), who claimed that Davison had been specifically promoted to the position of principal secretary in order to be used as a scapegoat for the execution – 'and thus this Davison, a man of honest disposition and esteeme, not cunning nor acquainted with Court-tricks, was purposely brought upon the Stage (as divers have thought) to be an actor in this Tragedie'.[18] Though this claim has since been disproven, the image of the sympathetic scapegoat has nevertheless reverberated through the centuries.[19] Today, historians continue to overlook Davison's agency, often labelling him simply as a 'man made in the Walsingham mould', a 'man-of-business', or merely 'the scapegoat'.[20]

Consequently, Davison's distinct importance within the mid-Elizabethan polity has never been acknowledged. His experience was entirely unique among his peers, as he worked at the lowest and highest levels of diplomacy and domestic government. Such a career trajectory was reserved for only the most elite politicians, such as Sir Francis Walsingham and Thomas Wilson. Moreover, existing literature has often framed Elizabethan politics in terms

[18] William Camden, *Annales, the true and royall history of the famous empresse Elizabeth* (London: Printed for Benjamin Fisher, 1625) [STC (2nd ed.) 4497], p. 215. Similar in William Camden, *The historie of the life and death of Mary Stuart Queene of Scotland* (London: Printed by John Haviland for Richard Whitaker, 1624) [STC (2nd ed.) 24509a], p. 244.
[19] See pp. 276-8.
[20] R. B. Wernham, *Before the Armada: The Growth of English Foreign Policy, 1485–1588* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1966), p. 330; Adams, 'Davison', p. 2; Patrick Collinson, 'Servants and Citizens: Robert Beale and Other Elizabethans', *Historical Research*, 79(206) (2006), 488-511, p. 499; G. R Elton, *England Under The Tudors* (London: Methuen & Co., 1974 (1955)), p. 370.

of binaries, such as domestic and diplomatic, or patron and client. Davison is key to moving beyond these historiographically-imposed boundaries, as the extraordinary range of his career illuminates the true complexity and fluidity within the polity.

Through examination of Davison's career, this thesis will therefore present a holistic view of the mid-Elizabethan polity. First, it will prove that Davison was an influential and significant political actor, both before and during his tenure as principal secretary. In so doing, it will uncover hitherto overlooked episodes in Elizabethan history in which Davison played a central role, and offer a brand new perspective on familiar ones. Second, it will reveal the complexity and fluidity of political relationships, and dispense with oversimplified notions of patronage and men-of-business. Third, it will show the cohesion of diplomatic and domestic service, particularly with regard to political creeds, counsel and rhetoric.

These aims are fulfilled through chronological examination of Davison's career. Each part covers a distinct phase in his career, and is subdivided into chapters which focus on the main themes of his work. This structure facilitates analysis of the development of Davison's unique skills, professional influence, political creed and relationships over the long trajectory of his career. Some chapters – particularly Chapters 1 to 5, and 9 – explore events which have been largely overlooked, whilst others – particularly Chapters 6 to 8 – provide a brand new perspective on familiar events.

Part I explores Davison's work as a junior ambassador, through his diplomatic apprenticeship in the mid-1570s, and his long resident mission from 1577 to 1579. Chapter 1 sets Davison within the context of the mid-Elizabethan diplomatic corps, examining his early missions through the lens of the *ars apodemica* genre. Chapter 2 examines Davison's use of counsel during his resident mission, and argues that counsel was viewed as an integral part of the ambassador's role. Chapter 3 investigates Davison's developing diplomatic authority

through two religious incidents, involving the presbyterian minister Walter Travers and the Queen's commander Duke Casimir.

Part II covers the central years of Davison's career, as a senior ambassador in Scotland and the Low Countries. Chapter 4 explores Davison's friendships with patrons in the early 1580s, particularly the development of his relationship with Walsingham throughout his missions to Scotland. Chapter 5 examines Davison's work on the Treaty of Nonsuch, arguing that he fulfilled the role of an extraordinary ambassador or privy councillor. Chapter 6 covers Leicester's acceptance of the governor-generalship in spring 1586, and its effect on Davison's patronage relationships and political credit.

Part III sees Davison promoted to the Privy Council, before his dramatic fall following the execution of the Queen of Scots. Chapter 7 accounts for Davison's involvement in the trial at Fotheringhay and the Moody conspiracy, and provides the first comprehensive account of the dispatch of the death warrant. It argues that Davison's actions were consistent with his earlier work in the Low Countries, and emphasises his agency in the dispatch. Chapter 8 explores the response of Davison's patrons and colleagues to his imprisonment, showing the reality of patronage during political crisis. Finally, Chapter 9 examines the period of Davison's political disgrace, and reflects on his unusual position within the political hierarchy.

Ultimately, this thesis will prove Davison's political importance, and provide a new, comprehensive picture of the mid-Elizabethan polity. This was a world shaped by a complex patronage system, in which each relationship was different. Political authority was fluid, and was not limited by hierarchical statuses. Diplomatic and domestic service were inseparable, and shared a cohesive political culture. It was a world with William Davison at its centre, who, if not for unprecedented circumstances, would have risen to the very top.

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In 1911, A.F. Pollard wrote that 'for forty years the biography of [William] Cecil is almost indistinguishable from that of Elizabeth and from the history of England'.[21] The same claim cannot, of course, be made of Davison, but his biography nevertheless takes us through the Dutch revolt, the aftermath of the Ruthven raid, the Earl of Leicester's governorship of the Low Countries, and the execution of the Queen of Scots. It is therefore rather bizarre that he appears so rarely in political and diplomatic histories. This is not because evidence of his contributions is hard to find – in fact, many of his papers survive, and are very easily accessible in the British Library and The National Archives.

During Elizabeth's reign, there was no properly implemented system for storing and managing state papers. Though the State Paper Office was created in 1578 to receive the papers of the principal secretaries, this was not consistently enforced, so secretaries, including Davison, continued to store their papers privately.[22] After his death, Davison's papers were inherited by his younger daughter and son-in-law, who later sold them to the collector Ralph Starkey sometime before 1619. The Jacobean Keeper of the State Paper Office, Thomas Wilson, then obtained a warrant to seize these papers, as secretarial papers fell under his remit. However, he only seized some of Davison's papers, and many remained in Starkey's possession. These were later bought by Symonds D'Ewes in 1628 with rest of Starkey's collection, and were subsequently purchased on behalf of Robert Harley in 1703-6.[23] Consequently, those papers which had been subsumed into the State Paper Office by Wilson are now held in the State Papers Domestic and Foreign, in The National Archives, and the papers retained by Starkey now form part of the Harley collection (the Davison Papers) in the

[21] A. F. Pollard, 'Burghley, William Cecil, Baron', in *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, Vol. 4 (11th ed.) (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1910), p. 817.
[22] Nicholas Popper, *The Specter of the Archive: Political Practice and the Information State in Early Modern Britain* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2024), pp. 40-1.
[23] Adams, 'Davison', pp. 1-2.

British Library. There are also many papers relating to Davison in the Cotton and Yelverton collections in the British Library, and in the Cecil Papers at Hatfield House.

Evidence of Davison's work is therefore not at all hard to find. Yet Davison's name, and his perspective, still remains curiously absent from existing scholarship. This is almost certainly due to the dominance, in the historical mind, of the execution of the Queen of Scots, and to his enduring reputation as 'the scapegoat'. As a result, no care has been taken to investigate his earlier work, unlike that of his conciliar colleagues. For instance, much work has been done on Walsingham's diplomatic career, and it is commonly accepted that his presence during the massacre of St Bartholomew's Day in 1572 significantly influenced his subsequent political career.[24] Davison's diplomatic career ought to be viewed in the same way, as the evolution of a privy councillor, which shaped his future religious and political beliefs and actions.

Davison's only full biography, by the nineteenth-century antiquarian Nicholas Harris Nicolas, focusses almost entirely on the Mary, Queen of Scots episode. Nicolas originally served in the navy, and from the early 1820s, developed his interest in antiquarianism. In 1822 he married Sarah Davison, daughter of John Davison of Loughton, in Essex, whose family claimed descent from William Davison.[25] It was from this connection that Nicolas' interest in Davison arose. Whilst his biography provides an overview of Davison's career, it fails to adequately address Davison's diplomatic work.[26] Nicolas dismissed Davison's two year resident mission to the Low Countries out of hand, claiming that Davison's correspondence

[24] Simon Adams, Alan Bryson and Mitchell Leimon, 'Walsingham, Sir Francis (c. 1532–1590), principal secretary', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford University Press, 2009 (2004)) <https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/28624>, p. 7; Coates, 'Sir Francis Walsingham', pp. 112, 124-7; John Cooper, *The Queen's Agent: Francis Walsingham at the Court of Elizabeth I* (London: Faber and Faber, 2011), pp. 76-83.
[25] Colin Lee, 'Nicolas, Sir Nicholas Harris (1799–1848), antiquary and author', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford University Press, 2005 (2004)) <<https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/20169>, p. 1.
[26] Nicholas Harris Nicolas, *Life of William Davison, Secretary of State and Privy Counsellor to Queen Elizabeth* (London: Printed by and for John Nicholas and Son, 1823).

from this period is 'more connected with the history of that country than with the life of Davison'.[27] Only slightly more attention is paid to his embassy from 1585-6, during which Davison dealt with the negotiations over the Treaty of Nonsuch, and held the cautionary towns of Flushing and Brill until Leicester's arrival. The vast majority of the biography is devoted instead to the trial and execution of the Queen of Scots, which fills over 160 pages, compared to just 35 pages on his diplomatic career of over 12 years.[28] Nicolas did not try to mask his bias, clearly stating that his aim was to 'prove [Davison's] perfect innocence' over the dispatch, and achieve the 'vindication of Davison's character'.[29]

Aside from its focus on the Queen of Scots episode, there are other issues with Nicolas' work. First and foremost, being written almost two centuries ago, new information has since come to light, such as the discoveries of B. M. Ward and R. B. Wernham in 1929 and 1931, that Davison had never paid his fine and continued to be paid his secretarial salary and emoluments after his disgrace.[30] Second, it seems that Nicolas only had access to the manuscripts then kept in the British Museum (now in the British Library), not those in the Public Record Office (now in The National Archives), as the Public Records Act was not passed until 1838, fifteen years after the publication of Nicolas' work. As a result, Nicolas' work is based on the Harley, Yelverton and Cotton collections, not the State Papers Foreign or Domestic. This partly explains his dismissal of Davison's resident mission, as he did not have access to all of his extant correspondence, and explains some of his errors – for instance, he was unaware of Davison's missions to Scotland in 1574 and 1575, and of his mission to the Low Countries in 1584-5, before the treaty of Nonsuch. His account of Leicester's acceptance

[27] Nicolas, p. 9.
[28] Nicolas, pp. 36-197.
[29] Nicolas, pp. 164, 144.
[30] B. M. Ward, 'Queen Elizabeth and William Davison', *The English Historical Review*, 44(173) (1929), 104-106; R. B. Wernham, 'The Disgrace of William Davison', *The English Historical Review*, 46(184) (1931), 632-636.

of the governor-generalship is also very confused, but this is less understandable, as the majority of the relevant material is in the Cotton collection. Finally, though a narrative style is not uncommon for a biography, Nicolas' work is unusually so, and it is obvious where the narrative has been lifted directly, almost verbatim, from the manuscript sources.[31]

The first *Dictionary of National Biography* article on Davison, written by Sidney Lee in 1888, is essentially a three page summary of Nicolas' biography; it even includes the original errors made by Nicolas, including the assumption that Davison took part in Henry Killigrew's 1566 embassy to Scotland (a claim later disproven by Simon Adams), and that Davison was financially ruined by payment of his one thousand mark fine (which was later disproven by B. M. Ward).[32]

Davison's only modern biography is the updated *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* article by Simon Adams, which supplies considerably more information on his diplomatic missions than that of Nicolas.[33] Crucially, Adams also recognised Davison's agency as a political actor, and dispensed with the traditional portrayal of the scapegoat:

> 'Yet if he was thrust into some of the trickiest episodes of mid-Elizabethan diplomacy and politics, he also lived dangerously. He held strong views, expressed them publicly, and did not suffer those he considered fools gladly. Throughout his career he urged the seizing of opportunities by decisive action. His behaviour in February 1587 was very much in character, however much he may have wished in retrospect to portray himself as a mere unfortunate instrument'.[34]

[31] For example, Nicolas, pp. 77-86 repeats the same information included in Harley MS 290 f. 218, Davison's 'discourse', almost verbatim.
[32] Sidney Lee, 'Davison, William (1541?–1608)', in Leslie Stephen (ed.), *Dictionary of National Biography*, vol. XIV (London: Smith, Elder & Co., 1888), pp. 179-182; Nicolas, pp. 4, 168; Adams, 'Davison', p. 2; Ward, 'Queen Elizabeth and William Davison'.
[33] Adams, 'Davison', pp. 2-12.
[34] Adams, 'Davison', p. 17.

However, due to the brevity of the *ODNB* format, neither Davison's embassies nor the execution crisis are analysed in depth – thirteen years' diplomatic service is condensed down to only ten pages, with a further five on the execution crisis and his disgrace.[35] Consequently, much of the detail of Davison's career remains overlooked.

Even in work specifically devoted to foreign policy, Davison only features as a walk-on character. This seems to be not only due to his typecasting over the execution, but also because the foreign policy literature has often focussed on more senior policy-makers. For instance, in R. B. Wernham's well-known survey volume on English foreign policy, the chapter on Anglo-Dutch negotiations in the late 1570s sees Davison mentioned only once, despite him residing in the Low Countries and leading those negotiations for almost two years. [36] More attention is given to the short extraordinary embassy of Francis Walsingham and Lord Cobham in summer 1578, who stayed for only three months.[37] Similarly, Davison's autumn 1585 mission to the Low Countries, being sandwiched between the Treaty of Nonsuch and Leicester's expedition and governorship, is consequently overshadowed by those events and actors – even Wallace MacCaffrey, who did discuss Davison's resident mission, omitted any mention of his mission in autumn 1585, with Davison only reappearing during the governor-generalship episode.[38]

Davison's most substantial appearances are in Conyers Read's three-volume biography of Walsingham, and in Charles Wilson's monograph on the Dutch revolt.[39] However, in the former, he is still portrayed as a supporting character to Walsingham and Elizabeth, and his depiction in the latter is shaped by his subsequent disgrace – for instance, Wilson described him as 'the unfortunate Davison, doomed to spend his life a martyr to the Queen's ingratitude',

[35] Adams, 'Davison', pp. 2–12.
[36] Wernham, *Before the Armada*, ch. 24, at p. 330.
[37] Wernham, *Before the Armada*, pp. 334–5.
[38] Wallace T. MacCaffrey, *Queen Elizabeth and the Making of Policy, 1572–1588* (Guildford: Princeton University Press, 1981), pp. 310–12, 348–59.
[39] Read, *Walsingham*, 3 vols., esp. Chs. 6, 9, and 13; Wilson, *Revolt of the Netherlands*.

'the memory of [whose] misdemeanours was no doubt kept green against the future'.[40] Davison continues to be sidelined even in more recent work – for instance, though Malcolm Smuts' 2023 monograph on Tudor and Stuart religious war mentions several of Davison's missions, the Low Countries chapter still focusses primarily on Leicester's governorship.[41]

This focus on senior politicians, as well as great institutions such as the Privy Council and the Dutch States-General, has meant that much detail has been glossed over in favour of the broad strokes of policy. But it was Davison who was at the coalface of Anglo-Dutch diplomacy in the 1570s and 1580s, not his patrons, so examination of his career reveals much about the reality of diplomacy on the ground. Indeed, there are several significant episodes in Anglo-Dutch relations which have so far been entirely overlooked or misunderstood, specifically the appointment of the minister Walter Travers in 1578, the conflict with Duke Casimir, also in 1578, and the seizure of the cautionary towns in 1585, of which this thesis will provide the first comprehensive examination.

Since the millenium, scholars have gradually moved away from these 'bureaucratic state-centric… studies of foreign policy' towards studies of diplomatic culture – termed the 'New Diplomatic History'.[42] Various aspects of diplomatic culture have thus far been examined, from epistolarity to the role of women, but the majority has tended towards ceremonial and public-facing diplomacy – for instance, Tracey Sowerby on diplomatic portraiture, Felicity Heal on gift exchange, Bram van Leuveren on banqueting, and Helmer Helmers on public diplomacy.[43] Yet in many ways, Davison is an exception to the findings of

[40] Wilson, *Revolt of the Netherlands*, pp. 60, 65.
[41] Malcolm R. Smuts, *Political Culture, the State, and the Problem of Religious War in Britain and Ireland, 1578–1625* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2023), esp. pp. 151–58, 283–98, 308, 330.
[42] Tracey A. Sowerby, 'Early Modern Diplomatic History', *History Compass*, 14(9) (2016), 441-456, p. 441.
[43] Tracey A. Sowerby, "A Memorial and a Pledge of Faith': Portraiture and Early Modern Diplomatic Culture', *The English Historical Review*, 129(537) (2014), 296-331; Tracey A. Sowerby, 'Negotiating the Royal Image: Portrait Exchanges in Elizabethan and Early Stuart Diplomacy', in Helen Hackett (ed.), *Early Modern Exchanges: Dialogues Between Nations and Cultures, 1550-1750* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2015), pp. 119-141; Felicity Heal, *The Power of Gifts: Gift-Exchange in Early Modern England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014); Bram van Leuveren, *Early Modern Diplomacy and French Festival Culture in a European Context, 1572-1615* (Leiden:

the New Diplomatic History, as his experience was far from the ceremony of other diplomatic missions. He was not sent to a monarch, but rather to three competing parties – the States-General, the Prince of Orange, and Don John. He had no permanent embassy building, and had to move often, living in an active warzone. His experience in autumn 1585 in particular was far from that of a normal diplomat, as he assumed military command. He participated in dinners with the Prince of Orange, but on a modest scale, sometimes even in his own lodgings; his experience with grand ceremonial was instead through his superiors, including Orange's Joyous Entry into Brussels in September 1577, and Leicester's arrival in winter 1585. He did receive gifts, including silver pens from Christopher Roels (a member of the States of Zeeland), and a gold chain from the States-General before his return home in 1586, but we only know of these from the writings of others.[44] Consequently, much of the New Diplomatic History serves to emphasise the uniqueness of Davison's experience, and, just as in the traditional works on diplomacy and foreign policy, Davison has continued to be overlooked by these scholars. Davison's career therefore adds to this existing body of work by uncovering the reality of diplomacy beyond its public-facing and ceremonial aspects.

Instead, Davison features most often in work on the execution of the Queen of Scots. Yet he is still not as ubiquitous as one might expect, with scholars again focussing on more senior actors and institutions. Since Davison played such a pivotal role in these events, the omission of his perspective seriously hinders our understanding of the motivations behind the dispatch, and of the motivations behind his scapegoating. The most thorough work on the execution is by Stephen Alford, Conyers Read, J. E. Neale, and Mark Taviner, of whom the former three only give an overview of the crisis within the context of a broader biographical or

Brill, 2023); Helmer Helmers, 'Public Diplomacy in Early Modern Europe: Towards a New History of News', *Media History*, 22(3-4) (2016), 401-420.

[44] SP 84/5 no. 104 – 9th December 1585, Christopher Roels to Davison; William Bradford and Samuel Eliot Morison (ed.), *Of Plymouth Plantation, 1620-1647* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1952), p. 361.

institutional study – the former two are biographies of Burghley, and Neale's a study of parliament.[45] Consequently, whilst all outline Davison's role, they do not analyse it in any depth. In some work, Davison has not even been named – for instance, in his biography of Mary, John Guy refers to Davison only as Elizabeth's 'secretary'.[46] Davison received more attention in one of Guy's later books, but his agency is still downplayed – for instance, Guy describes Davison's decision to show the signed warrant to Burghley as a 'catastrophic mistake', rather than a deliberate choice, and Davison's stance at trial as simply 'keeping his mouth shut', which overlooks the nuance of his defence.[47] Only Mark Taviner sought to uncover Davison's perspective, alongside that of Beale, and examined his role in the execution and his trial in greater depth. However, since Taviner's doctoral subject was Beale, the crisis is placed in the broader context of Beale's career, rather than that of Davison. His ensuing disgrace has then featured briefly in work on the Earl of Essex, with whom he developed a patron-client relationship, specifically the biographies by Paul Hammer and Janet Dickinson.[48]

The neglect of Davison's perspective and role, in work on both the execution and diplomacy, is typical of the 'traditional' approach to political history, which pushes the 'great men' to the forefront. This approach has abated somewhat in recent years, with scholars increasingly recognising the political contributions of more junior actors, but still Davison remains absent. For instance, Robyn Adams has written extensively about the diplomatic agent William Herle.[49] Many of the themes in this work, such as patronage and diplomatic

[45] Stephen Alford, *Burghley: William Cecil at the Court of Elizabeth I* (London: Yale University Press, 2008), Chs. 17-18; Conyers Read, *Lord Burghley and Queen Elizabeth* (London: Cape, 1960), Chs. 18-19; J. E. Neale, *Elizabeth I and her Parliaments, Vol. 2, 1584-1601* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1957), Pt. 2, Chs. 1-2; Mark Taviner, 'Robert Beale and the Elizabethan Polity' (University of St. Andrews: unpublished doctoral thesis, 2000), Ch. 8.
[46] John Guy, *'My Heart is My Own': The Life of Mary Queen of Scots* (London: Fourth Estate, 2004), pp. 496-7.
[47] John Guy, *Elizabeth: The Forgotten Years* (London: Penguin, 2017), pp. 85, 90.
[48] Paul Hammer, *The Polarisation of Elizabethan Politics: The Political Career of Robert Devereux, 2nd Earl of Essex, 1585-1597* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), pp. 60, 101-2; Janet Dickinson, *Court Politics and the Earl of Essex, 1589-1601* (London: Pickering & Chatto, 2012), pp. 75-6.
[49] Robyn Jade Adams, "Both Diligent and Secret': The Intelligence Letters of William Herle' (Queen Mary, University of London: unpublished doctoral thesis, 2004); "The Service I Am Here For': William Herle in the Marshalsea Prison, 1571', *Huntington Library Quarterly*, 72(2) (2009), 217-238; 'A Spy on the Payroll? William Herle and the Mid Elizabethan Polity', *Historical Research*, 83 (2010), 266-280; 'A Most Secret Service: William

epistolarity, can also be illuminated by Davison's career, so the choice of a more junior agent is interesting. Similarly, in her monograph on diplomacy and epistolary culture, Elizabeth Williamson discusses countless junior agents and travellers, including Davison's own son Francis, but mentions Davison himself only once, in relation to Walsingham rather than his own missions.[50]

There is one man in particular in whose favour Davison has been overlooked. Robert Beale, a diplomat, clerk of the Privy Council, brother-in-law to Walsingham and close colleague of Davison, has instead emerged as the 'poster-boy' for Elizabethan administrators. His ubiquity seems to lie in both the volume of his surviving papers, and the timing of their release. The Yelverton collection was purchased by the British Library in 1953, but the 'full extent' of the collection was not revealed until the publication of the catalogue in 1994, which coincided perfectly with the 'monarchical republican' Zeitgeist of the 1990s.[51] Beale is the subject of two unpublished doctoral theses, by Patricia Brewerton and Mark Taviner, a forthcoming monograph by David Gehring, several articles – including one by Patrick Collinson – and frequently features in other work.[52] Beale was certainly an important figure, but such focus on him to the detriment of Davison and others seems strange – after all, Davison must have been regarded as more skilled than Beale, otherwise he would not have been promoted to the principal secretaryship. Beale frequently assisted and deputised for Walsingham, but even after Davison's disgrace and Walsingham's death, he was never touted for the role.[53]

Herle and the Circulation of Intelligence', in Robyn Adams and Rosanna Cox (eds.), *Diplomacy and Early Modern Culture* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), pp. 63-81.

[50] Elizabeth R. Williamson, *Elizabethan Diplomacy and Epistolary Culture* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2021), p. 179.

[51] Simon Adams, 'The Tudor State Papers in the Yelverton, Cotton and Harleian Manuscript Collections', *State Papers Online, 1509-1714* (Cengage Learning EMEA Ltd., 2009), p. 3.

[52] Taviner; Patricia Ann Brewerton, 'Paper Trails: Re-reading Robert Beale as Clerk to the Elizabethan Privy Council' (Birkbeck College, University of London: unpublished doctoral thesis, 1998); Collinson, 'Servants and Citizens'; David Gehring, forthcoming.

[53] Gary M. Bell, 'Beale, Robert (1541–1601), administrator and diplomat', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford University Press, 2015 (2004)) <https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/1804>, p. 2.

Scholars are therefore evidently interested in these more junior political actors, yet are still not attracted to Davison. Perhaps he is viewed as too senior to be included in studies on junior diplomats, whilst being too junior for the more traditional studies, or maybe it is simply due again to the pervasiveness of his reputation and connection with the execution. Ironically, these are precisely the reasons why Davison was so important within the polity, as he spanned such a unique range of positions, and can therefore help us to draw connections between these different experiences.

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This low historiographical profile has resulted in Davison also being overlooked within debates and discussions around Elizabethan political culture, upon which he could actually shed much light. His absence is particularly conspicuous in work on political relationships, patronage and men-of-business. The concept of men-of-business was created by Michael Graves in the 1980s, who argued that there was a group of 'knights and burgesses' in the House of Commons who 'willingly assisted the government in pursuit of efficiency and productivity', even when conciliar aims were 'at variance with the Queen's wishes'.[54] Graves emphasised the centrality of patronage to this system – 'men-of-business tended to operate on an individual patron-client basis, though sometimes there were clear signs of collaboration' – but clarified that these were 'not 'yes-men" or 'obsequious' to the Privy Council, but retained their 'independent temper'.[55] Though the term was only applied by Graves to members of the Commons, it has subsequently been used as something of a catch-all term to describe

[54] M. A. R. Graves, 'The Management of the Elizabethan House of Commons: The Council's 'Men-of-Business'', *Parliamentary History*, 2 (1983), 11-38, p. 18; M. A. R. Graves, 'Elizabethan Men of Business Reconsidered', *Parergon*, 14(1) (1996), 111-127, p. 111. See also M. A. R. Graves, 'Thomas Norton the Parliament Man: An Elizabethan M.P., 1559–1581', *The Historical Journal*, 23(1) (1980), 17-35; M. A. R. Graves, 'The Common Lawyers and the Privy Council's Parliamentary Men-of-Business, 1584-1601', *Parliamentary History*, 9 (1989), 189-215; M. A. R. Graves, 'Managing Elizabethan Parliaments' in D. Dean and N. Jones (eds.), *The Parliaments of Elizabethan England*, (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1990), pp. 37-63.

[55] Graves, 'Men of Business Reconsidered', pp. 126-7; 'Managing Elizabethan Parliaments', p. 51; 'Management of the Elizabethan House of Commons', p. 31.

administrators and diplomats below the rank of privy councillor. This was prompted by Patrick Collinson, who, in a 1988 article, applied the label to men outside of the Commons, and further emphasised the agency of these men-of-business, arguing that they were 'decision makers and policy formers, not… passive tools or instruments', who were 'esteemed as an important intellectual resource of government'.[56] Almost two decades later, Collinson returned to the subject, now claiming that although the term men-of-business 'has its uses', it 'implies a special client-patron relationship' which detracts from their 'active, responsible citizenship'.[57] He now rebranded his erstwhile men-of-business as 'public men but below the rank of privy councillor, who we are entitled to acknowledge as citizens of Elizabethan England, not merely subjects'.[58]

This indiscriminate use of the term 'men-of-business' beyond Graves' original definition causes several problems. First and foremost, it risks oversimplifying the complex makeup of the Elizabethan polity, by grouping together diverse political actors, with diverse specialisms – for instance, Collinson applied the term to Davison and Beale, to Thomas Norton, a lawyer and MP, and to Thomas Digges, a mathemetician and engineer.[59] If the majority of the political nation, aside from the Queen and Privy Council, can be grouped together, we might question whether it ceases to be a useful category. Second, it imposes a firm boundary between privy councillors and their non-conciliar clients, which in reality was blurred. We can see this most clearly in the case of Davison, as he defied the very definition by being promoted to the Privy Council, but also in the work of Beale, who deputised for Walsingham during his illnesses.[60] Indeed, Davison is explicitly mentioned by Collinson as the man who 'bore the ultimate burden of the Elizabethan man of business, which was to carry the can for the execution of Mary Queen

[56] Patrick Collinson, 'Puritans, Men of Business and Elizabethan Parliaments', in his *Elizabethan Essays* (London: The Hambledon Press, 1994 (1988)), 59-86, pp. 66, 70.
[57] Collinson, 'Servants and Citizens', p. 498
[58] Collinson, 'Servants and Citizens', p. 496.
[59] Collinson, 'Men of Business', p. 70.
[60] Bell, 'Beale', p. 2.

of Scots'.[61] Yet Davison 'carried the can' specifically because he was now Elizabeth's principal secretary and a privy councillor, so, he cannot, by any definition, be labelled as a man-of-business or non-conciliar 'citizen' at this stage in his career.

Davison's inaccurate categorisation as a man-of-business continues to undermine the uniqueness and significance of his work, both before and after his promotion to the Privy Council. One could technically, if they were so inclined, describe Davison earlier in his career as a man-of-business, perhaps in the 1570s. But this has never been done for other future privy councillors – no-one describes Walsingham, on his embassy to Paris in the early 1570s, as Burghley's man-of-business, nor do they apply the label to Robert Cecil prior to his elevation to the Privy Council in 1591. Walsingham is instead referred to simply as an ambassador, and Cecil a courtier, not as men-of-business. Yet none could deny that both Walsingham and Cecil were 'public men', 'decision makers and policy formers', and 'important intellectual resource[s] of government', who were, at that stage in their careers, 'below the rank of privy councillor'. The categorisation of Davison as a man-of-business does not therefore seem to be done deliberately to explain part of a longer career trajectory, but rather as a convenient, and perhaps unconscious, oversimplification, likely due to the brevity of his tenure on the Privy Council. It also downgrades the significance of his work prior to his elevation, particularly in autumn 1585, when he was acting at the same level as an extraordinary ambassador or privy councillor. Through examination of Davison's career, and of his colleagues and patrons, this thesis will therefore explore the complex reality behind the concept of 'men-of-business'. Ultimately, whilst the term may have some uses, Davison's career shows that it should not be used as a blanket way of categorising diverse non-conciliar political actors, and is particularly inapplicable to Davison himself.

[61] Collinson, 'Servants and Citizens', p. 499.

As both Graves and Collinson acknowledged, the notion of men-of-business is closely linked to the system of patronage and clientage. Patronage was the bedrock of Elizabethan political life – this was how politicians and courtiers made money, gained positions, and, ultimately, were able to conduct political work and serve the Queen. These were inherently transactional, but reciprocal, relationships – as Robyn Adams has explained, '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'.[62] Much work has been done on Elizabethan patronage, relating to various different people, processes and contexts. The traditional works on Crown patronage are by G. R. Elton, J. E. Neale and Wallace MacCaffrey; Frank Whigham and Robyn Adams have examined patronage in relation to rhetoric and epistolarity; Simon Adams and Paul Hammer have written on patronage and faction; and Linda Levy Peck has explored early Stuart patronage and corruption.[63]

In order to gain patrons and progress through the political ranks, as Davison did, Elizabethans had to develop their political credit. The term 'credit' appears frequently in letters between Elizabethan patrons and clients, including in Davison's own letters, and is often

[62] Robyn Adams, "Both Diligent and Secret", p. 73.

[63] The following are given as examples, and are certainly not intended to be an exhaustive list of work on Elizabethan patronage. G. R. Elton, 'Tudor Government: The Points of Contact', in his *Studies in Tudor and Stuart Politics and Government*, *Volume III: Papers and Reviews, 1973-1981* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983 (1974-76)), pp. 3-57; J. E. Neale, 'The Elizabethan Political Scene', in his *Essays in Elizabethan History* (London: Cape, 1958 (1948)), pp. 59-84; Wallace MacCaffrey, 'Place and Patronage in Elizabethan Politics', in S. T. Bindoff, Joel Hurstfield, and C. H. Williams (eds.), *Elizabethan Government and Society: Essays Presented to Sir John Neale* (London: University of London, Athlone Press, 1961), pp. 95-126; Frank Whigham, 'The Rhetoric of Elizabethan Suitors' Letters', *PMLA*, 96(5) (1981), 864-882; Whigham, *Ambition and Privilege: The Social Tropes of Elizabethan Courtesy Theory* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984); Simon Adams, 'Faction, Clientage, and Party: English Politics, 1550-1603', *History Today*, 32 (1982), 33-39; Simon Adams, 'The Patronage of the Crown in Elizabethan Politics: the 1590s in Perspective', in John Guy (ed.), *The Reign of Elizabeth I: Court and Culture in the Last Decade* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995 (1988)), pp. 20-45; Paul Hammer, 'Patronage at Court, Faction and the Earl of Essex', in John Guy (ed.), *The Reign of Elizabeth I: Court and Culture in the Last Decade* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010 (1995)), pp. 65-86; Linda Levy Peck, *Court Patronage and Corruption in Early Stuart England* (London: Unwin Hyman, 1990). For Robyn Adams on William Herle, see p. 24 n. 49.

mentioned in scholarship on Elizabethan patronage, by, among others, Alan Stewart, James Daybell, and Stephen Alford.[64] However, it does not seem to have been defined in a political sense. Instead, much work has been done on early modern economic and social credit, most notably by Craig Muldrew, Alexandra Shepard, and Ceri Sullivan.[65] In this sense, 'credit' was a social currency, based on one's reputation, morality and trustworthiness – in Sullivan's words, it was the 'social production of a marketable self'.[66] The *OED* also defines 'credit' in early modern usage as 'personal influence based on the confidence or trust of others'.[67]

It seems that political credit was much the same, as contemporaries generally used the term 'credit' interchangeably with reputation or influence, particularly in instances where they sought to defend their honour, exert authority or obtain preferment. This credit was developed through one's political service, and was based upon one's skills, knowledge and trustworthiness. Lisa Jardine and William Sherman developed the concept of 'knowledge transactions', in which a scholarly client offered academic services to a political or noble patron.[68] Using the future diplomat Henry Wotton as a case study, they argued that the client's 'learning' and 'intelligence' formed a "package' of skills' which 'enhance[d] his prospects of service'.[69] These ideas have subsequently been explored in the diplomatic context by Robyn

[64] Alan Stewart, 'Francis Bacon's Bi-Literal Cipher and the Materiality of Early Modern Diplomatic Writing', pp. 120-137, at p. 124; James Daybell, 'Gender, Politics and Diplomacy: Women, News and Intelligence Networks in Elizabethan England', pp. 101-19, at p. 107. Both in Robyn Adams and Rosanna Cox (eds.), *Diplomacy and Early Modern Culture* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011). Stephen Alford, "That confirmed man': credit and friendship in the letters of Nicholas White and Sir William Cecil, 1564-71', unpublished lecture given at 'Tudor Ireland and Renaissance Court Society: Audience and Discourse', The Royal Irish Academy, November 2016.

[65] Craig Muldrew, *The Economy of Obligation: The Culture of Credit and Social Relations in Early Modern England* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 1998); Alexandra Shepard, 'Manhood, Credit and Patriarchy in Early Modern England, c. 1580-1640', *Past & Present*, 167 (2000), 75–106; Ceri Sullivan, *The Rhetoric of Credit: Merchants in Early Modern Writing* (London: Associated University Presses, 2002).

[66] Sullivan, p. 11.

[67] Oxford English Dictionary, 'credit (n.)', definition 1.5 <https://doi.org/10.1093/OED/5894132409>.

[68] Lisa Jardine and William Sherman, 'Pragmatic Readers: Knowledge Transactions and Scholarly Services in Late Elizabethan England', in Anthony Fletcher and Peter Roberts (eds.), *Religion, Culture and Society in Early Modern Britain: Essays in Honour of Patrick Collinson* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), pp. 102-124.

[69] Jardine and Sherman, p. 104.

Adams and Elizabeth Williamson. For Williamson, diplomacy was a route by which 'favour-seeking crown servants' could 'demonstrate a particular set of skills that were associated, not with a clearly defined profession, but with entry to a world of political information that held the promise of patronage, pay, and potentially further salaried positions'.[70] Similarly, Adams has argued that 'knowledge collected and disseminated… was a commodity, and its exchange in the form of 'service' by the client ratified the patronage bond conducted for profit'.[71] Credit was therefore crucial to the processes of patronage and preferment, as one would only be deemed suitable for higher office if they had the necessary skills, experience and reputation. Considering Davison's relatively swift promotions, and regular references to 'credit' in his correspondence, he is the ideal candidate through whom to explore this concept further.

Although patronage relationships were inherently political, this did not make them incompatible with friendship. The humanist idea of friendship was based on 'an emotional and intellectual bond', usually between equals, informed by the classical ideas of Cicero's *De Amicitia*.[72] Cicero believed that it was possible for superiors and inferiors to be friends, but that this must always 'stand on an equality. For oftentimes a certain pre-eminence does exist, as was that of Scipio… but he never affected any superiority over… his other friends of a lower rank'.[73] Consequently, Elizabethans believed that intellectual equality was more important than social equality within a friendship. For instance, Richard Hoper, citing Cicero in 1580, argued that 'unlikenesse of studies, and diversitie of manners, do still breake and departe friendshippe in sunder'.[74] For Francis Bacon, a 'true Friend' was one 'to whom you may impart, Griefes, Joyes, Feares, Hopes, Suspicions, Counsels, and whatsoever liveth upon the Heart'; they shared

[70] Williamson, *Elizabethan Diplomacy,* p. 24.
[71] Robyn Adams, "Both Diligent and Secret", p. 79.
[72] Robyn Adams, "Both Diligent and Secret", p. 73.
[73] Cicero and William Armistead Falconer (trans.), *De Senectute. De Amicitia. De Divinatione*, Loeb Classical Library 154 (Harvard: Harvard University Press, 1923), pp. 178-9.
[74] Richard Hoper, *The Instruction of a Christian Man, in Vertue and Honestie* (London: H. Bynneman, 1580) [STC (2nd ed.) 13766.5], p. 86.

'Secrets', and gave each other 'Faithfull Counsell'.[75] Ideally, this close bond was achieved through almost-equality, which explained why monarchs tried to 'raise some Persons, to be as it were Companions, and almost Equals to themselves, which many times sorteth to Inconvenience'.[76] However, Bacon also believed that this form of friendship was rare, as relationships between equals could be fraught with competition and envy, so friendship between a superior and inferior, 'whose Fortunes may Comprehend, the One the Other', could actually be easier to navigate.[77] For Elizabethans, then, it was perfectly legitimate for patrons and clients to be friends.

However, these contemporary ideas have been largely dismissed in existing historiography. Though much work has been done on early modern friendship, this has been in a social sense, by scholars such as Alan Bray and Will Tosh.[78] Elizabethan scholars have either simply ignored the possibility of friendship within patronage, or explicitly denied it. Most notably, Robyn Adams has argued that 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*'.[79] These relationships 'sustain[ed] the administrative machine', but were not genuine 'Erasmian' humanist friendships, as they were 'not founded upon equality, but its very opposite'. However, this is a rather anachronistic argument, as Elizabethans themselves did not view inequality as a barrier to friendship. Moreover, by focussing only on the 'contrived' rhetoric, Adams overlooks the possibility of genuine friendships between patrons and clients, based in Ciceronian or Erasmian values, which were not expressed using such rhetoric. We can particularly see this between Davison

[75] Francis Bacon, *The Essayes or Counsels, Civill and Morall* (London: Printed by John Haviland for Hanna Barret, 1625) (STC 2nd ed. 1148), pp. 151, 155-8.
[76] Bacon, *Essayes or Counsels*, pp. 151-2.
[77] Bacon, *Essayes or Counsels*, p. 287.
[78] Alan Bray, *The Friend* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003); Will Tosh, *Male Friendship and Testimonies of Love in Shakespeare's England* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016).
[79] Robyn Adams, "Both Diligent and Secret", pp. 73-4.

and Walsingham, as their relationship became trusting, intimate, and intellectually equal, yet their letters remained unfailingly frank.

Study of Davison's career is essential to developing our understanding of political relationships further, as the unusual trajectory of his career provides a unique perspective on the patronage system. In particular, his career illuminates the fluidity and reciprocity within patron-client networks, as he was, both simultaneously and at different times, a client, colleague, friend and patron. Davison began his career as a straight-forward client of Walsingham and Killigrew, but, within a few years, developed these relationships into typical humanist friendships. His experiences therefore proved Hoper and Bacon right – patronage and friendship were indeed compatible.[80] He also maintained strong working relationships with Burghley, Leicester and Hatton for over a decade. Davison was a patron himself, initially to a network of messengers and informants in the Low Countries, and later, as a privy councillor, became highly sought after by clients from across the political system. His career also highlights the oversimplicity of the men-of-business category, as he blurred and crossed the line between non-conciliar client and conciliar patron – by 1585, his credit was so high that he was deployed to the Low Countries in the stead of a privy councillor, and was subsequently promoted to the Privy Council in 1586.

Perhaps most crucially, though, Davison's career uncovers much about the collapse of political relationships. Since existing work has tended to focus on the routine functioning of the patronage system, the breakdown and failure of patronage has consequently been overlooked. Whilst the patronage system was usually stable, Davison's experiences show that it was not immune to political crises, as it was thrown into chaos following the execution crisis in spring 1587. Individual relationships could also be volatile, as we can see with Leicester's

[80] See Chapter 4.

behaviour over the governor-generalship incident in 1586. The years of Davison's disgrace are a particularly unusual case study in patronage, as he sat in a political limbo beyond the usual patron-client hierarchy, simultaneously revered as an experienced statesman and reduced to the position of humble client. Davison's career therefore reveals the complex reality of political relationships, beyond any existing historiographical definitions or categories.

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Finally, Davison's career uncovers much about the cohesive nature of the Elizabethan polity, as his work spanned both the domestic and diplomatic spheres. Traditional works on Elizabethan political history generally fall neatly into either the domestic or foreign category – for instance, J. E. Neale's work on parliament, and R. B. Wernham's work on foreign policy – which has perpetuated a historiographical division between domestic and diplomatic service. Yet, for Elizabethans, there was no separation, as men moved seamlessly between embassies and domestic clerkships. Their diplomatic work was an integral, intertwined part of their Crown service, as maintaining foreign allies and secure borders was essential for the safety of the English commonwealth.

Since the 1990s, scholars have increasingly acknowledged the integrated nature of this service. In his work on the 'subtle revolution' in Elizabethan diplomacy, Gary Bell identified the deliberate use of diplomats in 'complementary domestic' positions which utilised their expertise, for instance, as clerks of the council.[81] Mark Taviner argued that diplomatic missions were not seen 'as a career in itself, but more as either a necessary prelude or as an ongoing but occasional aspect of their wider diplomatic service... as a resident intellectual or technical advisor to the Privy Councillors'.[82] Similar arguments have also been proposed by Patricia

[81] Gary Bell, 'Elizabethan Diplomacy: The Subtle Revolution', in Malcolm R. Thorp and Arthur J Slavin (eds.), *Politics, Religion and Diplomacy in Early Modern Europe: Essays in Honour of De Lamar Jensen (Sixteenth Century Essays and Studies vol. XXVII)* (Kirksville, MO: Sixteenth Century Journal Publishers, 1994), pp. 277.
[82] Taviner, p. 155.

Brewerton, Robyn Adams, and, most recently, Elizabeth Williamson, who reiterated that 'Elizabethan foreign policy was not treated as a separate institution… rather, the people and processes of diplomatic activity were embedded in domestic government'.[83]

Yet although this cohesion has been acknowledged, many aspects of traditionally 'domestic' political culture have still not been explored within the diplomatic context – or, rather, diplomats' position within this sole political culture has been overlooked. Since the 1980s, Patrick Collinson's concept of the 'monarchical republic' has become the dominant lens through which Elizabethan political history is examined, sparking a proliferation of work on political creed, counsel and rhetoric, but from which diplomats have been almost entirely excluded. This has further reinforced the division between domestic and foreign politics, with political historiography remaining dominated by senior privy councillors. Examination of these key concepts within the context of Davison's career will therefore resituate diplomats within this cohesive political culture, and emphasise the interconnected nature of domestic and diplomatic service.

In his seminal 1986 lecture on 'The Monarchical Republic of Elizabeth I', Patrick Collinson argued that the political nation, 'including its leading statesman, William Cecil, Lord Burghley' was 'read[y]… to contemplate its own immediate political future… not only without Elizabeth but without monarchy'.[84] His main case study was Burghley's 1584 plan for an interregnum, in the event of Elizabeth's assassination, in which power would be held instead by parliament and a 'Great Council'. The term 'monarchical republicanism' is therefore very narrowly defined, but has often, like Graves' men-of-business, been expanded to include other instances of counsellors defying or criticising Elizabeth's wishes, or placing other priorities,

[83] Brewerton, p. 65; Robyn Adams, 'A Spy on the Payroll', p. 267; Williamson, *Elizabethan Diplomacy*, p. 20.
[84] Patrick Collinson, 'The Monarchical Republic of Elizabeth I', in his *Elizabethan Essays* (London: The Hambledon Press, 1994 (1986)), pp. 31-58, at pp. 42-3.

such as God and the commonwealth, above the Crown. This is evidenced in the range of the essays influenced by Collinson's work, which cover topics from local government to the fall of Archbishop Grindal.[85] However, the execution crisis is curiously absent from these works, despite showing the monarchical republic in action, with the Privy Council assuming acephalous executive power in order to preserve national safety. Thus far, only John Guy and Stephen Alford have acknowledged the monarchical republican nature of the execution crisis, and then only briefly within a broader study.[86] Since Davison played the central role in the dispatch of the warrant, re-centering him within the narrative sheds further light on both the monarchical republican nature of the crisis, and on the cohesion of domestic and diplomatic service, as his behaviour over the dispatch was consistent with his diplomatic work.

This consistency of Davison's behaviour was due to his political creed, as developed throughout his diplomatic service. Here, a political creed is defined as one's set of beliefs and priorities, which shaped their political thought and action; in the Elizabethan setting, of course, this was inseparable from one's religion. The seminal work on political creeds is by Geoffrey Elton on Cromwell, which subsequently inspired Stephen Alford to examine Burghley's political creed.[87] For Alford, a political creed was a set of deeply-held, coherent beliefs which fundamentally shaped one's political outlook, often with a strong intellectual or classical component. The notion of political creeds is also closely linked to monarchical republicanism, as most Elizabethan politicians balanced their duty to the Crown with their loyalty to God and the protestant commonwealth. For instance, Stephen Alford has argued that 'at the heart of

[85] Peter Lake, "The Monarchical Republic of Queen Elizabeth I' (and the Fall of Archbishop Grindal) Revisited', pp. 129-147; Ethan H. Shagan, 'The Two Republics: Conflicting Views of Participatory Local Government in Early Tudor England', pp. 19-36. Both in John F. McDiarmid (ed.), *The Monarchical Republic of Early Modern England* (Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing, 2007).
[86] John Guy, 'The Rhetoric of Counsel in Early Modern England', in Dale Hoak (ed.), *Tudor Political Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), pp. 292-310, p. 135; Alford, *Burghley*, pp. 292-3.
[87] G. R. Elton, 'The Political Creed of Thomas Cromwell', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 6 (1956), 69–92; Stephen Alford, 'The Political Creed of William Cecil', in John F. McDiarmid (ed.), *The Monarchical Republic of Early Modern England* (Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing, 2007), pp. 75-90.

William Cecil's political creed was a paradox [–] he was a loyal servant of the crown who knew that government was too important to be left to kings and queens, a republican who believed passionately and forcefully in the survival of Elizabethan monarchy'.[88] Consequently, despite his loyalty to the Queen, 'Cecil stood, above all, for what had to be done' of which 'the finest, and also the most disturbing example… must be the Council's dispatch of Mary Stuart's death warrant'.[89] This attitude was articulated in a 1596 letter to his son Robert – 'I will not chang my opinion by affirmyng the Contrary for that were to offend God to whom I am sworn first, but as a servant I will obey hir Majesty's commandment'.[90] Hannah Coates has written similarly on Walsingham, arguing that he viewed himself as a "watchman', appointed by God to preserve religion and peace within England, Scotland and Ireland'; he was therefore sometimes 'prepared to act on his own initiative to secure what he considered the appropriate outcome, [because] 'the realm took precedence over the ruler".[91] A crucial difference with Burghley, though, was Walsingham's self-'identity as a member of an international community of Protestants'.[92] As we will see, this was an identity that he shared with Davison.

Considering the lack of information on Davison's education, it is more difficult to identify the intellectual underpinnings of his political creed, yet we can nevertheless clearly see a coherent set of beliefs emerge in the early years of his career. Crucially, we will see that whilst Davison's creed was similar to those of his patrons, he did not simply echo their beliefs, but rather arrived at these same beliefs through his own experiences of religion and service. Bringing in Davison's more junior voice, developed through extensive diplomatic rather than

[88] Alford, 'Political Creed', p. 75.
[89] Alford, 'Political Creed', p. 87.
[90] Cambridge University Library MS 3.56 no. 85 – 13th March 1596, Burghley to Robert Cecil.
[91] Coates, 'Sir Francis Walsingham', pp. 265-6, quoting Patrick Collinson, 'De Republica Anglorum: Or, History with the Politics Put Back', in his *Elizabethan Essays* (London: Hambledon Press, 2003), pp. 1-29, p. 19.
[92] Hannah Coates, 'Faction, Rhetoric, and Ideology: Sir Francis Walsingham's Role in Anglo-Scottish Diplomacy, ca. 1580–1590', *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies*, 50(3) (2020), 493-513, p. 506.

(in the case of Burghley) domestic service, will therefore further enrich this scholarship on political creeds.

With the exception of the execution crisis, politicians ordinarily pursued their policy aims through counselling the Queen to follow the 'correct' course of action. Counsel was fundamental to early modern governance, with ideas of humanist-classical counsel having largely replaced older modes of feudal-baronial counsel in the earlier sixteenth century.[93] Elizabeth's counsellors had grown up in the humanist mileu of the Henrician and Edwardian courts, where the work of men such as Sir Thomas Elyot was ubiquitous.[94] Indeed, it was Davison's predecessor as secretary, Sir Thomas Smith, who wrote one of the most famous works on humanist government, *De Republica Anglorum*, in the early 1560s; this circulated widely in manuscript form, before being printed in 1583.[95] Elizabethans believed that a good monarch must always listen to counsel, otherwise they risked falling into the role of tyrant – as Francis Bacon wrote, 'the wisest Princes, need not thinke it any diminution to their Greatnesse, or derogation to their Sufficiency, to rely upon Counsell. God himselfe is not without… Soveraignty is married to Counsell'.[96] However, the monarch was not obliged to follow this counsel, and the majority of Elizabethan politicians viewed the provision of counsel as their moral duty, rather than their right. [97] There were some exceptions, though – the puritan MPs Paul and Peter Wentworth, for instance, argued for 'full freedom of speech' for parliament, 'whether their advice was requested or not'.[98] Their demands were rejected by Elizabeth and her Privy Council.

[93] John Guy, 'The Rhetoric of Counsel in Early Modern England', in Dale Hoak (ed.), *Tudor Political Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), pp. 292-310, p. 293.
[94] Sir Thomas Elyot, *The Boke named the Governour* (London: Thomas Bertheleti, 1531) [STC (2nd ed.) 7635]
[95] Ian W. Archer, 'Smith, Sir Thomas (1513–1577), scholar, diplomat, and political theorist', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford University Press, 2008 (2004)) <https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/25906>, p. 8.
[96] John Guy, 'Monarchy and Counsel: Models of the State', in Patrick Collinson (ed.), *The Sixteenth Century, 1485-1603* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), pp. 113-144, at pp. 122-3; Bacon, *Essayes or Counsels*, pp. 115-6.
[97] Guy, 'Rhetoric of Counsel', p. 294.
[98] Guy, 'Rhetoric of Counsel', pp. 302-3.

Counsel was usually presented in humanist language, and within the bounds of certain rhetorical conventions, but this did not necessarily mean only humble, cliental language was used. Robyn Adams has argued that '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'.[99] Hannah Coates has shown that, far from ignorance or rudeness, Walsingham's 'plainness' and 'blunt' counsel was actually a deliberate rhetorical tactic, 'to convince [Elizabeth] of the validity of his advice', as humanist 'advisers were meant to be plain and honest'.[100] Coates argued that whilst 'Walsingham's education gave him the tools to deliver advice in accordance with the established conventions[,] Elizabeth's education gave her the tools to hear counsel intelligently, with an ear tuned for techniques and references', which explains their close relationship, and why she was rarely offended by his seemingly blunt counsel. Coates' work is crucial for understanding Davison's approach to counsel, as his frank manner became something of a trademark. It also raises more questions about Davison's education – as Coates shows, Walsingham and Elizabeth 'shared a common vocabulary of politics, drawn from their shared educational experiences', with Walsingham 'sometimes us[ing] Latin sayings in a gesture to this common language'.[101] Davison also used Latin phrases and specific rhetorical structures in some of his letters, such as that of a traditional oration, so it seems impossible that Davison had not had some kind of formal education, though it leaves no trace in the historical record.

Whilst the principles of counsel can apply to any Elizabethan, either at home or abroad, existing scholarship on counsel has generally been dominated by political theory and domestic counsel. John Guy, who has written prolifically on the topic, particularly focussed on the political thought of counsel and resistance theory, supported by examples from parliament and

[99] Robyn Adams, "Both Diligent and Secret", p. 88.
[100] Coates, 'Sir Francis Walsingham', pp. 80-6.
[101] Coates, 'Sir Francis Walsingham', p. 84.

the Privy Council (including the dispatch of Mary's death warrant); Natalie Mears has examined the role of select 'probouleutic groups' of privy councillors in the development of policy; and Jacqueline Rose has written on ecclesiastical counsel.[102] Counsel has also been largely overlooked by diplomatic scholars, who have tended to focus instead on diplomats' more indirect role in the process of counsel, by gathering news and intelligence which informed the counsel of their conciliar patrons.[103]

There are only a couple of exceptions. Elizabeth Williamson has argued that the provision of counsel – usually in the form of advice treatises for patrons – was a route to political advancement.[104] Yet her examples of the counsel supplied by Robert Beale, Nicholas Faunt and Henry Unton are very brief, covering less than two pages. Much more space is devoted to the diplomat's role as an intelligence-gatherer, and on the advice given to diplomats by their patrons. Most useful is the work of Robyn Adams on the diplomatic agent William Herle. Adams argues that men like Herle were expected to offer counsel to their patrons, and examines the rhetorical presentation of Herle's counsel, which shifted between deferential and frank.[105] In particular, he used 'modest modifiers…[to] flan[k] a straighforward opinion', which, as we will see, was a technique also used by Davison.[106]

Nevertheless, more work is needed in order to properly re-centre diplomats within this traditionally domestic aspect of political culture. Davison is a particularly useful case study on diplomatic counsel, as he wrote regular lengthy advice treatises to his patrons in his role as resident ambassador, and his reprimand over counsel in May 1578 highlights divergent

[102] Guy, 'Rhetoric of Counsel' pp. 292-310; 'Monarchy and Counsel'; 'The 1590s: The Second Reign of Elizabeth I?', in John Guy (ed.), *The Reign of Elizabeth I: Court and Culture in the Last Decade* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010 (1995)), pp. 1-19; Natalie Mears, *Queenship and Political Discourse in the Elizabethan Realms* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), Ch. 2; Jacqueline Rose, 'Kingship and Counsel in Early Modern England', *The Historical Journal*, 54(1) (2011), 47-71.
[103] See Ch. 1.
[104] Williamson, *Elizabethan Diplomacy,* p. 25.
[105] Robyn Adams, esp. 'A Spy on the Payroll', p. 272; "Both Diligent and Secret", p. 93.
[106] Robyn Adams, "Both Diligent and Secret", p. 93.

attitudes towards diplomatic counsel within the Elizabethan polity. His counsel also particularly illuminates the cohesion between domestic and diplomatic service, as, whether at home or abroad, all of his counsel tended to the same end – the preservation of the protestant commonwealth.

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In 1597, Davison wrote to the Earl of Essex lamenting the consequences of his involvement in the execution of the Queen of Scots, which had 'for these ten yeares space served as the occation and meanes of overwhelming and drowning both the memorie and merrit…of all my former travailes in a Sea of disgraces'.[107] Unfortunately for Davison, and for us, they have continued to be drowned out for the centuries since. Consequently, we have failed to acknowledge his unique significance within the mid-Elizabethan polity. Our understanding of both foreign policy and the execution crisis has lacked nuance; our definitions of patronage and men-of-business have been oversimplified; and our approach to domestic and diplomatic service too divided. By recovering 'both the memorie and merrit' of his 'travailes', we will finally see that William Davison was one of our most important Elizabethans, whose career enables a holistic view of the mid-Elizabethan polity beyond limiting historiographical categories.

[107] Stowe MS 145 f. 132.

Part I: Junior Ambassador

Chapter 1: Diplomatic apprenticeship, 1574-7

Davison entered Walsingham's service around 1572 or 1573, but no record of him survives until 1574.[1] It is therefore possible that he had served Walsingham on his Paris embassy of 1570-73, but due to the loss of Walsingham's papers from this period, this is unknown.[2] His first recorded mission was to Scotland in summer 1574, as secretary to Henry Killigrew, and he joined Killigrew again the following summer. Davison evidently proved himself capable enough, as in March 1576 he was dispatched to the Low Countries as a solo special ambassador for two months. He may also have covertly returned to the Low Countries in February 1577, possibly on unofficial business, before the commencement of his much longer, better recorded resident mission from August 1577.

The purpose of this chapter is to examine this period of Davison's diplomatic apprenticeship, and situate him within the broader culture of mid-Elizabethan diplomacy. In particular, it will explore the shift towards diplomatic specialisation, humanist education and the *ars apodemica*. It will be argued that Davison was, from the beginning of his career, an archetypal diplomat, characteristic of this diplomatic corps and cultural mileu. He appeared well aware of the expectations upon him, and was conscientious in his reporting, both with regard to the negotiations and intelligence-gathering. In light of Davison's swift rise through the ranks, and well-known tendency (in his later career) to bend the rules, his initial typicality and conformity is all the more significant – he had had no privileges or special treatment, but achieved everything through his own hard work. Considering the drastic change in Davison's manner between his brief mission to the Low Countries in 1576 and his resident mission the following year, it will also be suggested that his mysterious February 1577 embassy, perhaps

[1] Stowe MS 145 f. 132; Harley MS 6991 f. 94.
[2] Simon Adams, 'Davison, William (d. 1608), diplomat and administrator', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford University Press, 2008 (2004)) <https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/7306>, p. 2.

on behalf of the Earl of Leicester, was a turning point for Davison's ideology and approach to diplomacy.

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In his seminal essay on the 'subtle revolution', Gary Bell identified a deliberate professionalisation and specialisation of the diplomatic corps during Elizabeth's reign.[3] Bell argued that these changes in diplomacy were 'triggered' by the 'perilous prospects of the reign', as a professional diplomatic corps was a necessary response to the threats brewing among Elizabeth's continental neighbours.[4] Diplomats were increasingly drawn from the ranks of the educated young men of the universities and Inns of Court, rather than the clergy or the nobility, and served unofficial apprenticeships in ambassadorial households. Once they had gained sufficient experience, these men were used repeatedly on short-term missions, more so than resident embassies, and specialised in particular countries and areas of foreign policy. Between missions, the diplomats worked in domestic offices which similarly utilised their education and diplomatic expertise, for instance, as clerks of the council. These men would therefore have viewed diplomatic missions as one component of their broader Crown service, rather than as a specific vocation. That this was a deliberate government policy is evidenced by a list of 'noblemen and gentlemen that have served and are fitt to be employed in forrein messages', drawn up by Burghley in the late 1570s, which lists the 'very men who dominated the diplomatic activities of the reign'.[5] This was accompanied by a list of men 'that have not served but are fitt to serve'; however, none of them were ever employed on a diplomatic mission under

[3] Gary Bell, 'Elizabethan Diplomacy: The Subtle Revolution', in Malcolm R. Thorp and Arthur J Slavin (eds.), *Politics, Religion and Diplomacy in Early Modern Europe: Essays in Honour of De Lamar Jensen (Sixteenth Century Essays and Studies vol. XXVII)* (Kirksville, MO: Sixteenth Century Journal Publishers, 1994), pp. 267-288.
[4] Bell, 'Subtle Revolution', p. 283.
[5] Bell, 'Subtle Revolution', pp. 270-1, 285-8; Lansdowne MS 683 f. 49 – [late 1570s], Burghley's list of diplomats. The document is undated, and has been dated by Bell to 1577, and by Platt to August 1579 (see below).

Elizabeth, which, for Bell, was 'indicative of the extraordinary premium placed on diplomatic experience and training by the Elizabethans'.[6]

Bell's argument had actually been proposed six years earlier, by the little-known American historian F. Jeffrey Platt. Both Bell and Platt had been working simultaneously on Elizabethan diplomacy, completing their theses within two years of each other.[7] However, unlike Bell (who is also American), Platt's work has been almost entirely overlooked by British historians – this may have been due to issues with access, as neither his thesis, nor his articles in the obscure *Journal of the Rocky Mountain Medieval and Renaissance Association*, would have been widely available in hard copy in the UK. Bell seems to have been aware of Platt's work, as he cited Platt's thesis once in his 'Subtle Revolution', but did not cite his article on diplomatic service, which posed the same argument as his.[8] Like Bell, Platt had identified a 'conscious government policy of selecting' skilled and educated men, and focussed on the twenty-three gentlemen named by Burghley in his list of men who had served.[9] For Platt, these men were 'the real workhorses of the Elizabethan diplomatic corps', who 'helped establish the standards, values and tone of Elizabethan foreign relations'.[10] He also highlighted the religious homogeneity among these diplomats – all twenty-three were protestants, and fifteen of those likely harboured puritan sympathies.[11]

Often these men did not have a precise title, being called simply an ambassador or agent. However, it can be useful to apply anachronistic or redefined labels in order to clarify their particular remit – this has been done by Bell in his 'Handlist of Diplomatic Representatives'.

[6] Bell, 'Subtle Revolution', p. 285, n. 2.
[7] F. Jeffrey Platt, 'Sir Thomas Wilkes: A Study in Elizabethan Diplomacy, Government and Patronage' (Michigan State University: unpublished doctoral thesis, 1972); Gary M. Bell, 'The Men and Their Rewards in Elizabethan Diplomatic Service, 1558-1585' (UCLA: unpublished doctoral thesis, 1974).
[8] Bell, 'Subtle Revolution', p. 275, n. 17.
[9] F. Jeffrey Platt, 'The Elizabethan Diplomatic Service', *Journal of the Rocky Mountain Medieval and Renaissance Association*, 9 (1988), 93-115, p. 94.
[10] Platt, 'Diplomatic Service', p. 94.
[11] Platt, 'Diplomatic Service', p. 98.

For the purposes of this thesis, the following definitions, slightly different from those of Bell, will be used. Though used generally by Elizabethans to apply to many types of ambassador, the term 'agent' will be used here to denote men conducting unofficial diplomatic work, or various supporting roles within or attached to an embassy, such as secretary and messenger. Special ambassador will be used to describe diplomats sent on short-term missions with a specific purpose, usually related to negotiations. Bell uses this term regardless of rank, applying it to both the brief missions of William Herle, and to the important embassy of Lord Cobham and Walsingham in summer 1578.[12] The term 'extraordinary ambassador' – generally used interchangeably with special ambassador – will instead be used here for special ambassadors of higher rank, often noblemen or senior government figures, who were selected to add weight to the mission. Resident ambassador – a term which was used by Elizabethans – described a more long-term position: there was no pre-determined end date or work to be completed, and the ambassador could expect to live in that country for a long period, often in a permanent embassy building.[13] It must be acknowledged, though, that these labels, whilst useful for briefly glossing a diplomat's remit, are flexible and not definitive. Men also moved fluidly between positions – for instance, Davison himself served as a secretary, then special ambassador, resident ambassador, back to special ambassador, and then perhaps a resident, special or extraordinary in 1584-6.

For Platt, the archetypal diplomat was Thomas Wilkes, the subject of his PhD thesis. Wilkes spent eight years travelling the continent before studying at Oxford, and was subsequently appointed as secretary to Dr Valentine Dale on his Paris embassy in 1573.[14]

[12] Gary M. Bell, *A Handlist of British Diplomatic Representatives, 1509-1688* (London: Royal Historical Society, 1990), pp. 8, 187, 189.
[13] Bell, *Handlist*, p. 8. For instance, SP 84/8 f. 47 – 17th May 1585, Leicester to Davison, is addressed 'To my very loving frende and cousen Master Davison, Ambassador resident for the Queens Majestie with the States of the lowe countryes'.
[14] Platt, 'Diplomatic Service', p. 99.

Wilkes went on to have a long diplomatic career, serving missions across Spain, the Low Countries, and France, alongside his work as a clerk of the privy council from 1576. Similarly, Robert Beale was educated in the protestant hubs of Strasbourgh and Zurich, and possibly Cambridge, and between his countless diplomatic missions worked as a clerk of the council from 1572.[15] For Elizabethans, diplomacy and domestic service were therefore intertwined, both utilising the same set of skills within a unified Crown service.

Not all diplomats worked as clerks, but the majority served in another complementary capacity. For instance, Daniel Rogers engaged in scholarly pursuits, publishing both poetry and prose and collecting historical manuscripts. Rogers was the son of a Dutch woman and English protestant minister, who studied in Wittenberg under the theologian Philip Melanchthon, and later at Oxford.[16] He worked in the household of the English ambassador in Paris, Sir Henry Norris, as a steward and tutor in the late 1560s; as an agent for Walsingham during his Paris embassy; and on numerous subsequent missions to the Low Countries and the German states. Mercantile connections were also beneficial for diplomatic work – George Gilpin studied civil law at Mechelen, before working first as Sir Thomas Gresham's secretary in the Low Countries, and then as secretary to the Merchant Adventurers in Antwerp by 1564.[17] Gilpin carried out a number of non-official diplomatic activities supporting the English ambassadors, a role which has been described by Bell as a 'chargé d'affaires (at a time before this term was widely used)'.[18] Finally, military service was excellent preparation for a diplomatic career – for instance, the soldier and governor of Guernsey Thomas Leighton learned French during his

[15] Bell, 'Beale', pp. 1-2.
[16] Mark Loudon, 'Rogers, Daniel (c.1538-1591), diplomat and author', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford University Press, 2008 (2004)) <https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/23969>, pp. 1-2.
[17] Gary M. Bell, 'Gilpin, George (d. 1602), diplomat and translator', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford University Press, 2008 (2004)) <https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/10758>, p. 1.
[18] Bell, 'Gilpin', p. 1.

time in France as commander of the Huguenots, and later undertook missions to Scotland, France and the Low Countries.[19]

For these men, working across the domestic and diplomatic spheres, as diplomats, clerks, soldiers and scholars, diplomacy was a natural part of humanist service. Educated to a typical humanist curriculum, including Latin grammar, rhetoric and logic, these men were intimately familiar with classical authors such as Cicero and Livy, and more recent humanist writers, including Erasmus and Sir Thomas Elyot. Such works were essential to Elizabethan public servants, as they laid out the foundations of good humanist governance and service, including the importance of counsel. Manuals on more practical skills, such as letter-writing, were also widely read and adapted – for instance, Angel Day's *The English Secretorie*, published in 1586, was based on Erasmus' classic *De Conscribendis Epistolis*, and ran to nine editions by 1635.[20]

Their diplomatic service in particular both influenced the expansion of, and was shaped by, literature on the art of travel, or the *ars apodemica*.[21] By the latter half of the sixteenth century, ever increasing numbers of young Englishmen were venturing across Europe in humanist pursuit of knowledge, life experience and leisure, and soon a 'specifically English genre' of travel writing developed.[22] This increased popularity in travel was encouraged, and taken advantage of, by Elizabeth's government for the purpose of information-gathering. The fraught situation on the continent by the 1570s, and the consequent expansion of ministerial intelligence networks, meant that all English travellers were expected to serve their country by

[19] D. M. Ogier, 'Leighton, Sir Thomas (c. 1530–1610), soldier', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford University Press, 2008 (2004)) <https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/68015>, p. 1.
[20] Angel Day, *The English Secretorie, or, Methode of writing of epistles and letters* (London: Printed by Thomas Snodham, 1621); Markku Peltonen, *Rhetoric, Politics and Popularity in Pre-Revolutionary England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), pp. 44-8; W. Webster Newbold, 'Traditional, Practical, Entertaining: Two Early English Letter Writing Manuals', *Rhetorica: A Journal of the History of Rhetoric*, 26(3) (2008), 267-300, p. 270 n. 7.
[21] Justin Stagl, *A History of Curiosity: the Theory of Travel 1550-1800* (London & New York: Routledge, 1995).
[22] Joan-Pau Rubiés, 'Instructions for Travellers: Teaching the Eye to See', in his *Travellers and Cosmographers: Studies in the History of Early Modern Travel and Ethnology* (Aldershot: Ashgate Variorum, 2007), pp. 139-190, p. 167.

providing intelligence, irrespective of whether they were a diplomat, nobility or gentry, a merchant, or a lowly espial – all acted as the government's eyes and ears abroad. These English advice manuals for travellers therefore 'all lay emphasis on travel's educative function, and on how knowledge gained by it should be put towards the good of the common weal'.[23] For ambassadors, however, information-gathering was not just an encouraged extra, but an integral part of their job. The most popular advice literature for ambassadors was Jean Hotman's *The Ambassador*, but aspiring men in government service could also learn from the actual instructions from ministers to diplomats and noblemen, some of which were circulated in manuscript copies.[24]

The purpose of the *ars apodemica* was both intellectual and practical, as it encouraged travellers to develop their moral virtues, as well as specifying a method for their intelligence-gathering. This typically took the form of a 'lengthy enumeration of what to observe, covering topographical, anthropological, legal, financial, mercantile and military matters', and was usually 'heavily weighted towards matters of defence'.[25] Hotman's manual gives a perfect model of such a list. His advice for ambassadors was shaped and informed by his impressive range of first-hand diplomatic experience – he was employed by Sir Amias Paulet during his Paris embassy, as tutor to his two sons and to Francis Bacon, and subsequently undertook missions on behalf of Leicester, Essex, and Henry of Navarre (the future Henry IV).[26]

[23] Elizabeth Williamson, "Fishing after News' and the *Ars Apodemica*: The Intelligencing Role of the Educational Traveller in the Late Sixteenth Century', in Joad Raymond and Noah Moxham (eds.), *News Networks in Early Modern Europe* (Leiden: Brill, 2016), pp. 542-562, p. 543.
[24] As well as the *ars apodemica* and instructions discussed below, see also Sir Thomas Palmer, *An Essay of the Meanes how to make our Travailes* (London: Imprinted for Mathew Lownes, 1606) [STC (2nd ed.) 19156]; Conyers Read, *Mr Secretary Walsingham and the Policy of Queen Elizabeth*, Vol. 1 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1925), Vol. 1, pp. 18-20 – undated [suggested by Read as 1573-90], Walsingham's instructions to his nephew. For further information on the *ars apodemica*, see Williamson, "Fishing after News". On the circulation of manuscript instructions, see Rubiés, p. 167; Elizabeth Williamson, 'A Letter of Travel Advice? Literary Rhetoric, Scholarly Counsel and Practical Instruction in the Ars Apodemica', *Lives and Letters* 3 (2011), 1-22.
[25] Williamson, "Fishing after News", p. 544.
[26] Marie-Céline Daniel, 'A Diplomat and a Translator: Jean Hotman and the Good Use of Translations for a Soft Diplomacy', *Caliban*, 54(2015), 35-49, paras. 1-2; David Baird Smith, 'Jean De Villiers Hotman', *The Scottish Historical Review*, 14(54) (1917), 147-166, pp. 147-54, 160; D. C. Parker, 'Review of 'Jean Hotman's English Connection' by G. H. M. Posthumus Meyjes', *Scottish Journal of Theology,* 46(3) (1993), 394-395.

Consequently, he well-perceived what information should be gathered by an ambassador, advising that 'if he have not lessons given him by writing', then generally, an ambassador should report 'the forme of government…the maners of the people, the number of places of strength, havens and vessels, the store houses of munition, the forces of warre for sea and land, what may be drawne out of the Country without unfurnishing the frontiers and places of importance…the ordinarie and extraordinarie revenewe; the Treasure and meane in ready mony; the alliances offensive and defensive… the traffike, commerse, plentue and fertilitie therof… yearly expences, both for his house, as for his frontiers and garrisons'.[27]

Hotman's advice was echoed in the *Profitable Instructions*, a volume of three letters compiled by Benjamin Fisher, including one each from the Earl of Essex and Sir Philip Sidney to the 5th Earl of Rutland, and one from our own Davison to his son Francis.[28] We will overlook Davison's letter for now, since it would be anachronistic to measure Davison's early missions against his later experience. Of the other two letters, Essex's advice was more typical of the humanist-moralist style, whereas Sidney's leaned more towards practical advice: '[observe] how they are to Sea… how with Revenue, how with fortifications & Garrisons, how the people, warlike trained or kept under, with many other such warlike considerations'.[29]

Considering the travel experience of Sidney, Essex and Hotman, their advice was closely aligned with the priorities of the Privy Council. In many diplomatic instructions, intelligence gathering was an unwritten assumption, but in others the areas of interest were clearly outlined. For instance, Burghley's lengthy instructions for the 3rd Earl of Rutland's journey to France in 1571 covered geographical, financial, military, religious and political matters, and were likely circulated in manuscript form.[30] Similarly, the instructions given by

[27] Jean Hotman, *The Ambassador* (London: For James Shawe, 1603) [STC (2nd ed.) 13848], sig. F8r-v.
[28] Benjamin Fisher (ed.), *Profitable instructions describing what speciall observations are to be taken by travellers* (London: Printed [by John Beale], 1633) [STC (2nd ed.) 6789].
[29] Fisher, pp. 84-5.
[30] SP 12/77 f. 10 – 20th January 1571, Burghley to Rutland.

Walsingham and Lord Cobham to Henry Killigrew, William Pelham, and Sir George Carey for their travel through the Low Countries in June 1578 covered fortifications and taxes, and particularly focussed on popular opinion and allegiances, whether to Don John, France or the Queen.[31]

Alongside these practical matters, the *ars apodemica* and contemporary instructions also provided guidance on the ambassador's political remit. For Hotman, the ambassador played a crucial role in processes of counsel – he was 'bound to [give counsel] by the dutie of his charge, which charge comprehendeth the qualitie of a Counsellour of Estate for time of his Ambassage, although he had not the honour to be accounted so before'.[32] Although counsel does not seem to have been addressed in manuscript instructions, this did not necessarily mean that it was not expected or allowed, as their patrons would know that they were already familiar with the process of counsel through their humanist education, and through their broader service. After all, intelligence gathering was also rarely specified in instructions, but was known to be a crucial part of the diplomat's role. Nevertheless, it is possible that the lack of instruction or guidance on counsel may have discouraged newer, less experienced diplomats.

More significant was the issue of ambassadorial discretion, which, due to the diplomat's distance from court, needed to be clearly established prior to his departure. This was therefore discussed in both the *ars apodemica* and in contemporary instructions. For Hotman, the use of discretion was essential – although he recommended that an ambassador should adhere to his instructions 'as much as possibly hee can…alwaies aiming the will of his Maister', in some cases 'it is expedient to committe all to the wisedome of the Ambassador', as he was the person most familiar with the developing situation on the ground. Consequently, Hotman argued that 'there needeth to a new businesse a new advice… to change and omit something enjoined by

[31] Cotton MS Galba C/VI pt. 2 f. 171 – June 1578, instructions for Killigrew, Carey and others.
[32] Hotman, sig. F8r.

his instructions… many things ought to be left to the discretion of a wise Ambassador, without binding his tongue and hands'.[33]

In reality, the allowance and use of ambassadorial discretion seems to have varied based on the political circumstances and the experience of the ambassador. Junior ambassadors were more likely to be given specific, prescriptive instructions, with little leeway for their own decision-making. As we will see, on his first solo mission in spring 1576, Davison was instructed to come home immediately if the negotiations wrought no success. The government had evidently trusted him enough to send him alone, but probably believed that he lacked the experience to make autonomous decisions. The same year, though, the more experienced Robert Beale was permitted, on his mission to deal with Dutch seizures of English ships, 'chiefely to be guyded by your owne discrecion accordingly as you shall fynd the state of thinges there at your arryvall'.[34] Similarly, the instructions given to Walsingham and Lord Cobham for their extraordinary embassy of summer 1578 explained that 'for that it is very harde for us preciselye to sett downe every particularitie… we are pleased you use your discrecions having a principall regarde to direct the course of your doinges in soche sorte as may seeme best to farther the present charge comitted unto you'.[35] It therefore seems that the government recognised the necessity of ambassadorial discretion and autonomy, albeit largely for more experienced ambassadors.

This was the cultural mileu within which Davison grew up, and within which he would cut his political teeth. Though the details of his education are unknown, Davison nevertheless sat firmly among the cohort of young, educated protestant men, who would become his close colleagues. Whether learned at Gray's Inn or elsewhere, he was able to read, write and speak

[33] Hotman, sigs. F1r-v, F4r-F5v.
[34] SP 70/138 f. 46 – 16th April 1576, instructions for Beale.
[35] SP 83/7 no. 12 – 12th June 1578, instructions for Walsingham and Cobham.

French, and had been classically educated, able to read and write (and perhaps speak) Latin and utilise a variety of rhetorical structures. His thorough reporting, both in Scotland and the Low Countries, illustrated his awareness of the government's priorities, and of the lessons of the *ars apodemica*. He was first employed by Walsingham in 1572 or 1573, so it is just possible that he served Walsingham on his embassy in Paris – perhaps, like Wilkes, he had come to the ambassador's attention through his education and skills.

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Within a year or two, Walsingham 'lent' Davison to Henry Killigrew, as secretary for his missions to Scotland.[36] Killigrew had served as ambassador to Scotland regularly since 1560, and had recently served as Walsingham's secretary in Paris. It is therefore possible that Davison and Killigrew had met during this embassy before Killigrew's departure in March 1572, and that Killigrew was sufficiently impressed to want Davison as his own secretary.[37] Killigrew was then sent to Scotland in September 1572 (without Davison) to mediate between the regency government of James VI, headed by the Earl of Morton, and the supporters of Mary, Queen of Scots, led by William Maitland, and also to persuade the regency government to take Mary back to Scotland for execution.[38] This mission was regarded as a success, as Killigrew managed to have Morton confirmed as regent, and had opposition to the regency government quashed by summer 1573. The following summer, he was dispatched back to Scotland with Davison, with instructions to continue fostering friendly relations with Morton and the government.[39]

[36] Harley MS 6991 f. 94 – 26th July 1574, Walsingham to Burghley.
[37] Bell, *Handlist*, p. 91.
[38] Luke MacMahon, 'Killigrew, Sir Henry (1525x8-1603), diplomat', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford University Press, 2008 (2004)) <https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/15533>, pp. 4-5.
[39] SP 52/26/1 f. 22r – 22nd May 1574, instructions for Henry Killigrew. Copy is Cotton MS Caligula C/IV f. 254.

Davison's role was as secretary and messenger, writing dispatches for Killigrew and carrying secret messages personally.[40] Killigrew thought very highly of his service, and wrote to Walsingham that 'Master Davyson hathe deserved more at my hand then I am able to deserve I thanke you for hem'.[41] He sent Davison home in late July, 'not... for any great porpose but because he hathe ernest busynes at home'.[42] As this is one of the earliest surviving mentions of Davison in the record, it is unknown what his business might have been. It is possible that it was family related, as his son Francis was born around 1573/4. Killigrew certainly seems to have relied on Davison, asking Walsingham to send someone to 'supply Master Davyson rome for eles I am undon'. However, Davison arrived back in Scotland by the beginning of August, and presumably served Killigrew for the remainder of the mission.[43]

Davison then accompanied Killigrew again the following summer, but their mission was interrupted by the Redeswire raid.[44] This was a border skirmish between the English and Scottish wardens of the marches on 7th July 1575.[45] As a result of this, Killigrew and Davison were forced to halt in Berwick, and never entered Scotland. It was at this time that Killigrew wrote to Leicester introducing Davison as 'a gentleman who has married a kinswoman of your lordship's, though unknown, I think, yet to you'.[46] Killigrew was keen to return home, and recommended to the Privy Council that Davison remained instead as Elizabeth's representative.[47] Though the suggestion was partly self-interested, Killigrew must also have regarded Davison as competent enough, despite his juniority, to manage alone, and told

[40] Cotton MS Caligula C/IV f. 274 – 12th July 1574, Killigrew to Walsingham
[41] SP 52/26/1 f. 81r – 21st July 1574, Killigrew to Walsingham.
[42] SP 52/26/1 f. 83r – 23rd July 1574, Killigrew to Walsingham.
[43] SP 52/26/1 f. 88r – 3rd August 1574, Killigrew to Burghley.
[44] Cotton MS Caligula C/III f. 516 – 7th May 1575, instructions for Killigrew; SP 12/134 f. 16 – 27th May 1575, instructions for Killigrew.
[45] Adams, 'Davison', p. 2; Cotton MS Caligula C/IX f. 36 – 12th July 1575, further instructions for Killigrew.
[46] William K. Boyd (ed.), *Calendar of State Papers relating to Scotland and Mary, Queen of Scots, 1547-1603*, *Vol. 5 1574-1581* (Edinburgh: H.M. General Register House, 1907), entry 179, p. 171 – 8th August 1575, Killigrew to Leicester. On State Papers Online, this entry is mistakenly linked to SP 52/26/2 f. 190, but it is not actually there, it is just the outer sheet with the address and endorsement. The original letter may have been inserted loose into this volume and since been lost.
[47] SP 52/26/2 f. 172r – 8th July 1575; f. 198r – 19th August 1575**.** Both Killigrew to Walsingham.

Leicester that he was 'now well acquaynted with the affayres and humours of Scotland'.[48] However, he was not heeded and the pair remained together in Berwick; Davison was again used as a messenger, and wrote a thorough report on the Redeswire raid.[49] They returned to court, having never entered Scotland, in September.[50]

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In March 1576, Davison was sent on his first solo mission, to the Low Countries as a special ambassador. At the beginning of the year, the situation had appeared hopeless for the Dutch rebels, as Zierikzee, a 'strategically important town' which linked South Holland and Zeeland, was under ferocious siege by the Spaniards.[51] Consequently, in January, representatives of the States of Holland and Zeeland travelled to England to offer Elizabeth the sovereignty of their provinces, and to ask for her help against the Spanish.[52] However, Elizabeth favoured mediation with Spain, and at the same time received the ambassador from the Spanish governor-general's government, Frédéric Perrenot, sieur de Champagney.[53] But the political situation was suddenly turned on its head, as the Spanish governor-general, Don Luis de Requesens, died on 5th March. The English government now seized upon this brief window of opportunity to push their plans for mediation forward, sending an ambassador to convince the Spanish-loyalist Council of State and the Prince of Orange to agree to a peace before the arrival of the new governor-general. The ambassador selected was Davison. There is no evidence that any others were touted for this mission, so the government must have believed him to be capable following his experience in Scotland. He spent less than two

[48] SP 52/26/2 f. 196r – 17th August 1575, Killigrew to Leicester.
[49] SP 52/26/2 f. 198r; SP 52/26/2 f. 191r – 8th August 1575, Killigrew to Leicester; SP 59/19 f. 136 – 28th August 1575, Davison's report on the Raid of Reedswire.
[50] Bell, *Handlist*, p. 245.
[51] Wallace T. MacCaffrey, *Queen Elizabeth and the Making of Policy, 1572–1588* (Guildford: Princeton University Press, 1981), p. 200.
[52] Simon Adams, 'Elizabeth I and the Sovereignty of the Netherlands 1576-1585', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 14 (2004), 309-319, p. 309.
[53] MacCaffrey, *Making of Policy*, pp. 202-4.

months, from late March to early May 1576, in Brussels with the Council of State, and was recalled by the Queen when it became apparent that neither side would concede to a peace.

On 28th March, Davison's letters of credence were drawn up, and his instructions for the mission were finalised the following day.[54] His task was to persuade Orange and the Council of State to agree to a peace, and to prevent Orange from approaching Henry III of France for assistance. The potential involvement of France was a serious concern for the English government, as it would place a pro-Marian, Catholic power even closer to English shores, increasing the risk of invasion or at least disruption to trade.[55] This was feared even more than the incumbent Spanish, since the French, 'unlike the Spaniards, would have no long lines of communication back to their home base to make them vulnerable'.[56] He was therefore instructed to assure the Council of State of their authority to agree to an abstinence of arms, and to urge them to take seriously the 'perill lik to grown from France', who, in the midst of civil wars themselves, would 'cas[t] their owne fire into their Neighbour house'.[57] If the Council of State agreed to an abstinence, Davison was to 'repaire with all speede to the Prince of Orange and States', to 'require the same in humble and dutyfull sorte, as apperteineth unto subjects'. He was to particularly warn Orange against resorting to French aid, as they would bring the Dutch people 'to a servitude… the reliefe, that will grow to them that way, wilbe like as if a man to escape hanging seeketh to drowne himselfe'. If no agreement was reached, then Davison was to 'with all the speed you may make… repaire hether unto us, that we may take there uppon such further order for the stay of those matters, as to us shalbe thought convenient'.[58] He was therefore not authorised to remain in situ and await further instructions,

[54] SP 70/137 f. 304 – 28th March 1576, the Queen to Orange.
[55] Cotton MS Galba C/V f. 264; R. B. Wernham, *Before the Armada: The Growth of English Foreign Policy, 1485-1588* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1966), pp. 315-6.
[56] Wernham, *Before the Armada*, pp. 315-6.
[57] Cotton MS Galba C/V f. 264 – 29th March 1576, Davison's instructions.
[58] Cotton MS Galba C/V f. 264.

let alone enact further talks or make even minor policy adjustments – these decisions could only be made by his superiors at home.

Written by Burghley, these instructions were a distinctly humanist piece of writing in terms of both style and structure. Elizabethan politicians and administrators routinely utilised rhetorical techniques in their political writings and speeches, and Burghley in particular was renowned for his use of such techniques to reach policy decisions, through writing *in utramque partem* position papers which balanced the arguments *pro et contra*.[59] Consequently, the instructions followed the model of a classic four-part oration. The instructions began with an *exordium*, or introduction, followed by the *narratio*, which set out Elizabeth's interventions thus far.[60] Next was the argument both for and against, the *confirmatio* and *refutio*, before a conclusion, the *peroratio*. The *confirmatio* and *refutio* were not in two separate halves, as was the typical style, but were combined. So, in each paragraph, Burghley proposed a potential objection by the Council of State to a peace treaty, which was then rebutted with a counterargument. For instance, the government predicted that the Council may 'alleadge, that they have no authority, either to yeeld to an abstinence, or to any Treaty of peace', in which case Davison must 'signify unto them, that we judge, that what authority was given unto the Commendador [Requesens], is cast uppon them'.[61] Whilst this style was typical of a humanist oration, it was not usual for diplomatic instructions. The clarity and specificity provided by this structure essentially scripted how Davison should proceed in a range of situations, which suggests that the government, probably Burghley in particular, wanted to control and guide the

[59] Peter Mack, *Elizabethan Rhetoric: Theory and Practise* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), pp. 189-202. An example of one of Burghley's position papers from 1576 is Cotton MS Galba C/V f. 292 – August 1576, Burghley's memorandum, in which he considered different ways to prevent piracy from the Flushingers against English merchants. Beale had been dispatched to resolve this problem shortly after Davison (see below).
[60] Mack, pp. 9, 28.
[61] Cotton MS Galba C/V f. 265.

junior ambassador as much as possible. These instructions were essentially Davison's 'training wheels' for his first solo mission – nothing was left to chance, or to his professional judgement.

After receiving these instructions, Davison arrived in Brussels in early April, and conveyed Elizabeth's proposals for peace to the Council of State on the 11th.[62] Due to the brevity of this mission, there is a distinct lack of sources – Davison only sent five dispatches, and received one (surviving) letter, his recall, from Walsingham.[63] He did not handwrite any of his letters himself, but used three scribes (unidentified, referred to here as clerks A, B and C), who were more likely to be messengers and intelligencers than permanent embassy clerks.[64] Robert Beale was in Campveer in Zeeland from late April, negotiating with Orange over Dutch piracy against English merchants, so these men perhaps passed through, or were shared by, both embassies.[65]

In these dispatches, Davison reported information on the negotiations, and general military intelligence, but avoided giving counsel and included no personal details. In fact, on one occasion, he explicitly refused to provide an opinion – when sending Walsingham an enclosure on the 'distribution of the garrisons in Holland & Utreight which I have recouvered from one that should knowe somewhat', he added that he would 'give no sentence therof'.[66] Perhaps he wanted to avoid appearing too presumptuous on his first solo mission, or perhaps he simply felt too ill informed about the subject matter. Whatever the case, it is crucial to bear

[62] Cotton MS Galba C/V f. 269 – 16th April 1576, Council of State's answer to Davison's proposals.
[63] SP 70/138 f. 39 – 13th April 1576, Davison to Walsingham; f. 88 – 29th April 1576, Davison to Walsingham, and its draft, f. 90; f. 41 – 16th April 1576, Davison to Burghley, and its draft, Cotton MS Galba C/V f. 270x; SP 70/138 f. 68– 21st April 1576, Davison to Walsingham; f. 64 – 21st April 1576, Davison to Burghley, and its draft, Cotton MS Galba C/V f. 279; SP 70/138 f. 74 – 23rd April 1576, Walsingham to Davison.
[64] Clerk A wrote SP 70/138, f. 39, and f. 88 and its copy f. 90; Clerk B wrote SP 70/138 f. 41, and its draft Cotton MS Galba C/V f. 270x; Clerk C wrote SP 70/138 f. 68, f. 64, and its draft Cotton MS Galba C/V f. 279.
[65] Bell, *Handlist*, p. 184. For Beale's instructions and correspondence from this mission, see Allan James Crosby (ed.), *Calendar of State Papers, Foreign Series, of the Reign of Elizabeth, Vol. XI, 1575-1577*, (London: Longman & Co., 1880), p. 311ff.
[66] SP 70/138 f. 68v.

this initial caution in mind as we see Davison's confidence in providing counsel develop, particularly on his resident mission from summer 1577.

Aside from the conventionally cliental salutations, farewells and subscriptions, Davison's letters to both Walsingham and Burghley were plain and businesslike. In such a fast-paced environment, speed and efficiency were of the essence – this is evident from the differences between the drafts and final copies of his letters, as we can see that Davison constantly received updated information.[67] A businesslike manner appears to have been expected of working ambassadors, as Hotman recommended that an ambassador's 'advises which are looked on and considered by the Secretaries of Estate, read unto the Counsell, and represented unto the Prince… must therefore be grave, briefe, well compact, containing much in few words, couched in tearmes, rather ordinary than borrowed, interlaced sometimes with sententious clauses, and points, yet very seldome'.[68]

Davison was unable to report much on the state of the negotiations in his dispatches, because the answer to his propositions was delayed by the Council of State.[69] Finally, on 21st April, he was able to report that he had received 'thanswer of the lords… which I have thought good to send your honour'.[70] The councillors insisted that they did not have the authority to agree to a peace until they had received further orders from the King, whose agents were supposedly en route from Spain, but did not arrive during Davison's stay.[71] Due to these delays, Davison's reporting on the peace negotiations was incredibly slim, being confined to only one or two paragraphs in each letter. Instead, his letters mostly focussed on military intelligence.

[67] For instance, in his letter of 21st April, Davison reported a 'brut that the princes shipps to the nomber of 100 sayle after the fight against Zirickse should be gotten to the sea'; this information was not included in the draft from the same date – SP 70/138 f. 64v; draft is Cotton MS Galba C/V f. 279.
[68] Hotman, sig. G6r-v.
[69] Cotton MS Galba C/V f. 270x – 16th April 1576, Davison to Burghley (draft).
[70] SP 70/138 f. 68.
[71] SP 70/138 f. 88.

Although intelligence-gathering had not been specifically covered in Davison's instructions, he was well aware of the expectations upon him, and was careful to report in detail on military news, financial intelligence, and public opinion, as per the *ars apodemica*. He would have received reimbursement for his intelligence expenses – ambassadors were given both their regular allowance (or 'diet') plus expenses for 'extraordinary' costs, including 'intelligence expenses, bribes, sending and receiving correspondence'.[72] An example of one such 'expenses claim' is Henry Unton's 'bill for intelligence moneyes… for such monies as have beene disbursed by me in especiall and necessary causes of her Majesties service' in France, in December 1591.[73] Since Davison's letters are written in three different hands, it appears that he employed agents as spies, intelligencers or messengers. Considering the timing of the information Davison received, and the letters written by each agent, it seems likely that clerks A and B had brought him information on the Spanish siege of rebel Zierikzee in Zeeland.

The siege had been ongoing since October 1575, and an indecisive naval battle occurred on 13th April, shortly after Davison's arrival; the town eventually surrendered to the Spanish on 2nd July 1576, several weeks after Davison's return home.[74] On the battle of the 13th, Davison reported losses on both sides, recounting that whilst the King had 'ij galleys taken one shipp soncke &thadmirall of the donkerk fleete burnte by the prince', Orange had 'ij or iij flatt boates sonck'.[75] For the next fortnight, the rebels' situation seemed hopeless, as the King's forces had fortified the isle with 'Bullwarke trenches & ditches', and surrounded it with '10 of the greatest shippes the King hath & 3 galleys besides a Bullwark they have made wheron lieth 6 great cannons, so as it is thought impossible to pass that waye & in a manner impossible to

[72] Gary M. Bell, 'Sir Thomas Chaloner's Diplomatic Expenses in Spain', *Bulletin of the Institute of Historical Research*, 53(127) (1980), 118-124, p. 121 n. 12.
[73] Joseph Stevenson (ed.), *Correspondence of Sir Henry Unton* (London: William Nicol, Shakspeare Press, 1847), p. 472.
[74] SP 70/138 f. 64; Geoffrey Parker, *The Dutch Revolt* (Harmondsworth: Pelican Lane, 1979 (1977)), p. 168.
[75] SP 70/138 f. 64.

succor therin any way els'.[76] However, by the 29th, 'the Prince is come downe withall the force he can mak towards Siriczee & hath allready… landed certen pionners & souldiers… they have begon to cutt the ditches & drowned part of the Iles to the great annoy of the Kings folk & hath besides brought part of his fleete… hemming in on every sid the Kings forces & stopping the passages so as it is thought no vittuelles can com to the Camp'.[77] Orange's retaliation 'bredeth a doubt now whether the matter stand uppon so sure termes on the Kinges part as they made reconing of'.[78]

The initial information on the battle of 13th April was reported in the letters written by Clerk B on the 16th – three days should have been enough time to ride fast from Zeeland to Brussels, to bring the information to Davison, and then to write his letter to send home. Clerk A was with Davison on 13th April, but his hand did not reappear until 29th April, so, it is possible that, following the receipt of information from Clerk B, Clerk A was dispatched to Zeeland to gather more information. It was then in Clerk A's letters of the 29th that the new information of Orange's retaliation was reported, probably after he had returned from Zeeland. Clerk B's hand does not appear again on this mission – perhaps he had continued his journey onwards, or was dispatched elsewhere to gather intelligence.

Although Davison was unable to secure an abstinence of arms, the Queen was evidently pleased with his work, as, in his recall of 23rd April, Walsingham conveyed that she 'verry well allowed your manner of proceeding'.[79] Davison was not held responsible for the Council of State's denial of a peace, as she 'fyndethe by the awnswar geven unto you… that yt is determyned to prosecute the matter in the swoorde'. It seems likely that Elizabeth's government had not held high hopes for success, since none seemed too surprised or

[76] SP 70/138 f. 64, also f. 68.
[77] SP 70/138 f. 88.
[78] SP 70/138 f. 88.
[79] SP 70/138 f. 74 – 23rd April 1576, Walsingham to Davison.

disappointed by this outcome. If the government had truly been determined in their objective, they would surely have sent a more senior diplomat than Davison, as would occur in summer 1578, with the dispatch of the more senior Walsingham and Cobham during Davison's resident embassy. Regardless, Elizabeth must have been sufficiently satisfied with his work, both his negotiating and reporting, to employ him as the next resident ambassador to the Low Countries the following summer. After receiving his recall on 2nd May, Davison departed for England around the 9th, and arrived at court before 20th May.[80]

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With no governor-general yet in place, much of the Spanish army mutinied by the summer. This united the provinces against the Spanish, and led to a purge of the Council of State in September, which removed all pro-Spanish councillors, and an assembly of the States-General, which produced the Pacification of Ghent in November 1576. This treaty bound together the rebel provinces of Holland and Zeeland and the loyalist provinces of the south in defence against the Spanish troops, and committed them to the restoration of their ancient liberties under Charles V.[81] The heresy laws were suspended, and Calvinism in Holland and Zeeland was 'implicitly' recognised, with a long-term religious solution to be decided later by an extraordinary assembly of the States-General.[82] All signatories accepted Philip's sovereignty, but the newly selected governor-general Don John was not to be accepted until he agreed to the Pacification too. However, this alliance came too late to prevent the Sack of Antwerp in November by the Spanish troops, in which over 8,000 people were killed.[83]

The Dutch requested Elizabeth's help in obtaining Spain's – specifically Don John's – assent to the Pacification, and, if he refused, asked Elizabeth to loan them £100,000 to help pay

[80] SP 70/138 f. 74; SP 70/138 f. 110 – 9th May 1576, Council of State to the Queen; Bell, *Handlist*, p. 184.
[81] Wernham, *Before the Armada*, p. 329.
[82] Pieter Geyl, *The Revolt of the Netherlands, 1555-1609* (London: Ernest Benn Ltd., 1958 (1932)), p. 150.
[83] Parker, *Dutch Revolt*, p. 178.

for their defence. Considering Elizabeth's recent attempts to mediate a peace, as was the purpose of Davison's mission, the Pacification was exactly what she had wanted. Consequently, she dispatched two ambassadors, Edward Horsey to Don John and Sir John Smith to Philip, and sent an initial loan of £20,000 to the States; however, it was only to be released by her ambassador Thomas Wilson if negotiations with Don John failed. In this instance, a further £80,000 would be sent too.[84] Then, in January, Wilson suggested to Walsingham, perhaps on the direction of Orange, that if an English army was sent it ought to be headed by Leicester.[85]

It was at this point that Davison's mysterious mission took place, around February 1577. None of his correspondence survives, so the mission is only known due to a handful of references in others' correspondence to Davison's presence in, and work on behalf of, the Low Countries in spring 1577. There are also no extant instructions, which would prove that Davison was sent officially on Crown business. A letter from Leicester to Orange implies that Davison had acted on his behalf, and this is supported by Simon Adams, who believed it was 'just possible that he was sent privately by the earl rather than officially by the queen'.[86] Considering the current political situation, Davison had probably been tasked with conveying Leicester's friendship to Orange, and stressing his eagerness to bring an English army. On 7th March, Leicester told Orange that he was 'very glad that it pleased your Excellency, to instruct Master Famars to follow the advice that I gave you by Master Davison'; a letter from Orange's close advisor Philip of Marnix, lord of St Aldegonde to Walsingham revealed that Famars had accompanied Davison back to England in February.[87] Orange himself then thanked Davison

[84] Wernham, *Before the Armada*, p. 329; MacCaffrey, *Making of Policy*, pp. 220-1.
[85] SP 70/142 f. 103 – 24th January 1577, Wilson to Walsingham; Simon Adams, 'Dudley, Robert, earl of Leicester (1532/3–1588), courtier and magnate', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford University Press, 2008 (2004)) <https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/8160>, p. 21.
[86] Adams, 'Davison', p. 3.
[87] SP 70/144 f. 37 – 7th March 1577, Leicester to Orange. Original French: 'Je suis bien aise quil a pleu a votre Excellencie en mandant la Sieur de Famars par deca, de suivre l'advice que je vous ay donne par Monsieur Davison'. SP 70/143 f. 78 – 9th February 1577, St Aldegonde to Walsingham.

'for the good offices that you have continued to do for me and those of these countries, both with Her Majesty and my lord the Earl of Leicester'.[88] Thus, it is likely that Davison and Orange had now met in person, probably in Middelburg, where Orange and St Aldegonde were lodging in February.

It is frustrating that we know so little about this mission, because it appears to have been a turning point in Davison's career. Between the 1576 mission of this chapter, and his 1577 mission as resident ambassador, there occurred a notable shift in Davison's behaviour, as, from the beginning of the resident mission, he began to fervently express his protestant ideology and preference for military intervention in his dispatches. This was a significant change from the straightforward intelligence reports of his 1576 mission, in which he had avoided giving counsel. This February 1577 mission is the logical explanation for Davison's change in behaviour, as he was now closely associated with the 'puritan' Leicester, in direct contact with the Prince of Orange, and involved in the budding plans for military intervention.[89] Considering his pre-existing association with Walsingham and Killigrew, it is likely that Davison was already pro-intervention, but this mission may have given him the confidence to express his opinions more freely.

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Though brief, these missions have nevertheless revealed much about the origins of Davison's career. His selection as Killigrew's secretary, and subsequent appointment as a solo ambassador, marked him out as a budding member of the developing specialist diplomatic corps, alongside men such as Beale and Wilkes. Like his colleagues, he would have received a

[88] SP 70/144 f. 192 – 23rd April 1577, Orange to Davison. Original French: 'vous remerciant des bons offices que continues tous jours de faire en mon endroit et de ceux de ces pays, tant aupres de sa Majeste que de Monsieur le Comte de Lecester'.

[89] On Leicester's religious leanings, see Simon Adams, especially 'A Puritan Crusade? The Composition of the Earl of Leicester's Expedition to the Netherlands, 1585-86', in his *Leicester and the Court: Essays in Elizabethan Politics* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2002 (1988)), pp. 176-195; 'A Godly Peer? Leicester and the Puritans', *History Today*, 40(1) (1990), pp. 14-19.

contemporary humanist education, and was evidently well-versed in the government's expectations and the *ars apodemica*. Consequently, Davison acted the model ambassador, as he reported intelligence regularly, but avoided giving counsel. Though unsuccessful, his efforts at securing a peace satisfied the Queen and his patrons, and earned him a reputation as a capable diplomat. Finally, his mysterious 1577 mission seems to be the key to understanding the newfound confidence and ideology of his resident mission, as he began to associate more closely with Leicester and Orange. As we progress through the thesis, and Davison climbs ever higher, he will eventually far outrank his initial colleagues. But, for now, he was one of many, a competent but entirely ordinary ambassador. These humble beginnings make his swift rise, comparable to that of Walsingham, all the more impressive.

Chapter 2: Diplomatic counsel, 1577-8

It was not long until Davison returned to the Low Countries. Following Elizabeth's interventions, Don John realised he had little choice but to accept the Pacification of Ghent, and, in February 1577, signed the Perpetual Edict with the States-General.[1] This committed him to the conditions of the Pacification, including the removal of Spanish troops, but also provided for the restoration of Catholicism. This agreement was made without awaiting the consent of the representatives of Calvinist Holland and Zeeland, and consequently Orange refused to support the settlement.[2] Although Elizabeth had ostensibly achieved her aims, she, too, remained suspicious of Don John, as rumours spread that he planned to use the troops withdrawn from the Low Countries to instead invade England, so he could marry Mary, Queen of Scots and take Elizabeth's throne.[3] Eventually, after months of frustration over negotiations, Don John fled south from Brussels and seized the citadel of Namur on 24th July.[4] Upon receiving the news that these 'troubles in the lowe countries lately appeased are newly broken out againe', Elizabeth's government decided to dispatch Davison to keep an eye on the developing situation.[5] He was to remain there as resident ambassador until May 1579.

The purpose of this chapter is to examine Davison's approach to counsel as a resident ambassador. It must be acknowledged from the outset that this embassy produced a staggering amount of paperwork – the calendars alone fill over 700 pages.[6] Consequently, this chapter

[1] R. B. Wernham, *Before the Armada: The Growth of English Foreign Policy, 1485-1588* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1966), p. 329.
[2] Pieter Geyl, *The Revolt of the Netherlands, 1555-1609* (London: Ernest Benn Ltd., 1958 (1932)), pp. 151-2.
[3] Wernham, *Before the Armada*, p. 329.
[4] Geoffrey Parker, *The Dutch Revolt* (Harmondsworth: Pelican Lane, 1979 (1977)), pp. 181-3.
[5] Harley MS 285 f. 44 – [27th July] 1577, Davison's instructions. These are endorsed 27th June, but this must be an error since Don John did not seize Namur until 24th July. So, the date of this draft is probably 27th July. Also given by Simon Adams as 26th, but with no citation – Simon Adams, 'Davison, William (d. 1608), diplomat and administrator', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford University Press, 2008 (2004)) <https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/7306>, p. 3. News of Namur must therefore have reached the English court in less than three days.
[6] Primarily *CSPF* Vols. 12 and 13. These calendars include other foreign papers, including many from France, so, when compiled separately, the Dutch sources alone fill over 700 A4 pages.

will not be able to cover the political and military developments of this period in great detail, but will explain as much as is relevant to understand the context in which Davison was working.[7] It will be argued first, that counsel was an integral part of the ambassador's role, which was valued by patrons at home; second, that a variety of humanist rhetorical styles were acceptable for the provision of counsel; and third, that Davison's counsel was shaped by his political creed, specifically his commitment to the protestant cause.

Existing scholarship on counsel has almost exclusively focussed on domestic counsel, from groups such as the Privy Council and parliament.[8] The role of diplomats in providing counsel has been overlooked, often in favour of their complementary work as intelligence gatherers. Yet Davison was not alone, as many diplomats provided counsel. For instance, Thomas Wilkes repeatedly counselled the Queen against negotiations with Spain in 1586-7, including through the use of 'lengthy discourse[s]'.[9] Whilst later under house arrest, Wilkes even composed a long discourse setting out the solutions to Leicester's mismanagement in the Low Countries.[10] Mark Taviner has written on Beale's role as a specialist advisor, including the writing of discourses, such as his 'extensive treatise' relating to the St Bartholomew's Day massacres, and his 'extensive treatise propounding the benefits of an "alliance defensive and offensive" between England and France for Sir Robert Sidney' in 1596.[11] Whilst we know this counsel exists, it has not yet been analysed – not even by Platt and Taviner – either in terms of

[7] For a brief narrative of the period 1577-79, see Wernham, *Before the Armada*, pp. 329-36; Parker, *Dutch Revolt*, pp. 179-195. More detail is given in Wallace T. MacCaffrey, *Queen Elizabeth and the Making of Policy, 1572–1588* (Guildford: Princeton University Press, 1981), pp. 217-301, which includes the marriage negotiations with Alençon.
[8] See pp. 38-41.
[9] Michael Hicks, 'Wilkes, Sir Thomas (c. 1545–1598), diplomat', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford University Press, 2004) <https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/29412>, p. 3; F. Jeffrey Platt, 'Sir Thomas Wilkes: A Study in Elizabethan Diplomacy, Government and Patronage' (Michigan State University: unpublished doctoral thesis, 1972), p. 182.
[10] Platt, 'Wilkes', pp. 223-4; Cotton MS Galba D/I f. 151 – 13th July 1587, 'Wilkes's declaration concerning the state of the United Provinces'.
[11] Mark Taviner, 'Robert Beale and the Elizabethan Polity' (University of St. Andrews: unpublished doctoral thesis, 2000), pp. 105, 171-2. These treatises are Add. MS 48049 f. 340 – [Sept 1572], Beale's discourse written after the massacre of St. Bartholomew; Add. MS 48102 f. 351 – [spring] 1596, Beale's 'notes concerning a treatye'.

content or rhetorical style. Through close reading of Davison's counsel, this chapter will therefore re-situate diplomats within the scholarship, and highlight the necessity of further work on the counsel of Davison's colleagues.

Throughout this mission, Davison sought to balance his devout protestantism and sympathy for the Dutch rebels with his duty to the Crown; however, he did not consider these to be competing interests, as he viewed military intervention in the Low Countries as the best option both for the Dutch rebels, and for the safety of England. To this end, Davison wrote regular advisory discourses to his patrons and the Queen, offering unsolicited counsel on major political developments. His frank manner was not due to lack of tact or ignorance – as we have seen in Chapter 1, Davison was very familiar with humanist expectations – but rather was a deliberate rhetorical style, similar to that of Walsingham. In March 1578, he received a warning from Walsingham to refrain from providing counsel; however, this seemed to be due to rumours circulating at court, rather than any dissatisfaction from the government. Davison therefore continued to provide counsel using other rhetorical styles, which continued to be well received. We can therefore see that counsel was not simply a domestic process, as existing historiography has often implicitly suggested, but was one in which diplomats were intimately involved.

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News of the seizure of Namur quickly reached the English court, then on progress at Richmond, and Davison's instructions were drafted immediately.[12] This was quite the step up from Davison's previous brief missions, yet there does not appear to have been any debate around his appointment, which suggests that he had already acquired a reputation as a capable

[12] There are several drafts of these instructions, including Harley MS 285 f. 44 (probably the earliest, see above); and SP 83/2 f. 5, plus its draft with additions by Walsingham f. 6 – 2nd August 1577.

ambassador.[13] A resident ambassador did not officially command more authority than a special ambassador, as the official remit of each ambassador was stated in his instructions. However, whereas a special ambassador was generally sent to deal with one specific issue, resident ambassadors were in post longer, and were therefore required to deal with new issues as they arose. Since the process of reporting home and receiving new instructions could take weeks, it seems that the government chose men who they could trust to use their discretion and initiative, particularly once they had settled into the mission and proved their competence. This will be seen more in Chapter 3, and again in Chapter 5. Moreover, the length of their embassy meant that resident ambassadors had greater opportunity to build relationships with their local colleagues and acquaintances, and build up their personal and political credit.

Elizabeth evidently did not want Don John to be suspicious of her motives in sending Davison, ordering Davison to give out that he 'had [his] dispatche before the notice' of the seizure of Namur 'came to our eares, and that the principall cause of our sendinge [him] thither was to supplie the place of our agente there' – this had been Thomas Wilson, who had only recently returned home, in early July.[14] Wilson would soon be appointed as Walsingham's partner in the secretaryship, in November 1577.[15] Davison's task was two-fold – first, to fulfil the 'ordinarie charge' of resident ambassador, and second, to act as a mediator between Don John, the States-General, and Orange. Though he was instructed to encourage Don John's adherence to the Pacification of Ghent, it was expected that Don John would refuse – his army was making swift progress, seizing several other towns near Namur, and he was expecting support from several German princes and, crucially, the Duke of Guise.[16] Davison was

[13] Davison is named on all versions of the instructions – see above note.
[14] Harley MS 285 f. 44; Gary M. Bell, *A Handlist of British Diplomatic Representatives, 1509-1688* (London: Royal Historical Society, 1990), p. 185.
[15] Susan Doran and Jonathan Woolfson, 'Wilson, Thomas (1523/4–1581), humanist and administrator', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford University Press, 2004) <https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/29688>, p. 4.
[16] SP 83/2 f. 72 – 19th August 1577, Davison to Walsingham; SP 83/2 f. 127 – 30th August 1577, Davison to Leicester.

therefore instructed to assure the States-General of England's support – 'we ourselves are persuaded that don Jehan hath no other meaninge but to bringe them to servitude… we will not faile to assiste them so farre forth as may stand with our honours'.[17]

However, Elizabeth was also dissatisfied with the States' response thus far to her financial support – they had now received her loan of £20,000 – and hoped that they 'might be provoked to shewe themselves more thankfull then theie have hither to'. Davison was also to advise the States to accept the leadership of the Prince of Orange, for 'without the government and assistaunce of suche a person of valewe as the Prince is, it is apparaunte to all wise men that they cannot longe stande'.[18] Finally, he was expected, by Leicester at least, to further the plans for an English military expedition under his leadership, and to develop relations with Orange.[19]

Davison was dispatched from court with these instructions on 3rd August 1577, and arrived in Brussels around nine days later.[20] At the same time, the States-General sent an ambassador to England, the Marquis of Havré. He was half-brother of the Duke of Aerschot, who was one of the leading Catholic nobles and a member of the House of Croÿ. Havré was tasked with obtaining the remaining £80,000 which Elizabeth had already promised, as well as 5,000 foot soldiers and 1,000 horse, under Leicester's leadership, to defend the provinces against the anticipated French army.[21] In late September, Elizabeth agreed to the loan, and to send her troops if the French came to support Don John. However, the States-General now began to waver, as the Catholic deputies, led by Aerschot and the rest of the Croÿ family, were worried that the arrival of Leicester and English protestant troops would further bolster

[17] SP 83/2 f. 5 – 2nd August 1577, Davison's instructions.
[18] Harley MS 285 f. 44.
[19] SP 83/2 f. 51 – 14th August 1577; SP 83/3 no. 89 – 5th November 1577. Both Leicester to Davison.
[20] SP 104/163 p. 36 – 3rd August 1577, note in Walsingham's letter book; SP 83/2 f. 44 – 14th August 1577, Davison to Walsingham.
[21] MacCaffrey, *Making of Policy*, pp. 224-5; Wernham, *Before the Armada*, pp. 330-1.

Orange's power.[22] In fact, they had already taken action to retain power themselves, by inviting the young, Catholic Archduke Matthias of Austria to become their new puppet governor-general, in place of Don John.[23] They invited the Archduke in August, whilst Havré's mission was being arranged, and kept it secret from Orange until September. Despite their jealousy of him, the States-General also invited Orange to Brussels, where he made his Joyous Entry in September.

From the outset of the mission, Davison was suspicious of Don John, and disdainful of the States-General – on the latter, he mused to Walsingham, 'the proceadinges of theis men are so strange as I cannot tell in the world what to mak of them. If they be not willfully blind they cannot but see the great perill which hangeth over their heades'.[24] He was also struck by the severity of the division between Don John and the States-General – he reported to Leicester, 'I fynd the difference betwene son Alteze & the States so farre advanced that I see not with what meanes the vehemencie of this flame can be quenched'.[25] It seemed that Davison respected only Orange, whom he had probably met on his secret mission in February. In September, they were finally reunited upon Orange's arrival in Antwerp – they 'supped' together, and Davison then accompanied him on his Joyous Entry into Brussels three days later.[26]

Davison was to divide his time between Brussels and Antwerp for the next two years. Frustratingly, there are no surviving records of the English houses in either city. The Merchant Adventurers occupied the grand Hof van Liere in Antwerp until 1576, when they left the city following its sack.[27] However, we cannot assume that Davison's embassies were equally grand,

[22] SP 83/2 f. 44 – 14th August 1577, Davison to Walsingham; f. 51 – 14th August 1577, Davison to Leicester.
[23] MacCaffrey, *Making of Policy*, pp. 224-5; Wernham, *Before the Armada*, pp. 330-1.
[24] SP 83/2 f. 72 – 19th August 1577, Davison to Walsingham; SP 83/2 f. 189 – 15th September 1577, Davison to Walsingham.
[25] SP 83/2 f. 51 – 14th August 1577, Davison to Leicester.
[26] SP 83/2 f. 226 – 19th September 1577, Davison to Walsingham; SP 83/2 f. 269 – 25th September 1577, Davison's report of Orange's entry into Brussels.
[27] Guido Marnef, 'Gresham and Antwerp', transcript of *Gresham College* lecture (2008) <https://www.gresham.ac.uk/lecture/transcript/print/gresham-and-antwerp/> [accessed 8th November 2021]; Jeroen Puttevils, "Eating the Bread out of their Mouth': Antwerp's Export Trade and Generalized Institutions,

as, due to the sack and the uncertainty and expense of the war, he may have had to settle for comparatively inferior residences over the coming years. All we know is that there was a seemingly permanent residence for English ambassadors in each principal city, and that the house in Antwerp had a garden.[28]

Likewise, it is difficult to ascertain exactly who lived there. The English houses would have been busy, transitory places, with various relatives, diplomats and messengers staying there and passing through. Davison initially went over without his family, as his wife Catherine was heavily pregnant with their second child. She gave birth to a girl in August, and, once Davison was settled, Catherine, the baby, and their infant son Francis joined him in the autumn.[29] Davison's servants, secretaries and messengers would also have been part of the ambassadorial household. Since Davison usually referred only to 'my man' or 'the bearer' in his correspondence, it is impossible to determine precisely how many servants he had.

However, there are a few recurring names. The first is Edward Whitechurch, who was likely the son of the bookseller Edward Whitchurch, a prolific printer of protestant texts under Edward VI.[30] Whitechurch went over with Davison in August, and was last mentioned in February 1578.[31] The second recurring name was Davison's cousin-in-law, Edward Cheke.

1544-5', *The Economic History Review*, 68(4) (2015), 1339-64, p. 1341; 'Hof van Liere: Geschiedenis', *Universiteit Antwerpen* website <https://www.uantwerpen.be/nl/overuantwerpen/campussen/gebruik-infrastructuur/catering-en-congreszalen/congreszalen/hof-van-liere/>.

[28] SP 83/6 f. 112 – 11th May 1578, Davison to Walsingham.

[29] SP 83/2 f. 90 – 23rd August 1577, Killigrew to Davison; SP 70/144 f. 122 – undated, [Davison to Killigrew]; SP 83/3 no. 34 – 13th October 1577, Randolph to Davison; SP 83/4 no. 13 – 7th December 1577, Randolph to Davison. Adams ('Davison', pp. 5-6) assumed that the child born in August 1577 was a son named 'Frank', and that another child, possibly a daughter, was born in the Low Countries in summer 1578. However, this is incorrect, as Francis was born in 1573/4. See also SP 15/25 f. 200 – 10th October 1578, Killigrew to Davison; SP 83/5 no. 16 – 12th January 1578, Randolph to Davison; SP 83/6 f. 98 – 6th May 1578, Wilkes to Davison; SP 83/6 f. 105 – 8th May 1578, Catherine Davison to [her sister].

[30] SP 83/2 f. 239 – 20th September 1577, Wilson to Davison; PROB 11/45 f. 227 – will of Edwarde Whitchurche, Haberdasher of London; Alec Ryrie, 'Whitchurch, Edward (d. 1562), printer and bookseller', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford University Press, 2008 (2004)) <https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/29233>, pp. 1-2; Susan Doran and Jonathan Woolfson, 'Wilson, Thomas (1523/4–1581), humanist and administrator', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford University Press, 2004) <https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/29688>, pp. 1-2.

[31] SP 83/2 f. 44 – 14th August 1577, Davison to Walsingham; SP 83/2 f. 94 – 24th August 1577, Whitechurch to Davison; SP 83/5 no. 37 – 3rd February 1578, Davison to Burghley.

Cheke was a client of Edmund Grindal, the Archbishop of Canterbury, so, due to the crisis over his suspension in June 1577, Cheke was unable to go over with Davison in August.[32] It is unclear when Cheke was able to join Davison, but he was certainly working for him by autumn 1578.[33] However, Cheke appears to have remained in England from November 1578 onwards.[34]

The soldier Edward Chester also couriered for Davison between September 1577 and his death in December 1577.[35] Chester returned to England some time in the autumn, and on his return to the Low Countries, whilst carrying a letter from Leicester for Davison, was caught in a storm and died.[36] The letters he carried, including Leicester's, were lost. The final named servant was Henry Burnet, who was mentioned twice in September and November 1578.[37] Burnet was named by Walsingham and a secretary at court, not by Davison himself; so, considering that Davison's usual habit was to write 'my man', we might assume that Burnet did not just appear in autumn 1578, but had been among the unnamed men who had previously couriered for Davison.

Some of these servants may have worked with Davison for a long time – in a letter to Walsingham in January 1579, he asked Walsingham to 'be good to this bearer myn old servant in his allowaunce', as, 'if it please you to examyn the strang accident that befell him ryding

[32] SP 15/25 f. 48 – 8th August 1577, Cheke to Davison; SP 15/25 f. 53 – 19th September 1577, Cheke to Davison; SP 15/25 f. 85 – 15th December 1577, Cheke to Davison.
[33] SP 83/10 no. 38 – 17th November 1578, Davison to the Secretaries; Cotton MS Galba C/VI pt. 2 f. 346 – [17th November] 1578, Davison to Cheke – this was most likely sent with Cheke when he carried the above letter to the Secretaries, as it contains much the same information. See also SP 83/10 no. 39 – 22nd November 1578, Davison to the Secretaries.
[34] SP 83/11 f. 113 – 7th February 1579, Davison to Cheke. Cheke was definitely still in England in early December – SP 83/10 no. 55 – [3rd] December 1578, Davison to Burghley.
[35] SP 83/2 f. 232 – 19th September 1577, Davison to Leicester; D. J. B. Trim, 'Chester, Edward (d. 1577), soldier', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford University Press, 2004) <https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/71679>, pp. 1-2.
[36] SP 83/3 no. 120 – 22nd November 1577, Leicester to Davison. This was sent with a different courier, but mentions that the previous letter was sent with Chester. The letter with Chester was miscarried in the storm, referred to by Davison in SP 83/4 no. 52 – [28th] December 1577, Davison to Leicester; SP 83/4 no. 1 – 1st December 1577, Davison to Leicester; SP 83/4 no. 36 – 15th December 1577, Davison to Burghley.
[37] SP 83/9 no. 21 – 15th September 1578, the Queen to Walsingham and Cobham; SP 83/10 no. 25 – 12th November 1578, Walsingham to Davison.

with me between Morpeth and Newcastell, I doubt not but you will think he hath deserved well of me'.[38] The last time Davison had ridden through the north-east was probably in summer 1575, when he accompanied Henry Killigrew on his mission to Scotland.[39] So, Davison and his 'old servant' had probably been associated for at least four years. Davison not only used his own 'men', but also those sent over by Walsingham, Leicester, and others, as well as the merchants' post – by the end of the mission, Davison knew the merchants' courier well enough to entrust him with the carriage of valuable bonds, 'bycause I know the man to be very honest and carefull'.[40]

As well as these secretaries and couriers, various special ambassadors and other agents were sent to the Low Countries during Davison's tenure, and likely visited or lived at the embassy. It seems that the diplomat Daniel Rogers lived with Davison in Antwerp during his March 1578 mission, as there was a mix-up when Orange's servant mistakenly gave a message intended for Rogers to Davison.[41] Two other English diplomats, Thomas Leighton and Thomas Wilkes, were sent to Don John's camps, but did meet with Davison en route, and perhaps stayed briefly at the embassy. Leighton definitely visited the house in Antwerp, as Davison recorded that they walked together in the garden.[42] George Gilpin had been secretary to the Merchant Adventurers in Antwerp since 1564, and worked closely with Davison over the arrangements for English loans in summer 1578. Gilpin may have lived either in the Antwerp embassy, or with his merchant colleagues.[43] Though it is not clear from their correspondence where Walsingham and Lord Cobham stayed during their summer 1578 embassy, the logical place would certainly have been the English house.

[38] SP 83/11 f. 100 – 25th January 1579, Davison to Walsingham.
[39] Bell, *Handlist*, p. 244; Adams, 'Davison', p. 2.
[40] SP 83/11 f. 188 – 8th March 1579, Davison to the Secretaries.
[41] SP 83/5 no. 96 – 24th March 1578, Rogers to the Secretaries.
[42] SP 83/6 f. 112.
[43] Gary M. Bell, 'Gilpin, George (d. 1602), diplomat and translator', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford University Press, 2008 (2004)) <https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/10758>, p. 1.

Considering their personnel, the English houses would have been hubs of learning and reform. Davison himself was a staunch protestant, as was Rogers, who was the son of a protestant minister, and had studied under Melanchthon in Wittenberg.[44] Cheke's master, Archbishop Grindal, had only recently been suspended for supporting puritan prophesyings; and Whitechurch was the son of a protestant printer. Living in Antwerp, the home of Christophe Plantin's famous publishing house and press, Davison and his colleagues would have had access to all of the latest books and pamphlets.[45] The Antwerp presses were busy during Davison's embassy – from 1577 to 1579, the Universal Short Title Catalogue records 652 texts published in Antwerp, of which almost half (308) were printed by Plantin, and 118 are classed as religious, across both sides of the divide.[46] Political tracts were popular too, including printed copies of letters supposedly written by the Prince of Parma and the Prince of Orange.[47] The English house would therefore have been exposed to, and perhaps influenced by, the latest religious and political ideas.

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From the beginning of the mission, Davison wrote regularly to Walsingham, Wilson, Burghley and Leicester, at an average of three to four letters per week throughout autumn 1577. He also probably corresponded regularly, if less frequently, with Hatton – only a handful of his letters to Hatton survive, mostly as copies in Hatton's letterbook, but there was likely to be

[44] Mark Loudon, 'Rogers, Daniel (c.1538-1591), diplomat and author', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford University Press, 2008 (2004)) <https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/23969>, pp. 1-2.
[45] Andrew Pettegree and Arthur der Weduwen, *The Bookshop of the World: Making and Trading Books in the Dutch Golden Age* (London: Yale University Press, 2019), pp. 22-3. See also Léon Voet, *The Golden Compasses: A History and Evaluation of the Printing and Publishing Activities of the Officina Plantiniana at Antwerp*, 2 vols. (Amsterdam: Vangendt & Co., 1969), pp. 80-105.
[46] Universal Short Title Catalogue <https://www.ustc.ac.uk/> [search results accessed 23rd June 2024].
[47] Alessandro Farnese, Duke of Parma, *Copie d'une lettre envoyée aux estats generaux des Pais-Bas* (Antwerp: Christophe Plantin, 1579) [USTC 56818]; William I, Prince of Orange, *Sendtbrief aende provincien ende steden deser Nederlanden, inde generale Unie ghebleven, aengaende het verdrach tusschen den Prince van Parme ende de gedesunieerde provincien ghepasseert* (?Antwerp: ?Gillis van den Rade, 1579) [USTC 415063].

more which have been lost with the rest of Hatton's papers.[48] The regularity of his writing to different patrons varied based on the political circumstances – for instance, he wrote to Leicester more frequently when an English military expedition looked more likely in late 1578 – but the majority were always directed to Walsingham. In the first couple of months, he wrote to Walsingham twice a week, dropping slightly to around three times a fortnight by December, plus regular letters to his other patrons.[49]

These dispatches took two general forms. The first, and most common by far, were his news reports, in which he kept his patrons up to date with political and military developments. He occasionally snuck his opinion in, but the focus was very much on the information. The second type of dispatch is what will be referred to here as his discourses. These were lengthy letters, much fewer and far between, in which Davison sought to counsel and persuade the Queen, and to a lesser extent his patrons, to follow his favoured course of action. As their eyes and ears on the ground, Davison believed that his unique expertise made him qualified to counsel his superiors on the necessity of English intervention. Whether or not the recipients agreed very much remained to be seen.

These discourses were new to this mission – as we have seen, in spring 1576 Davison stuck to simply reporting information, without offering counsel. It is unclear what caused this change in behaviour, but it was likely due to his secret mission in February 1577, and his closer association with Leicester and the Prince of Orange. Alongside Walsingham, both of these patrons were desperate for English intervention in the revolt, and it seems that Leicester had instructed Davison to act as his unofficial representative in the Low Countries, alongside his

[48] Rosalyn Cousins, 'Letter from William Davison to Sir Christopher Hatton', *Notes and Queries*, 70 (2023), 246–249; Neil Younger, *Religion and Politics in Elizabethan England: The Life of Sir Christopher Hatton* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2022), pp. 5-6.

[49] The rate of three letters per fortnight includes letters to the Secretaries jointly and Walsingham individually. Davison initially did not write to the Secretaries together, and only started this in December (first letter is SP 83/4 no. 31 – 12th December 1577).

duties as a Crown ambassador – in November 1577, Leicester wrote to Davison reminding him that 'my desier chifely of your going was to treat & deale with' Orange.[50] It would therefore make sense that Davison's association with these patrons had bolstered his own support of the revolt, and given him the confidence to supply counsel to that end.

Davison's first extended piece of counsel was a letter to Walsingham, dated 27th October, regarding the installation of the Archduke Matthias as the new governor by the States-General.[51] Matthias was the son of the Holy Roman Emperor, Maximilian II, and both the nephew and brother-in-law of Philip II of Spain, but was regarded by the States-General as still being young and mouldable. He had been invited by the Catholic-dominated States-General back in August, in the hopes that he would both keep Orange's power in check, and pacify Philip, by showing that they were willing to accept a titular Habsburg figurehead.

A few days earlier, Walsingham had written to Davison, reporting that Elizabeth now wanted to halt the negotiations with Havré until she had heard Orange's opinions on Matthias.[52] Walsingham included a list of ten questions to which he asked Davison to obtain Orange's answers – these included 'what perryll or good he thinkethe the [Archduke] may brynge' and 'what he thinkethe don Joan wyll doe'.[53] Upon receiving Walsingham's letter on 23rd October, Davison went to Orange as soon as possible, but was not given audience until the 26th.[54] Orange had initially opposed the invitation to Matthias, but, by now, he had considered the benefits, and believed that he could influence him. In his reply to Walsingham, Davison did not report Orange's answers in detail, as he had already sent a copy of Orange's advice to the States-

[50] SP 83/3 no. 89 – 5th November 1577, Leicester to Davison.
[51] SP 83/3 no. 76 – 27th October 1577, Davison to Walsingham.
[52] SP 83/3 no. 51 – 20th October 1577, Walsingham to Davison.
[53] SP 83/3 no. 51. A version of this list is also given in SP 83/3 no. 52 – 20th October 1577, 'copy of the questions referred to in Walsingham to Davison', and in SP 83/3 no. 76a – 27th October 1577, 'questions propounded to his Excellency, and his answer'.
[54] SP 83/3 no. 76 – 27th October 1577, Davison to Walsingham.

General to Burghley, and thought that Walsingham would 'finde the propounded difficulties sufficiently aunswered'.[55]

Instead, Davison enclosed only a brief list of Orange's answers, and devoted the majority of the letter to his own counsel.[56] In Davison's opinion, the installation of Matthias would bring 'profit and suerty' to Elizabeth and to England, so he encouraged Elizabeth to support him. In favour of this argument, he listed five numbered reasons, but these appear negative at first reading – for instance, he argued that it would deepen the division between Philip and the Dutch, and deepen the 'strayte amytie and league' between Philip II and Henry III of France. However, he then proceeded to argue that there could be no 'greater pollicy' than to 'have such a neighbour possessed of thes Countryes as must of necessety depend uppon her, which this Prince, aswell for the Jealousy of Spayne as the hatred of fraunce shalbe driven to do'. Moreover, the Dutch would 'be increased by the coming in of the Archduke', and 'shalbe resolutly bent against the King'; so, England would have no cause to 'feare the ill neighbourhed of Spayne', since 'we are not to be afrayd [of Spain] but by way of this country'. So, if Elizabeth supported Matthias, the Dutch would depend upon and be loyal to her, and, in turn, would be strong enough to keep the Spanish from England's borders. Consequently, 'it may sufficiently appeare that with good handling the proffit may be farr greater then the perrill'. Davison further argued that Elizabeth should not 'withdraw the favour' which she had promised to Havré, as this would 'utterly alien… the whole Country in generall from her, and dryve them to ronne some other Course, as namely to practise with Fraunce', which would also 'breede no les perrill' to England.

[55] SP 83/3 no. 76; SP 83/3 no. 64 – 24th October 1577, 'the prince of Aurenge Advise to the States concerning the Archduck Mathias' (endorsement by Burghley) (French); SP 83/3 no. 76.
[56] SP 83/3 no. 76; no 76a.

For Davison to give such lengthy, unsolicited counsel was a bold move. At a time when Elizabeth was very carefully sitting on the fence, caught between Philip and Don John, Matthias, Havré, Orange and the States, Davison had now clearly declared his own position – his support for the Dutch cause, and for the provision of English money. He was no longer a mouldable junior agent, simply reporting home – he had his own political opinions, and was not afraid to articulate them. Crucially, though, he was not supporting the Dutch cause simply for its own sake, because, as he argued, support for Matthias would benefit both the Dutch and the English. So, for Davison, from the very beginning of his career, the Dutch revolt was completely intertwined with the safety of England. The protestant cause was not simply a continental issue – it was much larger, encompassing the protestant commonwealth of England, too, with Elizabeth at its head. Yet though he believed that he was promoting the right thing for England, this was not the same thing as following the Queen's policy, who, at that time, was still trying to balance relations with Spain and the States-General.

Despite his boldness, Davison seems to have realised that, as a junior diplomat, he would be expected to present his counsel with humility. Consequently, his argument was peppered with repetitive cliental phrases, including 'in my rude opinion' once, 'in my poore judgement' twice, and 'under your honours correction' three times. This humble framing was likely more for the Queen's benefit than for Walsingham's, as he probably anticipated that it would be read to or by her, especially since she had personally requested Orange's (albeit not Davison's) opinion. Just how far these token phrases served to modify his bold arguments, however, is unclear. Though Walsingham did not explicitly acknowledge this counsel in his subsequent letters, this was probably not a sign of dissatisfaction on his part, and was more likely because this dispatch was overshadowed by the sudden news of the arrest of the Duke of Aerschot by the Ghent Calvinists, on the charge of conspiring with Don John and Alençon.[57] However,

[57] SP 83/3 no. 78 – 30th October 1577, Davison to Burghley.

Leicester soon wrote to Davison mentioning 'the good opinion conceaved by hir majesty of your sufficiency', so, Elizabeth must have been satisfied with Davison's service thus far.[58] Aerschot was subsequently released at the request of Orange and the States.[59]

As the negotiations wore on, Davison began to win himself a reputation as Orange's man. He clearly admired Orange, and, as instructed by Leicester, had worked hard to foster good relations between them – as early as August, he had reported to Leicester that 'you have made a good beginninge with the Prince and States of Hollande where by the reporte of all men your name is aswell knowen and yourself asmuch honoured as in your owen countrey'.[60] By November, Davison and Orange had become close – he reported that Orange 'dothe dailie communicate withe me that which passeth', and 'if ther fall out anie thing of importaunce in two or three daies of myne absence from him; he will vouchsafe to come home to me to my Lodginge.' [61] Davison recognised that this favour was unusual, being pleased that 'so muche honour dothe he use me withall more than agrees with his state and my quallitie'.

However, their closeness soon attracted criticism at the English court. Davison was made aware of these rumours by Leicester, who informed him that 'whear hir majestie did send you chifely to the states generally… hir ys sayd you only follow the prince & negocyatt alone with him'.[62] This was somewhat ironic, considering Leicester's repeated entreaties for Davison to foster relations with Orange. Yet, as the Queen's ambassador, Davison represented her policy, so his perceived allegiance to Orange undermined Elizabeth's efforts at impartiality, especially when the States' ambassador, the Marquis of Havré, was still in England. Nevertheless,

[58] SP 83/3 no. 89 – 5th November 1577, Leicester to Davison.
[59] MacCaffrey, *Making of Policy*, p. 226.
[60] SP 83/2 f. 127 – 30th August 1577, Davison to Leicester. See also SP 83/2 f. 232 – 19th September 1577, Davison to Leicester; f. 275 – 28th September 1577, Leicester to Davison.
[61] SP 83/3 no. 111 – 18th November 1577, Davison to Leicester.
[62] SP 83/3 no. 120 – 22nd November 1577, Leicester to Davison.

Leicester asked Davison to continue as 'my espetyall Agent' to Orange, but advised him to act with 'great discretyon' to 'avoyd the suspicyon' of the States.

Davison did not take these accusations lying down, and replied to Leicester in order to defend his relationship with Orange. He had done his duty, and tried his best to deal with the States as per Elizabeth's instructions, but, due to their constant delays and prevarication, it was now apparent that they would not reach any resolutions soon. Davison therefore made no apologies for turning his attentions to Orange, as 'if it be considered how… uprightly he hath dealt with me, how the States and he are united… there is skarce any other with whom I may franckly deal (though I neglect not the rest)'.[63] The rumours, or Leicester's warning, did not seem to alter his approach, as he continued to move ever closer into the Orangist circle, and on 6th December hosted the Archduke Matthias, the Prince and Princess, and 'others of the nobilitie' for dinner at his lodging.[64]

Over the next few months, Davison had no cause to send extensive counsel to his patrons. After much back and forth throughout the autumn, the States-General had finally accepted Elizabeth's offer of aid in mid-November, and she committed to sending troops.[65] Mission seemingly accomplished, Havré departed England in mid-December.[66] Elizabeth also dispatched two ambassadors in December, to press Philip, Don John and the States for peace once again before her military intervention. Thomas Wilkes, sent to Philip, was also instructed to reveal their knowledge of the Spanish plans to invade England, which the government had learned from the intercepted letters of Don John's secretary Juan de Escobedo.[67] Wilkes did not receive an answer, and was dispatched home with the promise that a Spanish ambassador,

[63] SP 83/4 no. 1 – 1st December 1577, Davison to [Leicester].
[64] SP 83/4 no. 33 – 13th December 1577, Davison to Walsingham.
[65] SP 83/3 no. 113 – 19th November 1577, the States-General to the Queen; MacCaffrey, *Making of Policy*, p. 227.
[66] SP 83/4 no. 44 – 21st December 1577, Leicester to Davison; Wernham, *Before the Armada*, pp. 330-1.
[67] *CSPF* Vol. 12, item 524, p. 388 – 19th December 1577, the Queen's declaration to the King of Spain. MS (in Latin) is SP 83/4 no. 42. See also SP 104/163 f. 94v – 22nd December 1577, Wilkes' instructions.

Bernardino de Mendoza, would soon follow him to England to answer Elizabeth's proposals.[68] Thomas Leighton, sent to Don John and the States, also had no success.[69]

Meanwhile, Archduke Matthias was proclaimed governor in Brussels on 20th January, and, perhaps ironically considering the initial intentions of the Catholic nobles, Orange was declared his Lieutenant-General 'to the infinit joye and contentment of the people'.[70] But their glory was short-lived, as, on 31st January, the army of the States-General faced a crushing defeat at Gembloux at the hands of Don John. Around 2,000 of the States' forces were killed.[71] Davison was then in Antwerp, whilst the Prince remained in Brussels, less than 30 miles from Gembloux, 'ryding upp & down to surveye every corner & to provide wheare there was neede. Without whose stay I doubt things would have growen to a marvaillous confusion'.[72]

Upon receipt of this news, Thomas Leighton was immediately sent back, to report on the state of both camps, and to reassure Orange and the States of Elizabeth's support.[73] In reality, though, Elizabeth was now wavering on her commitment to provide troops.[74] When the Spanish took Leuven on 5th February, less than twenty miles from Brussels, Orange, the Archduke and the States-General fled to the safety of Antwerp.[75] The situation was now dire, so Davison urged Walsingham that 'if her Majesty shoulde nowe in ther nede disapoint them' over her promised aid 'it would in the Judgement of the wisest bring foreth some great and dangerous alteracon'.[76] As Don John made progress north, the States grew increasingly concerned over 'her Majestie's inclynacion' to provide aid, and 'resolvd to returne Havrech

[68] Platt, 'Wilkes', pp. 59-63.
[69] SP 83/4 no. 49 – 21st December 1577, Leighton's instructions; SP 83/5 no. 8 – 5th January 1578, Leighton's declaration to the States.
[70] SP 83/5 no. 25 – 23rd January 1578, Davison to Walsingham.
[71] SP 83/5 no. 36 – 3rd February 1578, Davison to the Secretaries.
[72] SP 83/5 no. 38 – 3rd February 1578, Davison to Walsingham.
[73] SP 83/5 no. 42 – 6th February 1578, Leighton's instructions.
[74] MacCaffrey, *Making of Policy*, p. 228.
[75] Parker, *Dutch Revolt*, p. 186; SP 83/5 no. 43 – 6th February 1578, Davison to Walsingham.
[76] SP 83/5 no. 43.

into England', if necessary.[77] Davison was frustrated by Elizabeth's prevarication, remarking that there was 'nothing more dangerous in matters of estate then to float & waver in deliberacon'.[78]

Consequently, Davison sent a lengthy discourse to Walsingham, explaining that Elizabeth must give assistance to the Dutch, or else they would be forced to turn to France. This letter has often been cited by historians, including Conyers Read and Simon Adams, yet has never before been analysed.[79] In comparison to his October discourse, this letter had a clearer rhetorical structure, borrowing some of the features of a classical oration, beginning with a brief *exordium* and *narratio* which set out his reasons for sending this advice. The Duke of Alençon had offered his support and aid to the Dutch rebels the previous year, but had not been accepted – partly due to suspicion of his motives, but partly as they held out for more powerful players.[80] Though a Catholic, Alençon had previously allied with the protestant Prince of Condé, and tried to present himself as a tolerant protector of protestants, both the Huguenots and the Dutch; however, many believed that this was just a mask for his political ambition, to gain influence independent of his brother Henry III. Alençon had now heard that Elizabeth was wavering in her commitment to provide aid, so, he had dispatched an ambassador 'to renewe his olde practises and offer of assistance unto the States in hope it wilbe nowe accepted'.[81] Orange and others remained suspicious of Alençon's overtures, as their 'borne enemy, a prince ambitious, the next heire to the crowne of Fraunce'. However, 'the longe suspence and incerteinty of her Majesties resolution', in such an urgent situation, 'hathe

[77] SP 83/5 no. 48 – 12th February 1578, Davison to the Secretaries. See also SP 83/5 no. 49 – 12th February 1578, Davison to Leicester.
[78] SP 83/5 no. 63 – 2nd March 1578, Davison to the Secretaries [fragments of draft].
[79] Adams, 'Davison', p. 4; Conyers Read, *Mr Secretary Walsingham and the Policy of Queen Elizabeth*, Vol. 1 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1925), p. 366.
[80] Wernham, *Before the Armada*, p. 331. Francis had become Duke of Anjou in 1576, but contemporaries, including Davison and his correspondents, never referred to him as such, instead sticking to 'Alençon' or just 'Monsieur'. He will be called 'Alençon' throughout to avoid confusion.
[81] SP 83/5 no. 67 – 8th March 1578, Davison to Walsingham.

begonne suche a jelousey and alteration' that many Dutchmen were now willing to accept Alençon's aid. Yet since 'amongs all theire neighbours it is indubitable that theare is no one whose assistance may be somuch profitable and litle dangerous unto them' as Elizabeth, Davison sought to persuade her to renew her offer of aid.

He was aware that his unsolicited counsel might be ill-received, so sought to pre-emptively justify his intervention on the grounds that his advice was informed by his eyewitness experience: 'nowe thoughe I maye seeme to goe to farre in judginge whither of these two resolutions her Majestie were beste to take, yet shall it not be muche amysse that I tell your honour what I observe uppon the inclynacion of things heare'.[82] Though passionate, Davison was therefore careful to only give counsel on matters about which he felt suitably informed, preferably through first-hand experience. So, in light of his unique position on the ground (unlike, of course, his conciliar patrons), Davison regarded himself as well-qualified, perhaps even entitled, to supply advice to his superiors.

The remainder of the dispatch was divided into two sections: the first justified why Elizabeth should assist, and the second explained how she should do so. These reasons were by no means original – they had been repeated by the pro-interventionists for years – but Davison expressed them clearly and logically. If Elizabeth abandoned the Dutch, it would cause 'a generall astonishment in the people, an alteration in the nobilitie, a confusion of the presente unyon, and agrement of the provinces, an advauncement of thaffaires and hope of thennemy, A hazard or rather certeintie of loosinge the hartes of this people'.[83] Consequently, Elizabeth would lose the friendship of the Dutch protestants, and would not be reconciled to Spain, thus securing the 'enemytie of bothe'. Furthermore, the 'holy league of these catholique princes' appeared 'nowe like to be putt in execution', and, as 'her Majestie occupieth the chifeste place'

[82] SP 83/5 no. 67.
[83] SP 83/5 no. 67.

among those that made 'profession of the reformed religion', 'shee [is] the marke they principally shoote at'. Elizabeth should therefore take arms against Spain, in order to defend not only the Dutch protestants, but also her 'owne surtie'. Indeed, Davison believed that 'her Majestie canne neither abandon them withoute the certein perill as well of her self as of them'.

To explain how Elizabeth should give assistance, Davison used a simple *pro et contra* argument, in which he first gave a supposedly flawed argument, and then rebuffed it. Pre-empting, and undermining, the opposing view enabled him to further strengthen his counsel against potential critics, one of whom was, of course, the Queen. So, although 'some men are perhapps of opynion that it were better done under hande, with the loane of some mony, then with men… [as] it shall drawe her into an open warre againste bothe the King of Spain and Fraunce', Davison disagreed, producing other reasons 'of farre more moment and consideration, in my rude advice' – again, note the attempt to qualify his frankness. Peace could be achieved sooner if Elizabeth 'proceaded roundlie and openly', for 'how muche the greater difficultie the Kinge of Spain shall find his enterprice so muche the more easely will he be broughte to a peace'. Besides, Philip was not stupid – 'it is apparant shee shoulde no lesse offend, nor shewe a lesse ill affection to the King of Spain, if shee should in any sorte assiste them underhand'. The best course of action was therefore to 'succor them openly, and with her men conducted by a personage of qualitie' – read, the Earl of Leicester. Orange, Davison and Leicester had long discussed his coming over, and had even considered options for his deputy (his brother the Earl of Warwick, or his nephew Philip Sidney).[84] Finally, in anticipation of another point *contra*, that Philip would attempt to invade England or Ireland to 'inferre a necessitie for her Majestie to kepe her men at home', he argued that 'it is not to be doubted but the King of Spain, so longe as he hathe his handes full in the lowe Countries, shalbe an enemy more terrible in opinion, then effecte to us'. Davison therefore concluded that 'if her Majesties

[84] SP 83/3 no. 5 – 3rd October 1577, [Davison] to Leicester.

suretie honour proffytt and necessitie may move her, shee will no doubte goe forward with her promys and good disposition to assiste these countryes… and thus submyttinge my opinion to the judgement and correction of your honour I moste humbly take my leave'. [85]

Davison had evidently now settled into his personal approach to counsel, as this letter was rhetorically similar to his October discourse on Matthias. His repetitive use of such cliental qualifiers as 'in my poore judgement' shows that he was sufficiently cognisant of the rhetorical importance of deference, yet was reluctant to tone down the actual content of his advice. This was similar in style to William Herle, who, as Robyn Adams has shown, usually wrote deferentially, but occasionally used 'modest modifiers' to 'flan[k] a straightforward option' in 'matters of extreme urgency'.[86] Davison's frankness also echoed that of Walsingham, who, as Hannah Coates has shown, spoke 'plainly' in order to convey himself as a 'moral' and honest humanist counsellor.[87] Walsingham also apologised for his manner at times – for instance, he once asked Elizabeth to 'pardon my rude & plaine (thoughe dutifull) maner of writynge', which, again, emphasised that his counsel was so important that it necessitated 'plainness'. Davison had worked with Walsingham for four or five years now, so it would be only natural to model himself on his patron; however, as a much more junior counsellor, he evidently felt it necessary to apologise for his 'poor opinion' more often, at least for appearances' sake. Davison's style also speaks to the genuineness and passion of his convictions. After all, such frankness was a risk this early in his career, as, despite his cliental modifiers, it could have potentially been read as overfamiliarity or even insolence. For Davison, though, the provision of English aid was so important that it necessitated plain speaking.

[85] SP 83/5 no. 67.
[86] Robyn Jade Adams, "Both Diligent and Secret': The Intelligence Letters of William Herle' (Queen Mary, University of London: unpublished doctoral thesis, 2004), pp. 92-3.
[87] Hannah Susan Coates, 'Sir Francis Walsingham and Mid-Elizabethan Political Culture' (University of Leeds: unpublished doctoral thesis, 2017), pp. 84-6.

However, shortly before Davison penned this discourse, Elizabeth finally made a decision regarding aid. Davison did not hear this news until the 11th March, three days after the writing of his letter.[88] This again reminds us of the disconnect between ambassadors and the government at home – in such a fast-paced environment, news and counsel quickly became outdated, so one party was always on the back foot. Elizabeth was now willing to supply money in the form of a loan, but not to become directly involved in the war, so, she would not send English soldiers or a figurehead. Leicester was devastated that he would not be allowed to lead English troops, and sent his apologies to Orange via Davison.[89] Instead, she agreed to supply a loan of £100,000 to the States-General, of which £40,000 was to be used to fund mercenary soldiers under Duke John Casimir of the Palatinate – 6,000 Swiss soldiers and 5,000 horse. Casimir was the brother of the Elector Palatinate, and had previously led soldiers in support of the Huguenots in France.[90] Elizabeth assured the States that Casimir was no mere substitute for Leicester, stressing that 'they can have no captain of greater valew… that no generall will make greater choice of his people to serve him both for valew and loyaltie then he wil, that besides his strength and sufficiency that way his counsell will serve them to great purpose'.[91] Daniel Rogers was sent over to assist with the distribution of English aid, and the procurations for the agreed loan of £100,000 were sent to Davison and George Gilpin.[92]

Davison's counsel was therefore redundant. Nevertheless, Walsingham reported at the end of the month that his 'letters… towching your opynyon what assystaunce you thowght fit' were 'greatly allowed by her majestie', so, she had not been offended by his advice. However, even though she had already agreed to send aid, she still held out hope for a negotiated peace

[88] SP 83/5 no. 74 – 11th March 1578, Davison to Leicester.
[89] SP 83/5 no. 69 – 9th March 1578, Leicester to Davison.
[90] SP 83/5 no. 68 – 9th March 1578, Rogers' instructions.
[91] SP 83/5 no. 68 – 9th March 1578, Rogers' instructions.
[92] SP 83/5 no. 68 – 9th March 1578, Rogers' instructions; SP 83/5 no. 75 – 12th March 1578, the Queen to Davison and Gilpin.

with Spain, 'espetyally sythence the arryvall of Don Bernadyn [de Mendoza] whoe hathe put us in a vayne hope of peace by her Majesties mediatyon'. Wilson reiterated both of these points, writing 'I did wyllinglie reade your late discurse which her Majestie hath harde by me, every worde, and did verie wel allowe of… and so did dyverse of the Counsel, unto whome afterwardes I did shew the same. But I doubt, notwithstandinge your apparent and substancial reasons alleaged, that litle or nothynge wylbee doone [since] The Kynge of Spayne hath sent don Bernadino de mendoza hether'.[93] So, although Elizabeth rejected Davison's counsel, her reaction, and that of the other councillors, suggests that the provision of counsel was viewed as a legitimate, and valuable, part of the ambassador's role.

Then, at the beginning of April, more malicious rumours regarding Davison began to circulate at court.[94] On 2nd May, Walsingham put these rumours to Davison, and requested an explanation. These accusations were significantly more serious than those from November, but again involved the Prince of Orange. Now, Davison was accused of criticising Elizabeth's prevarication over aid, 'suffr[ing] her majestye to be evyll spoken of in your hearing', and dealing rather 'as an agent for the Prince then for her majestye in the executyon of your charge'.[95] Whatever the truth of such bruits, Davison had firmly secured himself a reputation as the Prince's man, not just to the neglect of the States-General, but also to the disservice of the Queen. Walsingham was convinced that the accusations were untrue – perhaps this is why he had waited so long to challenge him, around a month since the rumours started. He assured

[93] SP 83/5 no. 88 – 20th March 1578, Wilson to Davison.
[94] Based on a comment from Wilkes, it seems that the rumours had begun in early April. Wilkes told Davison that 'the harde opinion that hathe ben conceyved of you, is by many degrees augmented and increased during my shorte absence' – SP 83/6 f. 98 – 6th May 1578, Wilkes to Davison. Wilkes had been dispatched on 4th April to Don John, and had not returned to court until 29th April – Charles Trice Martin (ed.), 'Journal of Sir Francis Walsingham from December 1570 to April 1583. Edited, from the Original MS in the Possession of Lieutenant-Colonel Carew', in *The Camden Miscellany, Vol. 6* (London: Printed for the Camden Society, 1871), p. 36; Platt, 'Wilkes', p. 66-9; J. M. Rigg (ed.), *Calendar of State Papers Relating To English Affairs in the Vatican Archives, Vol. 2, 1572-1578* (London: His Majesty's Stationery Office, 1926), item 822, pp. 426-7; SP 83/6 f. 14; SP 83/6 f. 16 – 5th April 1578, instructions for Wilkes.
[95] SP 83/6 f. 84 – 2nd May 1578, Walsingham to Davison.

Davison, 'hardely can I think you to be so undutyfull towardes her majestye, so unthankefull towardes your frendes, and so undyscreat in your charge, so far foorthe to forget your selfe as the seyd accusatyons importe'.

The matter of 'duty' here is an important one. Both Walsingham and Davison, as well as Leicester, Wilson and others of their friends and colleagues, all regarded Elizabeth's decision to delay or refuse the aid promised to Havré as a disaster. It was therefore not Davison's disagreement that was the issue. Rather, his 'duty', as a Crown ambassador, was to keep such opinions to himself (unless writing to trusted patrons) – hence, the reference to being 'undyscreat'. Walsingham resolved 'not only to suspende my judgement untyll I receyve your awnswer, but also to howld you faulteles in that behalfe'. He was therefore not accusing Davison, but rather giving him an opportunity to clear his name. Walsingham also regretted the impact that these false 'blastes of envye' could have on Davison's future career and preferment: 'sorrye I am that thes anxyouse brutes in the fyrst frutes of your servyce shoold hinder the good opynion conceyved of your suffytynencye to have supplyed a place of better caulyng'. The suggestion that these rumours sprung from 'envye' implied that Davison was, by now, accomplished enough to be envious of, and perhaps had some rivals at court.

The postscript to this letter is particularly interesting. According to Simon Adams, 'Walsingham advised him to cease sending his own opinions and confine himself to reporting the facts'.[96] This is not precisely true. In fact, Walsingham only advised that he would 'doe well hereafter to forbeare to set downe your pryvat opynion in the publycke letters you sende us the Secreataryes'.[97] No mention was made of the more private letters which Davison sent to Walsingham and Wilson individually, so, Walsingham probably wanted to continue receiving Davison's opinions. Neither, too, was any mention made of his private dispatches to Leicester,

[96] Adams, 'Davison', p. 5.
[97] SP 83/6 f. 84.

who could surely share their contents with his colleagues. During Walsingham's own resident embassy in Paris in the early 1570s, he regularly sent private letters to Burghley, for his eyes alone, as well as public letters which were 'fit for the eyes of Elizabeth' – he seemed to be asking Davison to do likewise.[98] Apparently, 'some geve owt that you are more curyowse in setteyng downe your owne dyscoorses (a matter not incydent to your charge) then in searching owt the bottom of ther proceadynges ther & advertycyng sooche partycularytes as were fyt for her majesties knowledge'. Again, this criticism had not come from the Queen or Davison's patrons, as Walsingham explained that 'this myslyk proceadeth partely of mallyce, and partely for that merchauntes letters sent from thence conteyne more large matter towching the state of thinges ther then is comprehended in yours'. However, it was unclear who had spread these rumours, or how they had been able to access Davison's letters. Ultimately, it seemed that, whilst Walsingham appreciated Davison's discourses, he was conscious of the impact they could have on his client's reputation and career.

Walsingham was not Davison's only colleague to leap to his defence. Wilson echoed his message, but advised Davison in more explicit terms away from giving his own counsel. Although he 'neyther can nor wyl accuse yow in any thynge, but rather prayse yow for your service donne', Wilson reminded him that 'yow are to bee commanded, and bownde to folowe the bowndes of your charge by just limitacion. And although thynges bee sometymes ordered moche agaynst your mynde, yet yow must submitte yourselfe to the same, although with modestie yow maye interpose your judgement, under the correction and favour of your superiors'.[99] Whether intentional or not, Wilson's wording highlighted the insufficiency of Davison's cliental phrases, one of which was, of course, 'under your honours correction'. Yet, despite the difference in their wording, both Walsingham and Wilson implied that they wanted

[98] Taviner, pp. 100-2.
[99] SP 83/6 f. 100 – 6th May 1578, Wilson to Davison.

to continue receiving Davison's advice – the former in Davison's 'private' letters, the latter in a more 'modest' fashion. Following the apparent reprimand, Wilson reassured Davison that he spoke frankly because he was one 'whome I love and lyke wel, and the rather I am playne with yow, becawse yow showlde bee blamelesse'. Wilson's explanation of his 'plainness' therefore confirms that such a manner was used to convey honesty and sincerity, as with Walsingham and Davison's 'plain' counsel to the Queen.

Thomas Wilkes also assured Davison of his loyalty and friendship, assuring him that he had dealt with Walsingham 'as effectually in the maintenaunce of your credite and reputation as if you had ben myne owne brother, and will not fayle to continewe that course to any others whome I shall fynde to conceyve sinisterly of you'.[100] This highlights the importance of political credit to men such as Davison and Wilkes – it was crucial that Davison's reputation remained untarnished, as this could affect his future career prospects. Like Walsingham, Wilkes warned his friend that he had 'ben muche abused by suche as you have too well accompted of, and those that commonly applaude you there are not your sounde frindes. Have an eye unto your self, for the worlde is full of envye'. So, it seemed that the source of these rumours was someone whom Davison knew personally, which explains how they might have had access to his letters.

Davison wasted no time in refuting these accusations. On 11th May, he penned a long, methodical rebuttal to Walsingham, which clearly and specifically addressed each charge.[101] This dispatch differed from his previous discourses, as he made no effort to write in deferential terms. This was likely a deliberate choice, as a way of asserting his honesty and morality, and perhaps also to emphasise his affront at such rumours. Davison believed that his 'adversary'

[100] SP 83/6 f. 98 – 6th May 1578, Wilkes to Davison.
[101] SP 83/6 f. 112 – 11th May, Davison to Walsingham. Davison also wrote more briefly to Wilson on the same day – SP 83/6 f. 116.

was the diplomat Thomas Leighton, as Davison had previously 'reproved' him for talking indiscreetly in front of suspected spies.[102] Davison was convinced that Leighton had spread these rumours in retaliation at this reprimand.

Rather than follow a classical rhetorical structure, as he had attempted in his previous discourses, Davison copied Walsingham's structure and replied to each point in turn, likely to ensure maximum clarity. He staunchly denied 'concurring with such as have at any time condempned her majesties delaies and chang of resolution', but explained that this accusation may have sprung from a conversation between Davison, Leighton, Orange and Havré in the 'garden of the English house', which had been misconstrued by Leighton. Orange had indeed lamented over Elizabeth's prevarication, but Davison insisted that he had done his 'best to disguise the matter and to interteign the good opinion and hope conceaved of her majestie'. With regard to the accusation that he followed Orange, Davison argued that whilst he did 'honour and love the Prince', he did not 'supply my affection towardes him with a lack of dewtie towardes her majestie and respecte to the place I hould'. Though perhaps not even deliberate, his terminology here sheds light on the difference in his relationships with Orange and the Queen. A 'love' for Orange implied a stronger affection, in this case, grounded in their shared devotion to the protestant cause; conversely, Davison's 'dewtie' towards Elizabeth appeared more professional. Nevertheless, he was aware that his duty as Crown ambassador must always come first.

The methodical structure continued through to the lengthy postscript. This was no genuine afterthought appended at the last minute, as the whole postscript was included in a previous draft; instead, Davison wanted to mirror Walsingham's exact structure to ensure maximum clarity.[103] In the postscript, Davison bristled in response to Walsingham's advice to

[102] SP 83/6 f. 112; SP 83/5 no. 103 – 27th March 1578, Woodshawe to Burghley.
[103] SP 83/6 f. 114 – 11th May 1578, Davison to Walsingham (draft).

forgo supplying counsel – 'I did not think it would have bene myslyked that I living here wheare I see & observe how thinges pass should sett downe the reasons and lykelyhodes which I gather of thinclination of thinges but seing it is thought an error I will hencefourth simply *narrare rem gestam* [tell the story of what had happened] as it falleth out'.[104] This echoed the words of his March discourse – 'it not be muche amysse that I tell your honour what I observe uppon the inclynacion of things heare'.[105] Davison therefore firmly believed that his experience as an eyewitness legitimised his counsel, as only he could provide these unique insights. His bitterness at Walsingham's advice also highlighted the fundamental tension in Elizabethan foreign policy – policy was determined at the centre, by Elizabeth and the Privy Council, yet was implemented on the ground by diplomats who actually had more experience and expertise. The only contribution diplomats could ordinarily make to this policy-making process was through providing their expert, first-hand counsel. Now, even this was being revoked – no wonder Davison was frustrated at this enforced political impotency. Thankfully, his explanation was well-received by Walsingham, who 'rest[ed] satysfyced' with his 'full awnswer'.[106] However, he insisted that Leighton was not Davison's 'accuser', and offered to help mediate between them in order to resolve their 'pyke'. The rest of his letter focussed on routine intelligence matters, and the matter was dropped.

Nevertheless, for the next few months, Davison appeared to make a concerted effort to 'simply *narrare rem gestam*', as promised. In May, Elizabeth began contemplating a courtship with Alençon, as a distraction from his interest in the Low Countries, and decided to dispatch an extraordinary embassy to join Davison.[107] Though Davison had managed the negotiations

[104] SP 83/6 f. 112.
[105] SP 83/5 no. 67.
[106] SP 83/6 f. 129 – 16th May 1578, Walsingham to Davison.
[107] Simon Adams, Alan Bryson and Mitchell Leimon, 'Walsingham, Sir Francis (c. 1532–1590), principal secretary', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford University Press, 2009 (2004)) <https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/28624>, p. 10.

thus far, these complications over Alençon's involvement now required 'some personages of qualyte', with greater decision-making capacity, and Walsingham and William Brooke, Lord Cobham were duly selected.[108] Once the embassy had been decided, Davison's role consisted of treading water, as he was ordered by Walsingham on 18th May to 'keepe matters as upright as youe maye untill we shall further & more fully debate with them in her Majesties name'.[109] Then, on the 22nd, Davison was sent official instructions from the Queen regarding the States' dealings with Alençon.[110] He was to 'presse' Orange, Havré, and the States 'to send us a coppye' of the negotiations with Alençon, and inform them that only if they 'proceede in no further dealing with Monsieur: we wilbe content to send them the said assistance withall convenient speede'. If the Prince and States agreed, 'we meane to send over with all expedicion' Walsingham and Cobham 'to confere with them touching such ayde'; if not, then the 'money latlie sent over shalbe stayed, and Duke Casimire required to forbeare to come to their assistaunce'.

These instructions arrived into Davison's hands on the night of the 25th. Following the rumours and his reprimand for giving counsel, this now gave Davison the perfect opportunity to re-ingratiate himself with his sovereign and patrons. So, on 30th May, he wrote, for the first time of the mission, to the Queen directly.[111] Though he ostensibly adhered to his promise to 'simply *narrare rem gestam* as it falleth out', he still tried to persuade Elizabeth to supply aid – the persuasion just did not come directly from his mouth. Enter his leading man, the Prince of Orange. Davison recounted, in extreme detail, a conversation which had supposedly passed between himself and Orange on 26th May, four days before the writing of this letter. In this conversation, Davison argued against French intervention, whilst Orange explained that, unless

[108] SP 83/6 f. 110 – 11th May 1578, Walsingham to Davison.
[109] SP 83/6 f. 143 – 18th May 1578, Walsingham to Davison.
[110] Cotton MS Galba C/VI pt. 2 f. 65 – 22nd May 1578, instructions for Davison.
[111] SP 83/6 f. 175 – 30th May 1578, Davison to the Queen.

other help was forthcoming, it would be necessary. Yet unless he had taken detailed notes at the time, it is unlikely that Davison could remember the exact phrases and points made by the Prince. Rather, it seems that Davison turned this conversation into a rhetorical device – by emphasising and enhancing Orange's arguments over the necessity of (preferably English) aid, Davison sought to persuade the Queen to supply aid herself, without having to break his promise to *narrare rem gestam*.

According to Davison, he explained 'at some lengthe the error comitted by [Orange] and the States in there forwardnes to have concluded with the Frenche before knowledge of your Majesties likinge and assent'.[112] This is likely true, as Davison did oppose French intervention. Several of the reasons laid out by Davison were almost identical to those specified in his March 1576 instructions.[113] Whilst this was may or may not have been deliberate, it shows that Davison had, by this point, internalised the Queen's policy, and knew exactly what to say to please her. For instance, he referenced the 'miseries and callamities that befell to the estate of Ladovic Sfortia, Duke of Milan, in particuler, and the whole country of Italie in generall, by introducinge of the Frenche amongest them'; his 1576 instructions had mentioned 'the insolency of that Nation [France], which both Naples, Sicil and Milan can witnes'. Davison's arguments against French intervention covered less than a folio side; Orange's response spanned more than double.

Orange insisted that he 'had alwaies bene, was and woulde be your highnes moste humble, faithfull and devotid servant'; however, just 'as a man that is in daunger of drowninge, woulde without respecte of frende or foe lay holde on him that comes next to hande to save himself', Orange too would lay hold on any who offered aid, including the French. This drowning metaphor is also familiar – in 1576, Davison had been instructed to persuade the

[112] SP 83/6 f. 175.
[113] Cotton MS Galba C/V f. 264 – 29th March 1576, Davison's instructions.

States that 'that the reliefe, that will grow to them' from accepting French aid 'wilbe like as if a man to escape hanging seeketh to drowne himselfe'. After discussing the 'causes that might induce them to proceede in this treaty with the frenche', Orange concluded that 'it should apeare of more perill and les proffitt to breake then to proceede with the Frenche in the sorte pretended'. Such phrasing is strongly reminiscent of Davison's own October discourse, in which he weighed the 'proffits and perrills' of the Archduke Matthias.[114] Though not uncommon metaphors, would Davison remember these four days later? It is more likely that, remembering (and agreeing) with Orange's general message, Davison took it upon himself to embellish its rhetoric, using his familiar phrasebook. Having discussed the points *pro et contra* of French intervention, Orange then requested Elizabeth's help. Orange was pleased at the news of the coming over of Walsingham and Lord Cobham, and had high expectations of them, hoping that 'your Highnes woulde not sende over so speciall an Ambassade with any fruictles or sclender negociation, consideringe the tyme, the necessitie and generall expectacion of some good matter by them'.[115] The last round of negotiations with Havré had 'singulerly alterid and generallye discouragid them here', so, he asked Elizabeth to 'deale resolutely and plainely with them vertues… moste beseminge your Majesties wisedome'.

According to Davison, this 'as nere as I remember was the somme of that passed betwixt his Excellencie and me that afternoone'. Yet, considering the wording and detail supplied, the conversation appears much too 'nere' to be genuine. This is not to say that Davison fabricated this conversation entirely, but rather that he likely agreed with Orange much more than he admitted, and therefore sought to present Orange's voice in a manner which would best counsel and persuade the Queen. This method allowed Davison, at least on paper, to keep his word and avoid offering direct counsel, whilst still championing the interventionist cause.

[114] SP 83/3 no. 76.
[115] SP 83/6 f. 175.

Miraculously, Wilson soon reported that 'the Queenes Majestie had good lyking of your letters of the 30 of Maye sent by my man, which I did afterwards communicate to her Counsel'.[116] Davison's tactic, of indirect counsel, had therefore not offended her. As Hannah Coates has argued, 'Elizabeth's education gave her the tools to hear counsel intelligently, with an ear tuned for techniques and references', so, it is likely that she saw through Davison's technique – but, crucially, she had still welcomed his insight, and not been offended by it.[117] Nevertheless, Elizabeth was still unwilling to commit to aid, so it seemed that a firm answer would have to wait until the arrival of Walsingham and Cobham.

Since Elizabeth's initial decision to send Walsingham and Cobham in May, the Holy Roman Emperor, Rudolph II, had now offered to mediate a settlement between Don John and the States-General. Consequently, the purpose of the embassy had now shifted. Their first task was to persuade Don John to participate in the mediation process; if he would not, then they would co-ordinate the defence effort against him, including the States-General, Orange, and potentially even Alençon, as a way to prevent him from allying with Don John.[118] Elizabeth was still reluctant to send military aid, and would only do so if absolutely necessary. The ambassadors left court on 15th June, and, with a great train of 'six score and odd persons' – very unlike Davison's own embassy – landed at Dunkirk on 21st, and joined Davison in Antwerp a week later.[119]

The arrival of Walsingham and Cobham shifted the nature of Davison's role. No longer the senior agent, Davison now occupied a subordinate position under the senior ambassadors.[120] But his duties, specifically the reporting of news and the provision of counsel,

[116] SP 83/7 no. 5 – 5th June 1578, Wilson to Davison.
[117] Coates, 'Sir Francis Walsingham', p. 84.
[118] Adams, Bryson and Leimon, pp. 10-11.
[119] SP 83/7 no. 16 – 17th June 1578, Walsingham and Cobham to [Davison]; no. 25 – 23rd June 1578, Walsingham and Cobham to Davison; no. 35 – 29th June 1578, Cobham to Burghley.
[120] SP 83/7 no. 56 – 13th July 1578, Davison to Wilson; no. 60 – 18th July 1578, Davison to Burghley.

did not suddenly cease because special negotiations were underway – rather, Davison's competence in managing the day-to-day responsibilities of a resident ambassador allowed the extraordinary ambassadors to focus on their task in hand. The majority of his letters focussed on the negotiations with Alençon and the progress of the war, whilst Walsingham and Cobham took the lead on the peace negotiations with the States-General. In this way, the ambassadors seem to have neatly divided up the labour, with Walsingham directing Burghley for news 'towching the state of this contrye as well for martyall as cyvell governement… to Master Davysons letters'.[121]

Davison remained conscious of his recent reprimand, yet deliberately continued to provide counsel. This is evident from two letters, dated 18th and 20th July, from Davison to Burghley.[122] The letter of the 18th was addressed and endorsed, so it must have been the final copy which was sent to Burghley. The letter of the 20th was an unaddressed draft, containing similar information to that of two days previous. The order of these letters therefore appears reversed – it is possible that the draft was dated incorrectly, after the fact, as its date and place is written (possibly in a different hand) vertically along the left margin, not in the body of the letter. Alternatively, Davison may have considered sending a more subtle follow-up letter, to mitigate the force of his first discourse. In any case, whatever the order of the letters, Davison chose to send that of the 18th.

Despite professing that he wrote only 'rather for duty then for matter sake', Davison slipped into his usual habit of providing thinly disguised counsel, on the arrival of the Duke of Alençon. Since the States were 'yet utterly irresolute what course to take', Davison weighed up 'whither [it] were better to accepte him as a frinde or rejecte him as an enemye'.[123] Though

[121] SP 83/9 no. 28 – 20th September 1578, Walsingham to Burghley.
[122] SP 83/7 no. 60 – 18th July 1578, Davison to Burghley; no. 68 – 20th July 1578, Davison to Burghley.
[123] SP 83/7 no. 60 – 18th July 1578, Davison to Burghley.

short, covering only two sides, this was a passionate argument against the acceptance of Alençon, presented in a stream-of-consciousness form. The use of varied sentence lengths and forms, interspersed with rhetorical questions and emotive language, creates an impression of chaos and urgency. Since this letter is written up in a neat final copy, with no interlineations or additions, this is likely to have been a deliberate stylistic choice, rather than just accidental.

As in his recent dispatch to the Queen, Davison used his technique of providing indirect counsel through using the words and opinions of others. Davison's argument was familiar – Alençon was not to be trusted, and was suspected to have 'comithe to serve the turne of the Spaniardes or of himself', which would pull the Dutch from 'one tyranye to come into an other'. Such arguments confirm that Davison's objection to Alençon expressed in his previous letter to the Queen had not been fabricated. However, as with that letter, he refrained from explicitly giving his personal opinion, instead answering his rhetorical questions with the opinions of his colleagues: 'will he embarque himself into a warre against the King of Spaine beinge disavowed as it semes of his brother…? Fewe men beleve it'. Strongly implied, of course, is that Davison, too, did not believe it.

Davison evidently realised that he may have 'perhaps overshott my self', so, in closing, used his familiar tactic of retrospectively modifying his counsel. He claimed that the purpose of his 'tedious discours' was to obtain the 'grave counsaille and judgement of your Lordship for the course to be taken herein then as interposing myne owne opinion'. Such a rhetorical device was particularly transparent on this occasion as, if Davison had truly just wanted advice from a patron, Walsingham was there with him in Antwerp to provide it.[124]

Moreover, if he had really wanted to avoid giving his own opinion, he could have sent the draft of the 20th instead; it was much shorter, and more moderate in its counsel and

[124] Both Davison and Walsingham's letters to Burghley on the 18th were written in Antwerp. SP 83/7 no. 59 – 18th July 1578, Walsingham to Burghley.

conclusions. The matter of Alençon's arrival filled less than a page, so, both the benefits and dangers were only listed briefly – there was no room for the rhetorical questions or emotive flourishes. Consequently, Davison's request (in the draft) for 'your Lordships wisdome & consideracion' appeared more genuine.[125] That Davison drafted, finalised and chose to send the letter of the 18th, rather than the more moderate version, therefore reveals that, even after careful consideration, he still believed it was important to lead Burghley to the 'right' answer. Thankfully, Burghley appeared receptive to his counsel, among his other dispatches, as on 8th August he asked Walsingham 'pray you lett Master Davison understand how thankfully I tak his frequent wrytyngs, and advertisments, which I pray hym to contynew'.[126] Davison's other patrons were also grateful for his letters – Leicester sent 'some signyficacion of my mindfulnes' to show that his letters were 'welcome', and Wilson anticipated that if Davison 'contynew styl your writinge… I dowbt not but in the ende, yow shal receave the rewarde of your travayle'.[127]

Walsingham and Cobham's mission was largely unsuccessful. The States-General were unwilling to negotiate with Don John, and instead signed their treaty with Alençon, who had travelled secretly to Mons in July to exert pressure.[128] Walsingham and Cobham both protested against this alliance, but, as Alençon had already sent ambassadors to Elizabeth to agree to her suggestion of marriage, it had no result. Their only success was to persuade the States-General to send a delegation to Don John. Walsingham and Cobham joined this delegation, and initially were unable to draw Don John into negotiations. However, Philip later accepted the imperial offer of mediation. Upon hearing the news, Elizabeth gave their recall; the ambassadors departed Antwerp on 27th September, and arrived back at the court at Richmond on 7th

[125] SP 83/7 no. 68.
[126] SP 83/8 no. 18 – 8th August 1578, Burghley to Walsingham.
[127] SP 83/8 no. 36 – 18th August 1578, Leicester to Davison; no. 22 – 9th August 1578, Wilson to Davison.
[128] Adams, Bryson and Leimon, p. 11.

October.[129] Considering the repeated failure of ambassadors to either broach peace negotiations, or to convince Elizabeth to supply military aid, the lacklustre results of their mission are not unusual. It is nevertheless important to recognise, though, that this much-lauded embassy, headed by two great personages served by a great train, had achieved no more than the much junior Davison. The failure of his efforts thus far to achieve either of these objectives therefore does not reflect on his competence – if anything, it seems that Davison had been equally as effective as his superiors. It is perhaps telling that no further extraordinary embassies were sent to the Low Countries until Leicester's military intervention in December 1585, and only then after Davison had already successfully seized the cautionary towns.

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According to Nicolas, Davison's correspondence from his resident mission 'throw[s] considerable light on the affairs of the States at that period, and upon Elizabeth's conduct towards them; their contents, however, are more connected with the history of that country than with the life of Davison'.[130] Yet, as we have seen, Davison's correspondence in fact reveals much about his political creed and diplomatic counsel. Every action Davison took during this embassy was in pursuit of the protestant cause, in which, for him, the success of the Dutch revolt and the continued safety of the English protestant commonwealth were intertwined. His resistance to Elizabeth's policy was therefore not incompatible with loyalty to the Crown, as he believed that her reluctance to offer military intervention would endanger England.

This explains Davison's commitment to providing counsel, even when warned otherwise. Throughout this mission, his counsel was consistently well-received by both his patrons and the Queen, despite her usually differing in opinion. In Davison's eyes, his unique

[129] Adams, Bryson and Leimon, p. 11; SP 83/9 no. 1 – 1st September 1578, Davison to Burghley; no. 21 – 15th September 1578, the Queen to Walsingham and Cobham; no. 52 – 4th October 1578, Davison to Walsingham.
[130] Nicholas Harris Nicolas, *Life of William Davison, Secretary of State and Privy Counsellor to Queen Elizabeth* (London: Printed by and for John Nicholas and Son, 1823), p. 9.

position on the ground qualified him to give particular advice and insights, and it would seem that his patrons agreed. After all, Walsingham's reprimand stemmed not from a dislike of Davison's counsel, but rather a concern for his reputation – indeed, it seemed that he had wanted to continue receiving Davison's counsel, albeit only in his private letters. It therefore seems that ambassadors were not expected to limit themselves simply to gathering information, upon which their patrons could base their counsel, but were also allowed – even encouraged – to take an active role.

The positive reception of Davison's counsel also speaks to the legitimacy of his frank style, at least among those with a particular education. As Coates has argued, Elizabeth was attuned to different styles of counsel, hence her receptiveness to the frank style of Walsingham, and Davison, too; the criticism of his counsel in spring 1578 arose from others who either had not seen the style of Davison's counsel, or did not have the tools to understand it. [131] The continued positive reception of his more indirect counsel following this reprimand further shows the range of acceptable rhetorical styles for counsel, beyond typical humility or Davison's usual plainness.

Although Davison ultimately did not succeed in convincing Elizabeth of the necessity of military intervention, neither did Walsingham or Leicester, so this is not a particularly useful way to measure the importance of Davison's counsel. Rather, we ought to recognise him as an important cog in the conciliar machine, and a key member of the pro-interventionist group alongside senior privy councillors. Counsel was not simply a domestic process, but one which involved the whole of the Elizabethan political service, both at home and abroad. It is therefore an area which is ripe for further study, perhaps continuing with examination of the counsel provided by Davison's close colleagues Beale and Wilkes.

[131] Coates, 'Sir Francis Walsingham', pp. 80-6.

Chapter 3: Challenges to authority, 1578–9

Davison had now spent one year as resident ambassador, but had not yet had opportunity to exercise much political authority. His patrons had praised his service and valued his counsel, yet he was still regarded as too junior to manage delicate negotiations alone, hence Elizabeth's decision to send Walsingham and Cobham. However, throughout the latter half of his mission, Davison's involvement in political controversies resulted in an increased emphasis on his authority, both from Davison himself, and from Walsingham. This chapter will examine this development of Davison's political authority through two incidents – the first involving the presbyterian minister Walter Travers, and the second involving Duke Casimir and the Ghent Calvinists. It will be argued that these incidents confirmed Davison's diplomatic authority, as he was staunchly supported by London in the face of external challenges.

Travers was a presbyterian minister whom Davison and Killigrew had covertly arranged to become the chaplain to the Merchant Adventurers in Antwerp. However, Travers' non-conformism was criticised by both Walsingham and the governor of the Merchant Adventurers, Nicholas Loddington. Even after Travers and Walsingham reached a compromise which enabled Travers to continue his non-conformist worship, Loddington refused to allow Travers to preach. Walsingham was furious at Loddington's affront to both his and Davison's authority, and sternly rebuked him, apparently without the knowledge or agreement of the Queen. This incident therefore revealed that Davison's personal authority was fully supported by Walsingham, even in non-Crown business.

At the same time, Duke Casimir became involved with the radical Ghent Calvinists. As the commander of the Queen's mercenary troops, this affected her reputation, so Walsingham instructed Davison, as the Queen's representative, to reprimand Casimir. Davison was permitted to act using his own discretion, and without letters of credence, which blurred the

line between Davison's personal authority, and his authority as a representative of the Crown. Casimir was furious at what he deemed to be Davison's presumption, but Davison's authority was again unanimously upheld by Walsingham, Leicester and the Queen.

Ultimately, it will be argued that these incidents laid the foundations of Davison's diplomatic authority, as, despite the challenges of Loddington and Casimir, his patrons nevertheless remained confident in his judgement and authority. We might therefore view this period as Davison's graduation from junior ambassador status, as, following his eventual success with Casimir, he was permitted greater authority and autonomy on subsequent missions. Both of these incidents also revealed much about Davison's political creed and approach to religious reformation, as his actions over both Travers and Casimir were, in his eyes, intended to best further the protestant cause.

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Several months earlier, in April 1578, the English Merchant Adventurers in Antwerp had appointed Walter Travers as their new chaplain. Travers was educated and worked at Cambridge, but was pushed out by the Master of Trinity, John Whitgift, in 1570 due to his puritan views.[1] Whitgift would later become Archbishop of Canterbury, and was instrumental in supressing puritanism throughout the 1580s and 1590s. Travers then spent six years in Geneva, where he published work on Calvinism, and became a friend of the reformer Theodore Beza, before returning to England in 1576.[2]

The appointment of Travers in Antwerp is not absent from existing historiography, but has generally been examined from an ecclesiastical point of view, by, for instance, Patrick

[1] Alan Ford, 'Travers, Walter (1548?–1635), religious activist and college head', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford University Press, 2004) <https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/27673>, p. 1.
[2] Guido Marnef, 'Challenging the Church of England: The Building of a Calvinist English Church in Antwerp (1578-1582), in Arthur der Weduwen and Malcolm Walsby (eds.), *Reformation, Religious Culture and Print in Early Modern Europe: Essays in Honour of Andrew Pettegree*, Vol. 1 (Leiden: Brill, 2022), pp. 298-308, at p. 300.

Collinson, Guido Marnef, and Travers' biographer S. J. Knox.[3] Its political significance for Walsingham and Davison has only been acknowledged briefly by Conyers Read, Simon Adams and Hannah Coates.[4] Moreover, most accounts of the incident include misconceptions, particularly surrounding Walsingham's support (or lack of), and the understanding reached. For instance, Marnef claimed that Walsingham supported Travers' initial appointment, a claim for which there are no extant sources, and no-one has yet examined the significance of the Norfolk articles.[5] A re-evaluation of this incident is therefore necessary, and will shed further light on both the religious beliefs and diplomatic authority of Davison, as well as on the broader state of the Elizabethan puritan movement in the late 1570s.

By the late 1570s, there was a deep divide between the bishops and the puritan clergy and laity.[6] Throughout the 1571 parliament, several bills of reformation were proposed by puritan MPs, but were all rejected by the bishops. Following this parliament, the bishops then attempted to force all clergy to subscribe to the Thirty Nine Articles and the Book of Common Prayer – which many puritans regarded as popish – or else lose their preaching license. In response, Thomas Wilcox and John Field wrote *An Admonition to the Parliament* in 1572, which called for the abolition of episcopalianism.[7] This *Admonition* was responded to by John Whitgift with his *Answere to a Certen Libell* in 1573, which in turn was denounced by Thomas

[3] Patrick Collinson, *The Elizabethan Puritan Movement* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1967), p. 234; Marnef, 'Challenging the Church of England', pp. 300-304; S. J. Knox, *Walter Travers, Paragon of Elizabethan Puritanism* (London: Methuen & Co., 1962), pp. 42-8.
[4] Conyers Read, *Mr Secretary Walsingham and the Policy of Queen Elizabeth*, Vol. 2 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1925), pp. 262-6; Simon Adams, 'Davison, William (d. 1608), diplomat and administrator', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford University Press, 2008 (2004)) <https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/7306>, pp. 5-6; Hannah Susan Coates, 'Sir Francis Walsingham and Mid-Elizabethan Political Culture' (University of Leeds: unpublished doctoral thesis, 2017), pp. 162-4.
[5] Marnef, 'Challenging the English Church', p. 300.
[6] The following overview is synthesised from: Collinson, *Elizabethan Puritan Movement*, pp. 116-121; Diarmaid MacCulloch, *The Later Reformation in England, 1547-1603* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1990), pp. 37-43; Peter Marshall, *Reformation England, 1480-1642* (London: Hodder Arnold, 2003), 121-3.
[7] Thomas Wilcox and John Field, *An Admonition to the Parliament* (Hemel Hempstead: ?Printed by J. Stroud, 1572) [STC (2nd ed.) 10847]. See also Collinson, *Elizabethan Puritan Movement*, p. 121.

Cartwright.[8] Field and Wilcox were both imprisoned, whilst Cartwright fled to exile on the continent.

Puritanism among the clergy was particularly high in Norwich, due to the failure of its bishop, John Parkhurst, to enforce uniformity.[9] After Parkhurst's death in 1575, his successor Edmund Freake was determined to suppress puritanism, and conflicts emerged within the diocese's clergy.[10] In 1576, several puritan ministers were suspended, and seven of these began to petition the Privy Council for their restoration.[11] However, whilst they agreed to yield to the Queen's authority, they still rejected the rites of the Prayer Book, as this would be 'to prefer the ordinance of man before the worde of god', and called for it to be reformed.[12] After two years of lobbying – during which time Archbishop Grindal was suspended over allowing puritan prophesyings – and intervention by Burghley, a resolution was reached to coincide with the royal progress through Norfolk in August 1578.[13] This was a 'carefully drafted humble submission', amended by Burghley and signed by the deprived ministers, in which they agreed to a 'limited subscription' to the Prayer Book.[14] This was the immediate backdrop, in spring and summer 1578, to Travers' covert appointment in Antwerp.

Travers' appointment was quietly arranged by Davison along with his friends Henry Killigrew and Thomas Randolph, and also John Field.[15] Considering the antipathy towards

[8] John Whitgift, *An Answere to a Certen Libell Intituled, An Admonition to the Parliament* (London: By Henrie Bynneman, for Humfrey Toy, 1573) [STC (2nd ed.) 25429]; Thomas Cartwright, *A Replye to an Answere made of M. Doctor Whitgifte Agaynste the Admonition to the Parliament* (Hemel Hempstead: ?Printed by John Stroud, 1573) [STC (2nd ed.) 4711].
[9] C. S Knighton, 'Freake, Edmund (c. 1516–1591), bishop of Norwich and of Worcester', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford University Press, 2004) <https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/10136>, pp. 1-2.
[10] C. S Knighton, 'Freake, Edmund (c. 1516–1591), bishop of Norwich and of Worcester', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford University Press, 2004) <https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/10136>, pp. 1-2.
[11] Matthew Reynolds, 'Puritanism and the emergence of Laudianism in city politics in Norwich, c.1570-1643' (University of Kent: unpublished doctoral thesis, 2002), pp. 59-60.
[12] Add. MS 48101 f. 132 – 25th September 1576, petition of John More and other Norwich preachers to a puritan sympathizer.
[13] Reynolds, p. 60.
[14] Reynolds, pp. 60-1; Collinson, *Elizabethan Puritan Movement*, p. 203.
[15] SP 15/25 f. 132 – 22nd February 1578, Killigrew to Davison.

Travers from within the Church establishment and the government, as well as the current climate for puritan clergy, they knew that it would be impossible to have Travers officially approved as the chaplain to the Merchant Adventurers. Instead, it was decided that Travers must be summoned by Davison personally, on behalf of the Prince of Orange, as this would be deemed too important an invitation to deny.[16] They planned that he would initially conform to the English forms of worship, 'for avoiding contention in these beginnings', and then, 'after he has been settled there awhile', would switch to the usual Dutch Calvinist presbyterian structure. This would absolve Davison of any blame, as the Council would see that 'you were glad first to obtain one to read the word of God to our nation in our own tongue', but this had 'never [been] yielded to there', so Davison had simply 'thought it not best to urge them with much formality, or many particulars'. Walsingham was also aware that Travers was being invited over, but was probably not aware of the rest of the plan.[17] Travers departed at the end of April, carrying letters from both Randolph and Stubbs.[18] Upon his arrival, he was immediately integrated into the existing Church in Antwerp. He was ordained on 8th May, and the synod of Walloon churches recorded that he 'declared his consent and union with our Churches, both in doctrine and in the order required for the conduct of the same' – so, Travers had confirmed that the church of the Merchant Adventurers would function the same as the local presbyterian, Calvinist churches.[19]

However, Travers' approach was not supported by those back at home.[20] A few days before his ordination, the Merchant Adventurers in London had already reported to Walsingham that their colleagues in Antwerp intended to 'alte[r] the exercyse of common

[16] SP 15/25 f. 121 – 8th January 1578; f. 142 – 20th March 1578. Both Killigrew to Davison.
[17] SP 15/25 f. 121.
[18] SP 83/6 f. 59 – 23rd April 1578, Randolph to Davison; SP 15/25 f. 166 – 30th April 1578, Stubbs to Davison.
[19] Marnef, 'Challenging the Church of England', pp. 301-2.
[20] Marnef does not mention Walsingham's reprimand to Davison, and inaccurately claims that 'everything remained quiet' over summer (p. 302).

prayer in the inglyshe house ther, contrarye or at least not agreable to the receyved order in the churche of this realme', and that Davison was a 'pryncypall fortherer therof'.[21] As Killigrew and Davison had anticipated, 'yf yt shoold come to her Majesties eares yt woold greatly kyndell her offence' against him, Travers and the merchants. Consequently, 'as one that wyssheth you well', he 'advyse[d]' Davison 'to forbeare forther proceadyng therin and to suppresse the same before owre repeyre thither in case you have allready established any sooche order', and to adhere to the Book of Common Prayer. As Hannah Coates has argued, this letter reveals much about Walsingham's personal religious position – although he personally agreed with Davison and Travers, and 'myslykethe [not] of sooche a foorme of exercyse of prayer', he was careful to keep within the bounds of the law, in order to maintain the settlement they already had. He explained, 'only I woold have all reformatyons don by publycke authoryte… yf you knewe with what dyffycultye we reteyne that we have: and that the seeking of more myght hazarde… that which we alreadye have: you woold then Master Davyson deale warely in this tyme when pollecye carrythe more swaye then zeale'. So, whilst Walsingham, Davison and Killigrew all shared similar religious beliefs, they differed in their political approach. In this situation, Davison and Killigrew were not only 'hot protestants', but apparently hot-headed ones, in contrast to Walsingham's pragmatism. Travers also faced another obstacle in the form of the governor of the Merchant Adventurers, Nicholas Loddington, who opposed his form of worship and refused to allow him to preach in the merchants' house – instead, he had to use a room found elsewhere by Davison.[22]

Over the next few months, there is an unfortunate lacuna of sources, but it seems from a later letter that Walsingham met with Travers during his embassy. According to his biographer S. J. Knox, Travers was not wholly opposed to the use of the Prayer Book, but rather to its sole

[21] SP 83/6 f. 106 – 8th May 1578, Walsingham to Davison.
[22] SP 83/9 no. 67 – 19th October 1578, Davison to Walsingham.

use.[23] So, Walsingham put to him the same articles, drafted by Burghley, which had recently been 'offred unto certeyne ministers in norfolke'. Travers 'offred to subscribe' to these articles, thereby agreeing to some, but not full, conformity to the English form of worship. Though Walsingham clearly refers to the Norfolk articles in his letter, it seems that no historians investigating this episode have properly examined their content, and have consequently misunderstood it in various ways. In his short biography of Davison, Simon Adams mentions only Walsingham's rebuke to Davison in May, but not Walsingham's subsequent deal with and support of Travers – this implies that Davison lost the battle, when in fact he would win a resounding victory.[24] Conyers Read printed a transcription of the letter which mentions the Norfolk articles, but offered no comment.[25] Hannah Coates noted only that Travers had promised to conform, and is ambigious about whether or not he had done so before the upcoming incident, in September.[26] Finally, Travers' more recent biographer Alan Ford used the episode to emphasise his 'close ties to influential courtiers of a Calvinist inclination', which, whilst true, nevertheless overlooks Burghley's involvement in the Norfolk agreement.[27]

The incident occurred just a few days after Walsingham and Cobham's departure. Loddington interrupted Travers' service, accusing him again of 'not using the book of comon prayer', and took over the sermon himself.[28] Travers then announced that those who wished to hear him preach should 'resort unto [Davison's] lodging', but Loddington 'charged them all… not to come at it with many lusty and imperious speeches', and 'sent his officer to all the free host houses in the Towne… to renew this inhibition'. Davison did not challenge Loddington at the time, but did so a few days later, 'roundly charg[ing] him with his folly & presumption…

[23] Knox, p. 47.
[24] Adams, 'Davison', pp. 5-6.
[25] Read, *Walsingham*, Vol. 2, pp. 262-3, n. 3.
[26] Coates, 'Sir Francis Walsingham', pp. 162-3.
[27] Alan Ford, 'Travers, Walter (1548?–1635), religious activist and college head', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford University Press, 2004) <https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/27673>, p. 2.
[28] SP 83/9 no. 67 – 19th October 1578, Davison to Walsingham

& with the injury he had done' to Walsingham and Cobham, as well as 'usurping uppon my place'.

Davison did not write to Walsingham about this incident immediately, but Walsingham heard about it through other means. He was incensed, and wrote to Loddington on 11th October, sending a copy of this to Davison too.[29] Walsingham charged Loddington with 'do[ing] my Lord Cobham and me a great deale of wronge' by overriding their orders, 'as though you could better judge what were fit to be donne [in] those causes than we'. He also emphasised Davison's authority, as 'her majesties Agent', and reprimanded Loddington for not 'conferr[ing]' with him first, 'whose authoritie and countenance in that place and in those matters is greater then yours & such as you ought to reverence'. Consequently, Walsingham ordered Loddington 'to permit him to continue his preachinge' until the Privy Council conveyed further orders via Davison.

The same day, Walsingham's secretary Laurence Tomson also wrote to Davison.[30] According to Patrick Collinson, Tomson was 'a most important member of the presbyterian party'.[31] It seems that Tomson had also personally supported Travers, as he referred to a conversation that summer, during Walsingham's embassy, between him, Davison and Killigrew (who had also joined the embassy).[32] Tomson appeared as committed as Davison, asking him to 'tel Master Travers from me, the Lord shall blesse you'.[33] He also emphasised

[29] SP 83/9 no. 59 – 11th October 1578, Walsingham to Davison; Cotton MS Galba C/VI pt. 2 f. 270 – [11th] October 1578, Walsingham to Loddington. Walsingham's letter to Loddington is misdated, in this Cotton copy, as 21st October, but this must be an error by the copier, as it must have accompanied his autograph letter to Davison on 11th. This letter is also printed in L. Gilliodts-Van Severen (ed.), *Relations Politiques des Pays-Bas & de l'Angleterre sous le Règne de Philippe II, Vol. 11* (Brussels: Kiessling & Co., 1900), item 4238, pp. 55-6, as being from Burghley to Loddington, and dated 21st October. This mistake has been copied by Marnef, who had consequently claimed that Burghley reprimanded Loddington too, which is not true.
[30] SP 83/9 no. 60 – 11th October 1578, Tomson to Davison.
[31] Collinson, *Elizabethan Puritan Movement*, p. 135.
[32] Cotton MS Galba C/VI pt. 2 f. 171 – June 1578, instructions for Killigrew, Carey and others; f. 171b – [undated], Killigrew's report.
[33] SP 83/9 no. 60.

Davison's authority, instructing that if Loddington continued, Davison should 'overrul[e]' him 'by the countenance of your place', and 'stand uppon your authoritie'.

Only after receiving these letters did Davison send his full account of the incident. This delay suggests that Davison knew full well that Travers had not yet shown any conformity, and had therefore not wanted to report anything which incriminated himself. However, as Walsingham was already aware of the incident, Davison could now put across his side of the story. Along with his account, he also reported that Walsingham's letter had calmed Loddington's 'lusty humour', and caused him to 'acknowledg[e] his error' to Davison, 'offering not only any roome' in the merchants' house for Travers' preaching, 'but also any furderaunce & help he might give yt'.[34] Walsingham was pleased to hear that the situation had been resolved, and wrote again to Loddington more favourably, acknowledging that although his actions had been misguided, his devotion to the Book of Common Prayer was 'good and comendable'. He also assured Loddington that Davison would be keeping an eye on Travers, to ensure the 'peace and quiet of that charge'.[35]

Walsingham wrote once more to Davison on the matter, on 26th October, to advise him and Travers to 'deale advisedly' and 'show some conformity therein', so as not to provoke Loddington again.[36] He was therefore evidently aware that Travers had not yet kept to his promise that summer to show 'some conformity', but was not angry over the matter. He suggested that, since the 'difference' in the forms of worship was 'but smaule betwin thone and the other', Travers should 'order the matter that in the tyme before the sermon he that usid to reade the chapters may beginne with the confession and reade som psalmes untill the tyme of the full assembly and the beginning of the Sermon'. Loddington soon returned to England,

[34] SP 83/9 no. 67 – 19th October 1578, Davison to Walsingham
[35] Cotton MS Galba C/VI pt. 2 f. 277 – 25th October 1578, Walsingham to Loddington.
[36] SP 83/9 no. 82 – 26th October 1578, Walsingham to Davison.

and did not receive Walsingham's second letter, but Davison confirmed that 'all thinges [are] well compounded betwene him and me as also betwene him and Master Travers', and thanked Walsingham for his 'well handling of our adversary'.[37]

Though at first it may appear that Walsingham had abandoned his earlier commitment to 'policy' over 'zeal' by allowing Travers to continue, in fact his position had remained unchanged. The compromise which he engineered with Travers was not done underhand – the more conservative Lord Cobham had also been involved, and it was based upon the Norfolk articles drafted by Burghley. He also made the Privy Council aware of the situation, and expected to send further instructions via Davison. Though Walsingham personally may have wanted Travers to continue his presbyterian worship – which he had earlier admitted that he preferred – this compromise was also the more pragmatic option, since, as Coates has argued, 'a Travers in post was better for the stability of the English church than a resentful, stymied Travers searching for employment'.[38] The same sentiment also seems to have applied to the deprived ministers of Norfolk, hence why Burghley fostered a deal after two years of conflict.

However, considering the Queen's personal antipathy to presbyterianism, Walsingham would have known that she would not have supported his course of action. Indeed, she would likely have supported Loddington instead, who, strictly speaking, was in the right over the Prayer Book. But, for Walsingham, the issue was not one of religion, but rather one of authority. As he made plain to Loddington, his intervention had completely undermined the authority of the extraordinary ambassadors, who had already dealt with Travers, and especially of Davison, who was present during the incident. Davison was 'her majesties Agent', and Loddington ought therefore to 'reverence' him, not contradict his orders.

[37] SP 83/10 no. 9 – 5th November 1578, Davison to Walsingham
[38] Coates, 'Sir Francis Walsingham', p. 163.

Crucially, though, Davison's actions had not been carried out on 'her majesties' authority. The Queen had been unaware of his covert plan to install Travers, and seemed to still be unaware of his avoidance of the Prayer Book and compromise with Walsingham. Davison's actions had therefore rested on his own personal authority rather than authority flowing directly from the Crown. This was not enough for Loddington, whose devotion to the Prayer Book surpassed his respect of authority, even, initially, that of Walsingham, though he later heeded his reprimand. Yet it did not seem that this lack of direct Crown authority mattered to Walsingham. Although Davison's actions had been somewhat underhand – both the initial appointment and continued avoidance of the Prayer Book – Walsingham disregarded this, and would not allow the authority of a Crown ambassador to be undermined by a man such as Loddington. Even when that ambassador was acting on non-Crown business, it was important for the government to present a united front – Davison was the ambassador, so must be obeyed by his inferiors regardless of the circumstances.

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Concurrent with the Travers situation, Davison had also become embroiled in the clash between Duke Casimir, the Ghent Calvinists (known as the 'Gantois'), and the Prince of Orange. This conflict had been brewing since a Calvinist coup in Ghent in October 1577 – though tacitly supported by Orange at the time, the gradual implementation of radical anti-Catholic policies severely threatened his hope of religious toleration.[39] The region became increasingly divided, with the Catholic 'Malcontents' now fighting the Calvinist Gantois, rather than the Spanish. This already volatile situation was compounded by the sudden death of Don John on 2nd October, due to sickness and fever.[40]

[39] Guido Marnef, 'The Dynamics of Reformed Religious Militancy: The Netherlands, 1566-1585', in Philip Benedict et al. (eds), *Reformation, Revolt and Civil War in France and the Netherlands, 1555-1585* (Amsterdam: Royal Netherlands Academy of Arts and Sciences, 1999), pp. 51-68, pp. 65-6.
[40] SP 83/9 no. 62.

Davison was dragged into the conflict by Duke Casimir. On 12th October, just two weeks after Walsingham and Cobham's departure, Davison reported to Burghley that the Gantois had 'sollicitid thasistance of the Duke Casimire', who, 'caried awaie with the counsaile' of his advisor Dr Beutterich, had gone to support them without informing Elizabeth, Orange or the States-General.[41] His support would exacerbate the divide between the Calvinists and Catholics and the northern and southern provinces, and destroy Orange's aim of a unifed, tolerant nation.[42] As was made apparent by the Travers episode, Davison himself preferred Calvinist forms of worship, but his religion was not so zealous that he approved of Casimir's actions. In fact, Davison was furious, predicting that 'if the Duke Casimire declare himself for the Gauntois', the Malcontents would 'backe themselves with the Duke d'Alençon', since he took 'for his colour a defence of the nobility and protection of the Catholic religion'; this would result in 'an inward combustion' – a civil war – rather than fighting Spain together.[43] Rather than further the protestant cause, Casimir's actions would instead hinder its progress. The States-General were already trying to repair the division, but were unable to negotiate a resolution.[44]

Since Casimir had been employed by the Queen, some thought that she had encouraged his move.[45] So, in order to prevent any dishonour to the Queen, and stop Casimir's course, Walsingham decided to have Davison confront him in person. He instructed Davison to 'repayre both to the Gantois and Duke Casimir with lettres of credit and charges to lay before them the perrill that maye ensue by the dangerous course they are entred into', and to give out that Elizabeth 'mislyke therof, disavowinge utterly his doinge in that behalf' – she would be

[41] SP 83/9 no. 62; Charles Wilson, *Queen Elizabeth and the Revolt of the Netherlands* (London: Macmillan, 1970), p. 61.
[42] Wilson, *Revolt of the Netherlands*, p. 64.
[43] SP 83/9 no. 62.
[44] SP 83/9 no. 68 – 19th October 1578, Davison to the Secretaries.
[45] SP 83/9 no. 68.

'loth to be so touched in honnour as to be the sedesman of civill dissencions where she intendeth to procure peace'.[46]

However, these instructions appear to have been given without the Queen's knowledge. Walsingham had received Davison's last packet when 'I was at my house in the contry: by meanes wherof I coulde not travaile in those causes to that effect I woulde'.[47] So, he could not discuss his immediate response with the Queen, but did so instead with Leicester, acquainting him with 'my opinion, of what I thought were not the worst waye, to help'. Although Davison received 'no direccion from her majesty', Walsingham gave Davison the authority 'of your self in discrecion [to] deale bothe with the Gantois and Duke Casimir to the effect aforesaide, as her majesties minister in her majesties name'. The specific reference to discretion is significant, as Davison had not yet been permitted to act with discretion in his previous instructions – so, following his earlier support of Davison's personal authority to Loddington, it seems that Walsingham was now confident in Davison's abilities and judgement over official Crown matters, too. Any decisions taken by Davison had to be in the spirit of his instructions though, 'to the effect aforesaide'.

Nevertheless, this was a somewhat complicated position – Davison would be acting on his own 'discretion', on Walsingham's instructions, without Elizabeth's knowledge, but in her name. Walsingham promised to 'solicite' the Queen on his return to court, and reassured Davison that 'your service wherin cannot but be well accepted of… yf by your travaile, so apparant a mischeife maye be steyed'. He further advised Davison to confer with Orange before dealing with Casimir, since he was 'throughly acquaynted with there humors, [and] can best direct youe what course to take therin'. Fortunately, once Walsingham returned to court he secured Elizabeth's (possibly unknowing) retroactive approval, as he reported that the planned

[46] SP 83/9 no. 74 – 21st October 1578, Walsingham to Davison.
[47] SP 83/9 no. 74.

'travell to remove the jealousye conceaved by some that her Majestie should have an interest in the fact of Duke Casimir is well to be liked of'.[48]

Yet, perhaps in light of the Loddington incident, Davison was unconvinced that his authority alone would suffice. Although he had been confident in his superiority over Loddington, he had nevertheless had to rely on Walsingham's support in resolving the situation, and he was now dealing with someone of greater rank. Consequently, he requested that Elizabeth 'wryte somewhat roundly to the Duke & the Gantoys & that the copies [might] be sent to me that I might impart them where I sound it convenient'.[49] He also asked for 'lettres of creance', which Walsingham had already promised, 'for my better warrant I hope we should do the more good'. But Walsingham seemed to have anticipated Davison's concerns, as he wrote again, before receiving Davison's letter, to reassure him that 'you shall not need to attend direction from hence, but take all oportunitie as it falleth owt to doe what good you can, so that you fayle not to acquaynt hir majestie with your doynges, which will come well to passe both for the approbation of your service'.[50] Walsingham therefore trusted Davison to make his own judgements, without being micro-managed from London. It is unclear from the letter whether Elizabeth herself had authorised this semi-autonomy, but Walsingham seemed to imply that, as long as Davison kept the Queen informed of his actions, she would be satisfied. Yet considering Davison's earlier reprimands, for supposedly siding with Orange and allowing slander of the Queen, as well as the clash with Loddington, it is no wonder that he wanted explicit letters of credence, in order to ensure that his actions were not later misliked.

By early November, Casimir was seeking to be declared the general of Ghent's army, and had sent a justification of his actions to the Archduke Matthias.[51] Casimir and Davison

[48] SP 83/9 no. 82 – 26th October 1578, Walsingham to Davison.
[49] SP 83/10 no. 9 – 5th November 1578, Davison to Walsingham.
[50] SP 83/10 no. 16 – 6th November 1578, Walsingham to Davison.
[51] SP 83/9 no. 68 – 19th October 1578, Davison to the Secretaries.

finally met on 8th November. According to Davison, he let Casimir 'understande howe muche this his procedinge did prejudice the comon service hinder thadvancement of the Gospell touche his owne creditte and finallie call in question the honour of the Queen my Mistress who had bine author of his cominge downe'.[52] Davison's reasons were therefore the same as in his earlier conciliar discourses – his (and Walsingham's) chief consideration was always the preservation of the revolt, religion, and England's safety. His opposition to Casimir was therefore not incompatible with his religious 'zeal', but quite the opposite – by undermining Orange's policy, Elizabeth's position, and the unity of the States, Casimir's actions threatened the progress of the broader protestant cause.

The same applies to Leicester. Leicester had, by now, corresponded with Casimir for several years – the pair had been keen to work together for 'for the service of God and the Queen of England and the defence of the persecuted oppressed', and hoped that Leicester would be able to join Casimir in the Low Countries with his own troops.[53] However, for Leicester, Casimir's recent actions were in fact a threat to the 'the furtherance of the Gospel', as well as to the Queen's honour – reasons which he later explained to Casimir directly.[54] Like Davison, his fervent protestantism was therefore compatible with his opposition to Casimir's actions.

Davison admitted to being rather forceful with Casimir, laying these reasons 'somuche the more roundlye bycause I fownde him somewhat strangely carryed awaie with the counsaile of his Beutrich the chief fier brande of this combustion'.[55] He evidently realised that Casimir

[52] SP 83/10 no. 37 – 17th November 1578, Davison to the Secretaries.
[53] SP 81/1 f. 140 – 25th April 1578, Casimir to Leicester. Original French: 'pour le service de dieu de la royne angleterre et la deffense des poures oppressez'. See also Simon Adams, 'Dudley, Robert, earl of Leicester (1532/3–1588), courtier and magnate', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford University Press, 2008 (2004)) <https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/8160>, p. 21.
[54] SP 83/10 no. 52 – 2nd December 1578, Walsingham to Davison; SP 83/10 no. 73 – 10th December 1578, draft of instructions by Leicester for Rogers's mission to Casimir.
[55] SP 83/10 no. 37.

was suspicious of 'my lack of charge & authoritye to deale with him in those matters bycause I brought him no lettres of creadance or whether offended with my plainenes (conteigned notwithstanding with the bondes of modestie and truthe)', as Casimir 'refused to geve me other answere then that he was able to justifie his accions' and determined to write to Elizabeth directly. In light of Casimir's subsequent letters, it seems that this was probably an honest account of what passed between them.

Following the meeting, Davison sent a 'summary of what was proposed… in the name' of the Queen, to Casimir.[56] This summary is now lost, but, according to Casimir, it was 'totally founded… on false reasons and maxims', and contained 'other things' that were not said in the meeting.[57] Consequently, Casimir intended to 'enlighten her Majesty on all points here', as he 'very much doubt[ed] if her Majesty… wanted to Judge me in this way, without having first heard me'.[58] He wrote directly to Elizabeth, insisting that 'I purge myself of things that are imputed to me, in the said writing, without having deserved such a reward', and 'beg[ged]' for her continued favour.[59] He also sent separate letters to both Leicester and Walsingham.[60] To Walsingham, he insisted that 'Master Davison, had no credence, no letter from Her Majesty to me: which was well deserved for the gravity of what he proposed to me, derogating from my honor…Now for his discharge, he says, understandably, that he said nothing to me, except by your express command'. [61] Nevertheless, Casimir would only accept Elizabeth's authority, not

[56] SP 83/10 no. 21 – 10th November 1578, Casimir to Davison. Original French: 'Le Sommaire, de ce que m'avez proposé Sammedy passe, au nom de vostre maistresse'.
[57] Original French: 'J'y ay trouvé aulrmes choses que ne m'avez pas encores dit… totalement fonde, en ce qui me touche, sur faulses raisons, & maximes'.
[58] Original French: 'et le trouve par tout tel qu'il vaut bien la peine, que (sans vous travailler davantage en dit courant de ces choses avec vous) J'esclarrise sa Majestie sur tous les points d'iceluy, pour luy rendre satisfaction… Et doute bien fort, si sa Majestie (la quelle J'ay tousjours honore et honore pour sa prudence) a voulu, ainsi Je qui de moy, sans m'avoir premierement ouy'.
[59] SP 83/10 no. 31 – 14th November 1578, Casimir to the Queen. Original French: 'je me purge des choses, que me sont imputées, au dict escript, sans avoir desservy telle recompanse; de ma prompte; et bonne, et droicte volonté; je le vous ay voulu envoyer, vous suppliant, Madame; me faire cest honneur de m'esclaircir de votre volonté ceste part'.
[60] SP 83/10 no. 31 – 14th November 1578, Casimir to Leicester.
[61] SP 83/10 no. 22b – 11th November 1578, Casimir to Walsingham. Original French: 'Le Sr d'Avison, n'a eu ni creance, ni lettre de Sa Majestie sadressante a moy: et meritoit bien la gravite de ce qu'il ni a propose derogant a

Walsingham's, and asked 'if you have written these things to him by Her Majesty's command to reveal them to me, I beg you to show me this commandment'.[62] Again, this was similar to Loddington, who had initially refused to recognise Walsingham's authority, and the settlement he had made with Travers. Casimir's counsellor Beutterich also wrote to Davison's colleague Daniel Rogers, accusing Davison of fabricating a false message from the Queen.[63] Evidently Davison's caution had been justified – without letters from the Queen, Casimir and Beutterich did not trust that Davison was acting on her behalf.

But Walsingham seemed to have anticipated Casimir's response, as before he had received his reports from either Casimir or Davison, he once again reassured Davison of his authority. Walsingham explained that he had discouraged Elizabeth from writing 'the letters you thowght meet to be sent unto Cassimir and the Gantoyse', because he feared that she would have 'wrytten in so harde and sharpe termes' that they woold rather breed contempte then redresse'.[64] Yet, somewhat contradictorily, he allowed Davison to 'delyver' his 'good counsell… in her Majesties name… eyther in sharpe or sweete termes as to you shall seeme meete'. That Davison had already given his counsel in apparently 'sharpe termes', before receipt of this approval from Walsingham, reinforces the similarity in their political styles – both valued frankness and honesty above dissimulation. He reassured Davison of his authority to deal with Casimir as he saw fit for a second time, recognising that 'harde yt is here to prescrybe what is fyt to be done therefor to set downe a foorme of speeche and what persons are fyt to be dealt withall for that newe accydents requyrethe newe cownsyles'. Only Davison had up-to-date information about developments on the ground, therefore, Walsingham trusted

mon honneur, une creance, Maintenant pour sa descharge, il dit, a ce que j'entens, qu'il ne ma rien dit, que par vostre commandement expres'.

[62] Original French: 'Si vous luy avez escrit ces choses par le commandement de Sa Majestie pour me les declairer, Je vous prie me faire aparoir de ce commandement'.

[63] *CSPF* Vol. 13, item 365, p. 277 – 11th November 1578, Beutterich to Rogers (English translation/summary). MS is SP 83/10 no. 22 (Latin).

[64] SP 83/10 no. 25 – 12th November 1578, Walsingham to Davison.

him to respond to such developments on his own initiative. Interestingly, this remark was very similar to one included in the instructions given to the much senior Walsingham and Cobham that summer: 'for that it is very harde for us preciselye to sett downe every particularitie… we are pleased you use your discrecions having a principall regarde to direct the course of your doinges in soche sorte as may seeme best to farther the present charge comitted unto you'.[65] Though he had shown trust in Davison throughout the mission, Walsingham had, after all, now experienced Davison's competence and sufficiency first-hand during the summer, and so 'dowbt[ed] neyther of your suffytcencye nor care to doe that which may be best for her Majestys servyce and the benefit of thos countrys'. Walsingham's opinion did not change even upon receipt of Casimir's accusatory letters. On 27th November, he sent Davison copies, and assured him that 'howsoever [Casimir] is offendid her Majestie doethe verie well allowe of your speache & proceading and is resolved to maintaine and Justefie your doinges in that behalf'.[66]

Davison then wrote again to Burghley and the secretaries on 3rd December. He had heard that Casimir had written to the Queen, but not yet received Walsingham's letter or the copies of Casimir's letters. He therefore reiterated that he had acted in 'respect of her Majesties honour', and was confident that 'havinge not therein excedid the boundes either of dutye or reason, or otherwise done ought in that behaulf to the disservice of her Majestie, I doubt not but her Hignes will justifie my doinges'.[67] So, despite his initial caution and requests for letters of credence, Davison was now reassured that his actions would be supported back at home. However, the accusations of Casimir and Beutterich 'in the meane tyme… toucheth my creditt and reputacion', so he asked to 'have some satisfactyon'.

[65] SP 83/7 no. 12 – 12th June 1578, instructions for Walsingham and Cobham.
[66] SP 83/10 no. 46 – 27th November 1578, Walsingham to Davison.
[67] SP 83/10 no. 54 – Davison to the Secretaries; no. 55 – Davison to Burghley. Both 3rd December 1578.

The government's response to Casimir was coordinated by Leicester. Since he already had a good relationship with Casimir, Leicester's involvement was intended to pacify him whilst also upholding Davison's authority. Daniel Rogers, who was also on friendly terms with Casimir, was chosen as the ambassador to convey Leicester's response; he was also instructed to foster a reconciliation between Casimir and Orange. Leicester explained why the Queen had been so offended by Casimir's actions with the Gantois, and that Davison had indeed acted on the Queen's orders. He insisted that the use of Davison's discretion, as her representative on the ground, was completely legitimate and approved of – 'and for that her Majestie coulde not so well see, into the Inconveniences, which came of his defendinge the Gantoys, as he beinge present with them, she injoyned him to use such reasons in dissuadinge his Excellency... who havinge receaved this charge from her Majestie in generall termes, and beinge in those places where he presently and daly hearde his Princesse slaundered... mooved him to retourne all the said argumentes uppon the Duke'.[68]

Leicester also wrote directly to Davison, reassuring him that his good work would not be undermined by this mission, as he had instructed Rogers to 'mayntayne the substance of the speeches youe delivered unto him in her Majesties name', and 'to declare at large his hole negocitiacion to you'.[69] Wilson, too, guaranteed that Rogers' mission would 'in nothynge… touche yow in your credite'.[70] Thus, though efforts were made to pacify Casimir, this was not at the expense of Davison's reputation – Elizabeth, Walsingham and Leicester stood firmly by their ambassador, and continued to support his actions.

However, there seemed to be some discord between Rogers and Davison. Walsingham had 'willed the said Rogers to acquainte you with his chardge and to hould good

[68] SP 83/10 no. 73 – 10th December 1578, draft of instructions by Leicester for Rogers's mission to Casimir.
[69] SP 83/10 no. 52; SP 83/10 no. 72 – 9th December 1578, Leicester to Davison.
[70] SP 83/10 no. 65 – 8th December 1578, Wilson to Davison.

correspondency with you forbearing hereafter to continue his strainge manner of dealing towardes you'.[71] Rogers would only have become aware of his friend Casimir's accusations against Davison in mid-November, and had not written to Davison since. So, this tension was probably not just due to the accusations, but was longer-term. Since there are no other mentions of their relations, we cannot know for certain what caused this tension – however, there is one particularly interesting possibility. Rogers had been in the Low Countries from March to May, overlapping slightly with Thomas Leighton, whom Davison assumed had started the rumours against him earlier that year. Could these rumours instead have originated from Rogers? Though he was still abroad when the rumours began circulating in early April, he could have sent such reports back in letters to friends. Moreover, Walsingham had attributed the rumours to 'blastes of envye', and Rogers, who had similar experience in the Low Countries, could certainly have felt that the more accomplished Davison was a rival.[72] This would therefore be a plausible explanation for both their discord and the origins of the rumours. Now, Walsingham emphasised the necessity of a united front, for 'her Majesties publick ministers (all pryvat passions set a part) to concurre together for the better furtheraunce of her service'. This comment aptly sums up Walsingham's approach to service – though he often privately complained to friends of the Queen's prevarication and refusal to heed his counsel, in public, he was unwaveringly loyal to the Crown. This also helps to explain his support of Davison against Loddington, because, although Davison had not acted under Crown authority, it was nevertheless essential for all of her ministers to 'concurre together'.

By the 15th, the situation in Ghent was improving, as the city magistrates had finally agreed to the demands of Orange and the States, 'touchinge the tolleracon of both religions… [and] conformablenes in all other reason to the councell & advice of the Prince'.[73] Still, Casimir

[71] SP 83/10 no. 58 – 5th December 1578, Walsingham to Davison.
[72] SP 83/6 f. 84.
[73] SP 83/10 no. 78 – 15th December 1578, Davison to Walsingham.

would not let the matter drop. At the end of the month, he wrote again to Walsingham to insist that although he was 'content' that Davison had conveyed Elizabeth's message, 'it has been difficult for me to believe that either her Majesty or you upon whom he threw the responsibility, can have directed him to say what he did, without being properly informed of the facts. I know well that neither her Majesty, nor you, nor any one in England can know what goes on here except by the reports'.[74] This was a fair point – Elizabeth and the Privy Council were indeed dependent on Davison's reports (and those of other agents) for their information, hence why their veracity was so important. And Walsingham and the Queen evidently did trust in these reports, as they continued to support him – according to Wilson, by the beginning of January, 'her Majestie did affirme' the 'curage and wysdome' showed by Davison in Ghent, and 'lyked yow verie wel for that service'.[75]

Although Davison was unable to resolve the conflict in Ghent, he and Casimir were soon reconciled through the help of Rogers.[76] Upon Davison's return to Ghent, he 'suppid in [Casimir's] companie at the Princes wheare we concluded the matter in a glass of wyne to her Majesties healthe and the next morning he did me the honour to come to my lodging & invyte me to dynner with him wheare the matter was confirmed & sealid upp with haulf a dozen other Santees to heavie for some of the companie'.[77] Casimir soon decided to reconcile with the Queen in person, and arrived in England on 18th January.[78] Walsingham anticipated that, despite their carousing, Casimir had not fully forgiven Davison, and wrote that 'whatsoever I heare of [Casimir and Beutterich] against you, you may be assurid I will suspend my judgement

[74] SP 83/10 no. 98 – 28th December 1578, Casimir to Walsingham. Original French: 'Il ma esté tres difficille de croire que Sa Majesté ou vous sur qui il se deschargeoit, luy eust donné charge de me dire ce quil a faict, sans estre bien informé de la vérité des choses. Je scay bien que Sa Majesté ny vous ny aultres en Angleterre, ne pouvez scavoir des choses que se font par deçà que selon que lon les rapporte'.
[75] SP 83/11 f. 14 – 4th January 1579, Wilson to Davison.
[76] SP 83/11 f. 25 – 6th January 1579, Rogers to Walsingham.
[77] SP 83/11 f. 25 f. 55 – 13th January 1579, Davison to Walsingham. See also SP 83/11 f. 20 f. 45 – [10th] January 1579, Davison to Leicester [draft].
[78] SP 83/11 f. 62 – 14th January 1579, Rogers to Walsingham; f. 85 – 24th January 1579, Walsingham to Davison.

thereof'.[79] For Walsingham, Davison's word was worth more than that of a volatile foreign prince, regardless of his rank.

Moreover, on 15th January, Elizabeth granted Davison the reversion of the office of custos brevium (keeper of the writs) of the Court of Queen's Bench for life.[80] This office had been combined with the clerkships of the treasury and the warrants of the Court since the mid-fifteenth century, and these reversions were also granted to Davison.[81] Adams mistakenly assumed that Davison was granted the offices, not the reversions; however, a petition from Davison's son Christopher in 1609 clearly states that 'Queene Elizabeth... granteth to William Davison Esquire the Office of Custos Brevium of the Kings Bench... after the death of one Richard Payne then Clerke of the said Office'.[82] Davison did not succeed to these offices until after Payne's death, when James I 'confirmeth and ratifieth the said Queenes grant' in July 1607.[83]

Although Davison had petitioned for these reversions several months ago, in spring 1578, he had not been granted them immediately as, whilst Elizabeth had seemed 'well disposed to passe it… hir only stay… [was] that shee thincketh it will not serve your present necessitie'.[84] Nevertheless, she had assured Walsingham that 'she never meant to bestow it uppon Paynes sonne, nether hath any disposition to bestowe it uppon any other, than uppon you'. Walsingham had taken some efforts to persuade her, 'not without some litle difficultie… [so] I promised her Majesty, youe woulde content your self therwith not myndinge to be

[79] SP 83/11 f. 85.
[80] Lansdowne MS 91 f. 113 – 1609, Christopher Davison's suit for custos brevium.
[81] J. H. Baker (ed.), *The Reports of Sir John Spelman*, Vol. 2 (London: Selden Society, 1978), p. 366; Davison's will, p. 206.
[82] Adams, 'Davison', p. 6; Lansdowne MS 91 f. 113.
[83] Lansdowne MS 91 f. 113.
[84] Adams ('Davison', p. 6) mistakenly assumed that he did not sue for this office until after mid-1578. However, he must have begun around spring 1578, as Walsingham first referred to his suit on 5th April – SP 83/6 f. 14. He had then continued to push Davison's suit throughout the year – quotation from SP 83/10 no. 16 – 6th November 1578, Walsingham to Davison.

troublesome to her highnes in further sutes'.[85] The significance of Davison's success here was two-fold. First, that, despite her initial reluctance (which was totally separate from the Casimir situation), Elizabeth had ultimately seen fit to reward Davison for his work, irrespective of Casimir's reaction. As long as Davison was seen to be visibly defending his Queen, Elizabeth was well satisfied with his service. Second, Walsingham's persistent efforts on behalf of his client showed the extent of his loyalty and goodwill. Throughout the autumn, he had been preoccupied dealing with the Alençon marriage negotiations, as well as the developing situation in Ghent, yet had not let his obligation to Davison slip. It would therefore seem that their relationship, and Davison's reward, was a priority for Walsingham.

Davison's recall was first mentioned by Walsingham on 24th January, although he also said that if Rudolph II's mediated peace negotiations went ahead, then Davison would be included in the English delegation.[86] Davison did not want to be a delegate – he was eager to go home, and stressed his financial difficulties.[87] The final months of his mission were occupied with handling the English loans, on which he regularly reported, along with the usual military news. Once it became clear that Davison would not be invited to the peace talks, he was recalled in April.[88] After a slight delay over Elizabeth's initial refusal to pay another 30,000 florins to the States-General, he arrived back at court at the end of May.[89] Though Davison had not achieved the major aim of the mission, of a peace between Philip and the rebels, neither

[85] SP 83/10 no. 92 – 21st December 1578, Walsingham to Davison.
[86] SP 83/11 f. 85; f. 81 – 19th January 1579, Walsingham to Davison.
[87] SP 83/11 f. 89 – 25th January 1579, Davison to Burghley; SP 83/11 f. 113 – 7th February 1579, Davison to Cheke.
[88] SP 83/11 f. 110 – 3rd February 1579, Walsingham to Davison; SP 83/11 f. 253 – [mid-April] 1579, Davison to [Hatton]. The tentative date of 13th April given in the calendar must be just slightly too early, as in the letter Davison mentions receiving his recall, which had only been sent on the 10th or 11th. The recipient is not given, but Davison writes 'I have made your Lordship a great fault in respect of my 8 or 9 monethes silence', which would be since July or August 1578. His last extant letter to Hatton is SP 83/7 no. 74, dated 21st July 1578. Davion mentions the choosing of deputies for the talks in SP 83/11 f. 142 – 22nd February 1579, Davison to Walsingham, and SP 83/11 f. 228 – 1st April 1579, Davison to the Secretaries, but he never seems to have been considered.
[89] SP 104/163 f. 150r – [10th/11th April] 1579, Walsingham to Davison; SP 83/11 f. 241 – 11th April 1579, the Queen to Davison; SP 83/11 f. 264 – end of April 1579, Davison to Walsingham; f. 269 – 10th May 1579, Davison to Walsingham; SP 83/11 f. 274 – 17th May 1579, Davison to Walsingham.

had Walsingham and Cobham, nor Wilkes or Leighton, nor any of the other diplomats sent throughout Davison's tenure.

He had, however, been successful in other ways, not least by maintaining good relations with Orange and the States-General, despite Elizabeth's prevarication. Indeed, Orange wrote that 'among the great benefits that it has pleased Your Majesty to do to this country I esteem it not the least that you that you pleased to send us' Davison.[90] According to Orange, they had been 'placed by his prudence, vigilance and righteous affection for the advancement of our affairs without however anything forgotten from the service of Your Majesty'.[91] The States-General agreed, professing 'great regret for his departure', 'as it has been an indescribable pleasure to us to have had hither the presence of Master Davison', and 'implore[d] Your Majesty very humbly to want to send him back'.[92] They even arranged to give Davison a present of one thousand crowns.[93] Once Davison had returned home, he was able to report to the Queen, Walsingham and his other patrons in person, so there is no evidence in writing of their final response to his mission. Yet, in light of his recently granted suit, and his continued employment, all must have been sufficiently satisfied with his service.

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Above all, these two incidents confirmed Davison as a diplomatic authority, as his actions were consistently supported by his patrons at home. In his first mission to the Low Countries in 1576, Davison had been trusted with very little authority – he represented the

[90] SP 83/11 f. 118 f. 276 – 18th May 1579, Orange to the Queen. Original French: 'Entre les grans benefices quil a pleu a vostre majeste faire a tout ce pays d'estime cestuy n'avoir este de moindres de ce que luy a pleu nous envoyer et tenir quelques amices priz de Messieurer les estats monsieur Davidson'.
[91] Original French: 'Et comme nous avons senti par sa presener beaucoup de bons offices on nostre endroict par sa prudence vigilance et droicte affection a l'advancement de noz affaires sans toutteffois riens oblies du servir de Votre Majestie'.
[92] Cotton MS Galba C/VI pt. 2 f. 319 – 22nd May 1579, States-General to the Queen. Original French: 'Madame, Comme ce nous at este ung plaisir indicible d'avoir eu par-deça la presence du Seigneur Davidson… ainsi ne pouvons sinon recepvoir votre grandissime regret de son partement… Par ou sommes occasionnez, de supplier Votre Majesté bien humblement le vouloir renvoyer pardeça'.
[93] SP 103/32 no. 93 – 22nd May 1579, resolution of the States-General.

Crown, but was entirely dependent on his instructions, and was not permitted to take any decisions alone. Even at the start of this resident mission, when the government had evidently deemed Davison sufficiently capable to manage for a long period, he was still not permitted to make judgements and use discretion, hence the extraordinary embassy of Walsingham and Cobham. But now, through his involvement with Travers and Casimir, Davison's authority had been articulated beyond doubt. In the case of Travers, his actions which had so infuriated Loddington had not been officially sanctioned by the Crown – indeed, the Queen appears to have remained ignorant about Travers' conduct. Walsingham had also not initially supported his decision. Nevertheless, when confronted by a challenge to his and Davison's authority, Walsingham reacted quickly and decisively, backing the authority of his ambassador. Even when Davison was probably in the wrong, Walsingham showed the importance of a united front against external challenges. The Casimir incident was a little more straightforward, as Davison had been explicitly authorised to act by Walsingham, who clearly had great confidence in his authority and judgement, hence the lack of letters of credence, and the instruction to use his discretion. Even when challenged by Casimir, the government again staunchly backed their ambassador, and rewarded Davison for his service soon after.

Although Davison initially faced challenges from both Loddington and Casimir, this was not necessarily due to his junior rank, as both also dismissed the authority of Walsingham – Loddington overrode Walsingham and Travers' compromise, and Casimir would only accept the direct orders of the Queen. In any case, their challenges had perhaps worked out for the best, as it was now evident to all that Davison would always be backed by London. By the end of his resident mission, then, Davison's diplomatic authority had been clearly established. He had come far from his 1576 mission, limited by prescriptive instructions, and was now a trusted member of the diplomatic corps.

Part II: Senior Ambassador

Chapter 4: Patronage and friendship, 1579-84

After departing from the Low Countries in May 1579, Davison was not to return until 1584. From 1579 to 1582, there is no surviving record of his work. Then, in 1582, he returned to his professional roots in Scotland, where he had served his diplomatic apprenticeship under Henry Killigrew in the mid-1570s, dealing with the consequences of the Ruthven raid of August 1582. In December 1582 he undertook a brief mission to escort the French ambassador, Bertrand de Salignac de La Mothe-Fénelon, to Scotland; in summer 1584, he was dispatched to act as a mediator between James and the Ruthven lords, during which time he also became involved with the exiled presbyterian ministers. These Scottish missions have previously been analysed in light of debates on factionalism, but, as we will see, they are also illustrative of friendship between patrons and clients.[1]

This chapter will therefore focus on Davison's political relationships during this period, at home and during his Scottish missions. It will be argued that his patron-client relationships were fluid and not strictly hierarchical, blurring the line between patronage and friendship, which, as it will be shown, were not mutually exclusive. Though scholars have usually viewed friendship and patronage as being incompatible, Elizabethans themselves believed that social inequality was not anethema to friendship, as long as intellectual equality was achieved. Indeed, as Francis Bacon argued, difference in rank could actually make friendship easier to navigate, as the friends would not view each other as rivals.[2]

Davison's relationships in the early 1580s illustrate perfectly this compatability of patronage and friendship. He was, by now, close friends with Henry Killigrew, his former

[1] Conyers Read, *Mr Secretary Walsingham and the Policy of Queen Elizabeth*, Vol. 2 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1925), Ch. 9; Hannah Coates, 'Faction, Rhetoric, and Ideology: Sir Francis Walsingham's Role in Anglo-Scottish Diplomacy, ca. 1580–1590', *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies*, 50(3) (2020), 493-513.
[2] Francis Bacon, *The Essayes or Counsels, Civill and Morall* (London: Printed by John Haviland for Hanna Barret, 1625) (STC 2nd ed. 1148), p. 287.

superior on their Scottish missions of the early 1570s, and a bond had developed between their two families. Davison also developed a special relationship with Walsingham, which surpassed the normal boundaries of a patron and client. Whilst historians have recognised their close and 'trust[ing]' relationship, only Conyers Read has described it as a friendship, although he appears to have applied the label somewhat lazily, as early as spring 1576, before Davison had even served his first solo mission.[3] Yet by the 1580s, Walsingham and Davison did indeed fit the mould of a humanist friendship. Bound by their similar political creeds, the pair came to only trust each other over Scottish policy, and worked together secretly to the exclusion of other privy councillors – including Leicester, with whom Davison had previously been close. Walsingham also worked tirelessly for Davison's preferment, so it seems likely that their special relationship was instrumental in Davison's later promotion to the secretaryship in 1586. Davison's other relationships, with friends, colleagues and family, will be explored at the beginning of the chapter.

This chapter also shows that Davison's political creed and diplomatic work in Scotland were entirely consistent with his work in the Low Countries. He remained committed to the furtherance of the protestant cause, which encompassed the safety of England and Elizabeth, and continued to provide counsel to this end – for instance, over the exiled presbyerian ministers and the surrender of Edinburgh Castle. These Scottish missions therefore confirm the cohesion in Davison's political service across different roles and geographical settings.

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For the years 1579 to 1582, there is no surviving evidence of Davison's professional work. He did not serve as a clerk of the council, as many of his diplomatic peers (such as

[3] Simon Adams, Alan Bryson and Mitchell Leimon, 'Walsingham, Sir Francis (c. 1532–1590), principal secretary', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford University Press, 2009 (2004)) <https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/28624>, p. 30; Read, *Walsingham*, Vol. 1, p. 325; Vol. 3, p. 429.

Wilkes and Beale) did, and he was not elected as an MP until 1586 (and even then never took his seat).[4] Strype claimed that he served as clerk of the council at this time, and this was repeated by Nicolas, but there is no surviving evidence for this, and, considering how well-documented the other clerks are, it is unlikely that Davison ever served in this position.[5] However, his correspondence from the early 1580s does uncover much about his personal life. Davison has long been considered a hot protestant of the 'Walsingham mould', and his association with Leicester is well known, but no account has yet been made of his own personal network and friendships.[6]

Davison's correspondence reveals Henry Killigrew to be perhaps his closest friend, and the pair were also friendly with Thomas Randolph and Walter Mildmay. Like Killigrew, Randolph had served repeatedly in Scotland since the beginning of the reign, and the pair had long been well acquainted. It would therefore make sense for Killigrew to introduce his like-minded secretary to another colleague with experience in Scotland. Killigrew also probably introduced Davison to Mildmay, another member of the old guard at court, with moderate puritan leanings.[7] Davison had been in contact with Mildmay since before his resident mission, as in August 1577 Killigrew wrote to Davison asking him to 'remembre me to Master Myldmay'.[8] However, Mildmay's correspondence with all three men appears to be lost. That this was a group rather than independent, separate relationships is evident from two of

[4] Shortly after Davison was promoted to the Privy Council in September 1586, he was appointed as a commissioner for Mary's trial, and was elected as the MP for Knaresborough for the Parliament sitting that autumn, but he remained at court and did not participate in either – Simon Adams, 'Davison, William (d. 1608), diplomat and administrator', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford University Press, 2008 (2004)) <https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/7306>, p. 12.
[5] John Strype, *Annals of the Reformation and Establishment of Religion*, Vol. III Pt I (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1824 (1728)), p. 420; Nicholas Harris Nicolas, *Life of William Davison, Secretary of State and Privy Counsellor to Queen Elizabeth* (London: Printed by and for John Nicholas and Son, 1823), pp. 14-15.
[6] R. B. Wernham, *Before the Armada: The Growth of English Foreign Policy, 1485-1588* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1966), p. 330.
[7] L. L. Ford, 'Mildmay, Sir Walter (1520/21-1589), administrator and founder of Emmanuel College, Cambridge', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford University Press, 2008 (2004)) <https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/18696>, p. 9.
[8] SP 83/2 f. 43 – 23rd August 1577, Killigrew to Davison.

Randolph's letters to Davison in Scotland – in May 1584, he reported that 'no man hathe seen your letter but Sir Walter and Master Killegrew', and the following month, he was 'wylled by Sir Walter and Master Harrie to wryte ther hartie comendations unto you'.[9]

Of the group, Davison's closest relationship was with Killigrew. Through their shared diplomatic experiences and religious leanings, the pair gradually developed the emotional and intellectual bond necessary for a humanist friendship. Killigrew had, of course, previously been Davison's direct superior on their missions to Scotland in the early 1570s, as ambassador and secretary, respectively. He had regarded Davison highly, writing to Walsingham that 'Master Davyson hathe deserved more at my hand then I am able to deserve'.[10] Killigrew had then conspired with Davison over Travers' appointment in spring 1578, and travelled to the Low Countries alongside Walsingham and Cobham that summer.[11] On this mission, the dynamic no longer appeared to be that of patron and client, but of more equal colleagues, working together secretly in support of Travers.

Their relationship also involved their families, so, it is first necessary to account for Davison's growing family. During this period, Davison and his wife Catherine had at least two more children, Walter and Christopher. The couple probably had six children that survived to adulthood – the four sons Francis, Walter, Christopher, and William, and two daughters, with the married names Townley (the elder) and Catherine Duncombe (the younger).[12] As mentioned in the previous chapter, Francis was the eldest boy (and probably the eldest altogether), and had been born around 1573/4; a girl, probably the future Mistress Townley,

[9] SP 52/34 no. 63 – 13th May 1584; SP 52/35 no. 9 – 10th June 1584. Both Randolph to Davison.
[10] SP 52/26/1 f. 81r – 21st July 1574, Killigrew to Walsingham.
[11] Cotton MS Galba C/VI pt. 2 f. 171 – June 1578, instructions for Killigrew and company; SP 83/7 no. 42 – [June/July] 1578, Killigrew's report; no. 43 – June 1578, expenses of Killigrew and company; SP 83/9 no. 60 – 11th October 1578, Tomson to Davison.
[12] Davison's will, pp. 208-9, 212. Of these six, only Walter was not mentioned in Davison's will, presumably because he had already died (see p. 275 n. 62). Historians only know of his existence because of his brief career as a poet and soldier. By contrast, very little is known of the youngest son, William, beyond the information in Davison's will. It is therefore possible that there were other children who, if they died before their father, lived and died unrecorded.

was born in summer 1578. Then followed two more boys – one born sometime before December 1580, and Christopher around December 1581.[13] In his will, Davison lists Francis as his first son, Christopher as the second, and William as the third. William was therefore definitely born after Christopher, so could not have been the boy born in 1580. This must have been Walter, who was not mentioned in his father's will as he had probably already died, perhaps when serving as a soldier in the Low Countries.[14] The birth dates of William and Catherine are unknown.

In his biography of Davison, Nicolas incorrectly assumed that Walter was the fourth boy, despite knowing that he was born around 1580. He also supposed that Christopher was 'most likely' named after 'Christopher Coo, whose daughter married William Spelman, his mother's grandfather'. [15] He declared it 'difficult to account for that of the fourth son, unless he was called Walter, in compliment to the father of the Earl of Essex'. In fact, the solution was much more simple. Christopher was named after Christopher Hatton, who stood as the baby's godfather, and Walter must have been named after Walter Mildmay, who may plausibly have stood as a godfather.[16]

Now, to bring our attention back to Killigrew, who was closely involved with the Davison family. He stood as godfather to the second son, Walter, and was friendly with Davison's wife, supporting her whilst Davison was away on missions.[17] Killigrew was also acquainted with Davison's brother, who seems to have met with Killigrew after returning from

[13] SP 15/27/2 f. 128 [printed] – 29th December 1580, Killigrew to Davison; SP 12/150 f. 169 – 23 December 1581, Davison to Lady Mason; Add. MS 15891 f. 75 – 28 December 1581, Davison to Hatton.
[14] John Considine, 'Davison, Francis (1573/4–1613x19), poet and anthologist', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford University Press, 2008 (2004)) <https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/7300>, p. 2.
[15] Nicolas, p. 227.
[16] SP 12/150 f. 169; Add. MS 15891 f. 75.
[17] SP 15/27/2 f. 128 [printed]; SP 52/35 no. 49 – 6th July 1584, Killigrew to Davison.

a spell in France.[18] This 'brother' could either have been Davison's brother by birth, or a brother in law, because, in his will, Davison referred to his sons-in-law as his sons.[19]

Davison was equally well acquainted with Killigrew's family. Killigrew's nephew, Thomas Mychell, was in Davison's service since at least December 1580, and later accompanied Davison to Scotland in December 1582.[20] Davison was also involved in the education of Killigrew's ward, Jonathan Trelawny.[21] In March 1583, Killigrew informed Davison that Jonathan was 'returned agayne… to his scolemaster for suche tyme as he shold please to tarry with you'.[22] The schoolmaster had promised to 'do his best endevor to teache Jonathan so long as he shall remayne there', and Killigrew professed himself 'beholding unto' Davison. This suggests that Jonathan had been placed in Davison's household, and, due to Davison's absence in Scotland, had had to be temporarily sent to a schoolmaster. Alternatively, Davison may have had a hand in the procurement of Jonathan's school place. Whatever the case, it is clear that Davison had worked on his friend's behalf.

Killigrew was therefore no longer the senior party in the relationship, as Davison's influence had risen significantly since their first missions together. Davison was now in a position to be furthering the education and careers of Killigrew's dependents, just as Walsingham and Killigrew had furthered his just a few years ago. The relationship was no longer that of a patron and client, but rather of equal colleagues and friends, as they shared familial bonds, intellectual and social equality, and a common ideology. This boundary between friendship and patronage was evidently blurred, as, over the six or so years of their association, it would be impossible to pinpoint the moment when Killigrew stopped being

[18] SP 52/31 no. 57 – 12th March 1583, Killigrew to Davison.
[19] Davison's will, pp. 208-9.
[20] SP 15/27/2 f. 128 [printed]; SP 52/31 no. 25 – 6th February 1583, Davison to Walsingham; SP 52/31 no. 57 – 12th March 1583, Killigrew to Davison.
[21] On the wardship of Trelawny, see also SP 12/155 f. 178 [printed] – 18th November 1582, Katherine Killigrew to Burghley.
[22] SP 52/31 no. 57 – 12th March 1583, Killigrew to Davison.

Davison's patron, and instead became his friend. Of course, it is possible that the pair had also been friendly during their earlier missions together, characterised by Ciceronian intellectual equality between men of different ranks, but this is impossible to determine for certain due to the lack of extant sources.

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Although Davison was kept fully informed on the situation in the Low Countries after his departure in 1579, he was not to return until 1584. Elizabeth did not send another official English agent until 1582, probably because, once Alençon became involved, she wanted to keep out of the conflict and leave the Dutch to find another leader. She did consider sending Davison to Orange in July 1580, because, at this time, the States-General seemed to be seriously considering accepting Alençon as their new sovereign, which they did in September 1580 with the Treaty of Plessis-les-Tours. However, aside from Walsingham's initial letter informing Davison that 'hir majestie having present occasion to send one to the Prince of Aurange and myndyng to use you hathe willed me to send for you forthwith to come hither where you shall receave further direction', there are no further references to a mission at this time.[23] Consequently, Simon Adams asserts that Elizabeth must 'have changed her mind'.[24]

Having said this, there is another possibility – a secret mission. After all, Davison had been sent on a secret mission to Orange in February 1577, which had no official instructions, and is known only from a handful of references in others' correspondence.[25] Moreover, his colleague Thomas Wilkes was sent on a similarly secretive mission in June 1582 – there is only one known reference to this mission, and Wilkes never mentioned it in his own writings.[26]

[23] SP 83/13 no. 38 – 10th July 1580, Walsingham to Davison.
[24] Adams, 'Davison', p. 6.
[25] See Ch. 1.
[26] F. Jeffrey Platt, 'Sir Thomas Wilkes: A Study in Elizabethan Diplomacy, Government and Patronage' (Michigan State University: unpublished doctoral thesis, 1972), p. 78; Gary M. Bell, *A Handlist of British Diplomatic Representatives, 1509-1688* (London: Royal Historical Society, 1990), p. 188; G. Groen van Prinsterer

Thus, it is possible that Davison actually did go on a brief secret mission. Whatever the truth of the matter, though, there was still an interval of several years, from either May 1579 or June 1580 until October 1584, in which Davison was not deployed in the Low Countries.

The possibility of a secret mission aside, the first official English ambassador sent to the Low Countries after Davison's resident mission was Fulke Greville in April 1582, followed by Wilkes' secret mission in June.[27] The next, and slightly lengthier, missions were undertaken by Edward Darcy and John Somers, both in early 1583. It would not have been possible for Davison to do these, as he was in Scotland from December 1582 to April 1583. However, he was considered for the next mission, as in January 1584, Leicester wrote to Davison regarding the birth of the Prince of Orange's son, and remarked 'I perceave the want of your health hath kept you here'.[28] Due to Davison's poor health, Leicester hoped either that Philip Sidney would 'supply my plaice', or else 'I have appointed this gentellman Master dyer who ys my very frend to do the same'. It was indeed Edward Dyer who was charged with this mission, on official Crown business as well as Leicester's, and he departed England in late January.[29] If Davison's health problems had scuppered this mission, it is possible that they had done so before, so perhaps this was the reason why he had not been sent in 1582. Nevertheless, his health was clearly not judged so serious that overland travel to Scotland was out of the question.

(ed.), *Archives ou Correspondance Inédite de la Maison d'Orange Nassau*, first series, vol. 8 (Leiden: S. and J. Luchtmans, 1847), pp. 105-111.

[27] Bell, *Handlist*, p. 188.

[28] SP 83/21 no. 110 – [January] 1584, Leicester to Davison. The calendar is *CSPF Vol. 18*, item 643, pp. 529-30. This letter has been labelled in the calendar as 'May?', with the comment: 'A pencil endorsement shows that this letter has been placed among the Holland papers of this date as possibly relating to the baptism of the Prince of Orange's child, but this is very doubtful.' There is no explanation as to why this is doubtful, and it actually seems likely to be accurate. Prince Frederick Henry was born in January 1584, and Edward Dyer departed for the Low Countries the same month (Bell, *Handlist*, p. 188), all of which suggests that this letter was indeed referring to the baptism, and that the letter would therefore date from January rather than May 1584.

[29] SP 83/21 no. 18 – 1st February 1584, Fremyn to Walsingham. On Dyer's mission, see also SP 83/21 no. 31 – 22nd February 1584, Orange to the Queen; Cotton MS Galba C/VII f. 265 – 21st February 1584, Orange's answers to Dyer.

Alternatively, as the 1582 missions were both so brief, Elizabeth may have judged that they could be undertaken by someone without Davison's particular expertise.

Davison maintained his network of correspondents and informants throughout his absence from the Low Countries, and continued to be fully informed about the political developments. Key among these correspondents were, of course, his pro-Dutch patrons Walsingham and Leicester, as well as Killigrew and Randolph. For instance, it was Randolph who wrote to Davison informing him about the 'French Fury' in Antwerp in January 1583, and the death of Alençon in June 1584.[30] The following year, Davison received the news of Orange's death from Leicester, and Walsingham forwarded a report including the confession of the assassin, Balthasar Gerard, as he knew 'that it will stand you greatly in stead, to under stand what hath ensued in the low Cuntryes since the late mischevous act don uppon the person of the Prince of Orange'.[31] This seems to suggest that Walsingham knew that Davison would soon be sent back. As for eyes on the ground, Davison maintained correspondences with several of his Dutch contacts for at least a year or two after his return home: multiple letters survive from Monsieur Villiers, Orange's advisor; Antoine Gosson de Wavrin; and one C. Fremyn, an agent with the rebel army.[32] Considering how well informed Davison and his colleagues were, it is likely that there were many more letters which have not survived.

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After several years at home, Davison's diplomatic career finally resumed in December 1582 with a mission to Scotland. Since 1579, James VI – then aged only thirteen – had become close with his Catholic cousin, Esmé Stuart, seigneur d'Aubigny, who he created Earl of

[30] SP 12/158 f. 58 – 29th January 1583; SP 52/35 no. 9 – 10th June 1584. Both Randolph to Davison.
[31] SP 52/35 no. 42 – 5th July 1584, Leicester to Davison; SP 83/22 f. 83 – 12th July 1584, Walsingham to Davison.
[32] Various letters in SP 83/12, 13 and 14.

Lennox in 1580.[33] Several of the protestant Scottish lords were unhappy with Lennox's influence on the young king, and, by summer 1582, rumours were circulating that Lennox was scheming with Philip II to free Mary, Queen of Scots and put her on Elizabeth's throne. Consequently, in August, a group of presbyterian Scottish nobles led by William Ruthven, Earl of Gowrie, seized James whilst he was out hunting. After trying and failing to rescue the King, another of James' allies, the Earl of Arran, was imprisoned, and Lennox was forced to leave the country. James was kept under the control of the Ruthven lords for the next ten months, during which time the new government implemented a puritan regime and curbed Crown spending. Elizabeth was in favour of the new regime, whilst Henry III of France, unsurprisingly, was not. In November 1582, Henry sent the ambassador La Mothe-Fénelon to negotiate a reconciliation and help Lennox to return to France. However, the English government believed that La Mothe-Fénelon's real task was to restore French influence over James.[34] In mid-December, it was decided that Davison would escort La Mothe-Fénelon to Scotland.[35] This mission would ultimately be brief and unsuccessful, though through no fault of Davison's own.

However, both Killigrew and Randolph were considerably more experienced in Scotland, so why was Davison chosen for this mission over them? At this time, Killigrew was occupied with pursuing a suit of some kind, and was dealing with family business regarding

[33] On James' relationship with Lennox and Arran, see Steven J. Reid, *The Early Life of James VI: A Long Apprenticeship, 1566-1585* (Edinburgh: John Donald, 2023), Ch. 6. On the Ruthven raid, see Ch. 7, and its aftermath, Chs. 8 and 9. On Davison's involvement, see Adams, 'Davison', p. 7. See also Sharon Adams, 'Ruthven, William, fourth Lord Ruthven and first earl of Gowrie (c. 1543–1584), magnate and politician', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford University Press, 2006 (2004)) <https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/24375> , pp. 3-4; Rosalind K. Marshall, 'Stewart, James, earl of Arran (c. 1545–1596), courtier and administrator', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford University Press, 2006 (2004)) <https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/26481> , p. 2.

[34] Adams, 'Davison', p. 6.

[35] SP 52/30/72 – 12th December 1582; no. 73a – 14th December 1582. Both Walsingham to Davison. Cotton MS Caligula C/IX f. 43 – December 1582, instructions for Davison; Harley MS 291 f. 40 – 15th December 1582, the Queen to James.

the wardship of Jonathan.[36] However, personal business did not usually preclude men from being sent on missions. The reason for Randolph's exclusion is more clear – his previous mission in 1581, to stop the execution of Regent Morton, had been widely regarded as a failure by both Englishmen and Scots alike, and even by summer 1584, it was reported that 'Scottishmen… all have better lyking of [Davison] for your modesty and wisdom, then of Master R[andolph] for his boldnes'.[37]

Lennox was currently travelling south en route to France, so, in order to prevent an encounter on the road, in which they might conspire, La Mothe-Fénelon and Davison were delayed in London until 22nd December.[38] Despite everyone's best efforts, Lennox and La Mothe-Fénelon accidentally met on the road on 27th December. Davison tried to eavesdrop on their conversation, but could not hear much due to 'the greatnes of the wynd & his soft delivery'.[39] Davison and La Mothe-Fénelon reached Berwick by 3rd January, and then Edinburgh on the 5th, where they joined with the English ambassador already present, Robert Bowes.[40] There are no extant letters from Davison between 3rd January and 6th February, so it is difficult to track their progress. Davison hoped to return south with La Mothe-Fénelon at the beginning of February, but was refused, due to the recent arrival of a second French ambassador, François de Roncherolles, sieur de Maineville.[41] Davison and Bowes suspected that La Mothe-Fénelon and Maineville sought to control James, probably through a French marriage, and rumours spread that La Mothe-Fénelon was encouraging James to accept Mary

[36] SP 12/155 f. 178 [printed] – 18th November 1582, Katherine Killigrew to Burghley; SP 52/31/57 – 12th March 1583, Killigrew to Davison.
[37] Julian Lock, 'Randolph, Thomas (1525/6–1590), diplomat', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford University Press, 2008 (2004)) <https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/23122>, p. 7; SP 52/34 no. 49 – 5th May 1584, John Butterweke to Davison.
[38] SP 12/156 f. 36 [printed] – 19th December 1582, Burghley to Walsingham.
[39] Cotton MS Caligula C/VII f. 106 – 1st January 1583, Davison to Walsingham; SP 52/31/5 – 3rd January 1583, Davison to Burghley.
[40] SP 52/31/5 – 3rd January 1583, Davison to Burghley; SP 52/31/7 – 5th January 1583, Alexander Hume to Davison.
[41] SP 52/31/25 – 6th February 1583, Davison to Walsingham; Cotton MS Caligula C/VII f. 126 – 7th February 1583, Bowes and Davison to Walsingham; SP 52/31/28 – 6th February 1583, Walsingham to Bowes and Davison.

back into his government.[42] Yet whilst Davison, Bowes and Walsingham all remained wary of the French, Elizabeth was notably less so, and Walsingham 'feare[ed] her Majestie shall learne by dangerous effectes to see the error of her owne judgement'.[43]

There was little change in the situation with the French ambassadors for the rest of the month, so, by the 20th February, Elizabeth had decided that whilst Bowes would remain with Maineville, Davison could return.[44] However, she quickly changed her mind, instead instructing Davison wait and accompany Maineville on his return.[45] Davison was becoming impatient, looking 'by every post of late… for my revocacion fynding no great cause for my particuler stay here to thencrease of her majesties charge and some incommodity to my self'.[46] He insisted that his stay was wholly unnecessary, as 'Master Bowes his experience & acquaintance with the affaires of this state enhabl[ed] him sufficiently alone to go thorough any service to be done here', words which, interestingly, echoed those used by Killigrew back in 1575, when he requested that Davison remain in Scotland in his stead.[47] Though partially self-interested, as Davison wanted to secure his own leave, his opinion of Bowes did appear to be genuine, as he later 'acquainted' Walsingham and Elizabeth, upon his return, with Bowes' 'wise and discreat manner of proceading in that service'.[48] The feeling was evidently mutual, as Bowes sent to Walsingham glowing praise of their mutual colleague, 'who in his late service here gave such good testymony of his approved sufficiencie wisdome and dilligence, as highlie advanced her Majesties service, profyted my selfe, and obtained at the Kinges handes & all other good men singuler good opynion & credite hereafter serve as a moste apte instrument &

[42] Cotton MS Caligula C/VII f. 137 – 18th February 1583, Bowes and Davison to Walsingham; Harley MS 291 f. 44– 29th January 1583, the Queen to Bowes and Davison; Cotton MS Caligula C/VII f. 126 – 7th February 1583, Bowes and Davison to Walsingham.
[43] SP 52/31/45 - [Feb. 27] 1583, Walsingham to Bowes.
[44] SP 52/31/36 – 20th February 1583, Walsingham to Bowes.
[45] SP 52/31/45 – 27th February 1583, Walsingham to Bowes.
[46] SP 52/31/50 – 4th March 1583, Davison to Walsingham.
[47] SP 52/26/2 f. 195 – 17th August 1575, Killigrew to Leicester.
[48] SP 52/31/99 – 16th April 1583, Walsingham to Bowes.

minister to be imployed for her Majestie in these affaires, and thereby be founde worthie to be comforted & incouraged by her Majestie'.[49] Thus, although Davison was by now much more familiar with the Low Countries, he remained versatile, and his performance in Scotland was just as commendable.

Davison's eagerness for his recall was perhaps linked to his ongoing suit for preferment. He had originally started suing for offices in early 1578, and had been granted the reversion of custos brevium of the Court of Queen's Bench in January 1579. This progress did not satisfy him for long, as, in late 1582, Davison resumed his petitioning once again. This may have been for the lease of a fee farm, as, at an unknown date, he owned the lease to Pomfret Park near Pontefract, which he later sold to the Earl of Shrewsbury.[50] In late 1582, Davison was assisted in his suit by Randolph, who, shortly after Davison's departure for Scotland, reported that 'I have studied since you went for your preferment'.[51] As usual, the support of senior patrons was also needed, so Davison wrote to both Burghley and Walsingham requesting help in 'my poore sute'.[52] However, no decisions were made on his suit at this time.

Davison's recall was finally granted on 14th March, and, after awaiting James' answers to Elizabeth in writing, he departed at the end of the month.[53] All in all, it had not been a particularly significant mission, and, considering that he sought his recall only four weeks after his arrival, it seemed that Davison himself thought it to be a somewhat pointless exercise. This mission therefore essentially served as a scene-setting for his weightier Scottish mission, in summer 1584.

[49] Cotton MS Caligula C/VII f. 193 – 6th April 1583, Bowes to Walsingham.
[50] CP 65/81 – 20th November 1598, Earl of Shrewsbury to Robert Cecil.
[51] SP 52/30 [inconsistent foliation, labelled 94, last item in volume] – 31st December 1582, Randolph to Davison.
[52] SP 52/31 no. 5 – 3rd January 1583, Davison to Burghley. Similar in SP 52/31 no. 26 – 6th February 1583, Davison to Walsingham.
[53] SP 52/31 no. 60 – 14th March 1583, Walsingham to Davison; Cotton MS Caligula C/VII f. 180 – 28th March 1583, Bowes to Walsingham; SP 52/31/79 – 29th March 1583, Davison to Walsingham; SP 52/31 no. 99 – 16th April 1583, Walsingham to Bowes.

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Aside from being considered for the January 1584 mission to the Low Countries, there is little evidence for Davison's activities in the interim between his two Scottish missions. We therefore take up his story again in April 1584. This mission is particularly important for understanding Davison's relationship with Walsingham, as the pair worked very closely together, to the exclusion of other ministers and patrons. Only a few months after Davison's departure the previous year, James escaped from the custody of the Ruthven lords in June 1583, and was joined by his ally the Earl of Arran.[54] This spelled problems for Elizabeth's government, as they had had good relations with the protestant Ruthven regime, but were suspicious of Arran. Walsingham then undertook a mission to Scotland himself in September 1583, during which he refused to deal with anyone but James. Consequently, the mission was 'brief and disastrous', and compounded the poor relations with James and Arran.[55] At the same time, plans were proposed for Henry Carey, Lord Hunsdon – Elizabeth's cousin, warden of the east marches and the Privy Council's resident expert on Scotland – to negotiate directly with Arran, to develop an Anglo-Scottish alliance without 'undermining' his power.[56] This became known as the 'by-course'.

In a last-ditch attempt to regain power, the Ruthven lords then seized Stirling Castle on 17th April. According to Conyers Read, Walsingham, along with Robert Bowes, had likely 'done everything in [their] power to forward this enterprise', as they supported the overthrow of Arran.[57] Since Davison had already dealt with the aftermath of the Ruthven raid, Elizabeth decided that he would now be sent back as a mediator. However, within a few days, the lords were forced to abandon the castle and flee to England. Gowrie had already been arrested on

[54] On the following summary, see the works cited at p. 160 n. 517.
[55] Coates, 'Faction, Rhetoric, and Ideology', p. 495.
[56] Coates, 'Faction, Rhetoric, and Ideology', p. 495.
[57] Read, *Walsingham*, Vol. 2, p. 226.

15th April, and was eventually executed in May. James and his allies ordered the surrender of Edinburgh Castle, which had been complicit in the Ruthven regime, but its captain, Alexander Erskine, the master of Mar, wanted to hold out for the return of the exiled lords.[58] James also demanded that Elizabeth send the exiled lords back into Scotland.

Davison was dispatched at the end of April. Officially, he was to act as a mediator between James and the exiled lords, but Elizabeth also granted Davison £2,000 to distribute among the exiles, to essentially buy their loyalty to the English crown.[59] However, after hearing of the 'harde case the well affected lords there stand in', Walsingham thought it better for Davison to bide his time a little longer before entering Scotland, and instructed him to tarry at Berwick.[60] It was during this delay that we can see the first hint of Davison's counsel on Scottish affairs. Just as in the Low Countries, Davison evidently believed the provision of counsel to be an integral part of his role, so he advised Elizabeth to give the exiled lords 'what favour and countenance in honour she might'.[61] He framed this report as part of his loyal service, explaining that he thought it his 'duty to say' that the exiled lords should 'rather be pitied than conetemned', and listed three numbered reasons in support of his argument. The second is perhaps the most notable, as Davison used the language of emergency familiar from his Low Countries dispatches, arguing that 'the action wherin [the lords] are embarqued tendeth only to the Kinges preservation the surety of religion & quiett of both Countryes'. Though much briefer than his set piece discourses, at only a page long, this dispatch nevertheless showed that Davison was still motivated by his commitment to the protestant cause, just as he had been in the Low Countries, and remained determined to supply counsel.

[58] SP 52/34 no. 60 – 11th May 1584, Davison to Walsingham.
[59] Cotton MS Caligula C/IX f. 127 – 30th April 1584, Davison's instructions; Harley MS 286 f. 48 – 25th April 1584, instructions for Davison 'for the imployment of the 2000 l. committed unto Sir John Foster's custodye'; SP 59/22 f. 192 – 26th April 1584, Burghley and Walsingham to John Forster.
[60] SP 52/34 no. 39 – 29th April 1584, Walsingham to Davison; SP 52/34 no. 43 – 4th May 1584, Walsingham to Davison; SP 52/34 no. 44 – 4th May 1584, Davison to Burghley.
[61] SP 52/34 no. 51 – 6th May 1584, Davison to Walsingham.

Whilst Davison waited in Berwick, Elizabeth then agreed to the request of the French ambassador, Michel de Castelnau, sieur de la Mauvissière, to travel to Scotland to aid in the mediation.[62] Castelnau was to be accompanied by an agent of the Queen of Scots, since she 'pretendeth to have great credit with [James] and that he will altogether be ruled and advised by her in his actions'.[63] In the meantime, Elizabeth was less supportive of the exiled lords than Davison and Walsingham had hoped, as she instructed that Erskine, the captain of Edinburgh Castle, must not hold out for the exiled lords, and that they must surrender to James if parliament demanded it.[64] In her opinion, the rebels were now 'so dyscoraged as ther is no hope to relieave the sayd Constable... The only waye for the releefe of there dystressed case (as her Majestye conceyvathe) is medyatyon', to which end Elizabeth would send 'certeyn espetyall comyssyoners' to join Davison. Walsingham made it clear that 'this I wryte by her Majestyes order', and that he, like Davison, supported Erskine and the lords, and hoped that Davison would 'accompagnye this resolutyon (which to them may seame harde) with as many arguments of compforte as you may'.

However, Elizabeth did refuse to send the exiles back into Scotland, and sent this answer to Davison, to convey to James, on 20th May.[65] In Walsingham's accompanying letter, Davison was tasked with using his 'owne discrecion to add such further reasons and arguments unto hers as you shall thincke maie be pertinently delyvered for the purpos', since he was so 'well and particularlie acquainted with the coorse and circumstaunces of thes affaires'.[66] She therefore recognised that his previous experience, and presence on the ground, would make his arguments even more convincing to James. She also evidently trusted in his decision-making

[62] SP 52/34 no. 59 – 10th May 1584, Walsingham to Davison.
[63] SP 52/34 no. 59.
[64] SP 52/34 no. 70 – 15th May 1584, Walsingham to Davison.
[65] SP 52/34 no. 72 – [20th May] 1584, Elizabeth to James.
[66] SP 52/34 no. 77 – 20th May 1584, Walsingham to Davison.

skills, hence the permission to use his own discretion, albeit only to support, and not alter, her instructions.

In the same letter, Walsingham also reported that Mary was now refusing to take part in the planned mediation, unless Elizabeth agreed to her release. He lamented, 'I do not see what meanes her majesty can use to procure their releefe, but feare greatly they wilbe left to seeke ther owne peace, which cannot but breade to us a warre'.[67] In his own hand, squeezed between the lines already written by the scribe, Walsingham then added 'this I praye you reserve to your selfe for that we maye alter owre purpose'. This seemed to suggest that he intended to alter the Queen's policy of mediation, but in what way it was not yet clear. For the pair to try to sway Elizabeth's policy was certainly not new, as they had both always sought to convince her towards intervention in the Low Countries, but asking Davison to keep these intentions secret certainly added an extra conspiratorial touch.

Davison was equally conspiratorial, and asked Walsingham for a secret favour regarding his letters. Davison warned him that Archibald Douglas, the Scottish ambassador to England, was still in the service of Mary, Queen of Scots – this was 'well knowen' in the Scottish court, 'whatsoever he pretends in others'.[68] Therefore, Davison requested that Walsingham 'give that caution to others whome happely he might creepe or circumvent', and asked that 'that my letters or ther contentes generall or speciall may by no meanes come to his view or knowledge'. In order to keep security tight, Davison also requested permission to write only to Walsingham: 'And so for the same cause also could I wish that I wer restrayned by her Majesties speciall commandement from writing to any but your self… not somuch in respect of any ease to my self as for the surety of her Majesties service as my honnorable frendes in Court may be so

[67] SP 52/34 no. 77 – 20th May 1584, Walsingham to Davison.
[68] Cotton MS Caligula C/VIII f. 52 – 23rd May 1584, Davison to Walsingham.

satisfied and contended'. This even included Leicester, to 'whom I must beseech your honour to make my speciall excuse'.

This decision was extraordinary. Despite his careful wording, Davison was essentially saying that he could trust no-one but Walsingham, and that any others, including Leicester, might either take the side of Douglas or let information slip by accident. Though Davison had positive working relationships with his other patrons, when the chips were down, he knew that he could only truly rely on Walsingham. However, Davison was not yet trying to take matters into his own hands, as he was careful to ask for 'her Majesties speciall commandement'. Though Walsingham was firmly on the side of the exiled lords, he was nevertheless bound by his responsibility as principal secretary to share Davison's reports out of Scotland, for the process of counsel and policy-making, and therefore explained that 'yt is harde to parforme considering the contraryetye of humors reygning in the partyes that for advyce sak are to be made acquynted with the proceadinges here'.[69] Although he agreed to 'have care (that according to your request) sooche letters as conteyne matters woorthye of secrecye shall be used accordingly', he could not sanction Davison's other request. So, whilst the pair were frank and rebellious when writing to each other, this did not yet go beyond words.

Whilst working closely together on diplomatic matters, Walsingham also continued to work for Davison's suit. Randolph and Killigrew had both been pushing Davison's case, but, as Randolph reported, 'we all do pyttie your case but have no meanes to do you good'.[70] As the senior patron, Davison's hopes instead lay with Walsingham. In mid-May, Walsingham had 'movid her majesty touching your suite, whom in generall I fynd verye gratyously disposid towardes you but yet can in particular drawe no resolut answer from hir in the matter'.[71] Henry

[69] SP 52/35 no. 3 – 3rd June 1584, Walsingham to Davison.
[70] SP 52/34 no. 63 – 13th May 1584, Randolph to Davison.
[71] SP 52/34 f. 69 – 15th May 1584; SP 52/34 f. 77 – 20th May 1584. Both Walsingham to Davison.

Cobham had recently had his lease decreased, from an initial offer of a fee farm worth £100, to a lease worth 100 marks for forty years. So, in order to avoid such a low offering, Walsingham advised Davison to write directly to the Queen, 'laying before her the necessity of your decayed estate'.[72] The situation certainly seemed dire, as he advised Davison to explain that he would not have been able to 'set fourth from London, yf I had not put your creditors in hope… that her majesty would releave and make you hable to satisfye them'.[73] The impoverished suitor, particularly the impoverished diplomat, was, of course, a common trope deployed in order to achieve the desired suit.[74] However, Walsingham's own personal intervention with his creditors suggests that Davison's troubles may have been genuine.

Upon receipt of this advice, Davison immediately penned a letter explaining his financial situation, ostensibly intended for Walsingham, but really for the Queen's eyes.[75] Though his tone was, at first glance, stereotypically cliental, Davison nevertheless made it clear that Elizabeth was responsible for his debts, as 'before my last Journey into flaunders was not to be chargid with a debt of x li in the whole world'. Following his resident mission, Davison's debt was now a 'consumyng canker… which eateth me to the bones', and even selling a 'house in London' for £800, plus 'my plate and divers other thinges admounting to asmuch more', had not resolved his problems. He had always been 'studious & carefull… [to] discharge my duty towardes her without respect of myne owne estate', but now, 'after fyve yeeres contynuall Sute in a cause so honest and favorable', he was at his wits' end. Davison's creditors were already calling on £200 to be repaid immediately, for which he sent Walsingham his bond and 'such further caution as I can presently make'. Though he professed himself 'both greavid & ashamed that after [being] so longe apprentished in her Majesties service I am dryven to be burthensome

[72] SP 52/34 no. 77.
[73] SP 52/34 no. 77.
[74] Gary M. Bell, 'Sir Thomas Chaloner's Diplomatic Expenses in Spain', *Bulletin of the Institute of Historical Research*, 53(127) (1980), 118-124, p. 122.
[75] SP 52/34 no. 87 – 26th May 1584, Davison to Walsingham.

to others', such a statement also laid the blame squarely at Elizabeth's feet, as why would she not have already repaid such a loyal servant? Clearly, he believed that after such long and dedicated service, financial compensation was not a bonus, but was his right. In closing, Davison added a thinly veiled threat, lamenting that if he remained 'clogged with my particular cares', this may be a 'hinderaunce to my publique charge' in Scotland; so, if Walsingham could procure 'her Majesties tymely & gracious dispatch of my poore cause' then 'I may do her that service I shalbe able with the more freedome & comfort'.[76] To take such a bold stance was a risk, but one entirely in keeping with Davison's usual confidence.

Thankfully for Davison, his letter seemed to strike the right balance, as it wrought satisfactory results. Having been shown the letter by Walsingham, Elizabeth 'greatly comendede you and thought you a man worthye the cherishinge', and in early June decided to grant him a lease of £80 per year, probably for Pomfret Park, as soon as Burghley returned to court to arrange it.[77] Davison was also now involved in talks about the lease of Quernmore Park in Lancaster, and Leicester had requested that 'ether you wyll lett me have yt or ells for forbear to take yt'.[78] The matter of the first lease was officially resolved in mid-August, when Elizabeth decided upon a lease of fifty years.[79] She also promised that 'when any offyce shall fawlle fyt for your caulyng she wyll not be unmindefull of you'. Considering Davison's repeated petitions through friends, it cannot be said that Elizabeth reacted to his necessity particularly quickly, but once she received his direct, personal petition (albeit addressed to Walsingham), she did take swift action. It therefore seems that Elizabeth did respect Davison and valued his repeated service, especially since she did indeed remain 'mindful' of him,

[76] SP 52/34 no. 87.
[77] SP 52/35 no. 3 – 3rd June 1584, Walsingham to Davison.
[78] SP 52/35 no. 42 – 5th July 1584, Leicester to Davison.
[79] SP 52/35 no. 15 – 22nd June 1584, Walsingham to Davison; no. 29 – 1st July 1584, Walsingham to Davison; no. 42 – 5th July 1584, Leicester to Davison; no. 62 – 29th July 1584, Walsingham to Davison; SP 52/36 no. 15 – 13th August 1584, Walsingham to Davison.

elevating him to the secretaryship two years later. The matter of Quernmore Park was then resolved the following year, when Leicester agreed to pay Davison 'two hundred poundes for fyvetye yeares'.[80]

Meanwhile, progress in Scotland was significantly less positive, as, much to Davison's dismay, James and his government had begun reforming the Kirk, undoing the changes made during the presbyterian Ruthven regime. The Scottish parliament had initially been tasked with making arrangements for the fugitive lords to forfeit their lands and titles, but the more major business was suppressing presbyertianism and reinstating the power of the bishops.[81] In retaliation, on 24th May, the ministers of Edinburgh, 'by authoritie of the scriptures freelie impugned whatsoever was in this said parliament concluded contrarie to that worde', and afterwards fled the city.[82] The ministers Walter Balcanquhall and James Lowson travelled to Berwick followed by 'dyvers of the gard… to take and apprehende them', whilst others remained in Edinburgh under arrest or surveillance.

The following day, Davison sent an advisory discourse to Walsingham, in which he expressed his frank opinions on the reforms. In Davison's eyes, 'this first breach… doth give entry to an utter overthrow & subversion of the whole' – that is, of the protestant Kirk of Scotland.[83] It seemed obvious that the Catholic Mary was behind this latest attack on presbyterianism: 'it seemes an Axiome necessarily gatherid that the Queen his mother sitteth at the sterne of that governement though elsewheare in person & disposeth of him self & his estat as she listeth'. Consequently, both the protestant faith and Elizabeth's life were at risk, and Davison counselled that 'we be not rockt a sleepe by the bare woordes & faithles protestacions of such as have made shipwreck of faith'. Such a concern was, of course, entirely

[80] SP 84/1 no. 53 – February 1585, Leicester to Davison; no. 92 – 3rd April 1585, Davison to Leicester.
[81] SP 52/34 no. 83 – 23rd May 1584, Davison to Walsingham.
[82] SP 52/34 no. 88 – 27th May 1584, Davison to Walsingham.
[83] SP 52/34 no. 90 – 28th May 1584, Davison to Walsingham.

consistent with his established political creed – the safety of England and Elizabeth were inseparable from the success of the protestant cause.[84]

On 29th May, Davison finally received his safe conduct to enter Scotland, and decided to depart for Edinbugh the following day.[85] He was instructed to inform James that Elizabeth would not return the exiled nobles, as she believed them to be 'free from all disloyall and ill meaning touching his own persone'[86] Just a few days later, Elizabeth decided that she would also send Hunsdon to negotiate directly with Arran, for the return of the lords and to improve Anglo-Scottish relations; unfortunately for Davison, this did not mean his revocation was coming, as he was also instructed to stay put.[87] Walsingham was affronted by this decision, and reassured Davison that he would 'procure your revocatyon as soone as I can for I am voyde of all hope of any good to followe of your travayle there'.[88]

Davison eventually had audience with James in Falkland on 8th June.[89] He explained that Elizabeth would not return the lords back, since she believed that they had 'alwaies carryed them selves honorablie and dewtifullie towardes' James, and also vehemently defended Elizabeth against accusations that she had been involved in a 'conspiracie for the takinge awaie of the lief bothe of his majestie and his mother'.[90] James was not satisfied, and upon Davison's return to Edinburgh he was kept under surveillance.[91] Consequently, Davison 'doubte[d] not what good I shalbe able to effectt here', and again asked for his recall.[92] As well as this report,

[84] The ministers continued to write to Davison throughout the summer: SP 52/35 no. 35 – 9th July 1584, Lowson and Balcanquall to Davison; SP 52/35 no. 50 – 6th July 1584, J. Carmichael to Davison; SP 52/36 no. 45 – 24th August 1584, J. Carmichael to Davison.
[85] SP 52/34 no. 93 – 29th May 1584, Davison to Walsingham.
[86] SP 52/34 no. 79 – May 1584, instructions for Davison; SP 52/34 no. 79 – May 1584, instructions for Davison.
[87] SP 52/35 no. 1 – 2nd June 1584, Walsingham to Davison; Wallace T. MacCaffrey, 'Carey, Henry, first Baron Hunsdon (1526–1596), courtier and administrator', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford University Press, 2014 (2004)) <https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/4649>, p. 6.
[88] SP 52/35 no. 3.
[89] SP 52/35 no. 6 – 10th June 1584, Davison to Walsingham.
[90] SP 52/35 no. 6 – 10th June 1584, Davison to Walsingham.
[91] SP 52/35 no. 6 – 10th June 1584, Davison to Walsingham. On the surveillance, see also SP 52/35 no. 18 – 23rd June 1584, Davison to Burghley.
[92] SP 52/35 no. 6.

Davison also sent another conciliar discourse to Walsingham, setting out at greater length 'what reasons I have to judge this King and Courte to be guided and governed at the appatite of his mother'.[93] It seemed apparent to Davison that the changes in religious policy, the exile of the pro-English lords, and siege of Edinburgh Castle, were all due to the influence of his mother, and the 'ill ministers' surrounding him. He therefore advised Elizabeth to prevent Mary from corresponding with James and the exiled lords, and to offer her 'favour and comfort' to those who 'fear[ed] and hat[ed] extreamely the presente governement'. These letters probably arrived at court before the 17th, as on that date, Walsingham reported back to Davison that 'your manner of proceading thereof is verry well allowed of here, bothe by her majestye, and others'.[94] However, he did not mention whether Elizabeth had approved of his counsel, or decided what action to take.

In the meantime, the situation with Edinburgh Castle was becoming ever more urgent, as James and his supporters were still pressing to take charge.[95] Back in May, Elizabeth had already ordered that the castle should be surrendered to James, but Davison remained desperate for Elizabeth to offer her support to the captain of the castle, Alexander Erskine, as 'the yealding up of this peace importeth the reliefe or ruine of the whole cause'.[96] Davison appeared to be closely involved in Erskine's plans, as he repeatedly asked for a cipher, and refused 'to wade farre in the particulars' until he had received one. Walsingham must have already been on the case, as just a few days later, Davison was writing in code, requesting instructions 'touching the matter of 365', which was presumably code for Edinburgh Castle.[97] Walsingham then reported that Davison's letter 'hathe so far foorthe prevayled with her Majestie as her Majestie is now pleased for the furniture of the Castell that ther shoold be delyvered for the

[93] SP 52/35/7 – 10th June 1584, Davison to Walsingham.
[94] SP 52/35 no. 14 – 17th June 1584, Walsingham to Davison.
[95] SP 52/35 no. 37 – [4th] July 1584, Davison to Walsingham.
[96] SP 52/35 no. 37 – [4th] July 1584, Davison to Walsingham.
[97] SP 52/35 no. 44 – 6th July 1584, Davison to Walsingham.

provision of victualls unto Alexander Erskine or to any other parson that you shall thinke meet 200 li yf a less somme may not serve'.[98] This was quite the about turn from Elizabeth's previous position – by now, she had 'no opinion of any good successe' of Hunsdon's by-course, and so therefore viewed Davison's idea as the most viable option.[99] He finally received the money before the 27th, but remained anxious about the whole affair.[100]

By now, Hunsdon had arrived at Berwick and set about arranging his meeting with Arran.[101] Walsingham was also not optimistic about his chances of success, claiming that he would not have been sent were it not for the support of Burghley.[102] As chief minister and principal secretary, Burghley and Walsingham ought to have been working in concert for the improvement of Anglo-Scottish relations, but it is clear that their approaches differed greatly. Like Davison, Walsingham preferred more active intervention, and he criticised Burghley, who 'hathe alwayes lyked to interteyne bycoorses which growethe from lacke of resolutyon in him which I praye god may not prove the destructyon of England'.[103] He attritubuted Burghley's support to his concerns about the succession, writing cryptically that 'the Lord Treasurer… dealethe strayngely in the actyon of Scotland I fynde that men begyn to looke to the sonne rysyng and therfore yt wyll behove her Majestye to make muche of faythfull servaunts'. The accusation that Burghley was looking to James is shocking, but, from Walsingham's perspective, perhaps reasonable – after all, it was only recently that he had been making plans for an interregnum and the Act for the Queen's Surety.[104]

[98] SP 52/35 no. 54 – 12th July 1584, Davison to Walsingham. Contemporary deciphering on the letter, probably by Davison's secretary.
[99] SP 52/35 no. 54.
[100] Cotton MS Caligula C/VIII f. 95 – 27th July 1584, Davison to Walsingham.
[101] SP 52/35 no. 58 – 23rd July 1584; no. 61 – 28th July 1584. Both Hunsdon to Davison
[102] SP 52/35 no. 54 – 12th July 1584, Walsingham to Davison.
[103] SP 52/35 no. 55 - 12th July 1584, Walsingham to Davison (draft). See also Read, *Walsingham*, Vol. 2, p. 231.
[104] Patrick Collinson, 'The Monarchical Republic of Elizabeth I', in his *Elizabethan Essays* (London: The Hambledon Press, 1994 (1986)), pp. 31-58, at pp. 48-55.

Unfortunately for Walsingham and Davison, James' new regime was quickly gaining ground. After a new conspiracy headed by the exiled lords was uncovered at the beginning of August, James' plans to seize Edinburgh Castle were pushed forward.[105] Since Davison had been involved in encouraging Erskine to hold out against the King, he now wanted to be 'revoked before thinges breake out to any open trouble' so that the English could not be blamed, and 'her highnes be charged as author, and I as instrument of those things [that] may happen here amongst them selves'.[106] He emphasised the effect on her service, arguing that if he became openly involved in the struggle over the castle, it would damage his 'credit', making him 'the unfitter for service in this place herafter'.[107] Moreover, Hunsdon was more than capable of managing the situation alone, 'lying so neare and having the meanes to understand how thinges passe'.[108]

However, Davison was not recalled in time. On 7th August, Arran ordered Erskine to surrender the Castle within twenty-four hours.[109] Despite the protests of his men, Erskine reluctantly agreed, and Arran took possession of the castle the following day.[110] Five days later, so, probably just after receipt of this report, Walsingham reported that Elizabeth refused to recall him, since 'your departure from there at this present… wold confirme some jealousyes they have already conceaved as though you had been a dealer therein under hand', which, of course, he had.[111] Walsingham was still keen to replace Davison soon, though, as he recognised that his reputation in Scotland was now tarnished as 'a man suspected'.[112]

[105] SP 52/36 no. 10 – 4th August 1584, Davison to Walsingham; SP 52/36 no. 12 – 7th August 1584, Hunsdon to Walsingham.
[106] SP 52/36 no. 11 – 4th August 1584, Davison to Walsingham.
[107] SP 52/36 no. 10 – 4th August 1584, Davison to Walsingham.
[108] SP 52/36 no. 10.
[109] SP 52/36 no. 13 – 8th August 1584, Davison to Walsingham.
[110] SP 52/36 no. 31 – 16th August 1584, Davison to Walsingham.
[111] SP 52/36 no. 15 – 13th August 1584, Walsingham to Davison.
[112] SP 52/36 no. 15.

Thankfully, Walsingham had not told any of the other councillors about Davison's support of Edinburgh Castle, since 'the most parte of owre councillors doe inclyne to both the King and his mother' – indeed, he 'never sawe so great dyscontentement as well in Court as else where as presently reygnethe'.[113] He was therefore glad that Davison had 'dealt so warely touching Edinburgh Castle otherwyse Hunsdon woold have made his profyt thereof bothe to yours and my dysgrace'. Yet Davison had been permitted to give money to Erskine by the Queen, so he had not acted improperly. Nevertheless, Hunsdon was now quite clearly leaning more towards Arran than his own colleagues, as Davison reported that he was 'grown into a great opinion of his new acquayntance and reporteth great things in his prayse upon this litle experience'.[114] It was therefore crucial that Davison was removed from the situation 'with all exspadytyon for Hunsdon wyll woorke your dysgrace yf you staye there'.[115] Walsingham also suspected that Leicester had 'hathe somme dealyng under hand' in Scotland, but Leicester 'denyethe yt'.

This long-awaited recall was finally granted on 1st September. In order to avoid suspicion over his involvement in recent events, Davison was instructed to say that this was 'in respect of the necessity of your presence here for your particular busynes'.[116] He departed Edinburgh on the 15th, and, after being home for only a matter of weeks, was dispatched to the Low Countries in November.[117]

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[113] SP 52/36 no. 15.
[114] SP 52/36 no. 44 – 24th August 1584, Davison to Walsingham.
[115] SP 52/36 no. 15 – 13th August 1584, Walsingham to Davison.
[116] SP 52/36 no. 60 – 1st September 1584, Elizabeth to James; no. 62 – 1st September 1584, Walsingham to Davison; no. 66 – 6th September 1584, Davison to Burghley.
[117] SP 52/36 no. 68 – 6th September 1584, Davison to Walsingham; no. 69 – 7th September 1584, Davison to Hunsdon; no. 73 – 14th September 1584, Davison to Catherine Davison; no. 75 – 17th September 1584, Davison to Walsingham; no. 82 – 3rd October 1584, Elizabeth to James.

Much had changed between Davison's first and last Scottish missions. In less than ten years, he had risen from being a junior secretary to a fairly senior ambassador, and his political relationships had transformed. This development highlights the oversimplicity of historiographical categories and boundaries, as, in reality, patronage, clientage, and friendship were fluid and overlapping concepts. For Davison and Killigrew, their shared ideology and familial closeness, coupled with Davison's professional rise, brought about the social, emotional and intellectual equality central to humanist ideas of friendship. Whilst Walsingham and Davison remained professionally unequal, Cicero had believed that it was possible for superiors and inferiors to be friends, as long as the senior party did not 'affect any superiority'.[118] For Bacon, inequality could even be desirable, as it removed any aspect of rivalry or competition. [119] And Walsingham certainly did not affect superiority over Davison, whom he treated as a respected and trusted colleague. That he viewed Davison as an intellectual equal is particularly evident in his criticisms of Burghley, Hunsdon and Leicester, all of whom were far senior to Davison. As per Francis Bacon's definition of friendship, Walsingham and Davison shared their 'Griefes' and 'Feares' over religious developments in Scotland; shared 'Secrets' and worked together privately; shared 'Suspicions' of Burghley and other privy councillors; and gave each other 'Faithfull Counsell'.[120] A patron was, of course, expected to secure his client's preferment, yet his efforts on behalf of Davison's lease were particularly tenacious. Their relationship therefore blurred the line between patronage and friendship, and suggests that these concepts should not be treated so distinctly within Elizabethan historiography.

[118] Cicero and William Armistead Falconer (trans.), *De Senectute. De Amicitia. De Divinatione*, Loeb Classical Library 154 (Harvard: Harvard University Press, 1923), pp. 178-9.
[119] Bacon, *Essayes or Counsels*, p. 287.
[120] Bacon, *Essayes or Counsels*, pp. 151, 155-8.

Their friendship is particularly evident when we compare it with Davison's interactions during this period with his other main patrons, Burghley and Leicester. Relations remained collegial, but, as his request to Walsingham revealed, Davison did not trust either of these patrons with his secret letters, preferring to write only to Walsingham. Although permission to do so was not granted, he still wrote infrequently to both – four letters from Leicester to Davison survive, and only one reply, though in one letter Leicester thanks him for his 'advertysments' so it appears that some replies have been lost.[121] There are only six extant letters from Davison to Burghley during the 1584 mission, all routine news reports as opposed to the discourses he sent to Walsingham, and no replies.[122] The more formal, dutiful nature of his relationship with Burghley is particularly evident in one of these letters, in which he apologised for his 'overlonge silence', in case it 'should prejudge my dewtie & respect towardes your Lordship to whome I am so much and deeply bounde', and wrote now to avoid 'suspend[ing] any longer the remembrance & discharge of my dewtie towardes you'.[123]

Moreover, neither patron was made party to the plans surrounding Edinburgh Castle, which remained secret between Davison, Walsingham and the Queen. Although Burghley helped to arrange Davison's lease, this was only after the ministrations of Walsingham, Randolph, Killigrew, and Davison himself, and neither he nor Leicester appear to have been particularly active in Davison's suits. Indeed, Leicester commended Walsingham's efforts on Davison's behalf, and then actually asked Davison to concede the lease of Quernmore Park to him.[124] When contrasted with Walsingham, then, we can see a clear difference between Davison's working relationships, albeit generally close and productive, and their more personal

[121] SP 52/35 no. 42 – 5th July 1584; no. 64 – 31st July 1584; SP 52/36 no. 7 – 2nd August 1584. All Leicester to Davison. SP 52/36 f.65 – 6th September 1584, Davison to Leicester.
[122] SP 52/34 no. 44 – 4th May 1584; Harley MS 291 f.113 – 8th May 1584; SP 52/35 no. 18 – 23rd June 1584; no. 59 – 27th July 1584; SP 52/36 no. 34 – 18th August 1584; no. 66 – 6th September 1584, and its copy no. 67.
[123] SP 52/36 no. 34.
[124] SP 52/35 no. 42.

relationship. The difference in his relationships with Walsingham and Leicester also reveals that whilst similarity in religion and ideology was certainly a factor in forging a friendship, it was insufficient without trust, honesty and intellectual equality.

Finally, this Scottish mission also highlighted the consistency of Davison's political creed. For Davison, the safety of both Elizabeth and the English commonwealth could only be guaranteed by protestant neighbours, so James' new regime posed a serious threat not only to religion, but also to national safety, just as the potential collapse of the Dutch revolt did. This explains – and in Davison's eyes, justified – his counsel to Elizabeth, his support of the Ruthven lords, and his (initially disobedient) support of Edinburgh Castle. Whatever the geographical setting or political circumstances, then, we can see that Davison's actions were always governed by his commitment to the protestant cause.

Chapter 5: Authority and leadership, 1584-5

By the time Davison returned to the Low Countries in November 1584, the situation was drastically different, with some key changes in personnel. Following Don John's death in 1578, Alexander Farnese, Prince of Parma, had succeeded him as governor-general.[1] The seven northern rebel provinces then created a formal alliance in January 1579, the Union of Utrecht, which formed the United Provinces. In September 1580, the States-General granted the sovereignty of the new United Provinces to the Duke of Alençon, in the Treaty of Plessis-les-Tours. This was followed by the Act of Abjuration in July 1581, which formally removed Philip II as their sovereign. Yet the Dutch people were less than pleased to have a French Catholic imposed upon them as their leader, and Holland and Zeeland refused to accept him as sovereign. Just as Don John, frustrated over a deadlock, seized Namur in July 1577, Alençon, frustrated by the Dutch people, attempted a military coup of Antwerp in January 1583. It backfired spectacularly – the city militia slaughtered the French army, with only Alençon and a few others escaping with their lives. After leaving the country in June 1583, Alençon died that month, aged just 29.

The following year, in July 1584, the Prince of Orange was assassinated by a Catholic royalist. Since his eldest son and heir was still living as a hostage in Spain, Orange's mantle was taken up by his second son Maurice, aged only seventeen. Whilst the States respected the young count, they did not regard a teenage boy as a viable head of state – so, their search for an alternative sovereign continued. The choice remained between France and England, with Henry III replacing his younger brother as the object of Dutch overtures.

[1] The following summary is based on: Pieter Geyl, *The Revolt of the Netherlands, 1555-1609* (London: Ernest Benn Ltd., 1958 (1932)), pp. 167-94; Geoffrey Parker, *The Dutch Revolt* (Harmondsworth: Pelican Lane, 1979 (1977)), pp. 193-207.

Though they had not sent another long-term ambassador since Davison's return in 1579, the Low Countries remained a source of contention for the English Privy Council. Whilst marriage negotiations with Alençon had finally fizzled out in 1581, the Privy Council had remained divided over the issue of intervention. The assassination of Orange, and the Dutch search for a new sovereign, brought a new urgency to this long-standing dilemma. Such a crisis called for an ambassador on the ground – and who better than the experienced Davison?

This chapter will cover Davison's work on the Treaty of Nonsuch, from November 1584 to December 1585. In November 1584, Davison was sent to the Low Countries to monitor the States-General's negotiations with Henry III. However, successive policy changes by both Henry and Elizabeth resulted in her long-awaited commitment to provide aid, in spring 1585. Davison returned to England in June, and was instrumental in the treaty negotiations over the summer. He then returned to the Low Countries in August 1585, on what would be his final diplomatic mission, to take control of the cautionary towns under the terms of the treaty. Having worked for English military intervention for almost a decade, this was the high point of Davison's diplomatic career.

The purpose of this chapter is to show Davison's importance as a key political player, and examine the nature of his authority as a senior ambassador. It will be argued that Davison's work in autumn 1585 set him apart from his diplomatic peers, as, by seizing the cautionary towns without any diplomatic support, he fulfilled the role of an extraordinary ambassador or privy councillor, such as Leicester, for whom he was a placeholder, though without the rank or title.[2] This therefore illuminates the fluidity of patron-client hierarchies, and the inadequacy of historiographical categories like 'men-of-business', as he blurred these boundaries in his role

[2] Bell has labelled Davison as an 'English councillor' during these months, but this is inaccurate, as Davison was never selected to sit on the Council of State – Gary M. Bell, *A Handlist of British Diplomatic Representatives, 1509-1688* (London: Royal Historical Society, 1990), p. 189.

as *de facto* interim governor. Davison's authority was extraordinary, as he made unilateral treaty alterations, secured the towns, and faced down challenges from his own commanders, without the assistance of any deputies or retinue. His authority was not only upheld by the government at home, but was also respected by the Dutch themselves. Throughout, we will see that Davison's actions were always driven by his commitment to the protestant cause – for instance, his counsel to Elizabeth to accept the position of sovereign, and his adaptations to the treaty, were both intended to avoid the collapse of the Dutch revolt, and thus ensure the safety of England, too.

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Shortly after his return from Scotland, Elizabeth 'resolved' that Davison would be sent to the Low Countries, and summoned him to the court at Nonsuch in early October 1584.[3] Yet his dispatch was delayed, as on the 10th the Privy Council again debated the dangers and benefits of intervention.[4] His instructions, finally drafted a month later on 13th November, were based on Burghley's report on this debate. Davison's primary task was to investigate how far the French negotiations with the States-General had proceeded. If he found that Henry was willing to 'undertake the action for their defence ether as a protector or as a possessioner', then Elizabeth did not want to 'deale any further our selfe… [or] to impeach his owne coorse of proceading therein'.[5] However, if Henry refused, then Davison was instructed to reassure the States-General that if 'they shalbe content to deale with us uppon sufficient caution', then England would offer them support instead. So, the government was, on paper, willing to assist the States General, but only as a last resort.

[3] SP 83/23 f. 42 – 5th October 1584, Walsingham to Davison.
[4] SP 83/23 f. 59 – 10th October 1584, Burghley's 'Resolution of the Conference had uppon the Question whyther hir Majesty shuld presently releve the states of the Lowe Countryes of Holland and Zelland or no'; SP 12/173 f. 108 – 11th Oct 1584, Walsingham to Davison.
[5] SP 83/23 f. 115 – 13th November 1584, Davison's instructions.

Davison arrived in the Hague by the end of November.[6] He had previously lived in the English houses in Antwerp and Brussels, but these cities had now fallen under Spanish control. Davison never, as was his previous habit, referred to an 'English house' during this mission, but just to his 'lodgings'. As he moved around frequently, usually between the Brill, Middelburg, the Hague, and eventually the cautionary towns, it seems likely that there were no permanent embassy buildings established in each city, but that Davison and his household found suitable lodgings as and when necessary. This time, his wife and their children probably remained at home in London, but Davison was once again served by Henry Burnett.[7] He was also served by Wiliam Brewster, who would later travel on the Mayflower and become one of the leaders of the Plymouth colony.[8] A colleague of Brewster later recorded that Davison 'esteemed him rather as a son than a servant, and for his wisdom and godliness, in private he would converse with him more like a friend and familiar than a master'.[9] It therefore seemed that Davison's manner as a patron was similar to that of Walsingham, as he prioritised intellectual equality.

Davison met with the States-General shortly after his arrival, and found them resolved to progress with the French treaty.[10] However, Davison also reported that a couple of the deputies had visited him privately to express their misgivings about France, and expected that the people would much prefer the 'asseurance' of England. Following these initial overtures, progress was fairly slow over the next few months, as the States' negotiations with France dragged on. In February, when it appeared from the reports out of France that Henry was unlikely to accept the Dutch proposals, Elizabeth decided that further assurance should be

[6] SP 83/23 f. 128 – 21st November 1584, Davison to Walsingham; SP 83/23 f. 160 – 5th December 1584, Davison to Walsingham.
[7] SP 84/1 no. 102 – 21st April 1585, Burnham to Davison. Burnett is mentioned in: SP 84/1 nos. 34 and 49, and SP 84/4 nos. 2 and 72.
[8] William Bradford and Samuel Eliot Morison (ed.), *Of Plymouth Plantation, 1620-1647* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1952), p. 325.
[9] Bradford and Morison (ed.), *Of Plymouth Plantation*, p. 325.
[10] SP 83/23 f. 160.

given of her support, in order to avoid the States reaching a 'composition with the kinge of Spayne'.[11] After receiving these instructions, Davison met with a deputation from the States of Holland. He informed the deputies that he had heard that the French did not intend to fully support the Dutch cause, and that their negotiations were intended to be nothing more than a 'long dallyaunce & enterteigment'.[12] The deputies admitted that they feared the consequences of a French treaty, and again requested Elizabeth's help, to which Davison promised that he would 'do my best & putt them in good comfort'.

Soon, Davison received the news everyone had been waiting for. Edward Stafford, the English ambassador in Paris, reported that Henry had finally refused the Dutch offer of sovereignty, and, consequently, would not be providing aid.[13] Instead, Henry offered to 'joyne with [Elizabeth] in becoming a mediator for the States to the King of Spayne'. Walsingham now moved fast. On the 9th, he dispatched further instructions with his servant Edward Burnham, confirming that Elizabeth had 'resolved to take the protection' of the States on the condition that they surrendered three towns (Flushing, Enchuysen and the Brill) into her control, as bonds for her financial aid.[14] These would become known as the cautionary towns.[15] Davison was instructed to emphasise that whereas Henry had sought possession of the United Provinces, as its sovereign, 'the Queen onlie without anie regarde of benefitt to her self offereth to be their protector'. After Davison received these instructions, he met with a group of deputies from the States within the hour, who then summoned the rest of their colleagues back to the Hague, in order to formulate their approach to Elizabeth.[16]

[11] SP 84/1 no. 44 – 18th February 1585, [Privy Council] to Davison.
[12] SP 84/1 no. 51 – 28th February 1585, Davison to Burghley and Walsingham.
[13] SP 84/1 no. 56 – 7th March 1585, Walsingham to Davison.
[14] SP 84/1 no. 61 – 9th March 1585, Walsingham's instructions to Burnham (to convey to Davison).
[15] Enchuysen would later be changed for Rammekens.
[16] SP 84/1 no. 86 – 26th March 1585, Davison to Walsingham; SP 84/1 no. 88 – 3rd April 1585, Davison to Walsingham.

However, both Davison and the States-General still hoped that the Queen would agree to become their sovereign. He reported to Walsingham that 'they doe much rather wishe her Majestie wolde embrace their cause as Soverainge then as protectrice', and argued that becoming sovereign would be 'as the thinge both moste safe & fitte for them & moste honourable sure & profitable for her self, consideringe howe much her greatnes & strengthe should be thereby augmented'.[17] Not only would it benefit Elizabeth personally, but a sovereign was desperately needed to preserve the Dutch cause, as 'theise men [cannot] subsiste longe, governed as they are, without fallinge into a thousande hazardes'. Having received no reply by the following week, Davison seemed anxious, writing again to Walsingham, 'I leave to your honours consideracion as also that her Majestie prejudge not that is done in the point of Soverainty'.[18]

In mid-April, the States-General officially agreed to offer Elizabeth the sovereignty of the United Provinces, and nominated a deputation to be sent to England.[19] Davison had already requested permission to return home with the deputation, due to 'the necessitie of mine own affaires, wherein the shorte time of my laste staie at home', after his return from Scotland, 'wold not permitte me to sett anie order: which done I wolde be readie eather to retorne if her Majestie be so pleased, or to doe her Highnes any other service'.[20] Elizabeth agreed that he could return, but only separately from the commissioners, 'lest it might be thought they come over by hir procurement'.[21] Davison finally departed at the end of May, and was followed by the Dutch commissioners at the end of June, having first been delayed by the late arrival of the

[17] SP 84/1 no. 88 – 3rd April 1585, Davison to Walsingham.
[18] SP 84/1 no. 100 – 14th April 1585, Davison to Walsingham.
[19] SP 84/1 no. 105 – 24th April 1585, Gilpin to Walsingham.
[20] SP 84/1 no. 88.
[21] SP 84/1 no. 103 – 22nd April 1585, Walsingham to Davison.

deputies from Zeeland, and then by storms at the Brill.[22] Now, his task was to navigate the treaty process, at home rather than abroad.

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Throughout the treaty negotiations, Davison continued to fulfil the role of ambassador at home. This was a normal part of wider diplomatic service – as Mark Taviner has highlighted, diplomats also 'performed service by acting as a resident intellectual or technical advisor to the Privy Councillors who were responsible for the formation of policy' – or, in this case, of a treaty – alongside their 'occasional' missions.[23] Davison's Dutch correspondents evidently viewed him as an ally, as they continued to send reports in the hopes that Davison could persuade the Queen more effectively now that he was back at court.[24] By 24th June, the Dutch deputies had finally landed at Margate, and Davison was summoned first to the court, presumably to be briefed, and then 'from hence to meete with them at Gravesend'.[25] Whilst it was certainly an advantage for Davison to once again be in close proximity to the Queen and Privy Council, it is a disadvantage for the historian, as their face-to-face conversations leave little trace in the record. So, exactly what instructions Davison received is unknown, and we do not hear from him again for several weeks.

It appears that he remained with or close to the deputies in London, to act as a conduit between them and the court. On the 14th, Davison returned to court carrying the deputies' first proposal.[26] They requested 5,000 foot and 1,000 horse, and, crucially, allowed that she 'shall have i or ij towns in every provynce at hir choice savyng for Zelland'. The reluctance of

[22] SP 84/2 f. 21 – [17th May] 1585, Davison to Walsingham; SP 84/2 f. 39 – 26th May 1585, States-General to the Queen; SP 84/2 f. 41– 26th May 1585, Jaques Rossel to Davison; SP 84/2 f. 80 – 24th June 1585, Waad to Davison.
[23] Mark Taviner, 'Robert Beale and the Elizabethan Polity' (University of St. Andrews: unpublished doctoral thesis, 2000), p. 155.
[24] For instance, SP 84/2 f. 74 – 14th June 1585, Thieri Lonck to Davison; f. 74a – 16th June 1585, Rossell to Davison; f. 83 – 28th June 1585, Bartholomew Gryphius Buys to Davison; f. 90 – 29th June 1585, P. d'Iniose to Davison.
[25] SP 84/2 f. 80 – 24th June 1585, Waad to Davison.
[26] SP 103/33 f. 163 – 14th July 1585, 'summary by Burghley of the answer brought by Davison'.

Zeeland was hardly a surprise, as Davison had reported two months earlier on the 'bad offices of some [in Zeeland] who do busily imploy them selves underhand to impeach the course of this treaty'.[27] However, Elizabeth had originally requested Flushing, the Brill, and Enchuysen as her cautions, the first of which was a major Zeeland port. It seemed, therefore, that despite their apparent desperation for aid, the deputies only wanted it on their terms.

Whilst those at court deliberated over the initial proposal, Davison took to his bed, being 'very ill disposed'.[28] Upon receiving further instructions from Walsingham (now lost), Davison summoned Paulus Buys, the deputy and landsadvocaat of Holland, to his house in London, to 'acquaint' him with Elizabeth's offer of 4000 foot and 400 horse, with 'the Townes of the Briell & Vlisshinge delivered unto her for her caution & assuraunce' – so, far below their request of 6,000 men.[29] Elizabeth had also formally declined the offer of sovereignty the previous week.[30] Being too unwell to visit the deputies himself, Davison requested that Buys 'in my name to comunycat this overture with the rest of his colleagues & to let me know with asmuch speede … whether they might accept thereof or not, to thend I might signify so much unto her Majesty'. [31]

For the negotiations to be conducted via Davison's sickbed was significant. Since Davison was already well acquainted with the deputies, and was known to be an ally, perhaps it was also thought that he would have greater success in convincing them to concede over Zeeland. Moreover, from his past embassies, Davison had a wealth of specialist knowledge which could be called upon, such as on the loans given in 1578-9, information relating to which

[27] SP 84/2 f. 21.
[28] SP 84/2 f. 155 – 24th July 1585, Davison to Walsingham.
[29] SP 84/2 f. 155 – 24th July 1585, Davison to Walsingham. A *landsadvocaat* was the leader of that States' representatives in the States-General, and was later renamed Grand Pensionary.
[30] Simon Adams, 'Elizabeth I and the Sovereignty of the Netherlands 1576-1585', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 14 (2004), 309-319, p. 318.
[31] SP 84/2 f. 155.

was required by Burghley in July.[32] Still, though, there were other potential choices with experience in the Low Countries, especially considering that Davison was unwell – George Gilpin was also back in London, and there was no shortage of trusted secretaries and messengers, such as Walsingham's own Burnham.[33] It therefore seems that they had deliberately chosen someone more senior, as this person would not simply convey messages, but would play a crucial intermediary role in the negotiations. Davison was continuing his work as a senior ambassador, juggling the government on one side and the Dutch on the other – only this time, his letters just had to cross London, not the North Sea.

Unfortunately, the deputies were not persuaded by Davison, and insisted that they did not have the authority to accept any offer of under 6,000 men. Since the ongoing siege of Antwerp 'brook[ed] nothing woorse then delayes and uncertaintyes', they requested that Davison procure them audience, 'that they might understand her Highness finall resolucion', and, if no agreement could be reached, to 'determin of ther returne home'.[34] Over the next month, it is most likely that Davison remained at home to recover, as he was certainly away from court on the 22nd. Walsingham was then 'commaunded by her Majestye' to summon Davison to Barn Elms, so that Walsingham could 'confer with' him before meeting with the deputies the following day.[35] This instruction suggests that the Queen recognised Davison's unique importance within the negotiations, as he brought eyewitness experience which Walsingham lacked.

On 10th August, the deputies agreed to accept Elizabeth's offer of 4,000 foot and 400 horse, but this came too late to save Antwerp, which finally surrendered to the Spanish on 17th

[32] SP 84/2 f. 164 – 29th July 1585, Davison to Burghley.
[33] SP 84/2 f. 36 – 24th May 1585, Maurice and the Council of State to Walsingham; SP 84/3 no. 10 f. 18 – 12th August 1585, Gilpin to Walsingham.
[34] SP 84/2 f. 155.
[35] SP 84/3 no. 20 [inconsistent foliation] – 22nd August 1585, Walsingham to Davison.

August.[36] It now appeared necessary to send an English ambassador, and quickly, to reassure the States of 'the care we have of the good, rest and preservation of the United Provinces', and to 'serve your well-being and preservation'.[37] William Waad, a diplomat and clerk of the Privy Council, was apparently considered first for the mission, perhaps as the government wanted Davison to remain working on the negotiations at home, or due to his ill health.[38] However, Waad had no prior experience in the Low Countries, and Elizabeth ultimately decided that the expert should return.

On 26th August, Walsingham sent Davison his instructions – his task was to have the treaty signed by the States-General, and to take control of the cautionary towns, but Walsingham also added that 'it is remitted to your choice to deminish or ad to your instructions as you shall finde maie most further her majesties service'.[39] As we have seen, Davison had been instructed to use his discretion on previous missions, so Walsingham's confidence in his judgement was nothing new. Yet Davison had not yet had been permitted to use his discretion over policy matters – the extent of his permitted discretion thus far had extended to his manner of dealing with Casimir, and supplementing Elizabeth's answer to James. Now, the stakes were much higher, as making even a small alteration could potentially affect a binding treaty. It was therefore up to Davison to use his discretion with discretion.

[36] SP 103/33 f. 216 – abstract of the treaty of 10th August, by Laurence Tomson. Various copies of the treaty in French and Latin also in SP 103/33. Simon Adams, 'A Puritan Crusade? The Composition of the Earl of Leicester's Expedition to the Netherlands, 1585-86', in his *Leicester and the Court: Essays in Elizabethan Politics* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2002), pp. 176-195, at p. 180. On the nobleman, see SP 103/33 f. 172 – [10th August 1585], 'abstract of such articles as concern the authority and charge limited to the governor to be placed by her Majesty'.

[37] SP 84/3 no. 29 – 25th August 1585, the Queen to the States-General. Original French: 'pour le soing qu'avons du bien, repos et conservation des Provinces unyes... servir a vostre bien et preservation'.

[38] Waad was originally named on the letters of credence to the States, but this was subsequently erased and overwritten with Davison's name – SP 84/3 no. 29.

[39] SP 84/3 no. 29 – 25th August 1585, the Queen to the States-General; no. 34 – 26th August 1585, Walsingham to Davison; Add. MS 48116 f. 145 – 25th August 1585, instructions for A. B.

As a result of the catastrophic fall of Antwerp, Elizabeth agreed to increase her offer to 5,000 foot and 1,000 horse.[40] Crucially, this new offer was not finalized by the time planned for Davison's departure, so, on 27th August, Walsingham instructed him to 'departe without any further stay', and promised that the new treaty would be 'sent over unto you with all speede'.[41] Finally, on 3rd September, Elizabeth confirmed her new, increased offer to the States-General, and agreed to 'send... a lord of quality, not only to take charge of our said forces but also to assist [them] with his opinion and advice to the government', along with two governors for the cautionary towns, and two English members for the Council of State.[42] The nobleman had not yet been chosen, but it seemed likely to be Leicester.[43]

She also wrote to Davison, 'Authorisinge and requiringe you herebye to receave the said Townes of Flushinge and Brille in our name and to our use', and to 'keepe Flushinge your selfe in like manner with such garisons by our servant Generall Norris shalbe appointed for that purpose', whilst delivering the Brill 'into the handes of such as by our said servant shall likewise be appointed'.[44] John Norris was a highly experienced soldier who had served in the Huguenot forces in the 1560s, and subsequently in Ireland.[45] Since 1578, he had risen through the ranks of the Queen's mercenary army in the Low Countries, and was appointed colonel-general in spring 1585. His brothers Edward and Henry also served in the Low Countries. Yet despite Norris' extensive experience, his military authority was now to be shared with Davison,

[40] Adams, 'A Puritan Crusade?', p. 180.
[41] SP 84/3 no. 37 – 27th August 1585, Walsingham to Davison.
[42] SP 84/3 no. 55 – 3rd September 1585, the Queen to the States-General. Original French: 'vous envoyer ung seigneur de qualitie, non seulement pour prendre la charge de nostre dit forces mais aussy pour vous assister de son advis et conseil au gouvernement, comme vous en avez requise'. Several papers relating to the sending over of a nobleman have been labelled in the calendars as relating to the 10th August treaty, but they are undated – e.g. SP 103/33 f. 172 – [undated], 'abstract of such articles as concern the authority and charge limited to the governor to be placed by her Majesty'. This decision was probably considered throughout August, and then confirmed in the 3rd September treaty.
[43] SP 12/181 f. 222 – 28th August 1585, Leicester to Walsingham; CP 163/115 – 28th August 1585, Leicester to Burghley.
[44] Harley MS 36 no. 264 – 3rd September 1585, the Queen to Davison.
[45] D. J. B. Trim, 'Norris [Norreys], Sir John (c. 1547x50–1597), military commander', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford, 2008 (orig. 2004)) <https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/20276>, pp. 2-6.

and the demarcation of their responsibilities was somewhat unclear. Elizabeth's letter of the 3rd suggested that Norris should choose the garrison troops and commander of the Brill, but that Davison was responsible for seizing the cautionary towns. However, in Davison's original instructions, all of the instructions on both soldiers and the cautionary towns had been directed to Davison himself, with Norris only being mentioned briefly twice in relation to military intelligence.[46] This ambiguity over their military responsibilities was to become a source of friction as the mission wore on.

The same day, Davison arrived at Flushing.[47] He met first with the late Prince of Orange's son, Maurice of Nassau, and subsequently met with the Council of State and the States of Zeeland, who assured him that there would be 'no difficulty' with the delivery of the towns. Walsingham was already sceptical, though, expecting that 'untyll they shall see more forwardeness here in the sendyng over of a noble man and that they shall knowe the persones to whom the seyd townes shall be commytted they wyll make no delyverye'.[48] Evidently, although the government had entrusted the seizure of the towns to Davison, it was nevertheless anticipated that he would struggle without the weight of a more senior, and permanent, figurehead.

Shortly after writing to the States-General to confirm her offer of 6,000 troops, Elizabeth then made a further concession to the Dutch deputies in London, to supply troops for the garrison of the cautionary towns in addition to those already pledged.[49] Since this new clause had been 'omitted in that sent unto' Davison, Walsingham sent him this amended treaty on 13

[46] Add. MS 48116 f. 145.
[47] SP 84/3 no. 56 – 4th September 1585, Davison to Walsingham. The date of this letter confirms that Davison continued to use old style dates throughout this mission, as his instructions of 25th August OS (n. 19 above), given before his departure, would be dated 4th September in NS; so it is not possible for Davison to have arrived in Flushing on 3rd September NS, and written home on 4th September NS. All dates, from correspondence with continental contacts, have been converted to old style.
[48] SP 84/3 no. 58 – 5th September 1585, Walsingham to Davison.
[49] SP 84/3 no. 63 – 8th September 1585; no. 71 – 12th September 1585. Both Walsingham to Davison

September, and instructed him to 'retayne' the 'imperfect' act 'in your owne handes'. [50] Elizabeth had also now chosen Leicester as the nobleman, though was reluctant to dispatch him until Davison had secured the cautionary towns, being concerned that if she sent a noble representative, but the Dutch then made 'difficulty to delyver the said townes yt would sound greatly to her dishonour'.[51]

Moreover, though the amended act had already been agreed upon, the Dutch deputies in London now refused to send it over to the States, instead insisting that it be delayed until another representative from the States was sent over. There was no official reason to wait for this further representative – this was simply a delay tactic. Since the States had heard that 'her majesty was now resolved to wade thoroughly into the action', they probably hoped to push her even further before the act was ratified – after all, they had initially hoped for an optimistic 10,000 foot and 2,000 horse.[52] Walsingham still expected that the States would try to delay handing over the cautionary towns until the new governors were nominated, but instructed Davison, as 'an eye witnes of ther proceedinges and of ther humours', to 'carye your self' according to 'your owne discrecion', in order to secure the towns.[53] So, Walsingham was here reiterating his earlier permission 'to deminish or ad to your instructions', and reiterating his trust in Davison. He recognized that there was no time for any further delay, for the ambassador to await further instructions from home – Davison was the expert, and as such, he respected his judgement.

Crucially, Davison did not receive these instructions or the amended treaty until 28 September – as far as he was aware, Elizabeth had promised 5,000 foot, 1,000 horse, and no more.[54] As usual when dealing with the States-General, he encountered multiple delays, and

[50] SP 84/3 no. 71; no. 72 – 13th September 1585, Walsingham to Davison.
[51] SP 84/3 no. 78 – 18th September 1585, Walsingham to Davison.
[52] SP 84/3 no. 78; Adams, 'Puritan Crusade?', p. 180.
[53] SP 84/3 no. 78.
[54] SP 84/3 no. 107 – 28th September 1585, Davison to John Norris.

was denied audience with the States for almost a fortnight.[55] Upon his arrival in the Hague, Davison, to his dismay, found the States on the brink of being persuaded into a reconciliation with Parma. Reports spread that various malcontents, favouring a treaty with Spain and possibly another attempt at negotiations with France, sought to 'alien bothe the Count Maurice & the Count of Hohenlohe [lieutenant-general of the States' army] from this course with her Majestie'. In light of these developments, Davison 'thought it very expedient… to insist earnestlye for myne audience'.[56] Though an audience was finally granted, the States deferred their answer, over signing the treaty, until the arrival of the rest of the provincial deputies.

In anticipation of their response, Davison began to organise the English troops. On 17 September, Davison wrote to Norris, relating that Elizabeth 'hathe appointed me to conferre with you aboute the Choice of the moste loyall & best qualified Captaines & Companies within your Regiment & under her pay to be disposed within the Townes of the Briell & Flushing; which are for her assurance to be delivered into my handes; till she send hither such persons as she shall finde expedient to take the particuler government of'.[57] He had also 'under[stood] secretly' that Norris was planning 'som enterprise in hande in those upper partes to which ende you have destined the most partes of your force'. Although Norris was the military expert, Davison was nevertheless concerned that this would not leave enough troops to protect 'such frontier places as are of moste importance… to bridle the enemy'. Consequently, he asked Norris to ensure that 'at the leaste so manie as shalbe necessarie for the guarde of those two places may be reserved & ready to be sent thitherwarde uppon the firste advertisement, accordinge to the chardge given unto me, & which I have to communicate with your self'. Davison could not have been clearer – he would liaise with Norris over the appointment of the garrisons, but, as Elizabeth's representative, and the man responsible for the implementation

[55] SP 84/3 no. 97 – 24th September 1585, Davison to Walsingham. Partial draft is no. 96.
[56] SP 84/3 no. 97; 'xjth' only given in draft, no. 96.
[57] SP 84/3 no. 77 – 17th September 1585, Davison to John Norris.

of the treaty, he would have the final say on the distribution of troops. So, although the division of military responsibilities had been vague in his instructions, Davison had evidently interpreted them to mean that he had overall authority over all political and military matters.

On 21 September, the States informed Davison that they would accept the treaty for the 6,000 men, 'besydes the garrysons… which their deputies had allwaies insisted on, accordinge to there commissyon & which by the letters of those remayninge in Englande they tooke to be fullye accorded'.[58] Davison's new instructions, and the updated treaty, had not yet arrived, so, as far as he was aware, the government had not agreed to supply extra troops for the garrisons. Davison was now put in a difficult position – should he send home for further instructions, which could take weeks, or, should he agree to this condition on the Queen's behalf, and hasten the completion of the treaty? This was not a decision to be taken lightly – although Elizabeth and Walsingham had allowed Davison to use his discretion in negotiations, committing extra troops, and therefore extra cost, was a significant alteration to the previous treaty. Davison was therefore initially cautious, and, scouring his instructions and the original act, found 'nothinge in expresse tearmes… that might sufficientlye warraunt my consent in that behaulf'. Consequently, he refused to increase the offer, as 'a matter of that weight to exceede my charge & commissyon'. The deputies did not back down, and 'pretended to be authorysed onlye' to ratify an offer including provision for the garrisons, and insisted that 'since my comminge from courte… her Majestie had finallye accorded the same'.

This was, of course, true, but Davison was not aware of it. If he now decided to agree to the new terms it would, as far as he was concerned, be a breach of his official instructions. Nevertheless, fearing that 'to deferre the matter to a new advice from home' would 'compell them (once abandouned of her favour) to runne a headlonge course of reconcilement with the

[58] SP 84/3 no. 97.

Spaniards', Davison saw no other option than to exercise his authority, and 'accorde the sayd project'. He and John Norris decided upon 700 troops for Flushing and Rammekens, and 450 for the Brill, to be installed within the next four or five days.[59] This new agreement was to be known as the act of ampliation.[60]

To take a unilateral policy decision was a huge gamble, as, in one move, Davison risked his career for the sake of speeding up the treaty. He was evidently worried that this decision outstripped the bounds of his permitted discretion, as he pre-emptively sought the support of his colleagues, asking Walsingham 'together with the rest of my good Lordes to intreate her Majesties most gracious pardon and excuse in my behalf as he that hath fayled rather of ignoraunce or necessytye then of will'.[61] Nevertheless, Davison ultimately judged it more expedient to agree with the Dutch, rather than risk going back to square one of the negotiations. After all, he and his likeminded colleagues, such as Walsingham and Leicester, believed that the success of the war was essential for the 'sewrtye of our estate'.[62] Davison was therefore content with his decision, as the 'best yssue and succes whereunto I can possiblye bringe my negotiacion here'.[63] So, although he had initially been cautious to use the permitted discretion, ultimately, he realized that, whatever the outcome, it was sometimes necessary to use his authority as ambassador to make urgent unilateral decisions on the ground.

There was a happy resolution, though. Davison finally received the amended treaty from Walsingham on 28 September, 'agreing in all partes & namely concerning the garrisons with that was allready passed between the States & me', five days after he had concluded the act of ampliation.[64] It was surely a relief to know that his actions would be approved of, but did not

[59] SP 84/3 no. 97.
[60] SP 84/5 no. 31 – 11th November 1585, Davison to Burghley.
[61] SP 84/3 no. 97.
[62] SP 84/3 no. 94 – 24th September 1585, Davison to Burghley.
[63] SP 84/3 no. 97. He sent the signed act over to Walsingham the following day – the accompanying letter is SP 84/3 no. 98 – 25th September 1585.
[64] SP 84/3 no. 107.

alter the fact that, at that moment, Davison had taken a decision beyond the bounds of his instructions and exercised his personal authority. He had been determined enough, and capable enough, to make this amendment in order to ensure the success of the treaty, even though it could have potentially jeopardised his career.

On 27 September, Davison arrived in the Brill 'to see this place delivered into her Majesties possessyon accordinge to the contract'.[65] A couple of days later, the troops arrived, and Davison took possession of the keys to the town. These he handed over to Henry Norris, who, along with Captains Hill and Roberts, had been sent by John Norris to take charge of the garrison 'tyll her Majestie shalbe pleased to take other order'.[66] Despite the presence of the three captains, it was Davison to whom the Queen had given authority to take control of the towns, so again it was Davison giving the final orders. He 'allotted 2 companyes of 300 stronge to the Towne [and] placed the thirde under Captayne Roberts'. However, Davison realised that the leadership of a diplomat and three captains may not suffice for long – so, he deferred the 'Inventorye of the Artillerye, munityon &c' to the 'cominge of the [new] Gouvernoure', and prayed Walsingham for 'a speadye choice', as the 'commaunders & companyes here are with the raughest & weakest for such a governement'.

Davison was right to be worried, as, after his departure on 2 October, the burgomasters of the Brill attempted to defy Henry Norris' authority by making new locks to set on the city gates. [67] Their surrender of the keys to Davison, mere days earlier, had therefore been purely performative. That they had not initially refused to hand the keys over to Davison suggests that they perhaps respected him more than the captains, or at least, as Elizabeth's political representative, deemed it wise not to deny his authority. However, they were unwilling to be

[65] SP 84/4 no. 2 – 1 October 1585, Davison to Walsingham. See also SP 84/4 no. 6b – 2nd October 1585, certificate by burgomasters and council of Brill, which confirms that Davison took possession of the town on 30th September.
[66] SP 84/4 no. 2.
[67] SP 84/4 no. 32 – 13th October 1585, Davison to Walsingham

ruled by soldiers, so tried to insist that 'they myght have the garde' of the keys as well as Henry Norris, and that he 'might not open the gates with out them'.[68] Norris refused to have the new locks installed, and wrote to Davison for further 'derection'; he also asked him to either send reinforcements or give him the 'authorite to raise ouer companies to to hundred a pese'. In his reply, Davison 'merveile[d]' at the attempted changing of the locks, which he believed it was 'absurde to yelde unto' – after all, Elizabeth had been unwilling to allow Leicester to depart until the towns were secure for this very reason, to avoid any such embarrassments.[69] Davison therefore advised Norris to deal 'in good & discret sorte' with the burgomasters, 'to praye them to forbeare that novelltye untill the cominge of the governer, in whose absence you would be loth to doe any which might turne to your discreditte, or her Majesties prejudice'. With regard to the troops, Davison wrote to Walsingham, advising him that 'it were not amisse (under your honours correction to encrease eache companie to 200 thoughe you retaine the same number of Enseignes'.[70] Although Davison had already authorised the extra garrison troops under the act of ampliation, the lack of funds meant that he was still struggling to recruit sufficient men, so, in the meantime, he could only inform Norris that 'the strengthening of your companies is best deferred till we know [the Queen's] further pleasure, which I hope will not be long'.[71]

The next port of call was Flushing, to which Davison set out in early October.[72] Considering that they had fewer troops than required, he was not optimistic – thus far, there were only 400 garrisoned at the Brill with Henry Norris, 'to weak for the guard of the Town & forts', and those destined for Flushing were 'hardly 600 strong'.[73] Since the States-General still refused to help with their payment, Davison was now 'driven to employ my creditt' for loans

[68] SP 84/4 no. 22 – 10th October 1585, Henry Norris to Davison.
[69] SP 84/4 no. 35 – 14th October 1585, Davison to Henry Norris.
[70] SP 84/4 no. 32 – 13th October 1585, Davison to Walsingham.
[71] SP 84/4 no. 35 – 14th October 1585, Davison to Henry Norris.
[72] SP 84/4 no. 26 – [10th October] 1585, Davison to Walsingham; no. 34 – 14th October1585, Davison to Leicester.
[73] SP 84/4 no. 26.

of around £1,500, 'as well for monie as clothe, to furnishe & relieve the necessitie of such as want till the cumminge of the Treasorer'.[74] Under this immense pressure, it was no wonder Davison wanted to return home 'to take order in my poor busines', as soon as the governors arrived to assume charge.[75] The Dutch had so far respected Davison's personal authority – for instance, by extending credit, and surrendering the keys to the Brill – but not that of his subordinates. Since he could not be everywhere at once, only the arrival of the Queen's governors could bring stability now, 'least that which hath bin brought, with so much travell to this pointe, be overthrowen in a momente'.[76] Davison hoped that assurance from the Queen directly might help to quell the rising discontent, and counselled Elizabeth to 'not be spare of her letters & good countenance wheare they may do much good & no hurt'.[77]

Finally, on 23 October, Walsingham reported that Elizabeth 'doth allowe verie well of your proceadinge and taketh no exception to your acceptinge the ratification of the acte in such sorte as by the States was delyvered unto you'.[78] Davison had, by now, received the updated treaty, but Elizabeth's explicit approval would surely still have been welcome. However, she was less than happy regarding the financial amendments, and Walsingham relayed that 'althoughe her majestie doth not blame you for accepting the said ratification: yett doth she fynde faulte with us her comissioners here' over the financial arrangements. Elizabeth was content with the overall number of troops agreed, but not with the States' insistence that they be paid immediately, or with the deferring of repayment of her previous loans 'untill the ende of the warres'. Consequently, Elizabeth and the States were once again at a deadlock over the

[74] SP 84/4 no. 28 – 12th October 1585, States-General to Davison; no. 32; no. 47 – 17th October 1585, Davison to Walsingham.
[75] SP 84/4 no. 26.
[76] SP 84/4 no. 32a (postcript).
[77] SP 84/4 no. 58 – 18th October 1585, Davison to Walsingham.
[78] SP 84/4 no. 100.

payment of the troops. So, although Davison had been successful over the act of ampliation, his problems were far from resolved.

Elizabeth also finally confirmed that she had chosen Philip Sidney and Burghley's elder son, Thomas Cecil, as governors of Flushing and the Brill, respectively.[79] It seemed that Leicester would be departing imminently, so Davison hoped to return home briefly, to 'establish myne own poore business & make my self the fitter & readyer to wayt on your Lordship on your Journey hither'.[80] Yet, even before his arrival, Leicester knew that, as the newcomer, he would be dependent on Davison's expertise and connections, so instructed him to remain abroad, 'for I must not lack you when I come thether you must first make me both knowe & knowen more than ys yet'.[81]

Meanwhile, the military situation was becoming increasingly fraught, as the tension over Davison and John Norris' military responsibilities now came to a head. Davison and Count Hohenloe had taken control of Flushing on 19 October, but needed to urgently send for another company to garrison the nearby fort of Rammekens.[82] John Norris suggested sending 'an other company of his now at Bergues', but Davison disagreed, as 'the Leader wherof is neither knowen to him nor my self'.[83] Malcolm Smuts has suggested that Hohenloe, who had an 'old quarrel' with Norris, may have deliberately advised Davison to ask another captain, Roger Williams, to select the company for the garrison in order to spite Norris.[84] However, it is crucial to remember that Davison had agreed with Norris' other choices of captains, such as Henry Norris, Hill and Roberts for the Brill, so it does not seem that Davison was that easily

[79] SP 84/4 no. 127 – [after 19th October] 1585, the Queen to Davison. On Sidney being chosen as the new governor, see also SP 84/4 no. 34 – 14th October 1585, Davison to Leicester; no. 56 – 17th October 1585, Davison to Sidney; no. 63 – 19th October 1585, Davison to Walsingham.
[80] SP 84/4 no. 70.
[81] SP 84/4 no. 103 – 25th October 1585, Leicester to Davison.
[82] SP 84/4 no. 63 – 19th October 1585, Davison to Walsingham; no. 65 – 19th October 1585, Davison to Captain Williams.
[83] SP 84/4 no. 64 – 19th October 1585, Davison to Captain Huntley.
[84] Smuts, *Political Culture*, p. 308.

manipulated. In fact, he had his own reasons for rejecting Norris' choices – since Davison was 'accomptable' to Elizabeth, and responsible for the success of the treaty, he was 'loth to putt a place of so great moment… into the handes of one I know not'. So, he and Hohenloe wrote to one Captain Williams in Bergues, asking him to send one Captain Huntley, of whom Davison already had 'so long tryall & experience'; Huntley was also already known to the privy council, and to Sir Philip Sidney, the new governor of Flushing.[85] However, Edward Norris, stationed nearby in Flushing, was unhappy with this choice, and now suggested sending over sixty of his own troops instead.[86] Again, Davison refused, as this company was led by 'one Whyte… a man of no reckoning & one that byn of the consorte of Alost'.[87] In February 1584, Aalst had been surrendered to Parma by English soldiers following a month under siege, for a bribe of 128,250 florins – no wonder Davison did not trust Whyte.[88] Frustrated by this decision, Edward Norris appealed to John, who supported him, demanding that Huntley step down, and claiming that Davison had 'exceaded [his] commyssyon & broken [his] promyse to him'.[89]

In response, Davison wrote to Burghley and Walsingham to explain the situation, and to justify his actions. As ever, his first duty was to the Queen, and he wryly commented 'I looke to be excused yf I respect lesse (as I wyshe [John Norris] did all so) the pleasuringe of his frendes then her Majesties service'.[90] Consequently, Davison explained that he 'would not suffer [Huntley] to dyslodge tyll the Gouvernours cominge, or other directyon from home, seinge my order was to take possessyon of these places, & to keepe them tyll her Majestie sent others, & not to shyft and translate anye garrysons at other mens appetites'.[91] By stressing that

[85] SP 84/5 no. 31; SP 84/4 no. 64 – 19th October 1585, Davison to Captain Huntley; SP 84/5 no. 45 – 16th November 1585, Davison to Sidney.
[86] SP 84/5 no. 42 – 15th November 1585, Edward Norris to Walsingham.
[87] SP 84/5 no. 31.
[88] Geoffrey Parker, *The Army of Flanders and the Spanish Road, 1567–1659* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1972), p. 241.
[89] SP 84/5 no. 31.
[90] SP 84/5 no. 33 – 11th November 1585, Davison to Walsingham.
[91] SP 84/5 no. 33.

it had been 'my order', Davison reiterated that it was he who had been tasked with the seizure of the cautionary towns, not John Norris. Consequently, Davison was determined that this dispute should not affect his reputation or prospects, so he requested Burghley and Walsingham's support, to ensure that he was not 'dysgraced in her Majesty's service wherein I presume to have deserved so well'.[92]

Ultimately, this episode emphasised the weight of Davison's authority, as, other than complain to Walsingham (complaints which were not heeded), there was nothing the Norris brothers could do.[93] This incident was therefore reminiscent of Davison's dealings with Nicholas Loddington and Duke Casimir, in both of which cases his authority was challenged, but was staunchly backed by Walsingham. On this occasion, though, it seems that Davison succeeded in managing the situation on his own – no reply from Walsingham to Edward Norris survives, and Walsingham was at this time preoccupied with the preparations for Leicester's departure. As a senior ambassador and *de facto* interim governor, Davison was fully confident in his position, and refused to have his authority challenged. He had been instructed to liaise with Norris, and had done so thus far, but, as the man responsible for the success of the treaty, was determined to make the final decisions. This is not to say that Davison's decision was ignorant or stubborn, though – indeed, this episode also proved his astuteness as a leader, as by choosing a commander already trusted by Sidney, and avoiding a potential traitor, Davison seemed to make the wiser choice. By the end of November, the matter appeared to have blown over, as John Norris reported to Walsingham that he travelled to Flushing to 'Conferre' with Davison 'touchinge the musterynge and paynge of the Compaines'.[94]

[92] SP 84/5 no. 31, and similar in no. 33.
[93] SP 84/5 no. 42 – 15th November 1585, Edward Norris to Walsingham.
[94] SP 84/5 no. 64 – 28th November 1585, John Norris to Walsingham.

It had already been determined, in early November, that Leicester, Sidney and Thomas Cecil would depart soon, and would also be accompanied by Sir William Pelham, as a commander, and Henry Killigrew to sit on the Council of State.[95] Dr Bartholomew Clark, one of the Masters of Requests, was later appointed as the second English member for the council.[96] It is worth remembering that, despite the weight of his mission, Davison had been granted no such retinue, and had had to operate without this level of support. By mid-November, Sidney was now en route, but Leicester was not, so Davison warned Walsingham that, recall or not, 'if my Lord of Lecester come not all the sooner after Sir Philip I purpose God willing to make a start home with the first opportunity, both for my health & busines sake'.[97] His mission had now been fulfilled – despite numerous obstacles, Davison had succeeded in taking control of the cautionary towns, so Walsingham obtained permission for Davison to return 'within a moneth after the Earle of Leycesters arryval'.[98] Finally, there was an end in sight. After another fortnight of preparations and delays, Leicester departed from London on 4th December.

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Above all, this mission showcases Davison's importance as a key political player prior to his elevation to the Privy Council. No longer a junior agent, he now exercised significant authority, and showed unparalleled diplomatic skill by taking possession of the cautionary towns, despite a multitude of obstacles, and without any other diplomats or deputies. None of his peers were ever given such responsibility. Davison's close colleagues Henry Killigrew, Thomas Wilkes, and Robert Beale all served, at various times, on the Dutch Council of State, but, crucially, this was as part of a team, alongside and supported by each other, Leicester, Lord Buckhurst, and others. This role entailed not nearly the same responsibility as Davison in

[95] SP 84/5 no. 13 – 6th November 1585, Walsingham to Davison.
[96] SP 84/5 no. 43 – 16th November 1585, the Queen to the States-General.
[97] SP 84/5 no. 44 – 16th November 1585, Davison to Walsingham.
[98] SP 84/5 no. 49 – 19th November 1585, Walsingham to Davison.

autumn 1585, as the sole English representative responsible for implementing a treaty. Throughout Elizabeth's reign, no other diplomat was tasked with such a uniquely important mission.

Indeed, considering Walsingham's own prediction that the Dutch would refuse cooperation until they saw 'more forwardeness here in the sendyng over of a noble man', Davison probably even exceeded the initial expectations of the Privy Council.[99] This chapter therefore shows that, in reality, patron-client hierarchies were complex and fluid, and that Davison in particular is resistant to neat categorisation. Months before his promotion, he was essentially performing at the level of a privy councillor, or extraordinary ambassador, but without the level of support afforded to one. His personal authority was exceptional, and, in many ways, he was more skilled than Leicester.

Davison had come far over the past ten years, but his political creed had not altered. Even though he had finally achieved his long-standing objective of English military intervention, his mission was still ongoing, as every action he took – for instance, amending the treaty, and refusing Norris' choice of captain – aimed to ensure the success of the intervention, and therefore the security of England, the Low Countries, and the protestant cause. On this mission, each of these actions had been successful; however, this commitment would now bring him into some difficulties, as we will see in the following chapter.

[99] SP 84/3 no. 58.

Chapter 6: Patronage and political credit, 1585-6

In December 1585, the Earl of Leicester arrived in the Low Countries to take political and military command, as per the Treaty of Nonsuch, and relieve Davison as the senior English representative. Soon after his arrival, the States-General offered Leicester the sovereignty, as governor-general, of the United Provinces. Elizabeth had already refused the position of sovereign for herself twice, in 1576 and earlier in 1585, and had not specified anything regarding the sovereignty in the Treaty of Nonsuch.[1] After some deliberation, Leicester accepted the position, and sent Davison home to explain his decision to a furious Queen. Davison's involvement in the affair destroyed his relationship with Leicester, and but ultimately did not scupper his chances of promotion.

The purpose of this chapter is to examine Davison's role in the incident, and its impact on his patronage relationships and political credit. First and foremost, this episode exposed the reality of conflict between a patron and a client, as the long-standing relationship between Leicester and Davison collapsed. Since the majority of existing work on patronage has focussed on the routine functioning of patron-client relationships, the collapse of political relationships has consequently been understudied. The only detailed examination of such a collapse is by F. Jeffrey Platt on the conflict between Wilkes and Leicester in 1587; however, Platt's work was never published, and appears to be little known by either Elizabethan or diplomatic historians.[2] Otherwise, rifts between Elizabethan patrons and clients tend only to be mentioned as a brief denouement to a broader study – for instance, by Stephen Alford on 'the fall and rise' of Thomas Phelippes in the 1590s.[3] This historiographical lacuna is something which can be

[1] On Elizabeth's refusal of the sovereignty, see Simon Adams, 'Elizabeth I and the Sovereignty of the Netherlands 1576-1585', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 14 (2004), 309-319.
[2] F. Jeffrey Platt, 'Sir Thomas Wilkes: A Study in Elizabethan Diplomacy, Government and Patronage' (Michigan State University: unpublished doctoral thesis, 1972), Ch. 6.
[3] Stephen Alford, *The Watchers: A Secret History of the Reign of Elizabeth I* (London: Penguin, 2013), Ch. 19.

rectified very easily through study of Davison's career, with the collapse of his relationship with Leicester here, and with Burghley over the execution crisis, in Chapter 8.

This episode also highlights the importance of political credit for maintaining patronage relationships and securing preferment. Although the term appears frequently in Elizabethan correspondence, the concept of political credit has not yet been examined in detail, with the scholarship on early modern 'credit' instead relating to its social and economic usage.[4] The notion of political credit is closely tied to that of patronage, as clients developed their reputations, trustworthiness, and value to their patrons over the course of their career. Davison's credit was mentioned frequently by Leicester and, despite their conflict, he nevertheless managed to secure a prestigious promotion. This incident is therefore a valuable, and unique, case study through which to develop our understanding of political credit.

At the outset, Davison's political credit was high not only with his patrons, due to his success in seizing the cautionary towns, but within the Low Countries themselves, being trusted as a long-standing ambassador. As events unfolded, Davison's patrons responded to his involvement differently. Leicester became furious at Davison's failure to pacify the Queen, and used Davison's credit in the Low Countries against him, claiming that he had only trusted Davison's advice to accept the sovereignty because of his experience. For the Queen, Davison's involvement was a hindrance to his promotion, but ultimately not a barrier, as he had proven his political skill to such a high degree in autumn 1585. However, for Walsingham, and, to a lesser extent, Burghley, Davison remained a reliable and trustworthy agent, and was the only suitable candidate for the position of Walsingham's assistant secretary.

Finally, this incident also confirms the consistency of Davison's political creed. In Davison's eyes, Leicester's acceptance of the governor-generalship was essential for the

[4] See pp. 29-31.

preservation of the protestant cause, therefore, it must be done, regardless of Elizabeth's personal wishes. That Davison continued to defend this decision throughout his audiences with the Queen, rather than conceding and begging for her forgiveness, proved his utter dedication to the cause, even when it posed a risk to his own career and reputation. In hindsight, we may view this as a foreshadowing, or rehearsal, for the execution crisis the following year, in terms of Davison's relationships, creed, and determination.

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In the weeks preceding Leicester's arrival, concerns were raised about the extent of his authority. In late November, Maurice was finally set to be appointed as governor, captain-general and admiral of Holland, Zeeland, West Friesland, and the Brill, just as his father had been.[5] However, this caused some concern, both among the Dutch and in England, that this was a pre-emptive attempt to limit Leicester's authority. The States of Holland and Zeeland justified their action, on the grounds that Maurice's appointment had been agreed the year before, but the confirmation had been 'delayed'; nevertheless, they insisted that Maurice would remain subordinate and would 'obey and respect [Leicester] in all that may concern the Commission'.[6] Despite their excuses, the timing certainly seemed fortuitous, so the States-General refused to 'ratify' the act 'til your Lordships coming & with your approbacion bycause it might otherwise be taken as a devise to restrayne your authority although the contrary be pretended'.[7] Thus, whilst the States of Holland and Zeeland were eager to confirm a native leader, the States-General refused to jeopardise English favour, and the matter was soon resolved with a re-written act, which more explicitly confirmed Leicester's status.[8] Leicester himself expected to 'have asmuch authorytye as the prince of orange had or any other gouvenor

[5] SP 84/4 no. 86 – 22nd October 1585, act of the States of Holland and Zeeland.
[6] SP 84/5 no. 66 – 28th November 1585, States of Holland and Zeeland to the Dutch deputies in England. Original French: 'differer… et d'obeyir et respecte le mesme en tout ce que pourra concerner la Commission'.
[7] SP 84/5 no. 55 – 23rd November 1585, Davison to Leicester.
[8] SP 84/5 no. 67 – 29th November 1585, Davison to Burghley.

or captain generall hath had hertofore'.[9] So, the matter of the Leicester's authority was clearly on everyone's mind.

Yet Elizabeth had been perfectly clear – Leicester had been 'appointed to be Generall of her forces there, to assist them in their affaires'.[10] His role was to command the forces, and offer political advice and guidance to the States-General in conjunction with the two new English councillors of state. He was also charged with a level of political reform, to slim down the central government and 'cutt of the often references to the particuler states' by the States-General, which usually caused delays.[11] Though Elizabeth did not mention the issue of sovereignty, her stance on this, too, was perfectly clear, as during the treaty negotiations, she had insisted on becoming a 'protectrice' rather than a 'possessor', as had been proposed to Henry III. She also confirmed this in Leicester's instructions, noting that 'although she wold not take soe much uppon her as to comaund them in such absolute sort', she sought to provide 'advise… by her lieftenaunte… for the more speedie Atteyninge of a peace'.[12] Thus, Leicester's duties were clear – he was there to assist and support, but not to assume power.

Leicester finally departed from London on 5th December, and landed at Flushing five days later.[13] Davison planned to arrive in the Hague before Leicester to meet with the States, as the Zeeland deputies already 'appeare[d] resolved to referr unto him the sovereign commandement & hope to induce the rest to concurr with them', despite Elizabeth's prior refusal of the sovereignty.[14] Yet although Leicester arrived with a great entourage, Davison seemed to be his only competent advisor. By the end of the month, neither Pelham nor

[9] Harley MS 285 f. 144 – 1585, Leicester's memorandum.
[10] Cotton MS Galba C/VIII f. 115v – November 1585, the Queen to the States-General (contemporary minute). See also the treaty papers, on the agreed remit of the nobleman: SP 103/33 f. 172, f.174, f. 176.
[11] Cotton MS Galba C/VIII f. 119v – abstracts of Leicester's instructions. See also f. 215.
[12] Cotton MS Galba C/VIII f. 215 – abstracts of Leicester's instructions.
[13] SP 84/5 no. 90 – 5th December 1585, Walsingham to Davison; Harley MS 6845 f. 26 – 1585, journal of Stephen Burrough, Admiral of the Fleet.
[14] SP 84/5 no. 121 – 17th December 1585, Davison to Walsingham.

Killigrew had arrived, and Leicester was unimpressed by Dr Clark, whom he regarded as 'to lytle' to stand up to the Dutch deputies – his 'good wyll' and 'pretty skollors wytt' was no match for 'these bygg fellowes'.[15] Leicester also requested the dispatch of a pursuivant (a heraldic officer) fluent in either French, Dutch or Latin. The Portcullis Pursuivant William Segar had initially been intended to accompany Leicester, but made 'xx excuses' to remain at home. Consequently, Leicester wrote that 'yf hit were not for Master Davison I shold be very farr to seke god knowes'.[16]

However, before this letter was received at home, Elizabeth now seemed 'dispos[ed] to yeld' to Davison's 'revocacion shortly both for that she meaneth to use your service otherwyes, as also to thend you maye attend your owne particular busines'.[17] The other 'service' referred to was the role of joint principal secretary.[18] This was a position of serious weight, as, considering Walsingham's ever-worsening health, the assistant secretary would need to be of exceptional ability in order to manage alone when he was unwell. It was particularly significant because Elizabeth had always been reluctant to appoint more than one secretary unless absolutely necessary – since November 1558, there had only been two joint secretaries for a total of less than six years.[19] She must have therefore been convinced, first, that there was need for a second secretary, due to Walsingham's poor health, and second, that Davison was the

[15] Harley MS 285 f. 171 – 26th December 1585, Leicester to Walsingham. Clark seems to have improved throughout his service, as in July Leicester reported that 'Dr Barthelmew Clerk doth serve exceeding honestlye and painfullie, and doth increase greatly in understanding' (Bruce, item 136 p. 365 – 29th July 1586, Leicester to Walsingham).
[16] Harley MS 285 f. 171.
[17] SP 84/5 no. 144 – 27th December 1585, Walsingham to Davison.
[18] Although Elizabeth did not specify the position, it must have been the secretaryship, as it was common knowledge by February – see Historical Manuscripts Commission, *The Manuscripts of His Grace the Duke of Rutland* (4 vols., 1888-1905), i (London, 1888), p. 190 – 14th February 1586, Roger Manners to the Earl of Rutland.
[19] These were Walsingham and Sir Thomas Smith from December 1573 to March 1576, and Walsingham and Sir Thomas Wilson from November 1577 to June 1581 – see Simon Adams, Alan Bryson and Mitchell Leimon, 'Walsingham, Sir Francis (c. 1532–1590), principal secretary', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford University Press, 2009 (2004)) <https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/28624>, pp. 8, 29; Ian W. Archer, 'Smith, Sir Thomas (1513–1577), scholar, diplomat, and political theorist', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (2008), pp. 5-6; Susan Doran and Jonathan Woolfson, 'Wilson, Thomas (1523/4–1581), humanist and administrator', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (2004), pp. 4-5.

most capable candidate. Considering the timing, it seems likely that, after years of service, the Queen had finally been convinced of Davison's capability for such an important position due to his work implementing Nonsuch. This therefore totally discredits Camden's claim that he was promoted purely to be used as a scapegoat for the execution.[20]

Having arrived in the Hague on 27th December, Leicester was visited on New Year's Day by a deputation from the States.[21] To great fanfare, Dr Leonius, the chancellor of the States-General, offered Leicester the 'absolute governement of the whole provinces'.[22] When they withdrew for more privacy into Leicester's chamber, he 'called such of the best of my companie as I thought meetest for v or vj wherof Master Davison & Master Dr Clerk were ij'. Although Elizabeth had already refused the sovereignty, the States, 'seing the creditt and trust it pleased her to putt me in here', desired Leicester to 'take the place & name of absolute governour' in her stead. Davison's presence in this meeting was essential, as Leicester, surrounded by French-speaking Dutchmen, was only able to read, but not speak, French – so, 'I aunswered by Master Davison (whom I required to delyver it in French…)'.[23] Thanking the deputies, he professed himself 'very farre unprovided to give them aunswer' since it was 'further then had past in the contract'. The States would not give up easily, and devised a written act setting out the terms of Leicester's role as absolute governor, 'confessing that confusion of officers hath undoon their governement' and could only be remedied by decisive leadership. The pressure was mounting, as 'all the lords here have ben in like sort with me, &

[20] William Camden, *Annales, the true and royall history of the famous empresse Elizabeth* (London: Printed for Benjamin Fisher, 1625) [STC (2nd ed.) 4497], p. 215. Similar in William Camden, *The historie of the life and death of Mary Stuart Queene of Scotland* (London: Printed by John Haviland for Richard Whitaker, 1624) [STC (2nd ed.) 24509a], p. 244.
[21] Harley MS 285 f. 160 – 31st December 1585, Leicester to Walsingham; Harley MS 285 f. 176 – 14th January 1586, Leicester to Burghley.
[22] Harley MS 285 f. 176.
[23] Simon Adams, 'Dudley, Robert, earl of Leicester (1532/3–1588), courtier and magnate', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford University Press, 2008 (2004)) <https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/8160>, p. 2.

all the captens & governors and magistrates of townes, pressing me most earnestly… to take it'.[24]

Davison continued to play a central role throughout this period of deliberation. After all, it was Davison upon whom Leicester had depended as a conduit to the Prince of Orange, and later to Maurice; it was Davison who had faithfully reported, sent intelligence, and defended Leicester's reputation abroad. There was no-one closer, or more experienced, in whom Leicester could trust, so it was Davison who worked on Leicester's behalf in negotiations with the States-General.[25] Before the 11th, another, more modified offer was made, which imposed conditions on Leicester's authority. His affront at such an 'unfitt' role, with 'so great a name upon me [but with] so lytle power more' confirmed his preference for the initial proposition – but he still requested Davison's advice, 'pray[ing] you therefor what is to [be] done'.[26]

By the 14th, Leicester had resolved to accept.[27] This was reminiscent of Davison's decision over the act of ampliation – both men were apparently initially cautious, but after some deliberation, took the decision out of necessity for the cause. Considering the significance of Leicester's decision, Davison was dispatched home to explain the 'reasons' to the Queen in person, since he 'hath seen how I have proceeded, and upon what necessitie'.[28] Davison agreed that Leicester's acceptance had been a 'Necessity', and privately asked Walsingham to persuade the Queen 'to suspend her judgment till she be infourmed more particularly from my self of the matter & circumstances'.[29] Adams described the decision to send Davison as a

[24] Harley MS 285 f. 176.
[25] Cotton MS Galba C/VIII f. 4 – 12th January 1586, Davison to Leicester.
[26] SP 84/6 no. 10 [inconsistent foliation] – 11th January 1586, Leicester to Davison.
[27] He officially accepted on the 16th, and was formally sworn in on the 25th – Simon Adams, 'Davison, William (d. 1608), diplomat and administrator', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford University Press, 2008 (2004)) <https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/7306>, p. 11; SP 84/6 nos. 49 and 50 [inconsistent foliation] – 25th January 1586, Sir Thomas Sherley to Burghley/Walsingham, respectively. Adams contradicts himself on this date – in his *ODNB* of Davison he says 25th, but in his *ODNB* of Leicester he says 15th (old style). However, Davison and his colleagues always wrote in OS when abroad, so Sherley's date of 25th must be OS, and the correct date.
[28] Harley MS 285 f. 176 – 14th January 1586, Leicester to Burghley.
[29] SP 84/6 no. 28 [inconsistent foliation] – 16th January 1586, Davison to Walsingham.

'mystery' – 'why Leicester, who knew better than anyone else how to handle Elizabeth, failed to write to her directly and gambled all on Davison's providing his defence is still to be explained'.[30] This is not strictly true, as Leicester did write to Elizabeth, but sent these letters with Davison, meaning that they were equally delayed. Nevertheless, Leicester could still have written ahead, to initially inform the Queen, and then sent his full explanation by Davison.

There are perhaps two explanations for Leicester's chosen course. The first is simple cowardice – Leicester was afraid to confront the Queen first, and wanted a convenient scapegoat in case the worst should happen. Alternatively, he may have honestly believed that, due to his experience and political credit, Davison could give the fullest and most convincing account to the Queen. After all, it was Davison, having been left in sole charge for over three months, who was most familiar with the chaos within the Dutch government and military, so Leicester may have felt that this eyewitness experience would carry more weight. He appeared to trust Davison wholeheartedly, professing that he could only spare him in order to 'have hir majesty fully answered & satysfyed touching all our proceedings here… and no man able to do yt but him self'.[31]

At this stage, Davison's political credit with Leicester was incredibly high. Even before his departure, Leicester asked Walsingham 'as ever you tender the success of this servyce retorn him hether with the more credytt the better for without him I confes my self quyte maymed' – so, Leicester himself was aware of the importance of credit within political service.[32] It is worth remembering, too, that Leicester was surrounded by senior English agents and a huge retinue, yet still none measured up to Davison . His unique experience and skills were invaluable, and Leicester praised him as 'the most sufficient man to serve hir majesty that

[30] Adams, 'Davison', p. 12.
[31] Harley MS 285 f. 188.
[32] Harley MS 285 f. 182 – 22nd January 1586, Leicester to Walsingham.

I know of all our nation, for he knoweth all partes of these countreyes, & all persones of any accompt, with all ther umores, and hath great credytt among them all here'.[33]

Leicester also reiterated his praise to Burghley, emphasising that Davison had 'delt most painfully & chargeably in hir majestys servyce here as any man hath in any place don &… [is] of such credytt withall the chife sort as I know no stranger in any place hath the lyke and he lyves lyke a gentleman and chargeably in every way'.[34] Davison's high credit with the Dutch was therefore also crucial in boosting his credit with Leicester. Though Leicester had built a productive correspondence relationship with Orange, and to a lesser extent Maurice, he was less familiar with many of the States' deputies and various city magistrates who, as evidenced by the incident over the keys to the Brill, could be hostile to Englishmen. The respect and trust they bore unto Davison, developed over the past decade, was therefore crucial for gaining their support for the new regime. Davison had been desperate for Leicester's arrival, to instil authority and order, but it was, in fact, most productive when they worked as a partnership – Leicester brought status and power, whilst Davison brought expertise and experience. In the meantime, Leicester sought an urgent replacement for Davison with prior experience in the Low Countries, and 'would gladly have Daniell Rogers here for some good services which I thincke he is fitt for'.[35]

In light of Davison's ability, Leicester wholeheartedly supported his promotion. He had heard the 'many brutes and reportes… of [Elizabeth's] good intentyon towards him', and confirmed that 'he wyll deserve any goodnes she shall bestow uppon him whatsoever yt be'.[36] However, Leicester hoped that this promotion could wait a little, as he was still desperate for

[33] Harley MS 285 f. 188 – 31st January 1586, Leicester to Walsingham.
[34] SP 84/6 no. 84 [inconsistent foliation] – 1st February 1586, Leicester to Burghley.
[35] Harley MS 285 f. 190 – 1st February 1586, Leicester to Walsingham. Unfortunately for Leicester, Rogers was never sent – Bruce, item 139 p. 383 – 7th August 1586, Leicester to Walsingham.
[36] Harley MS 285 f. 188. Similar to Burghley – 'surely my Lord you shall doe a good dede that he may be remembred with hir majesties gracious consideracion' (SP 84/6 no. 84 [inconsistent foliation]).

Davison's return – 'I protest before god that it yf yt were but for my none [own] partycular respect I wold not requyre it for v thousand pounds but… how nedefull for hir majestys service his being here wylbe'.[37] Moreover, the prospect of promotion would also further 'encrease his credytt here'. Both Davison and Leicester had, after all, worked for years for English military intervention, so he did not want Davison's absence to now hinder the success of their mission. Leicester's duty, as his patron, to support Davison's promotion therefore conflicted with his desperation, as his colleague, for his return.

Davison finally left the Hague on 5th February, and, after being delayed at the coast, sailed from the Brill on the 11th.[38] As per his instructions from Leicester, Davison's task was to gain the Queen's forgiveness and approval for Leicester's decision, and to emphasise the necessity and urgency of his acceptance.[39] As Davison made his journey, news of the Queen's anger began to filter through to Leicester. Leicester first heard rumours of Elizabeth's reaction, and soon received a formal reprimand from the Privy Council.[40] Due to postal delays caused by poor weather conditions, the Privy Council had not learned of the initial offer until the end of January, and had still not heard of Leicester's acceptance. They informed him that Elizabeth was 'much offended' with the States' offer, and was annoyed that Leicester, rather than reprimanding the deputies for their offer, had given 'them thanks for the same'.[41] She instructed Leicester to turn down the offer, but, by the time he received this letter, on 8th February, it was far too late.[42] Yet he still did not seem to fathom the severity of the situation, as rather than

[37] SP 84/6 no. 84 [inconsistent foliation].
[38] Cotton MS Galba C/IX f. 82, at f. 82r – 17th February 1586, Davison to Leicester.
[39] Cotton MS Galba C/IX f. 68 – February 1586, Leicester's instructions for Davison.
[40] He defended himself to Walsingham (Harley MS 285 f. 200 – 7th February 1586, Leicester to Walsingham), and also complained to Davison (SP 84/6 no. 106 [inconsistent foliation] – 7th February 1586, Leicester to Davison).
[41] SP 84/6 no. 53 [inconsistent foliation] – 26th January 1586, Privy Council to Leicester.
[42] His reply (Harley MS 285 f. 205, below) is endorsed by Burghley, 'Erle of Lecester answer to a letter sent by the Queens Majesties Commandment from Certen of the Counsell the 25 of January'. This probably refers to their letter of 26th, above, as there are no extant letters from the Council to Leicester dated the 25th.

write personally to the Queen, he only replied to his colleagues.[43] Though Leicester mentions Davison in this letter, there is no hint of blame towards him – indeed, Leicester took full responsibility, professing that 'I do desire for my mistaking offence to beare the burden of it'.

By the time Davison landed at Margate on 12th February, Elizabeth was implacable.[44] Though the Privy Council managed to delay her by a few days, Elizabeth determined that Sir Thomas Heneage would be sent to deal with Leicester, and he departed for Margate on the 14th.[45] Had Leicester written personally, as Simon Adams suggested, rather than just send Davison, her anger might have been mitigated, as Leicester's servant and distant kinsman Thomas Duddeley reported that 'the long staie of Master Davysons commyng and your honours forbearing to write to hir majestie all this while, notwithstanding so many messengers as commythe from thence, dothe greatlye offend hir'.[46] The odds were therefore already stacked against Davison, even before he met with the Queen. On 13th February, almost a month after Leicester's acceptance, Davison finally arrived in London and immediately asked Walsingham 'in what termes thinges stood in court'. [47] Walsingham advised that the delay in Davison's arrival 'had wounded the whole cause', and that he expected Elizabeth would refuse an audience.[48] Davison's involvement in the affair had now damaged his political credit, as she 'threatened Sir Phillip Sydney & my self as principall Actours & perswaders therof'.[49] As Walsingham persuaded Elizabeth to grant an audience, Davison went briefly to Hatton. He did not mention what occurred in this meeting, but it is interesting that he went to him in a time of crisis, as he would do so again before the dispatch of the death warrant for the Queen of Scots.

[43] Harley MS 285 f. 205 – 8th February 1586, Leicester to Burghley, Walsingham, Hatton and Hunsdon.
[44] Cotton MS Galba C/IX f. 82, at f. 82r.
[45] Cotton MS Galba C/VIII f. 24 – 10th February 1586, Heneage's instructions; Cotton MS Galba C/VIII f. 29 – 10th February 1586, Elizabeth to Leicester; Cotton MS Titus B/VII – 3rd March 1586, Heneage to Leicester; Cotton MS Galba C/IX f. 82, at f. 83v.
[46] Cotton MS Galba C/IX f. 79 – 11th February 1586, Thomas Dudley to Leicester.
[47] Cotton MS Galba C/IX f. 82, at f. 82r.
[48] Cotton MS Galba C/IX f. 82, at f. 82r.
[49] Cotton MS Galba C/IX f. 82, at f. 82r.

Davison's audiences with the Queen suggest that, at this stage, his credit was damaged rather than entirely destroyed, as despite her anger, she nevertheless gave Davison multiple audiences, and heard his bold defence without having him removed. Unsurprisingly, his first audience with the Queen was heated. She not only accused Leicester of deliberately disobeying her 'express commaundment', but also blamed Davison, 'in that I had not openly opposed my self against it wherin I had as she pretended greatly deceaved her opinion & trust she had reposed in me'.[50] Davison's defence would have been very familiar to the Queen, as his reasons were entirely consistent with his previous counsel on the Low Countries. He insisted that nothing 'what soever could cary me to deale otherwise with her then became an honest & dutifull servaunt', and began a passionate 'discourse unto her [on] the estate of the country before your Lordships coming… the doubtfull termes wherein you found thinges at your arryvall… inclyning to a peace with thenemy'.[51] Consequently, they had urgently required 'some person of wisdome and authority' to take command of 'ther governement taxed with corruption, partiality & confusion', and the Dutch had always intended to offer the position to Leicester.[52] Indeed, this had been fairly apparent from their wavering over Maurice's appointments only a few months earlier. Ultimately, he told the Queen, that 'unles you would have lyved theare as an eye witnes of the dismembring & division of the whole country', she could not understand the necessity of Leicester's acceptance. For Davison, then, his and Leicester's unique position as eyewitnesses enabled them much greater insight than the Queen herself, and therefore justified their taking actions against her misguided policy. Such an argument is, of course, familiar from his conciliar discourses.

Unfortunately, Elizabeth 'persist[ed] still in her offence', and 'often [&] vehemently charged' Davison 'to have forgotten my duty in that I had not disswaded or opposed my self

[50] Cotton MS Galba C/IX f. 82, at f. 82r.
[51] Cotton MS Galba C/IX f. 82, at f. 82r-v.
[52] Cotton MS Galba C/IX f. 82, at f. 82v.

against your fact being theare as her Ambassador'.[53] Yet although Davison served Elizabeth, he also believed that his duty was to preserve England's safety, not to blindly obey the Queen's policy. By taking decisive action to ensure England's safety, Leicester and Davison had fulfilled what they perceived to be their duty as servants of the Crown, but had disobeyed the Queen's personal wishes in the process. This was later expressed perfectly by Philip Sidney, who described Leicester's acceptance as 'a peece of an undutiful dutifulnes'.[54]

Davison then dared to criticise the Queen's policy. He had often done so in his letters to Walsingham, but this was probably the first time he had done so to Elizabeth's face. First, Davison remarked, rather cuttingly, that he 'never deemed so meanely… of her owne favour towardes your lordship… as to take the commandement of the reliques of Master Norris his worne and decayed troupes as a charge very unfitting to a person of your quality'.[55] He then alleged that 'some one of my Lords if not her majesties self' had told the deputies during the Nonsuch negotiations that although Elizabeth had refused the sovereignty, she would 'not restrayne them to give what authority & commaundement they should find expedient & necessary for ther estate'.[56] Though he did not name this lord, it was plausible that, in the hopes of pushing the deputies to agree to the requirement of the cautionary towns, someone (probably Walsingham) had been vague over the level of authority permitted to the nobleman. Moreover, Davison insisted that 'I never recyved lyne either from herself or any counsellor she had tending to any' limitation of Leicester's authority. He would not hesitate do the same again, 'protesting unto her majesty that if I were yet theare & myne opinion demaunded I could not tell what other advise to give your Lordship then that you had taken'. On this defiant note, their 'long and vehement debate' ended. For Elizabeth to endure Davison's lengthy defence,

[53] Cotton MS Galba C/IX f. 82, at f. 82v.
[54] Harley MS 285 f. 237 – 14th April 1586, Sidney to Davison.
[55] Cotton MS Galba C/IX f. 82, at ff. 82v-83r.
[56] Cotton MS Galba C/IX f. 82, at f. 83r.

including criticisms of her own actions, was remarkable. Her previous esteem of Davison must therefore have been high enough that she wished to hear what he had to say, even in her current anger. It also confirms that she was able to understand and appreciate different rhetorical techniques – although she disagreed with Davison's blunt argument, she nevertheless engaged in debate rather than simply dismissing him.

The morning after Davison's first audience, he heard that Heneage had been dispatched from court. Since his defiance the previous day had wrought no good, Davison 'repayred againe' to the Queen with a different rhetorical approach.[57] This time he grovelled, and 'with teares besought her to be better advised'. Elizabeth was now calmer, and 'len[t] me a more patient & willing eare then she had vouchsafed me the day before'. Nevertheless, she would not relent, and reprimanded Davison for the 'peremptory &… partiall dealing at my handes of whom she had conceaved better opinion [&] towardes whom she had intended more good then now she found me woorthy of' – so, she had indeed regarded Davison very highly.[58] Although any hope of promotion now seemed destroyed, this did not stop Davison from shamelessly requesting 'leave to retyre my self home to bestow the rest of my dayes in prayer for her', since his 'interest in her publique service' prevented him from proceeding any further in her mistaken policy. Though presented plaintively, this was still an outright criticism towards the Queen, but, surprisingly, it appeared to work, as she then delayed Heneage's departure 'till he heard her further pleasure'. Burghley then met Davison after this second audience, and 'went upp directly to the Queen' to 'labou[r] very earnestly' to stop Heneage's journey. Though unsuccessful, Burghley did manage to temper Heneage's message. Burghley also obtained a third audience for Davison, during which he 'found her majesty to conceave somewhat better', and was granted leave to retire home for a few days. Things were now looking up, and Davison

[57] Cotton MS Galba C/IX f. 82, at f. 83r.
[58] Cotton MS Galba C/IX f. 82, at f. 83v.

assured Leicester that 'I find the heate of her majesties offence towardes your lordship to abate every day somewhat'.[59]

The Queen's repeated reception of Davison was all the more significant since she refused to see Leicester's other representatives. Leicester later sent his kinsman and servant Sir Thomas Sherley 'to hir majesty to aquaint hir with the state of thinges here as they have passed synce Master Davyson's repayer home'.[60] However, upon his arrival, the Queen 'refused to speake with' Sherley, or receave his letters from Leicester. Sherley was only permitted to send his message via Burghley and Hatton, who related it to the Queen on his behalf.[61] This was a drastically different reception to that of Davison. Despite the Queen's anger, he obtained three audiences; Sherley, after eight days of solicitations, received only one.[62] Elizabeth would also not even receive letters from Sherley, whereas she had accepted Leicester's letter from Davison, which, 'after she had opened and begonne to peruse putt upp into her pocquett to read as I think, at more leysur'.[63] Sherley, at this time, officially outranked Davison, as a knight and landed gentleman, yet this was irrelevant. Davison's political credit and relationship with the Queen, at least until this incident, ultimately meant that she valued his explanation more than that of someone with lesser credit.

Meanwhile, Leicester was nervously awaiting news. Davison had, by now, retired to his London home, and planned to travel soon to Bath for his health.[64] Despite Leicester's earlier pleas for Davison's return, Burghley informed him that 'I find noe likelood to geve your

[59] Cotton MS Galba C/IX f. 82, at f. 83v.
[60] SP 84/6 no. 138 [inconsistent foliation] – 28th February 1586, Leicester to Burghley. Sherley and Leicester were second cousins, sharing Richard Guildford and Anne Pympe as great-grandparents. Sherley was also first cousin once removed to Davison's wife, Catherine – Sherley's grandparents Thomas Isley and Elizabeth Guildford were Catherine's greatgrandparents. Janet Pennington, 'Sherley [Shirley], Sir Thomas (c. 1542–1612), politician and courtier', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford University Press, 2016 (2004)) <https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/25435>, p. 1.
[61] Cotton MS Galba C/IX f. 122 – 7th March 1586, Sherley to Leicester.
[62] Cotton MS Galba C/IX f. 131 – 14th March 1586, Sherley to Leicester.
[63] Cotton MS Galba C/IX f. 82, at f. 83r.
[64] Cotton MS Galba C/VIII f. 33 – 17th February 1586, Davison to [Sidney]; f. 46 – 28th February 1586, Davison to Leicester.

lordship anye hope thereof'.[65] By 19th February, Leicester had heard the 'evil' speeches 'from England to me', but still trusted Davison, and wished for his return.[66] Heneage arrived at Flushing by 3rd March, and on the 9th he delivered his 'very sharp' message to Leicester and the Council of State.[67] Though Leicester had already heard the 'evil' reports, it seems that, confronted directly with Heneage, he now panicked, and decided to thrust the blame onto Davison alone.[68] This highlights the fragility of political relationships – Leicester and Davison were kinsmen, and had worked together closely for a decade, yet Leicester was willing to break these bonds for selfish motives. Davison's alleged crime was two-fold – first, he was responsible for convincing Leicester to accept without informing the Queen, and second, he had failed in his task of gaining the Queen's approval. Crucially, the first accusation is not borne out by Leicester's earlier letters – though Davison had supported his acceptance, so had a chorus of others, and it was quite clear that Leicester had been keen to accept. The second accusation was also unfair, as Elizabeth's anger was not due to Davison's failure, but rather to Leicester's actions and failure to write.

Leicester wrote to the Privy Council, insisting that he had been 'ernest' to inform Elizabeth immediately of the offer, and had only been convinced otherwise by Davison and others – 'how farr agenst my wyll it was notwithstanding any reasons delyvered me that he & others persisted in to have me accept first of this place'.[69] Crucially, the words '& others' are inserted above, as an afterthought; moreover, none of these 'others' are mentioned by name, in this or subsequent letters. From Davison's own reports, we know that Sidney was also held as a 'principall actor', and from Leicester's, that 'all the lords here have ben in like sort with me, & all the captens & governors and magistrates of townes'– Davison was not the only one.

[65] Cotton MS Galba C/IX f. 116 – 6th March 1586, Burghley to Leicester.
[66] SP 84/6 no. 274 [inconsistent foliation] – 19th February 1586, Leicester to Davison.
[67] Cotton MS Titus B/VII f. 86; SP 84/7 no. 31 – 17th March 1586, Leicester to Burghley.
[68] Harley MS 285 f. 228 – 9th March 1586, Leicester to the Privy Council.
[69] Harley MS 285 f. 228.

Sidney even professed to Davison that 'for my part I wil for no caws deny (and therefore you shall have my handwryting to prove I am no accuser of you) that I was ever of opinion he should accept it without delay'.[70] So why was only Davison named? According to Leicester, he had trusted Davison the most, since 'his knowledge therof I know to be farr beyond myne having byn contynewally beaten here amonge them long before my coming'.[71] Whereas Davison's specialist knowledge had previously been an asset, and had been repeatedly praised by Leicester, now, it was a black mark against his name. Nevertheless, this still reinforces the importance of Davison's expertise – even when used against him, no-one could deny that Davison was an incredibly skilled diplomat.

Since Davison was already back in England, and had already faced the Queen's wrath, it is also likely that Leicester saw him as a convenient scapegoat, rather than pinning the blame on a less familiar or more distant face in the Low Countries. Leicester claimed that it had been Davison's own idea to go over to Elizabeth instead of his, as he 'thought him self fully hable to satysfye hir majesty'. Leicester had trusted him to fulfil this promise, but had been disappointed by 'Master Davisons over great slacknes to have answered soner & better for me as he promysed he wold'. As shown by Davison's letters, and as could probably be testified by Burghley, Davison could not have answered any better, and, as for sooner, it had been Leicester who had retained him until early February.

Having pointed the finger squarely at Davison, Leicester added 'I say not thys to worke any blame to Master Davyson whose most sincere honest minde toward hir service I must acknowledge', admitting that 'my yelding was my none [own] fault what soever his persuasions'. Such a tokenistic statement is reminiscent of Davison's own letters, in which his rhetorical qualifiers did little to modify the tone of his counsel. In a private letter to Walsingham

[70] Harley MS 285 f. 237 – 14th April 1586, Sidney to Davison.
[71] Harley MS 285 f. 228.

the same day, Leicester then reaffirmed Davison's responsibility, insisting 'I must thank him only for my blame… no necessyty here could have made me leave hir majesty unacquantyd with the cause before I wold have acceptyd of yt but only his so ernest pressing me with his faythfull assured promys to dyschardge me'.[72]

So far, one could reasonably believe that Leicester was simply lying, in order to deflect the blame from himself. Simon Adams has suggested that Heneage may have advised Leicester to blame Davison, and the timing of his change of heart certainly supports this.[73] However, it appears that, whatever advice he received, Leicester genuinely believed his own accusations, as the following day he wrote to Davison directly. Leicester levelled the same charges as in the previous letters: that he had 'chifely perswade[d] me to take this chardge uppon me', and that he had dealt with Elizabeth with 'negligent carelesnes'.[74] This was therefore no performative scapegoating (as would happen to Davison the following year), but a genuine collapse of their relationship. Davison's political credit, developed over a decade of close cooperation, not to mention their kinship, had suddenly evaporated. When Davison received this letter, his pent-up anger spilled onto the page, as he underlined certain accusations, and added marginal annotations in his defence. Davison seems to have retained possession of this letter, so, this was not a case of him responding directly to Leicester. Rather, it may have been simply a cathartic exercise, or a more deliberate one, to make a record of his specific defences if ever called upon. Davison denied being responsible for Leicester's acceptance, as 'Sir Philip Sidney and others [could] witnes'. Though Leicester had 'a doubt bewrayed', he had given 'no commandement to the contrary', and knew that such a position had been Leicester's 'ende in

[72] Harley MS 285 f. 225 – 9th March 1586, Leicester to Walsingham.
[73] Adams, 'Dudley, Robert, earl of Leicester', pp. 27-8.
[74] Harley MS 285 f. 230 – 10th March 1586, Leicester to Davison, with Davison's comments. These comments are not in Davison's usual hand, but this small, neat italic hand appears occasionally in Davison's papers, presumably where he is conscious of writing small or for an audience. See also Harley MS 290 f. 246 – [after August 1598], Davison's memorandum on Burghley; f. 266 – undated, verses by Davison.

coming over'. Indeed, this is evident from Leicester's own writings, as he had carefully considered the nature of his power long before setting foot in the Low Countries.[75]

In light of Elizabeth's anger and Leicester's accusations, this could very well have been the end of Davison's career; however, as he was abandoned by one patron, others leapt to his defence. Walsingham informed Leicester that he 'beleve[d], by the great protestatyons he hathe made unto me, hathe acquyted himselve honestly towardes your lordship', and expected that 'ther hathe ben some yll reporte made unto your lordship of the poore gentleman from hence', perhaps implying that this was by Heneage.[76] He argued that Leicester's anger was unjustified, as 'at sooche time as he arrived her majestye was so incensed agaynst your lordship as all the arguments and orators in the world could not have wrought any satysfactyon'. For Walsingham, then, Davison had greater credit than the Queen's favourite. Sidney also criticised Leicester's reaction, explaining to Davison that 'I did never think he had writtne touching you into England', and insisting that 'I am no accuser of you'.[77] He also added 'I know [Leicester] in his judgment loves you very well how so ever in his passion he have writen'.[78]

By the beginning of April, Elizabeth had begun to relent. She conceded that if any alteration in government 'may woork any peril of consequence to that State', she would 'tollerate' Leicester remaining in post, but instructed him to stop using the 'absolut title'.[79] As the situation rumbled on, Davison was away from court, 'as litle attentive to the proceedings in the partes whence I came'.[80] Having fallen ill with a 'cold taken on my way homewards', he

[75] Harley MS 285 f. 144.
[76] Cotton MS Galba C/IX f. 157 – 1st April 1586, Walsingham to Leicester.
[77] Harley MS 285 f. 237 – 14th April 1586, Sidney to Davison.
[78] Harley MS 285 f. 237.
[79] Cotton MS Galba C/IX f. 171 – [1st April] 1586, the Queen to Leicester.
[80] SP 84/7 no. 119 – April 1586, Davison to Randolph.

was currently housebound, and planning to travel to Bath 'for cure of an ache that hath contynewed in my knees' since leaving Scotland in September 1584.[81]

Although Elizabeth had told Davison that he had ruined his chances of promotion, by early July it seemed likely that he would become the new secretary, alongside Walsingham.[82] In light of the events of the past few months, this was extraordinary. His recovery must therefore have been due to a winning combination of credit and patronage. Elizabeth had, of course, considered Davison's promotion as early as December 1585, as he had proven his exceptional capability through his seizure of the cautionary towns. His suitability for the role was therefore not in question, but his chances seemed to have been scuppered due to his involvement in the governor-generalship incident. It therefore seems likely that, once the Queen had calmed down, Walsingham had persuaded her to renew her earlier offer of promotion. Walsingham would only want an assistant whom he could trust implicitly, so no other candidates were touted following the incident – it would still be either Davison or no-one. Such a high-ranking appointment could not have been made without Burghley's full support, too.

The significance of this promotion is even clearer when we compare it to the case of Davison's peer and colleague, Thomas Wilkes.[83] After being sent to the Low Countries in July 1586, Wilkes was selected as the new English Councillor of State in October. Like Davison, he was praised highly by his colleagues – according to Leicester, 'her majestie doth not know what a jewell she hath of him', and according to Lord Buckhurst, he was 'so sufficiently

[81] SP 84/7 no. 119. There is a letter in the State Papers (SP 84/8 f. 47) calendared 17th May 1586 from Leicester to Davison, but this is actually from the previous year, as the address clearly says 'Ambassador resident for the Queens Majestie with the States of the lowe countryes'. Adams ('Davison', p. 12) wrote that 'several months later Leicester and Davison cautiously began corresponding again, but the warmth had left their relations' – this may have referred to Davison's letter of 2nd July, or mistakenly referred to this letter.

[82] Considering the timing of Davison's defence to Leicester on 2nd July (see below, Cotton MS Galba C/IX f. 263), it seems likely that his promotion had been discussed in late June/early July, hence his decision to smooth relations over with Leicester. Walsingham then probably reported the promotion to Leicester once it seemed fairly certain, by 11th July (Cotton MS Galba C/IX f. 302).

[83] For more on Wilkes' disgrace, see Platt, 'Wilkes', Ch. 6.

practised in the estate of other countries and so well trained in your affairs at home, with such excellent gifts of utterance, memory, wit, courage and knowledge and with so faithful a heart to serve your majesty'.[84] However, he soon clashed with Leicester over policy matters, and the pair criticised each other in their dispatches. As the conflict worsened, Wilkes and John Norris decided to return to England in July 1587 without permission from either Leicester or the Queen. Leicester was incandescent, and wrote to Elizabeth accusing Wilkes of 'touch[ing]' his 'credytt'.[85] Upon his arrival, Wilkes was imprisoned, initially under house arrest, then in the Fleet for two months, and again under house arrest. Walsingham supported Wilkes as much as he could – permitting him to collect his belongings from home before his imprisonment, and securing him decent lodgings within the prison.[86] When Leicester heard of these gestures, he also became angry with Walsingham, declaring that 'that if his nerest kinsman in the world had done the like to any of the Lords he would never speake for him'.[87] Wilkes was eventually released in September, but Leicester's fury and influence was such that he was not allowed to resume his position as clerk of the Privy Council until the year after Leicester's death.[88]

By comparison, Davison had weathered his storm incredibly well – not only had he survived Leicester's anger, but had also been promoted, thanks both to the support of his patrons, and also to his own credit and experience. Indeed, the Wilkes episode shows that Davison's promotion was not down to his patrons' favour alone, as Walsingham was unable to help Wilkes until after Leicester's death. Davison's high credit after Nonsuch, and the Queen's

[84] Bruce, item 139, p. 383 – 7th August 1586, Leicester to Walsingham; P. W. Hasler (ed.), *The House of Commons 1558–1603,* 3 vols. (London: Her Majesty's Stationery Office, 1981), p. 620. Both quoted in Michael Hicks, 'Wilkes, Sir Thomas (c. 1545–1598), diplomat', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford University Press, 2004) <https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/29412>, p. 3.
[85] SP 84/16 f. 18 – 7th July 1587, Leicester to the Queen.
[86] Platt, 'Wilkes', pp. 225-6.
[87] Harley MS 287 f. 37 – 25th July 1587, Francis Needham to Walsingham.
[88] Hicks, 'Wilkes', p. 4.

previous favour of him, must therefore have also been significant factors. In fact, several years later she referred to Davison as having been 'a man of her owne choyse'.[89]

Now that it seemed likely that he would be working with Leicester on the Privy Council, Davison wanted to clear the air, and wrote to Leicester defending himself against his accusations.[90] Wishing not to cause further friction, Davison framed this letter as a defence against his 'yllwillers', and used the classic trope of a lord – Leicester – misled by evil counsellors. It is unknown whether Leicester ever replied to this letter, as the next extant piece of correspondence between the pair is dated 4th November, and relates to arrangements for Flushing following the death of Sidney.[91] A week later, Walsingham then wrote to Leicester to inform him that Elizabeth 'seemethe to be dysposed to make Master Dayvson my assystaunt in the place I serve', and reiterated that 'for my own parte, I doe not fynde but that he hathe dealt well bothe for the cause and [also] towards your lordship'.[92] The change was startling – back in December, Leicester had actively encouraged Davison's promotion, yet now he had to be encouraged to accept it.

These letters definitively discredit Nicolas' bizzare suggestion that Davison may have been 'indebted' to Leicester for his promotion, as we can clearly see that, around the time that Davison's promotion was discussed, the pair were still not on speaking terms.[93] It was Davison's letter of 2nd July which broke the ice after months of silence, and Leicester was obviously still angry, hence Walsingham's placatory comments. Nicolas' account of the entire governor-generalship episode is confused, and he actually cited this 2nd July letter, yet still suggested that by now Leicester must have become 'convinced that his anger was undeserved',

[89] Harley MS 290 f. 240 – [late 1590-early 1591], Essex to Davison.
[90] Cotton MS Galba C/IX f. 263 – 2nd July 1586, Davison to Leicester.
[91] Cotton MS Galba C/X f. 41 – 4th November 1586, Davison to Leicester.
[92] Cotton MS Galba C/IX f. 302 – 11th July 1586, Walsingham to Leicester.
[93] Nicholas Harris Nicolas, *Life of William Davison, Secretary of State and Privy Counsellor to Queen Elizabeth* (London: Printed by and for John Nicholas and Son, 1823), p. 28.

and engineered Davison's promotion.[94] We can clearly see that this was not the case, and that it was instead Walsingham who supported his preferment.

Davison was grateful for his new position, and penned an incredibly cliental thank-you note to Walsingham. Being 'prefered to a nomber of others a thowsand tymes more worthy then my self', Davison professed himself infinitely bound to the Queen, and pledged 'all the humble & faithfull service I can'.[95] He was also indebted to Walsingham, whose favour 'encreas[ed] therby dayly my duty & obligacion towardes you'. This was quite the contrast to his usual perfunctory rhetorical manner, and was written in his own hand, despite his illness. Davison's out-of-character response probably stemmed from genuine surprise – his recent disgrace, the previous denial of promotion from Elizabeth, his long absence from court, and his multiple illnesses, all made it unlikely that he would receive preferment. That he did so in spite of these issues is ultimately testament to Davison's high political credit – his success as an ambassador over the past decade had far outweighed this recent crisis.

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By recentering Davison within this well-known story, we have thus been able to learn much about both Davison himself, and the complexity of patronage and political credit. First and foremost, the collapse of Davison and Leicester's relationship exposed the fragility of patronage, and thus develops our understanding of the system beyond existing models. Patronage was essential to the effective functioning of the Elizabethan polity, but the system was only as stable as the individuals and circumstances allowed. As Leicester's volatile reaction shows, one moment of crisis could undo over a decade of close collaboration, kinship ties, and shared ideology.

[94] Nicolas, pp. 27-8.
[95] SP 12/192 f. 88 – 30th August 1586, Davison to Walsingham.

This episode also illustrates the importance of political credit in preferment. The repeated references to ‘credytt’ by both Davison and Leicester show that this concept was at the forefront of their minds, and was perceived by Elizabethans themselves as being central to a successful political career. Davison had initially been an invaluable asset, with high political credit with both the Dutch and his English patrons, including the Queen. However, the differing reactions of Davison’s patrons to his involvement show that one’s political credit was not a concrete entity, but rather was interpreted and valued differently by different patrons. Though insufficient to save his relationship with Leicester, Davison’s eventual promotion, in spite of the incident, is therefore testament to the weight of his political credit with Walsingham and the Queen.

Finally, this incident also confirmed the constancy of Davison’s political creed, as his support for Leicester’s acceptance, even in the face of his furious Queen, was motivated by his commitment to the protestant cause. Davison had spent his career fighting for English military intevention, so now that it had finally been achieved, he would do anything to ensure its success. He knew full well that Elizabeth would oppose the decision, but nevertheless supported it, risking his own career and reputation for the furtherance of the cause – just as he had over the act of ampliation, the previous September, and just as he would the following year, over the dispatch of the death warrant, to which we now turn.

Part III: Privy Councillor

Chapter 7: Agency and political creed, 1586-7

We have now reached the infamous pinnacle of Davison's career – his tenure as principal secretary, during which he was partly responsible for the dispatch of the death warrant for Mary, Queen of Scots, in February 1587. The outline of events is familiar to all Elizabethan historians: following the uncovering of the Babington plot in August 1586, Mary was tried and found guilty at Fotheringhay Castle in October. The death warrant was drawn up in December, and was held by Secretary Davison, but Elizabeth refused to sign it for several weeks. During this time, an apparent conspiracy involving the French ambassador emerged, which was likely engineered by Walsingham in order to push Elizabeth to sign the warrant. When she did finally sign it, in early February, her resolve was far from firm, so Davison and his colleagues acted fast to ensure that the execution was carried out. Mary was executed at Fotheringhay on 8th February, and the Queen's wrath landed primarily on Burghley and Davison. Davison was tried in Star Chamber on 28th March 1587, and spent the next eighteen months in the Tower.

The purpose of this chapter is to re-centre Davison within this narrative, and to situate it within the broader context of his career. Although work on Davison has been dominated by the execution, work on the execution has not been dominated by Davison. Whilst the events of spring 1587 have been amply covered in existing literature, this has tended to be from the perspective of more senior actors or institutions, such as Conyers Read and Stephen Alford on Burghley, and J. E. Neale on the role of parliament.[1] In these works, Davison is confined to a surface level role, as he appears on the scene ready for the execution, and does not appear again until the index. This has contributed to Davison's stereotyping as the 'unfortunate' or

[1] Stephen Alford, *Burghley: William Cecil at the Court of Elizabeth I* (London: Yale University Press, 2008), Chs. 17-18; Conyers Read, *Lord Burghley and Queen Elizabeth* (London: Cape, 1960), Chs. 18-19; J. E. Neale, *Elizabeth I and her Parliaments, Vol. 2, 1584-1601* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1957), Pt. 2, Chs. 1-2.

'wretched' scapegoat, and has minimised his agency, as a supporting character to Burghley.[2] Read even attributed Davison's actions to inexperience rather than design, claiming that he 'made the mistake of not being precise to a fault… had he understood the character of Elizabeth better, he would have been'.[3]

Only Davison's biographers Nicolas and Adams focus on Davison's role, but, as we have seen, the former suffers from many problems, including a lack of sources and familial bias, and the latter is only a brief account. The most thorough account of Davison's role is therefore from Mark Taviner's unpublished thesis on Robert Beale, but this still situates the crisis in the broader context of Beale's career rather than that of Davison.[4] But, as the keeper of the warrant, Davison played the most central role in the crisis, more so than Burghley or Beale, and it was his actions which led directly to the warrant being dispatched. It is therefore essential that Davison is re-centred within the scholarship, as without him, our history could have gone very differently. This chapter will therefore provide a comprehensive account of Davison's involvement in the execution, from his work during Mary's trial, through the Moody conspiracy, to the dispatch of the warrant.

Moreover, due to the historiographical neglect of Davison's diplomatic work, his involvement in the crisis has been completely decontextualised from his earlier career. Yet in order to understand Davison's behaviour over the death warrant, we need to look back over his career as a whole, and view the crisis within this context. As we have seen throughout this thesis, Davison's work took place within an integrated Crown service, and a cohesive political culture. The dispatch of the death warrant was no different, as Davison's actions here were

[2] Conyers Read, *Mr Secretary Walsingham and the Policy of Queen Elizabeth*, Vol. 3 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1925), p. 429; J. E. Neale, *Queen Elizabeth* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1945), p. 279; Neale, *Parliaments*, Vol. 2, p. 137.
[3] Read, *Walsingham*, Vol. 3, p. 64.
[4] Mark Taviner, 'Robert Beale and the Elizabethan Polity' (University of St. Andrews: unpublished doctoral thesis, 2000), Ch. 8.

driven by a political creed developed during the Dutch revolt. Indeed, the entire crisis hinged on Davison's creed, as if he had not believed in the necessity of the execution, and in the legitimacy of conciliar government, he would simply have retained the warrant. This was the monarchical republic in action, instigated not by the most senior privy councillors, but rather by a long-time diplomat. The execution crisis therefore perfectly highlights the cohesion of Elizabethan diplomatic and domestic service.

It will therefore be argued, first, that Davison's own agency was central to the dispatch of the death warrant; and second, that his actions were entirely consistent with his established political creed, as developed through his years of service in Scotland and the Low Countries. He had spent his entire career in pursuit of both the Queen's safety and the preservation of religion, even when it brought him into conflict with Elizabeth's own wishes, and these convictions had only recently been reinforced in the domestic context by the Moody conspiracy. It therefore made perfect sense that he would go to any lengths to secure Mary's execution. Ultimately, it will be shown that whilst the execution was a political crisis, it was not a political anomaly. For Davison, the execution was the logical (albeit tragic) culmination of his diplomatic work thus far, as the beliefs that he had formed over the past decade influenced how events unfolded in February 1587.

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On 30th September 1586, Davison was formally sworn in as a member of the Privy Council.[5] Also sworn in that day was John Wolley, the Queen's Latin secretary. Beale's records contain several versions of the oath taken by privy councillors in 1575, and it would have been a similar oath which Davison and Wolley swore on that day.[6] Davison would have sworn to

[5] John Roche Dasent (ed.), *Acts of the Privy Council of England, Volume 14, 1586-1587* (London: Her Majesty's Stationery Office, 1897), p. 236.
[6] Add. MS 48018 f. 1 – 1575, three versions of the oath of a privy councillor, collected by Beale.

‘trewly justlie and uprightly counsell and advise the Quenes heighnes in all matters which you shalbe made privye or called unto’ – this was, of course, not new to Davison, who had been supplying counsel throughout his career. Secrecy was also a major concern, and Davison would have sworn to ‘kepe secrett the Quenes counsell and all that shalbe commoned by waye of counsell in the same’, and, if anything was discussed relating to another privy councillor, to ‘not reveale the same unto him… until soche tyme as by the consent of her Majestie or of the rest of the Counsell publicacion shalbe made thereof’. Perhaps most importantly, Davison would have sworn with all his ‘might and power’, to ‘helpe and strenthen the Quenes saide Counsell… for the universall good of the Quene, of hir Realmes and for the peace reste and tranquilitie of the same, and withstand any person or persons of what estate or degree that they be of that wolde by anie way attempte or attende unto the contrary’. In Elizabeth’s eyes, of course, this oath obliged her councillors to obey her own personal wishes; however, as we have seen, her councillors did not always agree. Throughout his career, Davison had always worked for what he believed was the ‘universall goode’ of the Queen and realm, albeit it did not always align with her orders, as occurred over the governor-generalship incident. The same applied to Walsingham and Leicester, with their determination for intervention. Now, faced with the problem of Mary, Davison would experience this conflict of creed versus duty once again, and this time, under oath.

Though Davison had long been patron or correspondent to men working in the Low Countries or Scotland, his accession to the council now cemented his position as a desirable patron within domestic politics. Over the coming month, he received petitions from, or on behalf of, a multitude of different suitors, from MPs, clerks, and family. Such suitors fell roughly into two camps – those seeking a place working for Davison directly, including Thomas Phelippes’ younger brother, Davison’s brother-in-law John Carpenter, and Carpenter’s

nephew George Cranmer, and those wanting Davison's intervention with the Queen, including Thomas Dannet and Francis Mylles.[7]

The sudden expansion in Davison's patronage network confirms that he was now definitively regarded as a senior politician, although, as we have seen, he had fulfilled senior diplomatic roles for several years now. He had begun in the same position as the younger Phellipes, as a young man seeking preferment, and climbed to a position similar to that of Walsingham's secretary Mylles, as Walsingham's man in the mid- to late-1570s. In fact, Mylles had worked for Walsingham since around 1566, roughly six years longer than Davison, but had achieved nowhere near his level of success. Now, Davison had outstripped his contemporaries, and served as their patron alongside his own patrons on the Privy Council. After over a decade of hard work, this was the peak of his career – it is important to remember this as we approach Davison's coming disgrace.

Though Davison had been busy in the Low Countries for the past two years, the issue of the Queen of Scots had continued to occupy his mind. During his mission to Scotland in summer 1584, Davison had reported on Mary's continued scheming and influence over James, following the collapse of the Ruthven regime, and had counselled Elizabeth to support the protestant, pro-English party in Scotland.[8] Mary had also pushed for her release, refusing to participate in the mediation with the exiled Ruthven lords unless Elizabeth would agree.[9] Shortly after Davison's return home in September 1584, and subsequent journey to the Low Countries, Mary then sent her secretary Claude Nau to the English court, in order to negotiate again for her release. She now proposed a treaty with Elizabeth, and offered to exert influence

[7] See, among others: SP 12/193 f. 91 – 14th Sept. 1586, Baughe to Davison; SP 12/194 f. 13 – 5th October 1586, William Phillips to Davison; f. 38 – 6th October 1586, Francis Mylles to Davison; f. 40 – 7th October 1586, John Carpenter to Davison; f. 42 – 8th October 1586, Thomas Phellipes to Davison; f. 62 – 13th October 1586, Carpenter to Davison; f. 93 – 25th October 1586, Thomas Dannet to Davison.
[8] See Ch. 4.
[9] See p. 145.

over her son in England's interests.[10] Davison was vehemently against these proposals, and drafted two papers setting out his objections, entitled 'Reason against the liberty of the Scottish Queen', and 'That the association shold be dangerous & against all policy'.[11] The latter paper was assumed by Nicolas to refer to the Bond of Association, but it actually refers to the proposed association between Elizabeth and a joint Scottish monarchy of Mary and James.[12]

These negotiations ultimately came to naught, and, at the same time, the English government created the Bond of Association. This required the signatory to pursue to the death anyone who benefitted from, but was not necessarily involved in, an attempt on Elizabeth's life, as well as their heirs.[13] Developed in the aftermath of the assassination of the Prince of Orange, its main target was, of course, Mary, but included James as well, as her heir. According to a later document, Davison refused to sign the Bond of Association, despite 'being earnestly pressed therunto by her Majesty herself'.[14] The most likely explanation for his refusal is his religious beliefs. Many others, including the puritan MP Peter Wentworth, also refused to sign the Association, believing that its 'obligations were not consonant with God's laws, nor yet with statute law'.[15] So, although Davison was desperate for Mary's death in order to secure the safety of the protestant commonwealth, this did not extend to (what he perceived as) illegal and immoral means. This helps us to understand his subsequent determination to dispatch the signed, legal death warrant, and his abhorrence of the idea of Mary's assassination – as we will see later in this chapter.

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[10] Stephen Alford, "Use but old trust and new diligence' 1583-7', in Susan Doran (ed.), *Elizabeth and Mary: Royal Cousins, Rival Queens* (London: The British Library, 2021), pp. 188-95, at pp. 191-2.
[11] Harley MS 290 f. 264r – [autumn 1584], Davison's paper entitled 'Reasons against the liberty of the S Q'; f. 264v – [autumn 1584], Davison's paper entitled 'That the association shold be dangerous & against all policy'.
[12] Nicholas Harris Nicolas, *Life of William Davison, Secretary of State and Privy Counsellor to Queen Elizabeth* (London: Printed by and for John Nicholas and Son, 1823), p. 37.
[13] Neale, *Parliaments*, Vol. 2, pp. 16-7.
[14] Cotton MS Caligula C/IX f. 648 – [1587], 'the objections against Mr Davison in the cause of the late Scottish Queen'.
[15] J. E. Neale, 'Peter Wentworth: Part II', *The English Historical Review*, 39(154) (1924), 175-205, p. 179. See also Digges on the objections to the Association – Lansdowne MS 98 f. 14 – January 1585, Digges's discourse on the Association.

Throughout the autumn of 1586, Burghley and Walsingham were largely absent from court, for a variety of reasons: Mary's trial at Fotheringhay; ill health; and commitments at their other residences. Consequently, Davison played a pivotal role during these months, as it was he who served the Queen in their stead, and served as a conduit between her and his absent colleagues.[16] He was present at every recorded Privy Council meeting bar six, and seemed to attend the Queen almost daily.[17] He was also elected as MP for Knaresborough for the October parliament, but did not take his seat, perhaps as he remained too busy at court.[18]

In the fortnight leading up the trial, Burghley was working tirelessly to ensure that all of the proceedings would be absolutely legally watertight. This involved drafting the commission for the trial, and arranging for the prorogation of parliament. As Burghley worked from Theobalds, it was Davison who was left to manage Elizabeth, and persuade her to agree to Burghley's plans. By 4th October, Burghley and the judges had agreed that Mary could not be referred to as 'Regina Scotorum', as this would acknowledge her claim to the Scottish throne as legitimate; instead, they decided that she must be referred to more indirectly, as the daughter and heir of James V of Scotland, 'commonly called the Scottish Queen and dowager of France'.[19] The same day, Davison conveyed this development to Elizabeth, who agreed that Mary could be described as the 'called' or 'said' Scottish Queen, and reluctantly agreed that

[16] For example, SP 84/10/1 f. 182 – 22nd October 1586, Leicester to Davison: 'Bycause I am in doubt whether Mr Secretarie Walsingham be yet returned from Fotheringaie or no, and this present matter being such as requireth speedy direccion, and a thing of importance, I thought good to write unto you only, desyring you (if he be returned) to imparte the matter unto him also'.

[17] At all meetings except 27th December, 21st January, two on 22nd January (present later that day), 4th February, 13th February. After 15th February Davison was imprisoned in the Tower. Privy Council Registers, PC 2/14 ff. 200-273.

[18] Shortly after Davison was promoted to the Privy Council in September 1586, he was appointed as a commissioner for Mary's trial, and was elected as the MP for Knaresborough for the Parliament sitting that autumn, but he remained at court and did not participate in either – Simon Adams, 'Davison, William (d. 1608), diplomat and administrator', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford University Press, 2008 (2004)) <https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/7306>, p. 12.

[19] Lansdowne MS 50 no. 28– 3rd October 1586, Attorney-General Popham and Solicitor-General Egerton to Burghley; Harley MS 290 f. 185 – 5th October 1586, Davison to Burghley. My translation, from original Latin: 'tam per Mariam filiam et heredem Jacobi quinti nuper Scotorum Regis ac communiter rocatam Reginam Scotorum et dotariam Francia'.

parliament could be prorogued until the 24th October, as Burghley had asked, though she thought it too soon for the return of the lords from Fotheringhay.[20] However, the very next day, Elizabeth had changed her mind, and Davison was unable to convince her otherwise. She now decided that the order of the references to Scotland and France should be swapped, and refused to 'signe both the one & other Commission till she heare againe from' Burghley.[21] Davison assured her of the 'care & consideration used by your lordship to send it her in such forme as was requisite in Lawe… that theie might in no wise be changed, the necessitie of expedicion in regard of the shortnes of the time' – but all to no avail. Davison therefore felt it necessary to send urgently to Burghley, 'humblie beseechinge your answere with as muche speed as maie be'.

Elizabeth was also clearly cautious of the speed of Mary's trial and probable indictment, as she now determined that parliament would sit no earlier than the 31st. This was not only 'for the certainetie of the lords retourne', but also 'for the better consideringe of the course to be taken uppon their reports' – clearly, she wanted no decisions made in a hurry.[22] Her attitude concerned Davison, who confided in Walsingham his worry that 'I feare she will kepe the course she held with the Duke of Norfolk which is not to take her life without extreme feare compell her'.[23] Norfolk had been involved in both the Northern Rising of 1569 – for which he spent nine months in the Tower – and the Ridolfi plot of 1571, in which he planned to marry Mary and depose Elizabeth.[24] He was found guilty at trial, but Elizabeth had nevertheless tried

[20] SP 53/20 no. 2 – 4th October 1586, Davison to Burghley. My translation, from original Latin: 'communiter vocata or appellata Regina Scotorum'.
[21] Harley MS 290 f. 185 – 5th October 1586, Davison to Burghley.
[22] Harley MS 290 f. 185.
[23] SP 12/194 f. 53 – 8th October 1586, Davison to Walsingham.
[24] Michael A. R. Graves, 'Howard, Thomas, fourth duke of Norfolk (1538–1572), nobleman and courtier', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford University Press, 2008 (2004)) <https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/13941>, pp. 7-12.

to avoid and delay his execution. It was only under immense pressure from her Privy Council, including Burghley, and from parliament that she finally agreed to his execution, in 1572.

In Davison's opinion, there was cause for extreme fear, as he had received a warning, from 'a dutch man newlie com from Parris', that the Queen should 'beware of one that lik a suter is to offer her som supplicacion as she goeth to the Chappell or walking abroade'.[25] Since Davison believed that counsel would 'prevaille more with her comminge from your Lordship then from anie other for the opinion she holdeth of you', Davison asked Burghley to 'perswade her highnes to be more circumspect of her person & spare to shewe her self publicquelie then she is till the brunt of the busines nowe in hand be well overblowen'. There would be no reason for Davison to exaggerate or falsify his feelings in a private letter to Burghley, so, this message proves that his worry for Elizabeth's life was genuine, and, at the time of the trial, was in a heightened state.

Though perhaps less exciting than the main action taking place at Fotheringhay, these letters so perfectly reveal the tensions and worries which would dominate the story of Elizabeth and Davison over the next few months. Elizabeth's indecision over the wording and parliament, and her reluctance at this early stage of proceedings – all would come to a head with her indecision and reluctance over the dispatch of the warrant. Indeed, the fact that she changed her mind over the wording of the commission within only a day helps to explain why, when the moment came, Davison and his colleagues acted so quickly. Moreover, his prediction that Elizabeth would only act if motivated by 'extreme fear', coupled with his genuine concern for Elizabeth's life, may shed light on both the upcoming Moody conspiracy and Davison's actions over the dispatch.

[25] Harley MS 290 f. 189 – 8th October 1586, Davison to Burghley.

The commissioners arrived at Fotheringhay by 12th October, and the trial commenced on Friday 14th. Even at this late stage, Elizabeth was still not fully satisfied with Burghley's plans, so, at midnight between the 13th and 14th, she instructed Davison to write Burghley 'a few hastie & scribled lynes… for the stay of the sentence against the said queen untill you returne to her Majesties presence to make report'.[26] However, Davison expected that 'how this will agree with the generall comission you have I knowe not nether do I think these lettres will come tyme ynoughe to hinder the sentence which by our calculacion here should be given as yesterday or this morning'. [27] So, despite Elizabeth's wishes, Davison was on the side of the commissioners, hoping that his letter arrived too late to stop sentence being passed. These letters probably arrived at Fotheringhay on the 14th, but, as only the sentence was mentioned, there was nothing to stop the lords continuing to hear evidence against Mary. Consequently, the trial continued into the 15th, but since no sentence was allowed to be passed, the court then adjourned for ten days.[28] Finally, on 25th October, the commissioners met in Star Chamber, and passed sentence on Mary – guilty.[29] Parliament began sitting four days later, with the task of authorising and implementing punishment in accordance with the court's verdict.

Meanwhile, Elizabeth remained at Richmond. As the lords were now assembled in London for the parliament, Davison continued to serve as the point of contact between London, Fotheringhay and the court at Richmond. He was caught in a difficult position – Burghley was determined to ensure that Mary's execution would be legally watertight, and knew that this required a parliament; however, Elizabeth much preferred a quiet assassination, under the more

[26] SP 12/194 f. 69 – 14th October 1586, Davison to Walsingham. These 'hastie' lines are probably Harley MS 290 f. 193 – 12th October 1586, the Queen to Burghley – this is labelled as a 'copie', which is probably why the date is incorrect.
[27] SP 12/194 f. 69 – 14th October 1586, Davison to Walsingham. It is not clear whether he expected his letter to arrive on the 15th, meaning that yesterday was the 14th, or whether he thought that the trial had actually begun on the 13th.
[28] Alford, *Burghley*, pp. 276-8. Cotton MS Caligula C/IX f. 576 – 15th October 1586, Burghley to Davison.
[29] Alford, *Burghley*, pp. 279-80.

dubious legality of the Bond of Association.[30] Whilst Burghley and Elizabeth were engaged in 'tactical warfare' over this parliament, it was Davison who sat in the middle.[31] It was he who had to tell Elizabeth when parliament would be meeting or adjourned, and pass on Burghley's questions over matters of parliamentary process.[32] Parliament sat for five weeks, but only a week in the decision was already made – Mary must die.[33] Parliament's petition to have Mary executed was delivered to Elizabeth at Richmond on the 12th November, but she refused to act. Burghley became increasingly exasperated, telling Davison that unless the sentence was published, the people 'may call this a vayne parliament or otherwise nick name it a parliament of words'.[34] After much back and forth, the sentence was proclaimed in London on 6th December, and the death warrant drawn up the following week.[35] So, by mid-December, everything was finally in place for Mary's execution, but the death warrant remained unsigned.

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Then, in early January, a plot against the Queen's life emerged, involving the French ambassadors, Guillaume de l'Aubespine de Châteauneuf and Pomponne de Bellièvre; Châteauneuf's secretary, Leonard des Trappes; William Stafford, brother of the English ambassador in Paris, Edward Stafford; and an Irishman named Michael Moody, who was a servant of Edward Stafford, and was currently imprisoned at Newgate.[36] Davison had been cautious as soon as Bellièvre had set foot in London in late November – William Herle had

[30] Alford, *Burghley*, p. 280.
[31] Alford, *Burghley*, p. 280.
[32] SP 12/195 f. 10 – 10th November 1586, Burghley and Hatton to Davison; SP 12/195 f. 17 – 11th November 1586, Burghley to Davison; SP 12/195 f. 18 – 11th November 1586, Burghley to Davison. SP 12/195 f. 34 – 29th November 1586, Burghley to Davison.
[33] Alford, *Burghley,* pp. 280-285; Neale, *Parliaments*, Vol. 2, Pt. 2, Chs. 1 and 2.
[34] SP 12/195 f. 30 – [24th] November 1586, Burghley to Davison.
[35] SP 12/195 f. 37 – 30th November 1586, Burghley to Davison; SP 12/195 f. 80 – 1st December 1586, Davison to Walsingham.
[36] Both Châteauneuf and Bellièvre are named in different accounts. Most literature names Châteauneuf as the ambassador involved, but both were apparently involved in this supposed plot. Officially, Châteauneuf was the ambassador, and Bellièvre was a special envoy, but both were present in London to petition for Mary's life. Bellièvre departed 'a daie or two' before the plot was discovered (SP 78/17 f. 12 – January 1587, instructions for Waad).

reported that some of the French entourage had died of the plague since arriving in England, so Davison asked Walsingham to delay Bellièvre's audience with the Queen. He was also distrustful of his servants in light of the 'the lat villanyes attempted against her Majestie', so asked that Bellièvre be instructed to only bring those attendants 'with him but such as he wilbe answerable for'.[37]

This plot is widely acknowledged to have been orchestrated by Burghley and Walsingham in order to urge Elizabeth into action, and has been described by Neale as 'partly, perhaps wholly, bogus'.[38] The details of the plot were somewhat murky: apparently, Châteauneuf, Bellièvre and des Trappes had arranged to engage William Stafford and Moody to assassinate the Queen.[39] The initial method suggested was gunpowder laid under the Queen's bed, but poisoning and stabbing were later suggested. Stafford then turned coat and reported the conspiracy to Walsingham, and des Trappes was apprehended already en route to Dover. Both Stafford and Moody confessed to being approached by des Trappes, but Châteauneuf insisted that the whole plot had been concocted by Stafford, and that he and his secretary were innocent.

Davison and Hatton interrogated Moody together at Hatton's townhouse, Ely Place, on 6th January, but drew 'nothing of substance from him'.[40] The next day, they interrogated des Trappes, who 'offered to sett downe asmuch as he could say with his own hand', but they

[37] SP 12/195 f. 32 – 25th November 1586, Davison to Walsingham; SP 12/195 f. 33 – 25th November 1586, Davison to Walsingham.
[38] Neale, *Parliaments,* Vol. 2, p. 136. See also Read, *Burghley*, pp. 365-6; Peter Holmes, 'Stafford, William (1554–1612), conspirator', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford University Press, 2007 (2004)) <https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/26217>, pp. 1-2.
[39] The following summary is based on information from: SP 12/197 f. 8 – 6th January 1587, Davison and Hatton to Burghley; CP 14/39 – 7th January 1587, Davison and Hatton to Burghley; SP 12/197 f. 40 – 12th January 1587, 'the true foundation and manner of the horrible treason'; SP 15/30 f. 4 – 12th January 1587, 'account of a conference had, by command of the Queen, with the French Ambassador at the Lord Treasurer's house'; SP 15/30 f. 12 – January 1587, 'note that in 1583 [1587], or the year preceding, a design to attempt the life of the Queen was discovered'; SP 78/17 f. 12 – January 1587, instructions for Waad; SP 78/17 f. 26 – 30th January, Waad to Walsingham and Davison.
[40] SP 12/197 f. 8 – 6th January 1587, Davison and Hatton to Burghley.

decided not to agree to this until they had received further instruction 'at the returne of me the Secretary to the Court this evening'.[41] They were also now making some progress with Moody, who after 'standing resolut in his denyall at his first coming doth now begyn to relent & having confessed the access of du Trap unto him'. However, he still seemed resolved to blame Stafford, 'protesting his owne fault to be chefly in concealement therof'. He had written this discourse down, which Davison promised to bring to Burghley that evening. Despite Moody's insistence, Davison still believed that it was the French who instigated the plot, not Stafford.[42]

Both Davison and Hatton also took part in the interrogation of Châteauneuf on the 12th, alongside Burghley and Leicester.[43] It is perhaps telling that Davison and Hatton were partnered up for this task – they had always corresponded regularly and had a good working relationship, but it would surely have made more sense for the two secretaries to have worked together. Walsingham's absence from these interrogations (he remained at court) was therefore perhaps by design, to keep a distance between him and this all-too-convenient conspiracy.

Châteauneuf was probably telling the truth – the most likely explanation is that Burghley and Walsingham used Stafford as a double agent, to implicate the French in a plot. This may have been in order to push the Queen to execute Mary, or perhaps not, as it is also possible that Elizabeth was aware of the plan, since she joked about the conspiracy when she received Châteauneuf again in 1587.[44] If she had known, then the plot was likely intended to cut communication between the French embassy, the French court, and Mary in the weeks leading up to her execution or assassination. Elizabeth may also have thought that another plot against

[41] CP 14/39 – 7th January 1587, Davison and Hatton to Burghley.
[42] CP 14/39 – 7th January 1587, Davison and Hatton to Burghley.
[43] SP 78/17 f. 12 – January 1587, instructions for Waad.
[44] Peter Holmes, 'Stafford, William (1554–1612), conspirator', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford University Press, 2007 (2004)) <https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/26217>, p. 2.

her life would push a concerned citizen into assassinating Mary under the Bond of Association, avoiding her having to arrange this.

Whichever way we look at it, the Stafford plot is hard to untangle, and Davison's involvement is hardly more straightforward. The fact that Davison was so concerned about Bellièvre and his attendants before this supposed plot came to light means his subsequent involvement can be read in multiple ways. Was Davison an innocent party, genuinely concerned about the French ambassadors, who believed that a real plot had been discovered? Or, was his worry over the Queen's life so great that he was willing to be complicit in a fabricated plot in order to achieve Mary's execution? Considering just how close he was to Walsingham, it seems unlikely that Davison would have been kept ignorant of the plans, and would surely have wondered why he was sent to work away from Walsingham, at Hatton's house. His subsequent actions over the death warrant also proved that he was willing to go to great lengths in order to preserve the Queen's life, and protect the protestant commonwealth. However, he did seem genuinely convinced that Stafford was telling the truth. Whatever the case, Davison's early worries over Bellièvre and his involvement in the Moody affair are crucial for understanding his state of mind during the months leading up to the execution. The dispatch did not happen out of the blue, but rather was preceded by his deep and urgent concern for Elizabeth's life.

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Now to the main event – the dispatch of the death warrant, and the execution of Mary, Queen of Scots. Davison was the key player in the dispatch, yet a comprehensive account of his role in the days of early February is notably absent from existing historiography. This section will provide this, by synthesising Davison's two accounts, supplemented and supported by Beale's account and other records. Though it may appear biased to base the following

narrative primarily on Davison's own accounts, this is necessary, as only he and Beale wrote accounts of the dispatch, and Beale did not become involved until the Council was summoned. Crucially, though, Davison's accounts do appear to be truthful, as they are corroborated in several places by other evidence. For instance, the comings and goings of Davison, Hatton and Burghley, and the meetings of the Privy Council, are included in Beale's account.[45] Beale could not have copied this from Davison's account, as he got several of the dates slightly wrong, so he must have observed or heard about these things independently of Davison.[46] Elizabeth's preference for assassination is also evident from other documents, primarily the correspondence with Paulet and Drury. Moreover, as we will see later, Davison's trial would hinge on the fact that he had disobeyed the Queen by informing the Privy Council about the signed warrant. It would therefore have been easy for him to state in his account that she had explicitly allowed him to inform the Privy Council, in order to excuse his actions – but he did not. If Davison was honest enough not to fabricate exonerating evidence, we may reasonably expect that he did not lie about anything else significant. This is not to say that he did not try to spin his innocence, but the facts do nevertheless appear to be in place.

Davison wrote two accounts, entitled the 'Discourse' and the 'Relation'. There are copies of both in Harley MS 290, from Davison's own papers, as well as a further three copies of the Discourse, and one of the Relation.[47] The copy of the Relation in the Harley MS is endorsed 20th February, but the copy of the Discourse in the Harley MS is not dated; the two copies of the Discourse in the Cotton MS are both neatly dated 20th February on the front page. However, it would make little sense to write two different accounts at the same time, especially

[45] Add. MS 48027 f. 636 – [Feb/March] 1587, Beale's 'touching the commission of the Scottish Queen, 1587'.
[46] Taviner, p. 216, n. 5.
[47] The copies of the 'discourse' are: Harley MS 290 f. 218 (hereafter 'Discourse'); Cotton MS Caligula C/IX f. 196; Cotton MS Titus C/VII f. 48; Inner Temple Petyt MS 538/50 f. 39 (later copy). The copies of the 'relation' are: Harley MS 290 f. 222 (hereafter 'Relation); Ayscough Catalogue of MSS 3199, printed in Nicolas, Appendix C, pp. 270-85.

when one (the Discourse) is so much longer and more thorough than the other. The original, or at least earlier, copies are probably those in the Harley MS, as these are from Davison's own papers. For the scribes copying these, or other earlier versions, it would have been very easy to accidentally copy the date of the Harley Relation onto their new copy of the Discourse. It is therefore possible that the dating of the Cotton Discourses is incorrect.

Based on their content, it seems most likely that the Discourse was written first, between 14th and 20th February, followed by the Relation on 20th February. The Discourse is longer, and includes a lengthy conclusion which reiterates his innocence. The Relation is shorter, and in it Davison has clarified certain points, and downplayed others. Every mention of assassination or Amias Paulet is either removed or heavily euphemised, to the point that it would be impossible to understand without the Discourse to accompany it. Paulet is only mentioned once, in relation to official execution rather than assassination. At the same time, Davison clarified Elizabeth's instructions and Burghley's role. In the Relation, he mentioned several times that Elizabeth instructed him to have the warrant sealed and dispatched, not just sealed, and added that it was Burghley specifically who summoned the Privy Council to his chamber.

It seems likely that Davison made these changes in an attempt to help his case. Around 20th February, when the Relation was written, discussions were underway at court regarding the possibility of a trial, and even Davison's execution. He probably thought that, by downplaying Elizabeth's desire for assassination, he could claw back some goodwill, and avoid a death sentence. This also helps to explain his clarification of other points – after all, Elizabeth's design on assassination was the best defence in Davison's arsenal, so if he could not rely upon it, his defence over other points was even more crucial. Considering the differences between these accounts, it is therefore essential that they are synthesised, along with other supporting evidence.

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The day after the warrant was drawn up in December, Burghley sent for Davison to come to his chamber at Richmond. In the presence of Francis Knollys, he informed Davison that Elizabeth had asked that the warrant should be given to Davison to hold, since Burghley was going away to London. Walsingham was also not an option, due to his ill health and absence from court. 'Some few daies after', Davison then reminded Elizabeth that the warrant was waiting to be signed, but she said that she wanted it to be postponed until after the French and Scottish ambassadors had left.[48] Consequently, Davison kept the warrant 'unpresented' for 'five or six weekes at the least', for which he was 'one daie sharply reproved by my Lord of Leicester in her majestes owne presence, as the Lord Treasurer, who was by, could witnesse'.[49]

It was not until 1st February that progress was made. That morning, Elizabeth discussed signing the warrant with Lord Admiral Howard of Effingham, and ordered Howard to summon Davison with the warrant to be signed. Howard sent a messenger of the chamber, who found Davison in Richmond Park. Davison repaired immediately to the Privy Chamber, where Howard first informed him that Elizabeth was 'nowe fully resolved to proceede' to the execution, and 'had comaunded him to send expresly for me to bringe the warrante unto hir to be sygned, that she myghte fortwith signe & dispatch'.[50] Davison collected the warrant from his own chamber, and returned to the Queen. He was called into the privy chamber by one Mistress Brook, so it seems that Howard remained outside, and perhaps left, as Davison made no mention of speaking with him after this meeting. After confirming that Davison had indeed brought the warrant, Elizabeth read it, 'called for pene & Inke sygned it', and asked Davison whether 'I wear not hartelye sorye to see it done'.[51] To this, he replied that 'seeing the lyfe of

[48] Relation, at f. 222r.
[49] Relation, at f. 222r.
[50] Relation, at f. 222r. Similar in Discourse, at f. 218r.
[51] Discourse, at f. 218r. Similar in Relation, at f. 222r.

that Queene threatened hir majesteys deathe… he that preferred the deathe of the guilty befor the Innoscente'.[52] Indeed, the Moody plot had only recently confirmed to him that the threat to Elizabeth's life was ongoing. Consequently, Davison believed in the 'Justyce and necessety' of Mary's execution, and argued that Elizabeth 'could not defferre it without the manyfeste wrounge & daungere of hir selfe and the wholle Realme'.[53] Such language echoed his repeated counsel for intervention in the Low Countries, which he had also framed as an issue of 'necessity'. Elizabeth seemed to approve of this answer, and signed the rest of the papers that Davison had brought to her. She instructed Davison to take the signed death warrant to the Privy Seal, and 'to geve my lord Chancelore spessyall ordere from hir to use it as secretly as myghte be, leste the devulgyng thearof befoare the Executyon myghte as she pretended encrease hir daunger'.[54]

She also instructed him to visit Walsingham en route to the seal, 'being then sycke at his house in London', because, as she joked, the 'greefe thearof would… kyll him outright', and told him 'expressely to dispatch & send it awaie unto the commissioners withall the expedicion I might'.[55] Elizabeth then gave a little speech to Davison, explaining that she had deferred signing the warrant because she did not want 'the world' to think her violent or malicious. This comment, as reported by Davison, is supported by her long delay to sign the warrant, until the ambassadors had left court. Though she now realised the 'necessetye' of the execution, she still wanted it done 'as secretly as myghte be', privately in the Castle's hall rather than more publicly outside, in the court or green.[56] 'In conclusion', she 'absolutely forbade me to trouble her anie further or let her heare any more thereof till it was done seeing that her part she had

[52] Discourse, at f. 218v.
[53] Discourse, at f. 218v.
[54] Discourse, at f. 218v.
[55] Discourse, at f. 218v; Relation, at f. 222r. Elizabeth did not instruct him to dispatch it in the Discourse, only to have it sealed.
[56] Discourse, at f. 218v. Similar in Relation, f. 222r.

now performed all that either in lawe or reason could be required'.[57] However, just as Davison made ready to leave with the warrant, Elizabeth then 'fell into some complaynte of Sir Amyas Paulet and others that myghte have eased hir of this burdene, wishinge that Master Secretary and I would yet wryte unto bothe him and Sir Drue Drurye to sound their disposytyon in that behalfe'.[58] Davison had previously refused to involve himself in the possibility of assasination, 'as a matter I utterly prejudged', especially 'knowinge the wisdome & integretye of the gentlmen whome I thoughte would not doe so unlawfull an Acte for any respecte in the world'.[59] Nevertheless, upon Elizabeth's insistance, he promised to impart her wishes to Walsingham.

Davison then left Elizabeth's chamber at about 10 o'clock, and 'went directly downe to the Lord Treasurers chamber, where I found my Lord of Leicester & him together, to whome I shewed her majestes warrant signed & faithfully related what directions she had given me for carying it to the great seale and sending it downe unto the commissioners'.[60] Davison was keen to remain at court that afternoon, as deputies from the Low Countries were 'appointed to be there imediatly after dinner', but 'they both intreated me, but especially the Lord Treasurer, to leave the care of that busines unto him, & to attend this, which was of far more importance; whereto I yeilded'.[61]

In the afternoon, Davison visited Walsingham at his home, to inform him of the signed warrant and pass on Elizabeth's instructions regarding letters to Paulet and Drury. He then travelled on to Lord Chancellor Bromley, where the warrant was sealed between 4 and 5 o'clock. On his way back, Davison stopped again at Walsingham's house, to collect the letters

[57] Relation, at f. 222r.
[58] Discourse, at f. 218v.
[59] Discourse, at f. 218v.
[60] Relation, at f. 222v.
[61] Relation, at f. 222v.

to Paulet and Drury.[62] He then stayed overnight in London, presumably at his own house, with the warrant, rather than returning to court. Davison did not mention when he dispatched the letters to Fotheringhay, but it must have been that day or the next morning, as Paulet received them at 5 o'clock on Thursday 2nd.[63]

The following morning, of Thursday 2nd February, Davison was called back to speak again with Elizabeth. At 10 o'clock, William Killigrew, a groom of the Privy Chamber, met Davison to instruct him to delay sealing the warrant until he had spoken to Elizabeth. Davison went immediately to court, where she asked him whether the warrant had already been sealed, and he confirmed that it had. Elizabeth responded 'what need that haste', and Davison 'answered that I had thearin mad no moare haste then her selfe comaunded and my duty in a case of that momente required which as I tooke it was not to be dallyed with'.[64] Davison asked her 'whether she continued her purpose to proceed therein according to her former direccions or no, she answered shee did, albeit she thought it might have bene better handled, because this course threw the whole burden upon her self'.[65] Davison again expressed his disapproval for assassination, in response to which Elizabeth 'entred into a great comendacion of Archibald Douglasse, wishing that she had but two such counsellours'.[66] The conversation ended, and both left for dinner.

Davison was worried by Elizabeth's wavering, so he determined to spread the responsibility for the warrant among his colleagues. He went directly to Hatton to show him the warrant, and explained that he 'feared of her inclination to throwe this burden from her self if she mighte finde anie just pretext remembring unto him amongst other reasons, how thinges

[62] The letter to Paulet is printed in John Morris (ed.), *The Letter-Books of Sir Amias Poulet, Keeper of Mary Queen of Scots* (London: Burns and Gates, 1874), pp. 359-60. See also Nicolas, pp. 86-7, 151.
[63] Morris, p. 361.
[64] Discourse, at f. 219r. Similar in Relation, at f. 222v.
[65] Relation, at f. 222v. Similar on the 'handling' in Discourse, f. 219r. Davison only confirmed her 'purpose' in the Relation, not the Discourse.
[66] Relation, at f. 222v. Douglas is not explicitly named in the Discourse, f. 219r.

had passed heretofore in the cause of the Duke of Norfolk the imputation of whose death she laied heavily upon my Lord Treasurer for dyvers yeares together'.[67] Consequently, 'whatsoever direction she had given me for sending it awaie unto the commissioners', Davison told Hatton that he 'was absolutely resolved not to medle in it alone', and 'thearfore havinge done asmuche as belonged to my parte would leave to him and otheres as deeply Interessed in the suertye of hir majestie and the state as my selfe to advise nowe what course shoulde now be takene'.[68] Hatton agreed with this decision, and the pair went together to see Burghley. The three of them agreed to 'to breake the matter with the lordes and otheres of hir majestes Counsell', with Burghley in the meantime writing the letters to the earls at Fotheringhay.[69] Burghley now took the warrant from Davison, 'which in presence of Master Vicechamberlen I delivered into his lordships owne handes, who from thenceforth kept it till it was sent away'.[70]

The next morning, Friday 3rd, Burghley called Davison and Hatton to his chamber to read the drafted letters. Hatton thought that the instructions were too specific and should be made more general, so Burghley agreed to redraft them, and in the meantime summoned the Privy Council to his chamber, who arrived within an hour. The councillors present at this meeting were Davison, Burghley, Leicester, Hatton, Howard of Effingham, Cobham, Hunsdon, Knollys, Wolley, and the Earl of Derby. Robert Beale was also present.[71] Burghley explained to his colleagues that Elizabeth wanted to 'derive this burden yf it myghte be from hir selfe, and every one willingly offered to beare his parte in a matter somuche importynge the publycke saftye of the whole state, bothe of Relygeon & Commonewelth'.[72] Indeed, as per the oaths of a privy councillor recorded by Beale, all those present had sworn to uphold 'the universall good

[67] Relation, at f. 222v. Similar in Discourse, at f. 219r.
[68] Relation, at f. 222v; Discourse, at f. 219r.
[69] Discourse, at f. 219r. Similar in Relation, f. 223r.
[70] Relation, f. 223r.
[71] Add. MS 48027 f. 636.
[72] Discourse, at f. 219v.

of the Quene, of hir Realmes and for the peace reste and tranquilitie of the same, and withstand any person or persons of what estate or degree that they be of that wolde by anie way attempte or attende unto the contrary'.[73]

Consequently, the Council all 'resolved to proceede to the sendinge doune thearof without trublying hir highenes any further withall aswell in regard of hir charge geven unto my selfe to lett hir heare no more thearof tyll it was done havinge otherwise performed as muche as in any reasone or lawe would be required of hir'.[74] Their oaths, as privy councillors, had emphasised the importance of keeping council matters secret from the outside world, but not, of course, from the Queen. Nevertheless, they believed that, if the execution was delayed further, 'daungerous consequence mighte else have growne thearof… concideringe the mallyce of hir enemyes and disposytyone of the tyme & state of thinges then bothe abroad and at home which they in no dutye could neglecte'.[75] Later in the Discourse, Davison clarified that 'shee had bothe to my selfe and otheres sygnefyed at other tymes hir indisposytyon to be acquinted with the tyme place and other circumstances as thinges unfyttyng to hir honoure and disposytyon and that to detayne the warrante in expectacion of any further directyon from hir selfe was bothe needles & dangerous'.[76]

Beale, also present at the meeting, was chosen as the 'fytteste person' to deliver the warrant and accompanying letters to Fotheringhay.[77] Davison's two accounts differ as to what happened next – in his Discourse he recounts that the neat versions of the letters were ready that afternoon, were signed by the lords and given to Beale, but in his Relation, he says that this happened the following morning, the 4th. Beale himself recorded that this occurred on the

[73] Add. MS 48018 f. 1.
[74] Discourse, at f. 219v. Similar in Relation, f. 223r.
[75] Discourse, at f. 219v.
[76] Discourse, at f. 221r.
[77] Discourse, at f. 219v. Similar in Relation, f. 223r.

afternoon of the 3rd – the Council had met originally at around 10 or 11 o'clock, and returned about 2 o'clock that afternoon to sign the letters.[78]

On Saturday morning, whilst in Elizabeth's chamber on other business, she told Davison that she had dreamed that Mary had been executed, and 'pretendinge to have byne so greatly moved with the newse againste my selfe as in that passyone she could have done I wotte not what'.[79] In reply, Davison sought to confirm 'whether having proceeded thus farre she had not a full and Resolute meanynge to goe throughe with the sayd execusyon accordinge to hir warrante', to which Elizabeth answered 'yes confyrmed with a solempe oathe in some vehemency', but still preferred another 'foarme' for Mary's death.[80] Once again, they debated over the matter of assassination, with Davison insisting that 'the forme prescribed by the warrante was suche as the Lawe required and could not welbe altered with any honor, Justyce or suertye'.[81] A few hours later, she asked Davison whether he had received Paulet's reply to Walsingham's letter, which he had not, but did so later that day upon his return to London.

On Sunday 5th, Davison informed Elizabeth that he had received Paulet's response. This is perhaps Paulet's most famous letter, in which he refused in no uncertain terms to have Mary assassinated – 'God forbid that I should make so foul a shipwreck of my conscience, or leave so great a blot to my poor posterity, to shed blood without law or warrant'.[82] Elizabeth was furious at Paulet, complaining to Davison of the 'deintynes and… perjurye of him and otheres who contrary to their Oathe of Assocyatyone did caste the burden uppon hir selfe', and exclaimed that others, including one Wingfield, would be willing to kill Mary themselves on her command.[83] Again, Davison told her how 'dishonorable (in my poore oppynyone) any

[78] Add. MS 48027 f. 636.
[79] Discourse, at f. 219v.
[80] Discourse, at f. 219v.
[81] Discourse, at f. 220r.
[82] Morris, p. 362.
[83] Discourse, at f. 220r.

suche course would be', and argued that she should not expose Paulet and Drury to 'the dishonour & Injustyce of suche a Course'.[84]

On the morning of Tuesday 7th, Davison took Elizabeth some letters to be signed for the Lord Deputy of Ireland. During this meeting, Elizabeth expressed her frustration that Mary's death 'was not all redy done, consyderinge she had for hir parte done all that Lawe or reason could require of hir', and asked for further letters to be written to Paulet 'for the hastynge thearof'.[85] She was presumably referring again to assassination, as she was still unaware that the warrant had been dispatched. Davison assured her that no letters would be needed, 'the warrant beinge so generall and suffycyente as it was', but did not explicitly inform her that the warrant had already been dispatched.[86] Despite the Privy Council's agreement for secrecy, he apparently believed that Elizabeth must have already known about the dispatch, since she was 'amongeste so many as weare parteneres thearin'.[87] This was their last meeting.

Mary was executed at Fotheringhay on the morning of 8th February 1587. The Earl of Shrewsbury's son, Henry Talbot, brought the news straight to Burghley. Burghley had conferred with Hatton 'and otheres', and they all 'thoughte it not fytte to breake soddenly to hir majestie and thearfore concealed it from hir all that daye'.[88] Davison was in London at this time. However, Elizabeth heard the news that evening by 'other meanes'.[89] Initially she seemed relatively calm, perhaps in denial, but the next morning 'fallynge into some heate & passyon about it sente for Master Vicechamberlene, to whom she disavoued the sayd executyon as a

[84] Discourse, at f. 220r. This conversation about Paulet, recorded in the discourse, is heavily toned down and euphemised in the Relation (at f. 223r), and mentions no names – Davison only writes that 'she entred into some speach with me of a course that had bene propounded unto her underhand by one of great place concerning that Queen; asked me what I thought thereof, which being in truth very unsutable to the rest of her publick proceding I utterly misliked, delivering my reasons, wherewith she seemed to rest fully satisfied, without any showe of allowing this new course or altering her former resolution in any pointe'.
[85] Discourse, at f. 220r-v. Similar in Relation, at f. 223r, but toned down.
[86] Discourse, at f. 220v.
[87] Discourse, at f. 220v.
[88] Discourse, at f. 220v.
[89] Discourse, at f. 220v.

thinge she nevere comaunded or intended castynge the burden generally uppon them all, but cheefly uppon my showlderes because (as she protested) I had, in sufferinge it to goe out of my handes abused the truste she reposed in me'.[90] Elizabeth was not angry that Mary was dead, but rather that she had died under her royal sign manual, instead of at the hand of an assassin, as this made her responsible. In her eyes, she had been perfectly clear about her wishes, and had therefore been disobeyed. Her 'indignation lighted particularly upon my Lord Treasurer and Master Davison', and she informed the Privy Council that she had 'taken order for the comitting of Master Secretarye Davison to the tower'.[91] The councillors, at this stage, wholeheartedly opposed this decision, and, according to the Queen's Latin secretary John Wolley, 'all knelid upon our knees to praye her to the contrarye', but to no avail.[92] Though not imprisoned, Burghley was to be barred from her presence. According to Beale, Elizabeth had also considered imprisoning Burghley and Walsingham. However, she had decided against Walsingham, as 'he was thought to stout and wold utter all'.[93] Burghley was also dismissed, because 'her Majesty thought that commit him to the tower wold kill him', probably more due to the shock than just his age and infirmity.[94]

Davison returned to court on the morning of the 10th, and, in Burghley's chamber with the rest of the Council, was informed of Elizabeth's reaction. At first, he was not unduly worried, since he had 'myne owne consyence and them selves to witenes of myn Innocencye & integretie'.[95] His colleagues nevertheless advised him to 'absente my selfe for a daye or twoe', so he returned to his home in London.[96] Davison was soon informed that Elizabeth had

[90] Discourse, at f. 220v.
[91] Cotton MS Caligula C/IX f. 220 – [10th?] Feb. 1587, Wolley to Leicester.
[92] Cotton MS Caligula C/IX f. 220.
[93] Add. MS 48027 f. 402 – undated, Beale's notes on Davison's trial.
[94] Add. MS 48027 f. 402.
[95] Discourse, at f. 220v. Similar in Relation, at f. 223r.
[96] Discourse, at f. 220v.

'resolved to comytte me to the Towere', to which end Lord Buckhurst came to his house on the 11th or 12th February.[97]

Finding him ill in bed, a sympathetic Buckhurst delayed the arrest and wrote to the Queen, explaining the consequences 'that are lyke to follow if that severe sentence of your Honours against Master Secretarye should be putt in execucon'.[98] He argued that punishing Davison would only serve to show that she and her Council were 'divided', and that her councillors were 'no better than murtherers', which 'maye worke to stirre up tumulte and rebellions'. In his eyes, since the warrant had been signed and sealed, the Council was 'bounde in and allegiance even withall spede to cause the same to be executed being a thinge that even by the wysest of your whole realme after longe debate was throughlie agreed uppon'. Consequently, he begged her to give some 'gratious and sober consideracon of the comitting of your Honours secretatie, whose facte though it cannot be excused, yet as the case standeth, without dangerous inconveniences it maye not now be punished'. However, his letter wrought no good, and Davison was duly arrested 'ij or three dayes… afterwardes one the xiiijth of this monthe'.[99]

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We can now see that Davison was not simply a scapegoat or a puppet of Burghley, but rather the instigator of the dispatch of the warrant. Without his quick action to seal the warrant, or his decision to share the warrant with Burghley and Hatton, Mary may not have been executed in February 1587. Crucially, these actions were not dictated by senior colleagues, but rather were motivated by his long-standing commitment to the protestant commonwealth. This

[97] Discourse, at f. 220v. Similar in Relation, at f. 223r.
[98] Add. MS 48116 f. 151 – [after 11th February] 1587, Buckhurst to the Queen; Rivkah Zim, 'Sackville, Thomas, first Baron Buckhurst and first earl of Dorset (c. 1536–1608), poet and administrator', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford University Press, 2015 (2004)), <https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/24450>, pp. 4-5.
[99] Discourse, at f. 220v. Similar in Relation, at f. 223r.

commitment had manifested differently depending on the political context – in the Low Countries, the most pressing threat had been the collapse of the Dutch revolt, so Davison had consistently counselled for military intervention, culminating in his support of Leicester's governor-generalship. Now, in the domestic context, the urgent threat was Mary, Queen of Scots and her plots, including the recent Moody plot. It was therefore logical that Davison's response was to eliminate the threat – that is, eliminate Mary – in order to ensure the survival of Elizabeth and the protestant commonwealth. After all, he had only recently sworn, as a privy councillor, to work for the 'universall good of the Quene, of hir Realmes and for the peace… and withstand any person… that wolde by anie way attempte or attende unto the contrary'.[100]

Although Davison had not openly admitted as much, it is clear, from the Privy Council's agreement for secrecy, that he, Burghley and Hatton, at least, if not the rest of the Council, knew that they were acting behind the Queen's back. They were all intimately familiar with her frequent changes of heart, as well as her preference for assassination, but, believing in the dire necessity of their cause, they seized their chance. This was the monarchical republic in action, as the Council assumed executive power, with Burghley at its head rather than the Queen, in order to prevent a threat to the safety of the commonwealth. Crucially, though, whilst Burghley led the Council, the process had been instigated by Davison. He evidently believed in the necessity of conciliar government, and later stated at his trial that he 'knoweth no reason whie her Lordes of the Counsale being counsellors of estate shold not be made privie & acquatnyed with a matter which ded so nerely concerne the state of the Realme'.[101]

This disobedience was not out of character for Davison, as he had already shown himself willing to interpret the Queen's orders flexibly in cases where he believed that it would serve the commonwealth. This is most notable over the governor-generalship issue – Elizabeth had

[100] Add. MS 48018 f. 1.
[101] Harley MS 290 f. 224, at f. 227v. Almost identical in Inner Temple Petyt MS 538/50 f. 39, at f. 40v.

rejected the position of sovereign herself, and had dithered over Leicester's appointment. Leicester and Davison were therefore perfectly aware that she would disapprove of his acceptance, but, since she had not explicitly instructed Leicester not to accept the position if offered, they felt that their actions were justifiable. Similarly, in February 1587, Elizabeth had not explicitly instructed him to retain the warrant secretly, so, technically, he had not done anything wrong.

In light of his determination to secure Mary's death, one may have expected Davison to support the idea of assassination. However, his abhorrence of assassination was also not out of character for him, considering his refusal to sign the Bond of Association. As shown by his behaviour over both the governor-generalship and execution crises, Davison's behaviour was motivated by his commitment to the protestant commonwealth, which was ultimately governed by God, not the Queen. Elizabeth's survival was of the utmost importance for preserving God's commonwealth, but not to the extent of contravening His law. After all, as Davison told Elizabeth, it was only the 'soveraigne majestrate to whom the swoard was comytted by god for the puneshement of the wicked and defence of the good'.[102] It would seem that this view was shared by others, hence Paulet's refusal to 'shed blood without law or warrant'. Indeed, at Davison's trial, the Archbishop of York – who actually spoke against him – began his speech by saying that 'that obedience is the greatest vertue... first to be observed towardes god and secondly towardes princes'.[103] Davison's opposition to Mary's assassination therefore makes sense within the context of his political creed and loyalty to God above all.

Patrick Collinson once wrote that Davison 'carried the can for those greater men, Burghley first and foremost, who wanted Mary dead. But that is not to say that Davison was

[102] Discourse, at f. 220r.
[103] Harley MS 290 f. 224, at f. 236r.

any less determined to secure her execution'.[104] Yet until now, no-one seems to have wondered just why he was so determined. By viewing the execution crisis alongside his diplomatic work, we can now see that Davison was no mere scapegoat, or 'man-of-business', but rather an influential political actor, whose monarchical republican convictions were borne of his long diplomatic service. He had spent his career fighting for the preservation of God, Queen and commonwealth, so now, as a privy councillor, he continued to do so. We therefore cannot understand the execution crisis without Davison, and we cannot understand Davison without his diplomatic career. The road to Mary's execution did not begin in August 1586 with the Babington Plot, but rather in the heat of the Dutch revolt in the mid-1570s.

[104] Patrick Collinson, 'Servants and Citizens: Robert Beale and Other Elizabethans', *Historical Research*, 79(206) (2006), 488-511, p. 499.

Chapter 8: Patronage in crisis, 1587

At this stage, Davison goes quiet for a while. From the moment of his imprisonment until his trial, the only records we have of Davison's experience are a letter from Randolph, who visited him on 11th March, and a record of his interrogation by Hatton and Wolley on the 12th. Other than writing his Discourse and Relation, there was nothing Davison could do to influence the course of events – he was completely at the mercy of those on the outside. For his colleagues, too, this was period of a unprecedented anxiety. Rarely had Elizabeth been so furious, and rarely had their privy councillors faced such treatment and disgrace. Never before had Burghley been barred from court, and, prior to Davison, the only other Elizabethan privy councillor to be tried was the Duke of Norfolk in 1572, who was, of course, executed. Davison's colleagues did not know, as we do now, that he would eventually be released from the Tower – for them, the possibility of his execution was all too real.

Consequently, the responses of Davison's patrons and colleagues offer a unique insight into the reality of patronage during political crisis, beyond the remit of existing historiography. The unprecedented nature of the crisis disrupted the normal functioning of the political and patronage systems, and Davison's patrons and colleagues all responded differently to his imprisonment. There is no historiographical model or humanist literature that can make sense of this period – even the notion of political credit, which had influenced Davison's recovery and promotion the previous year, was no longer relevant. This case study therefore expands our current understanding of political relationships, by showing first, that the system could break down, and second, how patrons behaved when this occurred.

Although scholars have recognised that Burghley foisted the blame onto Davison, this has not been examined in detail, nor compared to the responses of Davison's other patrons and

colleagues.[1] This chapter will therefore provide the first comprehensive account of their actions between Davison's initial imprisonment and trial. Both of Davison's main patrons, Burghley and Walsingham, were also partly responsible for the dispatch, and therefore faced the wrath of the Queen themselves. Burghley initially sought to defend Davison, but, panicked by the prospect of losing his career, ultimately thrust all of the blame onto Davison alone. As principal secretary, Walsingham was also complicit in Davison's disgrace, as he had a duty to disseminate the Queen's message of Davison's guilt. But, unlike Burghley, his motives were not selfish, and he tried to emphasise Davison's innocence where possible. Davison's other patrons and colleagues, including Hatton and Mildmay, were also required to play a part in his disgrace. However, the political nation did draw the line at the suggestion of Davison's execution – this was universally regarded as abhorrent, and others not involved in the dispatch, including Lord Buckhurst and the Crown lawyers, intervened to prevent this. Ultimately, then, this crisis uncovers the complex reality of political relationships during a crisis, and diversifies the existing body of scholarship on Elizabethan patronage.

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Davison's interactions with colleagues had hitherto been very predictable in light of his established political relationships – he had immediately taken the warrant to his most senior colleague, Burghley (with Leicester also present), followed by his friend Walsingham (albeit as instructed), and the following day to Hatton, with whom he was also close, and all had acted in concert. Burghley had acted as 'leader of the Council', making the decision to call the Council and dispatch the warrant; Walsingham had written the letter to Paulet regarding assassination, and had been informed about the signed warrant by Davison; Davison had

[1] For instance, see Stephen Alford, *Burghley: William Cecil at the Court of Elizabeth I* (London: Yale University Press, 2008), p. 294; Mark Taviner, 'Robert Beale and the Elizabethan Polity' (University of St. Andrews: unpublished doctoral thesis, 2000), p. 224.

confided his fears to Hatton, who was also at the Council meeting; and Leicester had been present at the meeting with Burghley, and the Council meeting. All five men therefore bore some responsibility for the dispatch of the warrant, particularly Burghley and Walsingham, who, according to Beale, had also been considered by Elizabeth for imprisonment. To defend Davison would therefore be to risk their own position and highlight their own culpability. So, would these patrons and colleagues leap to his defence, or would he be sacrificed as a scapegoat?

Of these four patrons, Leicester was the only one who bore Davison no goodwill at all. Though they had previously been close, their relationship had been destroyed by the clash over the governor-generalship the previous year, and had not since recovered. Consequently, Leicester did nothing to assist his former client, and actually appeared to work against him. In a letter written to Leicester's brother, the Earl of Warwick, the day after Davison's trial, the unknown author (probably a client of the Dudley family) praised Leicester for 'beinge the onlie meane from God to qualifie the Queens bitter humour and to stay the ruinous course provoked at home & abroad', and commented on the 'sweet mediacion and resolute wise dealinge of my Lorde'.[2] Since Elizabeth's course of action to 'stay' this 'runious course' was to arrest and prosecute Davison, this suggests that Leicester had been involved in this decision. Indeed, this is supported by Beale, who, in a memorandum written sometime after 1594, recorded that 'I have herd that this sute to empreson master Davison came from the Erle of Leycester'.[3] The letter to Warwick also reported rumours that Leicester had 'sought the preferment of Master Fortescue to be Secretarie', although the author fervently denied them – but was this really a

[2] SP 12/199 f. 137 – 29th March 1587, letter from unknown to [the Earl of Warwick]. A later pencil note records this letter as being from Walsingham to Warwick, but from the content, writing style, and place of writing at Temple Bar, it seems very unlikely to be from Walsingham, but is almost certainly to Warwick, due to the mentions of his brother (Leicester).
[3] Add. MS 48027 f. 402– [after 1594], memorandum by Beale.

case of no smoke without fire? Regardless, Leicester did nothing to help Davison, and probably did much to condemn him instead.

The responses of Walsingham, Hatton and Burghley were more complicated. Since Walsingham and Hatton still had access to the Queen, they had no need to write to her, unlike Burghley, who had been barred from her presence. Consequently, Burghley wrote frequently to Elizabeth in order to recover her favour. Three days after Mary's execution, on 11th February, Burghley drafted a letter from the Privy Council to the Queen, to beg for her forgiveness.[4] According to Taviner, Burghley's alterations to this draft 'bear witness to the moment when Burghley had not yet completely transferred the responsibility… off his own shoulders onto those of Davison [but] it also shows that this transferral was not very far off'.[5] Although Davison was not blamed for the dispatch, Burghley placed his name squarely in the frame, mentioning twice that the warrant was 'shewed to us by Master Davison'.[6] However, in light of Burghley's efforts on Davison's behalf two days later, it seems unlikely that his intention was to incriminate him. Rather, Burghley might actually have intended to deflect the blame from Davison alone. Elizabeth had already ordered Davison's arrest on the grounds that he had shown the warrant to the Council, so, Burghley was not telling her anything that she did not already know; indeed, considering the order for Davison's arrest, for him to be completely overlooked in this letter may even have been viewed as suspicious by the Queen. So, Burghley acknowledged that Davison had 'shewed and redd' the warrant to the Council, but also emphasised that the decision to put it into execution was a collective one, as he took care to make corrections and additions to the draft clarifying 'that we all had deliberatly resolved', that

[4] CP 164/10 – 11th February 1586, Privy Council to the Queen. See also the calendar: Historical Manuscripts Commission, *Calendar of the Manuscripts of the Most Hon. The Marquis of Salisbury,* Vol. 3 (London: Her Majesty's Stationery Office, 1889), art. 472, pp. 218-9, p. 218, dated here as 2nd February. Taviner shows that this draft has been calendared incorrectly, and was probably written on the 11th rather than the 2nd (Taviner, p. 224). It seems that the 'x' on the endorsement was misformed, and has been mistakenly taken for an 'i' in the calendar. The actual date was therefore 'xj' (11th), not 'ij' (2nd).
[5] CP 164/10.
[6] CP 164/10.

'we did with on mynd', and that the decision to have it dispatched was 'fully concluded by us all'.[7] By stressing that the Council acted as a group, Burghley drew attention away from Davison alone, and sought safety in numbers. He also drafted another letter to the Queen on behalf of the Council the following day, in which Davison was not named.[8]

In fact, Burghley was horrified by the Queen's treatment of Davison, and tried to persuade her not to have him arrested. On 13th February, so after Elizabeth had announced her intention to have Davison imprisoned but before he was actually arrested, Burghley wrote to her lamenting that 'the example will be sorrowfull to all your faythfull servantes… I can remembre manny examples in your father, your brother your sistars and yea your own mynd tyme, of committyng of Counsellors ether to other mens howses, or to ther own, so can I not remembre any on example of a Counsellor Committed to the towre, but wher… they war atteynted afterward of high treasun, and so never served afterward'.[9] He realised that Elizabeth was too furious to forgive Davison altogether, so by proposing house arrest as an alternative, he pragmatically sought to mitigate his punishment. Since house arrest would be less damaging to Davison's reputation, it could be possible to recover professionally afterwards. Burghley evidently wanted Davison to continue as secretary, as he greatly respected his professional capabilities – he declared in this letter, 'I know not a man in England so furnished unyversally for the place he had nother know any that can cume neare hym'.[10] Indeed, it would have been impossible for Davison to have been promoted to the secretaryship without Burghley's support, and we can see here that his favour and respect for Davison was genuine.

However, this may not have been the final version which was sent to the Queen. Strype's *Annals* gives an alternate ending to the letter from the surviving draft copy, possibly from the

[7] CP 164/10.
[8] CP 164/15 – 12th February 1587, Privy Council to the Queen.
[9] Lansdowne MS 102 f. 6 – 13th Feb. 1587, Burghley to the Queen.
[10] Lansdowne MS 102 f. 6.

sent copy which has since been lost – Strype gives no citation, and it has not been mentioned in subsequent work on the execution.[11] This ending omits any suggestion of house arrest, but still expressed 'grief' at Elizabeth's 'displeasure' towards Davison, and urged that 'for a servant in that place, I think it hard to find a like qualified person. Whom to ruin, in your heavy displeasure, shall be more your majesty's loss than his'.[12] This final line is extraordinary, as it turned the patron-client hierarchy on its head, suggesting that Davison, the servant, was the irreplaceable party. Without a manuscript copy, one hesitates to draw any firm conclusions, yet both endings are essentially the same in spirit – at this stage, Burghley wanted to defend Davison, and regarded his disgrace as a severe loss for the political nation.

Burghley was not the only patron to offer Davison support, as, the following day, Walsingham wrote to Burghley from his sickbed in Seething Lane. He had been recalled, and expected to be at court tomorrow 'to see your Lordship. In the meantime I humbly beseeche your Lord to use all the good meanes you may to remove her Majesty's heavye dyspleasour from Master Secretary Davyson who as I am informed is greatly dejected'.[13] That he wrote to Burghley rather than the Queen directly is notable – considering the Queen's current mood, he evidently expected that Burghley would be the best intercessor. Although there are no letters extant from Walsingham to Elizabeth during this period, his phrase 'in the meantime' suggests that he was planning to raise the issue upon his return.

However, Walsingham's own position remained precarious for a long time – he wrote to Leicester on 3rd April confessing that 'behinde my backe her Majestye giveth owt verry harde speaches of my selve... and yf her Majestye could be otherwyse served, I knowe I shoolde not be used'.[14] Yet, despite Elizabeth's harsh words, this also implies that she needed at least

[11] Specifically that of Read, Neale, Adams, Alford or Taviner.
[12] John Strype, *Annals of the Reformation and Establishment of Religion*, Vol. III Pt I (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1824 (1728)), pp. 542-3 – 11th February 1587, Burghley to the Queen.
[13] SP 12/198 f. 78 – 13th February 1587, Walsingham to Burghley
[14] Cotton MS Galba C/XI f. 315 – 3rd April 1587, Walsingham to Leicester.

one of her most senior councillors for the government to function. With Burghley in disgrace and Leicester returning to the Low Countries, Walsingham was indispensible, if only by default. Somewhat less precarious, though, were the positions of Hatton, Lord Buckhurst, and John Wolley, who also still had access to the Queen, and were asked by Burghley to deliver his letters to her.[15]

By the time Burghley wrote his second personal letter to the Queen, on the 17th, his desperation was apparent. Though he would never have expected Mary's execution to be simple, it seems that he had not anticipated the force of Elizabeth's reaction. So, despite his initial defence of Davison, Burghley's priority was now his own career, and he made no mention of the secretary in this letter. Though humble in tone, Burghley did not actually apologise for the dispatch of the death warrant, because, in his eyes, he had done no wrong.[16] Instead, he asserted that 'for this late fact which I understand doth so deeply offend your Majesty, I am no more to be charged then others, yet I fynd by report that your Majesty doth with more bitter termes of displeasur condemn me then others, and this I conceave increaseth by reason your Majesty hath not hard me as you have hard others'.[17] Whereas in his previous letter he emphasised the collective nature of the dispatch in order to defend Davison, here he used the same tactic in order to divert blame from himself – conveniently forgetting, of course, that it was Davison who had been 'condemned' the most. Nevertheless, this seems to have been written out of desperation rather than malice, as Burghley declared his 'mynd contynually oppressed with byting greff for your displeasur', and begged for 'some dropps of your mercy to quynch my sorrowfull pantyng hart'.

[15] As per the endorsements, Hatton carried Lansdowne MS 102 f. 6; Buckhurst carried Lansdowne MS f. 8 – 23rd February 1587; and Wolley carried his letter of 17th February – the two drafts of this are Lansdowne MS 115 f. 89, and Lansdowne MS 102 f. 4. The endorsement of MS 102 f. 4 states that it was not received by the Queen. It is unknown whether she accepted the other letters.
[16] Lansdowne MS 115 f. 89 – 17th February 1587, Burghley to the Queen.
[17] Lansdowne MS 115 f. 89.

The same day, Burghley also drafted a justification for Mary's execution, entitled 'the state of the cause as it ought to be conceaved and reported, concerning the execution doone uppon the Queen of Scottes'.[18] To give instructions on how events should be 'conceaved and reported' was somewhat presumptive, considering that he was still barred from the royal presence. This was therefore no official account, but rather Burghley's own spin on events. Crucially, the Privy Council was spoken of as a group, with only Davison and Lord Chancellor Bromley being singled out: 'hir secretary Master Davison, who did carry the sam to the Lord Chancellor to put the Great Seale therto, which was doone very secretly, and afterwards did declare the [sealed warrant] to Certen of the lords and others of her Majesties privy Counsell'.[19] Though Burghley had already named Davison in his private letters to the Queen, Elizabeth was already well aware of Davison's involvement, whereas the wider public, to whom the 'cause' was being 'reported', were not. Within only three days of Davison's arrest, then, Burghley was willing to advertise his complicity more widely. This day therefore appears to mark the turning point in Burghley's approach, as he switched from defensive to offensive. He could have simply chosen to abandon or ignore Davison, but instead actively worked to condemn and incriminate him in order to absolve himself – just as Leicester had done the previous year, when he blamed Davison for Elizabeth's reaction to his acceptance of the governor-generalship. So, whilst Burghley was not initially responsible for Davison's scapegoating – that had already been decided by Elizabeth when she had him arrested – his actions (and lies) would nevertheless strengthen the case against him.

By mid-February, discussions were happening at court about the possibility of Davison's execution. Since Davison wrote his Relation on 20th February, it seems likely that he had heard about this threat, and, having already written his longer Discourse, now sought to clarify

[18] CP 164/17 – 17th February 1587, Burghley's paper, 'the state of the cause as it ought to be conceaved and reported, concerning the execution doone uppon the Queen of Scottes'.
[19] CP 164/17.

Elizabeth's instructions and Burghley's role, as well as salvage some goodwill from the Queen by omitting any mention of Mary's assassination. It was Lord Buckhurst who first informed Elizabeth that to hang Davison would be against the law. She was not happy with this answer, and, on 24th February, asked Chief Justice Edmund Anderson 'whether [her] prerogatives were not absolut'.[20] Anderson replied that they were indeed absolute, so she 'rebuked [Buckhurst] bitterly'. Since Davison never was executed, it is perhaps easy to view this conversation with the benefit of hindsight, and dismiss it as simply an empty threat. However, for Elizabeth's counsellors, her response was nothing but genuine. They had never anticipated the level of her fury – it was like nothing they had ever experienced, far surpassing her rage at Leicester's acceptance of the governor-generalship a year earlier, and Burghley in particular had never before faced such treatment. At this stage, then, Elizabeth's threats were sincerely believed by her counsellors – this was to be a matter of life and death for Davison, with them standing as the only barrier.

Following her conversations with Buckhurst and Anderson, Elizabeth now seemed inclined to 'cause [Master Davison] to be hanged and that we all may be so convicted, as we shall require pardon'.[21] This was reported in a letter from Burghley to Mildmay, so the 'we' here refers to the councillors present at the dispatch meeting. Burghley expected that Elizabeth would push the other judges into an answer over her prerogative, too, so he asked Mildmay to 'secretly admonish' them 'to be well advised what answer they give'. Though Burghley had hardly been Davison's biggest champion, the suggestion of execution was beyond the pale, and he complained that 'I thynk it a hard tyme, if men for doing well afore god & man, shallbe otherwise punished then Law may warrant with an opynion gotten from the [judges] that [her]

[20] Lansdowne MS 108 f. 90 – 25th February 1587, [Burghley to Mildmay]. This letter has been deciphered by both Read (*Lord Burghley*, pp. 373-4) and Neale (*Parliaments*, Vol. 2, pp. 141-2). The square brackets here indicate words, including pronouns, which have been deciphered, with the exception of [Buckhurst], which just replaces 'hym' (Buckhurst having being mentioned earlier in cipher).
[21] Lansdowne MS 108 f. 90.

[prerogative] is above [her] Law'.[22] As Read has argued, Burghley was evidently 'fearful that the Queen's irrational anger would take a form menacing to the whole reign of law'.[23] Davison's execution would therefore not just be abhorrent in its injustice to Davison, but would also undermine the political system more broadly.

Mildmay's persuasions must have been successful, as on 9th March Walsingham reported that the judges had decided that 'his fact might be within the compas of a contempt punishable by fyne and imprisonment, and further the Lawe could not touch him'.[24] The Queen's lawyers also agreed with Burghley, Mildmay and Buckhurst, and added their voices to this outcry. Though they were to represent Elizabeth at Davison's trial, both the Attorney-General John Popham and the Solicitor-General Thomas Egerton 'did playnly say, that they would rather leave their offices then be brought to deale agaynst him otherwise, then in the star chamber'.[25] Since the Court of Star Chamber could not pass a capital sentence, this would at least ensure that Elizabeth could not follow through on her threat.[26] Sir Roger Manwood, Lord Chief Baron of the Exchequer, probably also wrote to the Queen pleading for Davison's life.[27] So, although they could not prevent Elizabeth from holding a trial, they clearly felt able to intervene on such a grave matter which touched both Davison and the authority of English law.

Davison had thus far been defended by several colleagues, but much less so by Burghley, hitherto one of his main patrons. So what of his most faithful patron and friend, Walsingham? Despite their close relationship, his reaction to Davison's imprisonment was not entirely straightforward. As principal secretary, Walsingham was responsible for spinning the

[22] Lansdowne MS 108 f. 90.
[23] Conyers Read, *Lord Burghley and Queen Elizabeth* (London: Cape, 1960), p. 374.
[24] SP 78/17 f. 73 – 9th March 1587, Walsingham to Stafford. The last folio, f. 75, is bound in the wrong way around, so this sentence runs from f. 74v straight to f. 75v.
[25] Add. MS 48027 f. 402.
[26] W. P. Baildon (ed.), *Les Reportes del Cases in Camera Stellata, 1593 to 1609* (London: Privately printed for Alfred Morrison, Esq., 1894), p. lxiii.
[27] Manwood later recounted that he had written to the Queen in his own hand for 'secrecy', in 'the case of Mr Davison' – SP 12/242 f. 22 – 16th May 1592, Manwood to Burghley.

execution, and for avoiding a diplomatic incident, as Elizabeth now faced the possibility of a war with Scotland, as well as the reaction from Mary's allies in France.[28] Indeed, since the whole point of Mary's execution was to ensure Elizabeth's safety, he now needed to follow through, and avert any other threats to her safety. As the most senior councillor still at court, the responsibility on Walsingham's shoulders was even greater than usual. Consequently, he was essentially forced to toe the party line, though he still did what little he could to help Davison.

In his meeting with the French ambassador Châteauneuf, Walsingham blamed Davison for the dispatch, but did attempt to justify his actions. According to Châteauneuf, Walsingham made 'many excuses to me for what had happened on the death of the Queen of Scotland, throwing the whole blame on Davison'.[29] However, Walsingham emphasised that Davison 'had done nothing but what a good man and good servant of the Queen, caring for his country, should do'; although 'it was true that he had exceeded the command of the Queen… this had been with the advice of the Council'. So, although Davison had been clearly chosen as the scapegoat by now, Walsingham was still careful to spread the responsibility, and emphasise that the Council had acted as one.

However, Walsingham also told Châteauneuf that the imprisonment of des Trappes, in the Moody plot, was due to Davison. Apparently, both the Queen and Walsingham had known that des Trappes was innocent, and it was due to Davison's zeal and inexperience that des Trappes had been arrested.[30] But the plot had almost certainly been Walsingham's idea, and,

[28] Cotton MS Caligula D/I f. 133 – March 1587, Walsingham to [the Chancellor of Scotland]; SP 78/17 f. 73.
[29] Alexandre Teulet, *Relations Politiques de la France et de l'Espagne et l'Ecosse au XVI^e Siècle, Vol. IV, 1585-1603* (Paris: Jules Renouard, 1862), p. 181 – March 1587, Châteauneuf to Henry III.
Original French: '…beaucoup d'excuses de ce qui s'estoyt passé sur la mort de la Royne d'Escosse, rejettant toute la faulte sur Davisson. Lequel toutetfoys n'avoyt rien faict que ce que ung homme de bien et bon serviteur de la Royne, aymant son pais, debvoit faire; bien estoyt vray que il avoyt oultrepassé le commandement de la Royne, mais que ce avoyt esté avec l'advis du Conseil…'.
[30] Teulet, p. 185.

since he stressed that the Queen knew of des Trappes' innocence, it seems likely that he had been instructed to foist the blame for this, too, onto Davison, in order to fully repair relations with France using one convenient scapegoat. Indeed, he did not blame Davison harshly, but simply said that if Davison had rejected Stafford's story, 'the thing would not have gone so far'.[31]

Walsingham's approach was much the same with the English ambassador to France, Edward Stafford – emphasise Elizabeth's innocence, whilst portraying Davison as sympathetically as possible. On 9th March, he wrote to Stafford with the now-established story that the death warrant had been dispatched without Elizabeth's command.[32] Crucially, Walsingham was also very clear that 'her Majestie is offended against her counsell and spetyally against my Lord Threasorer (uppon whom she layeth the greatest blame)'. He portrayed Davison sympathetically, explaining that his actions were due to a genuine misunderstanding of Elizabeth's instructions – 'which wordes Master Davison understood otherwyes, as he offreth to take yt uppon his death, supposing her Majesty had sayed that she would no further be troubled with the matter'. Thus, although Walsingham was certainly keeping to the established story, he was sympathetic to Davison, and did not entirely gloss over Burghley's culpability.

Then, in a letter to Archibald Douglas, the double-dealing Scottish ambassador, on 23rd March, Walsingham went so far as to criticise Elizabeth's course of action – 'Her Majestye is vyolently bent agaynst Master Davyson which seemethe to procead of a desire she hathe thereby to satysfye the King your Sovarayn. I woold ther ware some better coorse of satysfactyon taken'.[33] Such a comment to the famously shady Douglas was sure to be

[31] Original French: '…et si Davisson eust faict de mesme, la chose n'eust pas passée si avant: ce qu'il me confessa, m'adjouxtant que, s'il eust esté à la court, Destrappes n'eust pas esté pris'.
[32] SP 78/17 f. 73.
[33] CP 14/59 – 23rd March, Walsingham to Douglas.

circulated, and Walsingham would have known this. So, although Walsingham was obliged to stick to the agreed 'spin' in public, he still did what little he could to help his friend. It is also worth remembering that whilst all of Burghley's business was conducted via correspondence, Walsingham was present at court for the majority of this time. The same applies to Hatton. We therefore cannot know what went on in their meetings with Elizabeth and other colleagues, and whether or not they sought to defend Davison in person.

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Throughout these weeks of crisis management, we hear very little from Davison. The only glimpses into his state of mind, other than his Discourse and Relation, come from three visits between 11th and 16th March, from Randolph, Hatton and Wolley. Hatton and Wolley had been instructed to interview Davison ahead of his trial, and seem to have sent Randolph, his long-standing friend, ahead the day before, perhaps to prepare or comfort him. Randolph informed Walsingham that he had found Davison in poor health, and 'myche greved in mynde for her Majestys despleasure'.[34] Davison remained adamant of his innocence, refusing to 'confesse ether fawlte or error in that which he is charged with', and hoped that 'all that were partakers of the facte' would stand 'faythefullye with hym as ye have ether nobilitie honour, or feare of God not to suffer so innocente a man voyde of all offence toward her Majestie to stand longe in her hyghnes despleasure'. Though Randolph, Hatton and Wolley were ostensibly working on the Queen's behalf, their loyalty and sympathy still lay with Davison – after all, both Hatton and Randolph had been close to him for well over a decade. Randolph therefore declared himself moved 'with greate greef', hoping that 'nowe or never all honourable persons muste stande his frends or I doute what shall become of hym'.[35]

[34] SP 53/21 f. 58 – 11th March 1587, Randolph to Walsingham.
[35] SP 53/21 f. 58.

Hatton and Wolley came the following day to question Davison. In his Discourse, he had insisted that 'hir Majestie [had a] Resolute disposytyone to have it proceeded in accordinge to hir directyon and warrante afforsaid what soever be nowe pretended to the contrarye'.[36] He now continued to stick to the same story, 'protest[ing] before God he nether remembreth nor receaved any' commandment to retain the warrant in his hands until he knew 'her further pleasure'.[37] Although 'her Majestie did not expresly will hym to deliver it to any bodye so did he never understand her Majesties meaning to be other then to have it proceded in', considering her 'express order to carye it to the seale', as well as the 'howerly danger she lived in'. But Davison's attempts at defence, despite the sympathies of Hatton and Wolley, were destined to be futile, because he was unable to deploy his greatest defence – Elizabeth's desire for assassination. This was the focus of the fifth question, but any notion of assassination had been completely erased – 'whether 6 or 7 dayes after it was passed the great seale & in your custodye her Majestie told you not in the gallerye that she had a better way to proceed therein then that which was before devised'. Davison would have been well aware that, if Elizabeth's assassination idea became public knowledge, it would provoke international outcry and undermine the rule of law. Moreover, on a personal level, it would also heighten the Queen's fury against him, and damage his case. So, Davison was unable to defend himself against this accusation, and could only respond vaguely that Elizabeth had complained about Paulet 'upon such cause as she best knoweth', and 'uttered such a spech that she could have matters otherwise don, the particulars whereof I leave to her best remembrance'.

Two days later, on the 14th, the questioning recommenced, and was repeated again on the 16th. The questions were similar each time, but became more specific, referring to particular phrases and conversations which had apparently taken place. This repetitiveness and increasing

[36] Discourse, at f. 221v.
[37] Harley MS 419 f. 168 – 12th, 14th, 16th March 1587, articles ministered to Davison by Hatton and Wolley.

specificity of the questions, combined with the unanswerable questions about the plans for Mary's assassination, are the first signs of what would become a showtrial. On both the 14th and 16th, Davison continued to deny all of the charges against him. The final question referred to the issue of Elizabeth's prerogative, asking whether it was Davison who had raised the question of 'how far [he] might be touched by law'. To this, he 'answereth what any friend of his might doe for his owne satisfying he knoweth not: but that hym self ever gave direction to any man to make any such enquirye he denieth'. Since the first conversation around Elizabeth's prerogative appeared to have been between her and Buckhurst, and no letter or record of a visit from Buckhurst to Davison (after his arrest) survives, it is likely that Davison was also telling the truth on this matter.

Unfortunately for Davison, Randolph's hope that all would 'stande his frends' proved to be futile. As the trial drew nearer, and the threat of execution avoided, the Council was now content to lay all of the burden upon Davison. Shortly before Davison's trial, Burghley was interviewed by the MP and future privy councillor John Fortescue. The copy of his statement is endorsed 1st April, but since this was three days after Davison's trial, it seems likely that this was an error, as Beale recorded that before the trial 'the Lord Threasurer had sett to his hand to a writing, wherby he confessed that he had bin abused by Mr Davison: which was produced as an Evidence against him'.[38] In this statement, Burghley again reiterated Davison's responsibility, claiming that 'I was not neither doe I know that anie of us was commanded by hir Majesty hir self, to write or to cawse the execution to be done... and wheare it is demanded by whose Informacion it came to passe, it appeareth howe the same came by Mr Davison then her Majesties Secretarie'.[39]

[38] Add. MS 48027 f. 675 – undated, memoranda by Beale.
[39] Add. MS 48027 f. 702 – [before 28th March 1587], Burghley's statement.

Then, on the day before Davison's trial, the privy councillors present at the dispatch meeting were called to Lord Chancellor Bromley's house, where, in front of him, Archbishop Whitgift, and the two chief justices, Sir Christopher Wray and Sir Edmund Anderson, they signed a commission confirming Davison's responsibility: 'we did not understand by Master Davison any thinge to move us to be in anie doubt of hir Majesties meaninge but that it should be executed'.[40] This was the final piece of evidence against him. The four commissioners also asked Burghley 'howe and for what cause the consultation was had in his chamber'.[41] In response, Burghley denied summoning the Council, and claimed 'that Master Davison did cause the Counsell to be warned… [and] did send for them to come thither, without any direction from the Threasorer, as divers times before that was done, since the Threasorer's hurt of his legge'. However, Davison had made it very clear that Burghley was responsible for summoning the Council, and Burghley had not made this accusation in any of his earlier letters – then, he had only claimed that Davison had 'shewed and redd' the warrant, not that he had summoned the councillors. [42] It therefore seems that this claim was another fabrication by Burghley, in order to incriminate Davison even further.

Not everyone signed this document, though. Beale heard from Archibald Douglas who had seen this signed commission first hand, that 'all their hands were unto' this document, 'save Master Secretarye Walsingham'.[43] It seems that, unlike Burghley, Walsingham had remained faithful, refusing to condemn his friend and colleague on an unjust charge. Beale also 'heard that Sir Christopher Hatton did not sign yt: but [the ambassador] thought otherwise'.[44]

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[40] SP 53/21 f. 61 – 27th March 1587, statement by the privy councillors present at the dispatch meeting.
[41] SP 53/21 f. 61.
[42] CP 164/10. On Burghley summoning the Council, see Discourse, at f. 219r-v; Relation, at f. 223r.
[43] Add. MS 48027 ff. 675 and 690v – two undated memoranda by Beale.
[44] Add. MS 48027 f. 675.

Davison was tried in Star Chamber on 28th March 1587 before thirteen commissioners, including three privy councillors who had not been present at the meeting when the warrant was dispatched: the Archbishop of Canterbury, John Whitgift; Chancellor of the Exchequer, Sir Walter Mildmay; and Comptroller of the Queen's Household, Sir James Croft.[45] The Queen's lawyers were the Attorney-General John Popham, the Solicitor-General Thomas Egerton, and the serjeants-at-law John Puckering and Francis Gawdy.[46] According to Beale, it was initially planned that the lords present at the dispatch meeting would also be called to attend the trial, 'but that cause was stayed'.[47] Instead, the written submissions of Burghley and the Council were used as evidence.[48]

There are eleven surviving accounts of the trial, nine of which are anonymous.[49] The two named accounts were written by William Mill, a clerk of the Star Chamber, and by William Nutt, 'an eyewitness'.[50] These accounts differ in the level of details for each speaker, so cannot have been copied from each other – as Taviner suggests, these differences are indicative of 'some witnesses [being] obviously better placed to hear the various speakers, and some better able to remember the proceedings in detail'.[51] It was obvious to all that this was a showtrial, designed to 'prove' the Queen's innocence – indeed, following the trial, Burghley wrote to

[45] Harley MS 290 f. 224, at f. 225r.
[46] Harley MS 290 f. 224, at f. 225r.
[47] Add. MS 48027 f. 690v.
[48] Add. MS 48027 f. 675.
[49] All assumed to be dated 28th March 1587, the date of the trial, unless specified otherwise. Five are in Add. MS 48027: f. 398; f. 666; f. 677; f. 680; f. 688 – signed by William Mill, clerk of the Star Chamber. The other six are: SP 12/199 f. 137 – 29th March 1587, letter from unknown to the Earl of Warwick; Harley MS 290 f. 224; Harley 6807 f. 206; Inner Temple Peyt MS 538/50 f. 39; Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Ashmole 862 p. 235 – signed William Nutt (printed in Nicolas, Appendix F, pp. 330-349, under the old shelfmark 'sub. Tit. Juridici 7843. 862 p. 235'); Cambridge, Gonville and Caius College MS 197/103 p. 266 (with a note stating it was recorded by William Nutt, but the account is different from the Oxford Nutt account; printed in Nicolas, Appendix F, pp. 302-330, under the old shelfmark 'Caius College Cambridge Class A 1090, 8 p. 267'). Shorter accounts of different speeches or parts of the trial also exist, including Lambeth Palace Library MS 250 f. 167 – 'report of a speech in the Star Chamber at the examination of William Davison concerning the execution of Mary Queen of Scots'; Stowe MS 296 f. 3 – Mildmay's verdict 'at the censure of Secretary Davison'.
[50] Add. MS 48027 f. 688, at f. 690r, signed 'William Mill'; MS Ashmole 862 p. 235, at p. 245– 'ex autographo Guilielmi Nutti qui oculatus testis adfuit'.
[51] Taviner, p. 231.

Lord Hunsdon, then in Scotland, that James ought to be satisfied by 'the ernest and sever proceedyng to try out the offendors [and] the Judgment in publyck place gyven ageynst hym that was the principall and the only offendor'.[52]

The Queen's lawyers spoke first. Davison faced two main charges – first, showing the Privy Council the signed warrant without Elizabeth's permission; and second, misleading the Council, by telling them that Elizabeth had confirmed her intention to proceed with the execution. Simon Adams has suggested that he 'was persuaded to forgo his innocence, justify Elizabeth at his trial, and suffer only nominally', and that he had made 'an understanding' with Burghley.[53] However, the various trial records do not support this interpretation, as, in reality, Davison mounted a confident defence despite already being incriminated by the Privy Council. His defence remained unaltered from his earlier interrogations by Hatton and Wolley, as he argued that he had not disobeyed the Queen, as she had not instructed him to keep the signed warrant from the Privy Council, and had not told him not to dispatch it. He argued that once the warrant had been sealed, he took it to be 'irrevocable in law', and had therefore acted in accordance with what he believed were the Queen's wishes.

It is important to remember, though, despite Davison's defence, that Davison and the Privy Council had known exactly what they were doing, hence their agreement for secrecy. This was actually mentioned at trial, with Davison explaining that they had agreed 'not to let the Queen understand it' until after Mary's death in order to prevent any 'melancholie to her Majestie', due to her 'naturall compassion to mercy'.[54] Fortunately for Davison, though, the ambiguity of the Queen's instructions left him enough room to mount a staunch defence. His case was nevertheless undermined by his inability to mention assassination, as this was his best

[52] SP 52/42 no. 37 – 6th April 1587, Burghley to Hunsdon.
[53] Simon Adams, 'Davison, William (d. 1608), diplomat and administrator', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford University Press, 2008 (2004)) <https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/7306>, p. 16.
[54] Harley MS 290 f. 224, at f. 227v; Add. MS 48027 f. 398, at f. 339v.

defence against the charge that Elizabeth had 'ment to take an other course'.[55] One witness, who clearly already knew about Elizabeth's desire for assasination, 'well commended' Davison for 'his discretion and wise regarde he held, layinge the burthen of the matter upon the necessitie of the time & danger of private actions'.[56] Davison spoke just as he had always written in his discourses and dispatches – frankly, but peppered with rhetorical contrition. For instance, after rebutting an allegation made in Burghley's statement, he then commented, 'I reverence his testimony'; after demanding 'proofs' from the prosecution, he insisted that 'I will not stande in contestacion with her… I submytt my selfe to [your] punishement'.[57] Davison's confidence was noted by multiple eyewitnesses: one described Davison as being 'replenished with gravitie, a fine delyverie of speache, but a voyce somewhat lowe (which he excused by lat sicknes), whilst another recalled his 'countenance resolute, and [*marginal*] assured (thoughe his body was weake and his voyce lowe)'.[58] William Nutt was less impressed by Davison's manner, but still portrayed him sympathetically, recounting that he 'spake somewhat faintly unaudibly', with his 'left hand in a Scarfe benummed I thinke by his late taken Palsie'.[59]

As the chairman, Mildmay was the first commissioner to speak, and gave the verdict which all would follow. Mildmay was a long-time friend of Davison, along with Henry Killigrew and Thomas Randolph, so was probably dismayed to have been selected as a commissioner. However, as one of the few councillors who had not been present at the dispatch meeting, he had no choice. Just as Walsingham had been forced to speak against his friend, the same now applied to Mildmay, as, whether or not he had been briefed before the trial, the outcome expected by the Queen was abundantly clear. Consequently, the majority of his speech, until the brief verdict at the end, was much the same in substance as the speeches from

[55] Harley MS 290 f. 224, at f. 225v.
[56] SP 12/199 f. 137, at f. 138v.
[57] Caius College MS 197/103 p. 266, at pp. 269, 271.
[58] Caius College MS 197/103 p. 266, at p. 268; Add. MS 48027 f. 398, at f. 398v.
[59] MS Ashmole 862 p. 235, at p. 237.

the Queen's lawyers immediately preceeding his own. After recounting the danger posed by Mary, and the circumstances of the dispatch, Mildmay did comment that Davison had 'for his honestie & sufficiency… served her aswell as any other man that I knowe'; nevertheless, he could 'by noe meanes excuse' the 'manifest contempt' committed.[60] Davison had had no right to inform the Privy Council of the signed warrant without her permission, because 'every of those privie Counsellors, are, nor ought to be any further privie or acquainted with her Majesties affaires of State, then it pleaseth her to make them'.[61] Moreover, the Council must never 'presume to contenue her authority… not only without her expresse order, but also contrary to her commandment'.[62] With regard to their agreement for secrecy, Mildmay also judged that 'it is the dutie of a good subjecte to forget his promise where the Queen is a partie'.[63] In closing, he set the punishment at 10,000 marks and imprisonment in the Tower 'during her Majestie's pleasure'.[64] He remarked that this fine was 'much more, I confesse, then he is anyway able to satisfie, knowing his insufficiency that way as I doe', and recommended that Davison 'seeke grace at her Majesties handes'.

Although the punishment was agreed unanimously, some commissioners spoke more favourably of Davison's actions. The most significant of these dissenters was Arthur Grey, Baron Grey de Wilton. Grey had long supported Mary's execution, and had recently served as a commissioner at her trial at Fotheringhay. He therefore argued that since Mary had threatened 'the alteration of Religion, the confusion of Law, Lands, Lyf and Libertie of them all… that person whoo had delivered this Land of so pernycious a poyson was a worthie instrument'.[65] Davison had 'preferred the saftie of his prince & contrie before his owne welfare, and that…

[60] Stowe MS 296 f. 3, at ff. 4v-5r – 28th March 1587, Mildmay's verdict.
[61] Stowe MS 296 f. 3, at f. 5r.
[62] Stowe MS 296 f. 3, at f. 6r.
[63] Harley MS 290 f. 224, at f. 280r.
[64] Stowe MS 296 f. 3, at f. 6r.
[65] Add. MS 48027 f. 398, at f. 400v.

zeale therein was in his opynion to be rewarded'.[66] This vehement support of Davison was starkly at odds with his concurrence with Mildmay's verdict, which confirms, beyond all doubt, that there was a predetermined outcome. Most of the commissioners condemned Davison's behaviour, though, and all duly concurred with Mildmay's verdict.

Several of the accounts record that Davison then left Star Chamber 'with the Lieuettenent Sir Owen Hopton', and 'agane retorned to the Tower much lamented and pittied of a great many'.[67] However, one eyewitness author seemed to have remained behind with the commissioners. He reported to the Earl of Warwick that following the trial, Davison had 'dyned' with the commissioners in Star Chamber, albeit sat 'apart'.[68] Davison had also 'thanck[ed] Sir Walter Mildmay by Swanne his man, for his good chere, but not for the sharpe sauce that he had mixed therewith'. Again, this proves that it had been a showtrial, as, despite the weight of his punishment, Davison was still treated with respect. Moreover, as he remained on good terms with Mildmay, he must have known that his long-standing friend had been pushed into this position, and would not have abandoned him through choice.

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Through examination of this unprecedented crisis, we can see that patronage was very much the preserve of normal political circumstances. The governor-generalship incident the previous year had given Davison his first experience of relationship breakdown, but nothing could have prepared either him, or his colleagues, for the turmoil of 1587. The execution of the Queen of Scots was by far the most serious political crisis of the reign, and, as individuals were torn in different directions, their political relationships were shaken and their loyalties exposed. Burghley had initially been horrified at Davison's imprisonment, but soon came to prioritise

[66] Harley MS 290 f. 224, at f. 235v.
[67] Add. MS 48027 f. 680, at f. 686v; Harley MS 6807 f. 206, at f. 221r. See also MS Ashmole 862 p. 235, at p. 245; Add. MS 48027 f. 677, at f. 679v.
[68] SP 12/199 f. 137, at ff. 138v-139r.

his own career at Davison's expense. Walsingham, Hatton and Mildmay were also complicit in Davison's disgrace, though, unlike Burghley, this was through their obedience to the Queen, rather than for selfish motives. Indeed, these men were probably deeply unhappy that they had been forced to work against their friend. Yet since the whole purpose of Mary's execution had been to secure the safety of the Queen and commonwealth, it would have been illogical to now disobey Elizabeth and throw her to the (diplomatic) wolves. Nevertheless, the Queen's suggestion of execution was unanimously opposed, due both to sympathy for Davison, and to the political nation's commitment to the rule of law. As a disruption to the normal functioning of the patronage system, the dispatch of the death warrant therefore offers us a rare glimpse into the effects of political crisis on relationships, exposing a chaos beyond any existing models of patronage.

Chapter 9: Political disgrace, 1587-1608

Considering the lack of work on Davison's disgrace, one might assume that he simply disappeared from the political scene following his imprisonment in 1587. Aside from his biographies by Nicolas and Adams, the period of Davison's disgrace has only been addressed in two short articles by B. M. Ward and R. B. Wernham on his financial situation, and occasionally in work on the Earl of Essex.[1] Yet although Davison was never restored to the secretaryship, he continued to lurk in the political wings throughout the 1590s. The purpose of this final chapter is therefore to examine Davison's disgrace, and reflect on his relationships and political status.

The 1590s ought to have been the height of Davison's career, as, if not for the execution crisis, he would have continued as sole or senior principal secretary after Walsingham's death. We have seen throughout this thesis that Davison's relationships and position in the political hierarchy were far from conventional, and this was no different during his final years. Indeed, Davison's disgrace offers a unique insight into the fluidity of political relationships and status, as usually, once elevated to the Privy Council, one remained in office for life. Yet after climbing to the top table of political power, Davison now sat in a limbo state, suspended but not dismissed from office. Throughout the 1590s, he remained respected by his former colleagues, but became reliant on the patronage of men who should have been far his junior, and had a complicated relationship with his old patron, Burghley. His experience was therefore one beyond the usual hierarchy or career trajectory accounted for by existing scholarship.

[1] B. M. Ward, 'Queen Elizabeth and William Davison', *The English Historical Review*, 44(173) (1929), 104-106; R. B. Wernham, 'The Disgrace of William Davison', *The English Historical Review*, 46(184) (1931), 632-636; Paul Hammer, *The Polarisation of Elizabethan Politics: The Political Career of Robert Devereux, 2nd Earl of Essex, 1585-1597* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), pp. 60, 101-2; Janet Dickinson, *Court Politics and the Earl of Essex, 1589-1601* (London: Pickering & Chatto, 2012), pp. 75-6.

Following his imprisonment, Davison never paid his fine, and continued to receive financial assistance from Elizabeth. He soon gained the rising Earl of Essex as his patron, who repeatedly but unsuccessfully championed his restoration to the secretaryship; as Burghley promoted his son Robert for the same position, his relationship with Davison became increasingly complicated. Although Burghley tried to help him financially, it seems that this was not enough for Davison, and he resented Burghley for the rest of his life. Davison's son Francis was also patronised by Essex, and Davison's written instructions for his continental travels were later published, as part of the *ars apodemica* genre. By the end of the 1590s, Davison sought the patronage of his erstwhile rival Robert Cecil, following correspondence between them regarding the Low Countries. In the final years of his life, Davison's office of custos brevium was confirmed by James I, and was put in trust for his sons. For contemporaries, then, Davison was not a pariah, as the lack of literature implies, but rather a respected and sympathetic figure – the political nation knew that his disgrace was due not to any fault of his own, but to extraordinary political circumstances.

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Little is known about Davison's imprisonment. He maintained some contact with Leicester whilst in the Tower, which is rather unexpected considering that their relationship had previously deteriorated.[2] His other visits or correspondents are unknown. Davison spent spent eighteen months in the Tower, from his initial committal on 14th February 1587, until 23rd October 1588.[3] Neale has suggested that Davison's release at this time was due to the defeat of the Spanish Armada in August, which put paid to a Spanish-Scottish alliance.[4] Now that the threat of foreign invasion by Mary's allies had lessened, the man supposedly

[2] SP 12/238 f. 104 – 8th March 1591, examination of William Kinnevsley.
[3] Davison is recorded in SP 12/215 f. 42 - [14th] August 1588, certificate by the Lieutenant of the Tower of the names of the prisoners in his custody.
[4] J. E. Neale, *Elizabeth I and her Parliaments, Vol. 2, 1584-1601* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1957), p. 138.

responsible for her death could be quietly released. On 23rd October, Burghley and Walsingham wrote to the Lieutenant of the Tower, Sir Owen Hopton, instructing him to release Davison to the charge of Sir Robert Constable, a soldier and MP, who lived at the Minories just outside the Tower grounds.[5] This letter survives as a copy by Beale, which he then gave to Davison in 1591. It did not mention how long Davison was to remain at the Minories, but he had certainly moved on by May 1589.[6] His household was likely much reduced, but he continued to be served by Henry Burnett and William Brewster, who had been with him since at least 1578 and 1584 respectively, and also by William Temple.[7] Temple had previously been Sir Philip Sidney's secretary during his tenure as governor of Flushing, and, after Davison, would later be employed by both Sir Thomas Smith and the Earl of Essex.[8]

Following his release, Davison was not restored to the secretaryship, but neither was he ever formally dismissed. Instead, he was suspended from duties, as had happened to Archbishop Grindal in 1577. He never paid his fine, and it was 'remitted' in June or July 1589; he also continued to receive his secretarial salary of £100, as well as his portion of the secretarial emoluments.[9] These were the fees paid to the Secretary or Secretaries for petitions which they granted in their role as keeper of the Signet; these fees were then divided between the Secretaries and the four clerks of the Signet.[10] Davison continued to be paid his share until at least November 1589, possibly later, but this ceased after Walsingham's death. As Wernham has shown, the clerks of the Signet initially intended to continue Davison's payments after

[5] Add. MS 48027 f. 402r – 23rd Oct. 1588, Burghley and Walsingham to Sir Owen Hopton, Lieutenant of the Tower. See also f. 687 – undated, memorandum by Beale.
[6] In May, Davison was visiting 'Weldhall' in Essex – probably Weald Hall, owned by the Browne family. SP 12/224 f. 3 – 1st May 1589, Mylles to Burnett.
[7] SP 12/224 f. 3; William Bradford and Samuel Eliot Morison (ed.), *Of Plymouth Plantation, 1620-1647* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1952), p. 325; SP 12/254 f. 32 – 11th October 1595, Dr Roger Goad, provost of King's College, Cambridge, to the Queen.
[8] Elizabethanne Boran, 'Temple, Sir William (1554/5–1627), college head', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford University Press, 2004) <https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/27121>, p. 3.
[9] Add. MS 48027 f. 402v, f. 687, f. 708 – three undated memoranda by Beale. On the fine and salary, see Ward, 'Queen Elizabeth and William Davison'. On the emoluments, see Wernham, 'Disgrace of William Davison'.
[10] Wernham, 'Disgrace of William Davison', p. 633.

Walsingham's death, but this record was subsequently amended to allow the full amount to be shared between the four clerks, with no secretarial portion being drawn again until Robert Cecil's appointment in 1596.[11]

It would have been impossible for the fine to be waived, and for Davison's payments to continue, without the Queen's permission. If she had truly believed, as her lawyers had claimed, that he was fully responsible for causing the execution of the Queen of Scots without her permission, she would surely have had him imprisoned for life, or at least left destitute. That she permitted him to keep drawing his sizeable salary whilst suspended from the role confirms that she had deliberately used Davison as a scapegoat, and did not want to punish him more than was strictly necessary for the upholding of her innocence.[12]

For Davison, though, the money was not enough. After dedicating his life to his work, he would never be satisfied with a life beyond politics. But, in order to regain his position, he would need friends and patrons to work on his behalf. Leicester had died in September 1588, whilst Davison was still in prison, so, of his former patrons, only Hatton, Walsingham and Burghley remained. No correspondence with Hatton from this time survives, and he died just a few years later in November 1591. There is also no surviving correspondence between Davison and Walsingham, though, from the continued emolument payments, it seems that he had tried to ease Davison's suffering. Although the Queen must have been aware of the payments, the fact that they ceased on Walsingham's death in April 1590, and only then after someone intervened and had the Signet Office records altered, strongly suggests that Walsingham had advocated for his friend. This leaves only Burghley, to whom we will return later.

[11] Wernham, 'Disgrace of William Davison', p. 634-6.
[12] 'A few, but not many, officials of state received a higher rate of pay. The Lord Chief Justice got £225 per annum, other Justices £160, the Chancellor of the Exchequer £200, the Lord Admiral, Master of the Ordnance, and Doorkeeper of the Privy Chamber £133 6s. 8d.' – Ward, 'Queen Elizabeth and William Davison', p. 104.

Davison also obtained a new patron – the rising Earl of Essex. By the late 1580s, Essex was beginning to make a name for himself at court, and, following the death of his stepfather Leicester, was expanding his network to include many of his former clients. Essex may have viewed Davison as a political asset, considering his wealth of experience and knowledge, or may have genuinely felt a sense of honour and loyalty towards one of his stepfather's former clients, especially one who shared his fervent protestantism. Most likely, it was a combination of both reasons. Simon Adams and Paul Hammer have stated that Essex took up Davison's cause soon after his imprisonment in 1587, probably due to a letter from Essex to James VI which is erroneously dated April 1587; however, this letter most likely dates from April 1589 instead.[13] The majority of the letters between Essex and Davison are undated, but some dates and sequencing can be estimated from their content.[14] It seems most likely that Essex began his relationship with Davison some time between Davison's release and Essex's mission to Spain and Portugal with Sir Francis Drake, between October 1588 and April 1589.[15] This timing also coincides perfectly with the expansion of Essex's client network, after Leicester's death in September 1588. Unfortunately for Davison, Essex's initial suits for his restoration

[13] Simon Adams, 'Davison, William (d. 1608), diplomat and administrator', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford University Press, 2008 (2004)) <https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/7306>, p. 16; Hammer, *Polarisation of Elizabethan Politics*, p. 60. Essex's letter to James is Oxford, Bodleian Library, Tanner MS 79 f. 89 – 18th April [1589]. However, this letter is not dated by Essex, and though it is dated '1587' in the endorsement, this is in a different hand to the rest of the endorsement. It is therefore possible that this date was added later, by a different person, and therefore may not be accurate. I would instead suggest a date of April 1589. Essex wrote of 'restoring' Davison, not releasing him, and it seems unlikely that he would have written to James so soon after his mother's death. Davison was released from the Tower in October 1588, and released from house arrest sometime before May 1589, so, if it was written in April 1589, it may have been written shortly after his release. Moreover, the first edition of the Cabala (a seventeenth-century printed collection of state papers) date this letter as 1587, but the 1663 and 1691 editions give the date as 1589. There was therefore some confusion around the date, and the dating of 1589 in the second and third editions could have been a correction to an earlier mistake – Anon., *Cabala, sive, Scrinia sacra mysteries of state and government, in letters of illustrious persons, and great ministers of state*, 1st edition (London: Printed for G. Bedel, and T. Collins, 1654); 2nd edition (London: Printed for G. Bedell and T. Collins, 1663), pp. 229-230; 3rd edition (London: Printed for Thomas Sawbridge and others, 1691), p. 213.

[14] This dating has been explained further in the relevant footnotes.

[15] The earliest surviving letter from Essex to Davison which can be reliably dated is Tanner MS 79 f. 46 – [March/April 1589]. In this letter Essex writes about the 'rashnes' and 'soddennes of my unlooked for jorney', 'some four dayes before my departure'. This almost certainly refers to his joining Drake and Norris' 'English Armada' in early April 1589. This would place the letter at the end of March 1589. Essex also wrote to Davison on his return – Tanner MS 79 f. 50 – 11th July 1589. The copies of this letter are Harley MS 1323 f. 247v; Hargrave MS 225 f. 38v. These copies are erroneously misdated '11th July 1583'.

were rebuffed by the Queen, probably in October 1589.[16] Essex reported to Davison that he had laid 'open your sufferings and your patience' to Elizabeth, emphasising that Davison had 'shewed nothing butt faith and humbleness'.[17] Elizabeth was unmoved, however, telling Essex that 'her honor was much touched, your presumption had bene intolerable, and that she cold nott let it slipp out of her mind'. Considering that she continued to allow Davison his salary, we might question whether Elizabeth was genuinely still angry at this stage, or whether she was simply maintaining the pretence of his guilt.

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Six months later, the political landscape suddenly changed. Walsingham, the sole active principal secretary, died on 6th April 1590 following a long period of deteriorating health. No record of Davison's response survives, but he must have been personally devastated – Walsingham had been his first patron, a like-minded colleague, an ally in religion, and a close friend. It was also, of course, hugely politically significant, as it left the secretaryship vacant. Were it not for his imprisonment and disgrace, Davison would, by this stage, have been junior secretary for three and a half years, so would almost certainly have stepped up to the senior position. Even now, he was still well qualified for the role, having the necessary connections and experience, and had proven himself exceptionally capable as secretary before the execution crisis.

Essex now revived his suit for Davison's restoration with a new fervency. Robert Cecil was also put forward for the post by his father – although Cecil claimed to Hatton that Burghley had been reluctant to 'pursu[e]' his nomination, 'I being his sonne', Burghley's famous

[16] Cotton MS Vespasian C/XIII f. 288 – 2nd October [1589], Essex to Davison. Essex emphasised Davison's desire to 'serve' the Queen, rather than the matter of his release, so he must have already been released from the Tower. It therefore cannot be from October 1587 or 1588. It also does not fit logically into the probable sequence of letters following Walsingham's death in 1590 (see below), as, although Elizabeth still denied Davison's restoration, she nevertheless spoke more favourably about him. It is therefore likely to have been from Essex's first suit, in 1589.
[17] Cotton MS Vespasian C/XIII f. 288.

Theobalds entertainment of spring 1591 suggests otherwise.[18] Burghley's eagerness to secure the secretaryship for his son was also noted by contemporaries – 'the Earl of Essex hath laboured for the restitution of Davison: the Treasurer for his sonne Robert Cicell… [and] will bringe in his sonne'.[19] Other potential candidates included Edward Wotton, Edward Dyer, and Thomas Wilkes, all of whom also had diplomatic experience.[20] Paul Hammer has argued that Essex's patronage of Davison was 'probably not an act of deliberate resistance to Cecil… [but] a token of Essex's continuing personal commitment to Davison, pursued as a matter of honour regardless of its political consequences'; nevertheless, securing the post for one of his clients would certainly have bolstered Essex's political position.[21] Davison's suit also received support beyond the court, and a group of radical puritan preachers, arrested in July 1591, declared that 'Master Davison… should be the greatest magistrate in England'.[22]

At first, the Queen appeared receptive to Essex's suit for Davison's restoration, as she 'gave many praises of' him, remarking that he was 'a man of her owne choyse'.[23] To confirm that Davison had been personally chosen by her – probably strongly encouraged by Walsingham – back in 1586 emphasises the significance of his disgrace. Elizabeth had not simply chosen a political nobody as her scapegoat, or, as Camden suggested, elevated Davison

[18] Paul E. J. Hammer, 'Letters from Sir Robert Cecil to Sir Christopher Hatton, 1590-91', in Ian W. Archer et al. (eds.), *Religion, Politics and Society in Sixteenth-Century England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), p. 222. Manuscript is London, University College London, Ogden MS 7/41 f. 3 – 10th November 1590, Cecil to Hatton.
[19] SP 15/32 f. 9 – 12th March 1591, Phelippes' notes for a letter to be written to 'J'.
[20] SP 15/32 f. 9 – 12th March 1591, Phelippes' notes for a letter to be written to 'J'; A. J. Loomie, 'Wotton, Edward, first Baron Wotton (1548–1628), diplomat and administrator', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford University Press, 2013 (2004)) <https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/30000>, p. 3; Michael Hicks, 'Wilkes, Sir Thomas (c. 1545–1598), diplomat', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford University Press, 2004) <https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/29412>, p. 4.
[21] Hammer, *Polarisation of Elizabethan Politics*, p. 101.
[22] SP 12/239 f. 123 – 19th July 1591, [Phelippes to Saint Mains].
[23] Harley MS 290 f. 240 – [late 1590-early 1591], Essex to Davison. Elizabeth would not have praised Davison whilst he was still imprisoned, so it must have been after October 1588 at least. Since Elizabeth denied Davison's restoration in both the Vespasian letter (above) and the Harley MS 290 f. 244 (below), this letter was probably part of the renewed suit between these two refusals – one harsh refusal shortly after his release, and a second, kinder refusal once she had made up her mind to keep the secretaryship vacant. For her to praise Davison is most likely during the period when she was selecting a secretary, so in 1590-91.

purely to be disgraced – he had been a very senior politician, highly regarded by the Queen herself. His continued suppression was therefore testament to the unprecedented nature of the execution crisis, rather than a reflection on Davison himself.

Davison also tried to further his own suit, by writing directly to the Queen in December 1590.[24] This is the earliest surviving letter from him since his imprisonment in 1587. Though this letter is significantly more humble and cliental than his usual frank writing style, his self-confidence is still apparent, as he suggested that Elizabeth's refusal to restore him was due to the manipulation of others. It is important to recognise that, in the eyes of Davison and his patrons, his restoration should not have been out of the question. Others had faced political disgrace and subsequently been restored, for instance, Archbishop Grindal and Thomas Wilkes. The political circumstances surrounding Davison's disgrace had indeed been much more serious, but by the early 1590s the storm had largely blown over. So, to Davison, the dispatch of the death warrant seemed an insufficient reason to keep him barred from office. He argued that his intentions had been honourable, to ensure 'the suerty of your royall person & preservacon of the state both of religion & comon wealth abroad and at home', and that he had only played a 'part' among others. He therefore believed that his disgrace had been 'censured and aggreavid by others', who sought to 'increase my disgrace & add affliction to the afflicted)'. Here he was probably referring to Burghley – we will return to this shortly. Consequently, Davison now wanted to justify his actions, and to be considered in Elizabeth's 'own equall indifferent judgement'.[25]

Davison's letter to the Queen wrought no success, and the competition wore on into the spring.[26] Davison's suit was also supported by others on the Privy Council, including his old

[24] Cotton MS Galba D/VII f. 337 – 7th December 1590, Davison to the Queen.

[25] Cotton MS Galba D/VII f. 337.
[26] SP 15/32 f. 9.

colleague, Hatton, whom Essex reported 'hath delt for you allsoe'.[27] Eventually, Elizabeth 'confessed' to Essex that 'none was so sufficient' as Davison, and that she 'cold not deny but that which she layes to charge was done without hope, feare malice envy or any respect of your owne but meerly for her saftey both of state and person'. However, she still 'absolutely denied to lett you enjoy that place', and 'willed' Essex to be 'satisfied for she was resolved'.[28] It therefore seemed that Elizabeth viewed Davison as the best candidate, as a 'man of her owne choyse' who was 'so sufficient', but refused to restore him for pragmatic reasons, to maintain the illusion of her innocence over the execution. Once it became clear that Elizabeth would not restore Davison, Hatton supported Cecil for the position instead.[29] Despite the Theobalds entertainment in May 1591 – which expressed Burghley's desire to retire as a hermit from public life, and pass on the mantle to his son – Elizabeth did not confirm Cecil in the role either.[30] Instead, Burghley was to take over the duties of the secretary but without the title, and would unofficially delegate much of the work to his son.

For the rest of his life, Davison blamed Burghley and Cecil for preventing his restoration to the secretaryship. In a later memorandum, written after Burghley's death in 1598, Davison accused both him and Robert of 'endevour[ing] both secretly & openly… to suppresse & keep [him] downe'.[31] It is unclear what the purpose of this document was, but it is written neatly, as if Davison expected it to be circulated. Perhaps he hoped that, after Burghley's death, others would now champion his return to politics.[32] Davison meticulously listed several ways

[27] Harley MS 290 f. 244 – [early 1591], Essex to Davison. Essex writes that 'not any other in England… wold for these 3 or 4 yeares know how to [save] himself to support so great a burthen'. This dates the letter between spring 1590 and spring 1591. Considering the acknowledgement that Davison's actions had been intended to be honourable, it was probably after his letter in December, in spring 1591.
[28] Harley MS 290 f. 244.
[29] Hammer, 'Letters from Cecil to Hatton', pp. 211-12.
[30] Stephen Alford, *Burghley: William Cecil at the Court of Elizabeth I* (London: Yale University Press, 2008), pp. 312-3.
[31] Harley MS 290 f. 246 – [after August 1598], Davison's memorandum on Burghley. On the handwriting of this memorandum, see p. 199 n. 74.
[32] This would have had to be to a different position, as the secretaryship was finally granted to Cecil in 1596.

in which Burghley had prevented his restoration, alleging 'evidence' for each accusation, such as 'the testimony of others of her Majesties counsayle both dead & living'. He believed that his former patron had prevented his restoration 'by his continuall opposition to all meanes propounded, eyther for restitution to his place, an acesse to her Majesties presence, or [*erased*] his estate'. This was due to 'his greate desire & labour to make his son secretary, which Master Davison restoring would in all reason have been a great impediment, considering the right hee had to the place both by her Majesties letters patents & his former position'. In Davison's opinion, he was a threat to Burghley and Cecil not only because he was the better candidate, but also because of 'his unaptnes to serve their turnes, or subject himself to any of their humors or factions with prejudice to her Majesties service & his owne honour & conscience'.

In light of Burghley's treatment of Davison in 1587, these accusations may initially seem plausible. However, there is evidence that Burghley had actually petitioned the Queen over Davison's case. In an undated letter, Lord Grey reassured Davison that 'whylst I am a courteyer you shal not want a remembrencer', and also reported Burghley's recent efforts on Davison's behalf.[33] It is difficult to date this letter based on its contents, but it must have been written some time between Davison's release in late 1588, and the below letter from Burghley, in February 1593.[34] According to Grey, Burghley had 'not long since' spoken to Elizabeth, and found that Davison 'rested in reasonable good termes of favour with her'; however, she thought that 'in respect of her beegoonne course', she could not now 'with honour saved make showe of' her favour. Burghley then suggested that she could instead 'in some oothers name releeve [Davison's] lowe brought estate', in order to do it as quietly as possible, and reminded Elizabeth that 'by the last act of yours (what offence so ever it had bred in her) shee had reaped no smal safetie & quyettnes'. She was not persuaded, though, commenting that 'her courte was

[33] Harley MS 290 f. 242 – [1587-1593], Grey to Davison.
[34] Tanner MS 77 f. 50.

now frawght with sutche Linxies eeyes, as the mascke of her dooyng for you in any sutche sorte woold bee discoovered'. So, although Elizabeth would allow Davison to receive his salary and emoluments, she seemed to believe that 'releev[ing]' his estate any further risked undermining her innocence over the execution. Nevertheless, this letter shows that, once the dust had settled, and Burghley's position was no longer under threat, he tried to help his former client. This confirms that his abandonment of Davison in 1587 had been pragmatic rather than personal, and due only to the unprecedented political circumstances. After all, he had once regarded Davison incredibly highly, as the only 'man in England so furnished unyversally for the place he had'.[35]

This picture is further complicated by a curious letter, never before cited in any work on Davison. It is dated 2nd February 1593, and is endorsed 'the project of a lettre to have bene signed by my Lord Treasurer to the Lord Mayour but never tendered to his Lordship or perfourmed by him'.[36] It is written in neither Davison nor Burghley's hand. It seems most likely that Davison (or rather, one of his secretaries) had drafted this letter on Burghley's behalf, to be sent to the Lord Mayor of London, Thomas Blanke, but that Davison ultimately did not give the letter to Burghley. In this letter, 'Burghley' asked Blanke to grant Davison a 'loane of some 5000 or 6000 li of the Citie for one year, or yf that may not conveniently be, to vouchsafe hym your bond for somuch to some others'. 'Burghley' explained that 'I have with others of his good frindes ben a longe & earnest suter to her Majestie in his behalf & find her at the length graciously inclined to doe hym good in some present sute he hath unto her'. This referred to a grant of lands which Elizabeth made to Davison the following year, in 1594. According to Beale, these drew an annual rent of £200, and were later sold by Davison for £5000, which was the amount that he had requested from Blanke.[37] However, 'the tyme & ordinary difficulties in

[35] Lansdowne MS 102 f. 6.
[36] Tanner MS 77 f. 50 – 2nd February 1593, [Burghley] to Lord Mayor Thomas Blanke.
[37] Add. MS 48027 f. 402v.

matters of that kind together with myne owne late indisposicion & absence from Court have ben some impedment to the dispatch therof' – so, Burghley had evidently been instrumental in arranging this suit, albeit it was delayed.[38] In the meantime, Davison was 'much pressed with the greatnes of his debt, importunitie of his Creditors & decay of his owne meanes & credit', and therefore desperately needed a loan until the lands were officially granted.

This letter therefore completely discredits Davison's later accusation that Burghley had 'neglect[ed] to doe anythinge for him ever since his trouble'.[39] Whilst he may have overstated their closeness in order to encourage Blanke to agree, Davison nevertheless referred to Burghley here as a 'good frind' and a 'longe & earnest suter' on his behalf. He would surely not have planned this 'project' without being confident of Burghley's support, so he must have been well aware of Burghley's efforts on his behalf thus far. The reference to Burghley's involvement in his suit for lands is almost certainly true, as, considering Elizabeth's previous prevarication over 'releev[ing]' Davison's 'estate', it is unlikely that she would have agreed to this grant of lands without Burghley's support.[40] That Burghley never 'perfourmed' the plan was not necessarily a sign of bad relations, considering the success of the suit the following year, but it is unclear why Davison did not 'tender' the letter to him. Though much about this letter remains a mystery, its existence nevertheless confirms that Burghley laboured on Davison's behalf for several years, and disproves Davison's later accusations.

The likely explanation for Davison's accusations is therefore that Burghley's efforts for his finances were simply not enough – only his full restoration to the secretaryship would do. Since Burghley would not support his restoration, and instead promoted his own son, Davison must have continued to resent him. He was probably also particularly bitter towards Burghley

[38] Tanner MS 77 f. 50.
[39] Harley MS 290 f. 246.
[40] Harley MS 290 f. 242.

because he had not only incriminated Davison over the dispatch, but had also managed to recover unscathed. Then, after Burghley's death, Davison perhaps exaggerated his behaviour in order to gain the sympathy and support of others. Davison's accusations were therefore not wholly true, but it must be said that they were also not unreasonable – after all, Burghley had done so much damage back in spring 1587 that his efforts would have needed to be extraordinary in order to repair their relationship. As is the pattern with Davison, his relationship with Burghley in the 1590s therefore emphasises the fragility and volatility of political relationships – no model of patronage could ever begin to make sense of their incredibly complex situation.

This 'project of a lettre' is also significant with regard to the dynamics between Essex and the Cecils. Cecil and Essex have traditionally been viewed as 'natural rivals', and the 1590s as a period of factional struggle.[41] However, as Paul Hammer has more recently shown, their relationship was 'far more complex and friendly' than this 'oversimplification'.[42] Burghley had previously been Essex's guardian, and believed that he would be a 'vital ally' for his son.[43] Natalie Mears has also shown that 'relations were characterized by reciprocity', and that 'Essexian allies… kept communication lines open to other councillors'.[44] Davison's letter supports this interpretation, as it shows that Essex and the Cecils shared clients, with Davison being patronised by both parties until at least 1593.

Despite Davison's continued political ostracisation, Essex continued to patronise him, and extended his support to Davison's eldest son Francis. Essex obtained a license for Francis to travel the continent in May 1595, a trip which was funded partly by Davison and partly by

[41] Hammer, 'Letters from Cecil to Hatton', p. 211; Simon Adams, 'Faction, Clientage, and Party: English Politics, 1550-1603', *History Today*, 32 (1982), 33-39, at pp. 37-9.
[42] Hammer, 'Letters from Cecil to Hatton', p. 211.
[43] Hammer, 'Letters from Cecil to Hatton', p. 211.
[44] Natalie Mears, '*Regnum Cecilianum*? A Cecilian Perspective of the Court', in John Guy (ed.), *The Reign of Elizabeth I: Court and Culture in the Last Decade* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), pp. 46-64, at p. 49.

Essex. Davison evidently hoped that his son would follow in his footsteps, and wrote some travel instructions for him in advance of the trip. This advice, based on Davison's own diplomatic experiences, was divided into three categories of things 'to Considir': the country, the people and the government. It was later published in 1633, along with Essex's letter of travel advice to the Earl of Rutland.[45] Francis corresponded with his father, Essex and the Bacon brothers throughout the tour, but other than producing one treatise on Saxony, Francis did not follow his father's travel advice, and instead treated the tour simply as leisure.[46] He promised to write another treatise on Tuscany, but never followed this through.[47] He was accompanied by his tutor, Edward Smyth, a godly man who disapproved of Francis' extravagant spending habits.[48] In light of Francis' extravagance and irresponsible behaviour, his patron Essex advised him to emulate his 'worthie' father, advising Francis that he 'expect[ed]' him to 'trulie mherit his vertues'.[49] By now, Davison was unlikely to regain any office, and his wayward son was frittering away Essex's money, so Essex's comments shows that his patronage and respect for Davison was genuine, and not simply borne of ambition.

It was during Francis' journey, when Essex was also away from court on the Cadiz mission, that Robert Cecil was finally granted the secretaryship, in June 1596.[50] Though

[45] Harley MS 6893 no. 8 – [spring 1595], 'Most brief but excellent Instructions for a Traveller written by Secretary Davison for His Son'. Published in Fisher, *Profitable instructions* – see p. 50. See also Elizabeth Williamson, 'A Letter of Travel Advice? Literary Rhetoric, Scholarly Counsel and Practical Instruction in the Ars Apodemica', *Lives and Letters* 3 (2011), 1-22, pp. 9, 12-13.

[46] The correspondence regarding this trip is: LPL MS 654 f. 243 – 8th January 1596, Essex to Francis Davison; Harley MS 296 f. 114 – 12th Jan 1596, Edward Smyth to Davison; LPL MS 658 f. 287 – [dated 7th August in French, unclear whether OS or NS] 1596, [Anthony Bacon] to Francis Davison; LPL MS 659 f. 367 – 12th September 1596, Francis Davison to Anthony Bacon; LPL MS 659 f. 366 – 16th October 1596, Francis Davison to Anthony Bacon; LPL MS 660 f. 235 – 27th October 1596, Francis Davison to William Davison (draft of middle section is LPL MS 660 f. 220); LPL MS 660 f. 237 – 10th Nov 1596, Francis to Davison; CP 47/45 – 22nd December 1596, Anthony Bacon to Essex; Harley MS 296 f. 111 – 16th Feb 1597, Smyth to Davison. Francis often used New Style dating, so this has been converted to Old Style.

[47] LPL MS 660 f. 235.

[48] Harley MS 296 f. 111 – 16th Feb 1597, Edward Smyth to Davison. Davison had likely employed Smyth shortly after his promotion to the secretaryship – SP 12/194 f. 84 – 20th October 1586, John Guilpine to Davison.

[49] LPL MS 654 f. 243 – 8th January 1596, Essex to Francis Davison. Copies are Hargrave MS 225 f. 39r; Harley MS 1323 f. 248.

[50] Pauline Croft, 'Cecil, Robert, first earl of Salisbury (1563–1612), politician and courtier', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford University Press, 2008 (2004)) <https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/4980>, p. 4.

Davison and Essex must have always expected this to happen, the finality of Cecil's promotion, coupled with the disappointment of Francis' tour, sank Davison into a deep despair. He now decided that the best course of action would be to 'withdrawe my selfe with my poore familie into some part beyonde the Seas', and asked Essex to 'move her Majestie in my behalfe for her gracious leave'.[51] This letter seems utterly genuine, and not a double bluff, in the hopes that he would have his position restored – indeed, with Cecil's appointment, that was now firmly out of the question. Davison's desperation, and anger, is palpable, as he recounted how he had spent 'some foure or five and twentie yeares, the best part of my poore life, in her Majesties service abroad and at home', only to be treated in this manner. Even after a decade, he still fervently believed in the justice of the dispatch, as an action which 'aim[ed] at noe other end (as the liveinge God can witnesse with my soule) Then the safetie of her Majesties precious life, and state'. His political creed had not wavered – for Davison, the Queen's person and the commonwealth were inextricably bound, and his actions had always been in the best interests of both, even if not in accordance with the Queen's wishes. Consequently, he resented that the dispatch had 'for these ten yeares space served as the occation and meanes of overwhelming and drowning both the memorie and merrit… of all my former travailes in a Sea of disgraces miseries and discomfortes', especially since he was no more to blame than others. This echoed the sentiments of his petition to Elizabeth in December 1590, but now, to Essex, he could be much more frank, professing his frustration that 'a faulte of noe worse nature… past over in the rest of my honourable partners shoulde lye soe heavilie as it doth still upon mee alone'. But now, after ten years with no hope, Davison only sought 'rest and suretie abroade that can finde neither at home'.

[51] Stowe MS 145 f. 132 – early 1597, Davison to Essex. This is a copy, and is dated '1596', but in the letter Davison writes that he has been in disgrace for 'ten yeares', which, being exact, would date it to March 1597. In light of the below letter (Tanner MS 79 f. 99), probably before the Azores mission in July 1597, this letter was probably written in spring 1597 (of which January to March would be dated as 1596 by Elizabethans anyway).

However, Essex was not amenable to Davison's request, and instead persuaded him to remain in the country, and 'go live a privat lif in the country'.[52] Whether or not it was Essex's advice, or his refusal to obtain Elizabeth's permission for Davison's leave, Davison changed his mind, and remained in England. His despair nevertheless continued, and the following year, in July 1598, one of Davison's kinsmen, George Cranmer, wrote that he was 'utterly ruined and broken not in present onely but even in future'.[53] Cranmer was the nephew of Davison's brother-in-law John Carpenter, and had served him after his promotion to the secretaryship in autumn 1586.[54] Just one month later, Burghley died in August 1598. Davison was perhaps heartened by this news, since he had long blamed Burghley for his continued disgrace and removal from office. His colleague Thomas Wilkes, who had also suffered the indignity of imprisonment, was able to be restored to his duties following Leicester's death, so perhaps Davison anticipated that this would be a turning point in his fortunes. It was likely in the aftermath of Burghley's death that Davison recorded his accusations against him. Davison also blamed Cecil, writing that 'their owne particular ambition and malices… made the Treasurer & his son to oppresse and kepe him downe so many yeares together'.[55]

Yet despite his resentment, Davison had begun to correspond with Robert Cecil over the past few years. This was probably due more to Davison's desperation for patronage and funds than genuine good relations between the pair. On at least two occasions since 1595, Davison had been called upon by Cecil to give information on the treaties and loans with the Low Countries in the late 1570s. For instance, in November 1597, Davison had sent a long

[52] Tanner MS 79 f. 99 – undated [early summer 1597], Essex to Davison. Essex writes that he is soon leaving the country, and that he is currently out of favour with the Queen, so this letter may have been written in early summer 1597, before departing on the Azores mission in July 1597. This is further supported by his advice for Davison to move to the country, as this suggests that it was written after Davison's above letter, so after March 1597.
[53] CP 62/73 – 22nd July 1598, George Cranmer to [unknown]. On Cranmer, see also George Cranmer, *Concerning the new church discipline* ([London]: 1642).
[54] SP 12/194 f. 62.
[55] Harley MS 290 f. 246.

letter to Cecil detailing the Crown's debt to the merchant Horatio Pallavicino.[56] Davison had evidently retained his own detailed records, as he recounted the amounts which had changed hands down to the penny.[57] For Davison, writing this letter to Cecil was an opportunity to ingratiate himself with the new secretary, and to recover some favour. This appeared to begin a tentative patron-client relationship; however, it did not seem to be financially advantageous for Davison, as by autumn 1600, he was still reliant on Essex for funds.[58]

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Elizabeth died in March 1603, at the age of 69. Her long-standing friends and councillors had all pre-deceased her; her government was now dominated by the younger generation, headed by Robert Cecil, who had smoothly and secretly arranged the succession of James I and VI over the past few years.[59] This could potentially have been a sticky situation for Davison – after all, he had long been held officially responsible for the death of James' mother. Fortunately, the new king appeared perfectly aware that Davison had been used as a scapegoat, and as late as 1601 had still blamed Burghley for 'couttit [his] mothers throt'.[60] Since Cecil had been undergoing negotiations about the succession at that time, the Master of Gray – who had offered his services to Cecil – had written to James insisting that 'it ben farre from the Queen or his fathers mynd, that she sold die when she died'; rather, 'the Earle of Leicester or Sir Francis Walsinghame wer only the Coutters of her throt, and inducers of

[56] Cotton MS Galba D/XII f. 145 – 21st November 1597, Davison to Robert Cecil.
[57] After Davison's death, his son-in-law Duncombe sold his papers to the collector Ralph Starkey. Most of these were then seized by Sir Thomas Wilson, the keeper of the state paper office, in 1619, and added to the state papers collection. Some papers remained with Starkey, and eventually ended up in the Harley collection – Simon Adams, 'Davison, William (d. 1608), diplomat and administrator', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford University Press, 2008 (2004)) <https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/7306>, pp. 1-2.
[58] CP 81/73– 7th September 1600, Davison to Essex; CP 250/26 – 9th October 1600, Davison to Robert Cecil; CP 81/95 – 10th October 1600, Davison to William Temple, Essex's secretary; CP 94/37– 16th July 1602, Davison to Robert Cecil.
[59] Stephen Alford, *All His Spies: The Secret World of Robert Cecil* (London: Allen Lane, 2024), Chs. 23-5.
[60] CP 90/91 – 9th December 1601, the Master of Gray to James VI; G. R. Hewitt, 'Gray, Patrick, sixth Lord Gray (c. 1558–1611), nobleman and courtier' *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford University Press, 2004) <https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/11348>, p. 3.

Davisone to do what he did'. It was very convenient to blame the dead men, yet it would also have made sense to insist that Davison had acted alone, as the charade of his guilt had now been maintained for over a decade. The fact that Gray did not, and spoke of Davison being 'induced', suggests that James had never really believed the charade of Davison's guilt, and regarded him instead as a pawn of the more powerful councillors. This certainly helps to explain James' treatment of Davison once upon the English throne. He continued to pay Davison's salary, and, in July 1607, granted Davison the offices of custos brevium, clerk of the treasury and clerk of the warrants of the Court of King's Bench, the reversions of which he had been granted by Elizabeth back in 1579.[61] James also granted the reversion of these offices to Davison's kinsmen George and Henry Bynge, so they could succeed after his death as trustees on behalf of his children.

So, Davison was not left destitute, but his last years were nevertheless spent in continued obscurity. His wife Catherine died some time between 1596 and 1608, and his second son Walter, who had served as a soldier in the Low Countries, died between 1602 and 1608.[62] Francis and his youngest brother William were probably married, as Davison's will refers to their future children, but not to any of Christopher.[63] Both of Davison's daughters were also married.

William Davison died on 21st December 1608, at his house in Stepney; this was probably after a short illness, as he drew up his will just three days earlier, on 18th December.[64] He was probably in his late sixties. Davison left money to each of his children, and left his

[61] Wernham, 'Disgrace of William Davison', p. 632-3; Davison's will, p. 206; Lansdowne MS 91 f. 113; Harley MS 830 f. 115 – 27th July 1607, letters patent granting Davison's office to George and Henry Bynge on trust.
[62] Catherine is referred to by Francis in a letter of 1596 (LPL MS 660 f. 235), but not in Davison's will in 1608. Walter is referred to in the 1602 first edition of 'A Poetical Rapsody' as 'being in the low Country Warres', and is also not mentioned in Davison's will – Francis Davison, *A Poetical Rapsody Containing, Diuerse Sonnets, Odes, Elegies Madrigalls, and Other Poesies, both in Rime, and Measured Verse* (London: Printed by V. S. for John Baily, 1602) [STC (2nd ed.) number 6373], 'to the reader'.
[63] Davison's will, p. 210.
[64] Davison's will, p. 205.

offices in trust to George and Henry Bynge until his debts and daughters' marriage portions were paid off.[65] Once the debts were repaid, they were then to pass the offices on to Christopher Davison.[66]

As the will suggests, it was Christopher who was to follow most in his father's footsteps. In 1609, he petitioned the King for the office of custos brevium, as the Bynge brothers 'unconscionably refuseth' to concede it to him as per the terms of Davison's will.[67] It is unknown whether his suit was successful. There is then no sign of Christopher until the 1620s, during the reign of Charles I, when he travelled to America.[68] Of course, puritanism looked very different in the 1620s than it had in Davison's time, but Christopher's beliefs must have been shaped by his father's zealous religion, especially considering that Davison's protégé Brewster had also become a pilgrim.[69] Christopher arrived at the Virginia colony in January 1621, at the age of 40, and was elected secretary of the colony that June. He died shortly afterwards, in 1623 or 1624.

Both throughout his disgrace and after his death, Davison was widely regarded as a sympathetic figure, or, in the words of Simon Adams, as 'a Tacitean hero, the honest man destroyed by the deviousness of the court'.[70] The poet Thomas Newton wrote a verse in Davison's honour, describing him as 'strong' and 'pious'.[71] The first historian of Elizabeth's reign, William Camden, recounted the dispatch and Davison's trial faithfully from the Relation,

[65] Lansdowne MS 91 f. 113; Davison's will, pp. 206-9.
[66] Davison's will, pp. 209-11.
[67] Lansdowne MS 91 f. 113.
[68] Lyon Gardiner Tyler, *Encyclopedia of Virginia Biography, Vol I* (New York: Lewis Historical Publishing Company, 1915), p. 95; Anne Kendrick Walker, *The Storied Kendalls, with Historical and Genealogical Records of Scottish and Allied Families* (Richmond, VA: The Dietz Press, 1947), p. 64.
[69] See p. 161.
[70] Adams, 'Davison', p. 17.
[71] John Strype, *Annals of the Reformation and Establishment of Religion*, Vol. III Pt I (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1824 (1728)), p. 658. Original Latin: Ad ornatissimum viruni, Guilielmum Davisonum regineum secretarium./ Tempora laeta diu vidisti, tempora dura/ Sensisti, et variis fata inimica modis./ Flante, reflante tamen fortuna, semper eundem/ Te praestas, fortem scilicet, atque pium./ Macte animo, Davisone, tuo: sic itur ad astra./ Praemiolum virtus assolet esse sui.

Discourse and trial records, and portrayed Davison sympathetically, as 'a man of honest disposition and esteeme, not cunning nor acquainted with Court-tricks', who had been 'purposely brought upon the Stage… to be an actor in this Tragedie'.[72] Camden was also aware that Elizabeth had assisted Davison financially, as he wrote that although Davison 'never recovered' her favour, 'she oftentimes releeved his wants'.[73] Camden's portrait of Davison likely influenced subsequent seventeenth-century historians – for instance, in 1656 William Sanderson described Davison as a 'man of singular modesty and mildness', and attributed to Walsingham the 'greatest hand in the contrivance towards her Death'.[74]

Davison's story also captured literary imaginations. In the 1684 play *The Island Queens*, Davison is erroneously portrayed as a central character from Mary's arrival in England in 1568.[75] Alongside Burghley, he is an evil counsellor, who manipulated Elizabeth into the execution of her beloved sister queen. In the fraught political context of the 1680s, this is likely to have been intended as a moralistic tale, rather than an accurate history, but nevertheless shows Davison's enduring fame in connection with the Queen of Scots. Almost two centuries later, Davison featured in a novel by the Dutch writer Anna Louisa Geertruida Bosboom-Toussaint on Leicester's acceptance of the governor-generalship. Perhaps influenced by Camden, the image of the scapegoat prevailed, and Toussaint described Davison as a 'frail and timid character' well suited to the role of scapegoat, both 'here in Holland', and with regard to the Queen of Scots the following year.[76]

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[72] William Camden, *Annales, the true and royall history of the famous empresse Elizabeth* (London: Printed for Benjamin Fisher, 1625) [STC (2nd ed.) 4497], p. 215.
[73] William Camden, *The historie of the life and death of Mary Stuart Queene of Scotland* (London: Printed by John Haviland for Richard Whitaker, 1624) [STC (2nd ed.) 24509a], p. 244.
[74] William Sanderson, *A compleat history of the lives and reigns of, Mary Queen of Scotland, and of her son and successor, James the Sixth, King of Scotland* (London: Printed for Humphrey Moseley and others, 1656), pp. 127-8.
[75] John Banks, *The Island Queens, or, the Death of Mary, Queen of Scotland* (London: Printed for R. Bentley, 1684).
[76] Anna Louisa Geertruida Bosboom-Toussaint, *De graaf van Leycester in Nederland*, Vol. 1 (The Hague: Charles Ewings, 1846), p. 110. Original Dutch: 'Davison – dezelfde staatsdienaar van Elisabeth, die later zulk eene treurige vermaardheid heeft verkregen, door het aandeel, dat hem werd opgedrongen aan den dood van Maria

In the nineteenth century, Camden's claim that Davison had deliberately been promoted for the execution was finally dismissed, with Nicolas showing that 'this opinion… is not only unsupported by one single argument, but every probability is strongly against it'.[77] Nevertheless, nineteenth-century historians still emphasised Davison's innocence rather than his influence and agency. Though he acknowleged Davison's 'anxiety for Elizabeth's personal safety, his zeal for the Protestant Religion, and his devotion to the welfare of his Country', Nicolas still regarded the dispatch as a misunderstanding rather than a deliberate action, and sought to 'prove [Davison's] perfect innocence' against the charges brought by Elizabeth.[78] For J. A. Froude, who was famously no great fan of Elizabeth, the blame for Mary's execution lay squarely at her door, with Davison as the desperate and 'ruined' scapegoat.[79] Considering the persistence of this reputation throughout the centuries, it is perhaps little surprise that Davison has continued to be misrepresented and overlooked by modern historians – until now.

Stuart – had juist het zwak en vreesachtig karakter, dat de Koningin noodig had, om hem de dubbelzinnige rol te laten spelen die zij hem oplegde, en hier in Holland ook scheen hem eene zulke te zijn opgelegd'.

[77] Nicholas Harris Nicolas, *Life of William Davison, Secretary of State and Privy Counsellor to Queen Elizabeth* (London: Printed by and for John Nicholas and Son, 1823), pp. 34-8.

[78] Nicolas, pp. vi, 164.

[79] J. A. Froude, *History of England, from the Fall of Wolsey to the Defeat of the Spanish Armada, Vol. XII: Reign of Elizabeth* (London: Longmans, Green & Co., 1870), pp. 348-76, esp. pp. 372, 376.

Conclusion

The ending to this thesis could have been so very different. Following the execution of the Queen of Scots, Elizabeth could have gradually cooled down, as had happened after Leicester's acceptance of the governor-generalship. Or another scapegoat could have been chosen – perhaps Robert Beale or Sir Amias Paulet. In this situation, Davison would have continued as principal secretary at Walsingham's side for another three years – honing his craft, growing closer to the Queen, cementing his position on the Privy Council. After Walsingham's death, he would have continued as the senior secretary, perhaps, in time, taking Robert Cecil under his wing. As the older generation died out, Davison, Burghley and Cecil would have worked together to steady the ship of state through war with Spain, ongoing turmoil in the Low Countries, and planning for the succession throughout the Queen's final decade. He would no doubt have been particularly valued by Elizabeth in her final years, as the last surviving councillor of her own generation. Had this been the case, we would surely now speak of William Davison in the same breath as Francis Walsingham and Robert Cecil, as one of the great administrator-advisors of the reign. Instead, as Davison predicted, his involvement in the execution crisis 'served as the occation and meanes of overwhelming and drowning both the memorie and merrit… of all my former travailes in a Sea of disgraces miseries and discomfortes'.[1]

By recognising Davison's 'former travailes', this thesis has proven his importance both within the polity, and for our historiographical understanding. Davison was no mere client, man-of-business or scapegoat, but was one of the most significant political actors in the mid-Elizabethan polity, whose work shaped both domestic and foreign policy, before and during his tenure as principal secretary. His career trajectory was unique among his peers, and has

[1] Stowe MS 145 f. 132.

therefore enabled us to see the complex reality of the mid-Elizabethan polity beyond binaries such as domestic and diplomatic, or patron and client.

During his missions to the Low Countries in the 1570s, Davison succeeded in forging a close bond with the Prince of Orange, which improved Anglo-Dutch relations; successfully asserted his authority over Duke Casimir, which avoided damage to the Queen's reputation; and contributed to the chorus of pro-interventionist voices, with a particular edge, as his counsel was informed by his expert eyewitness experience. Even at this early stage in his career, he was both officially (over Duke Casimir) and unofficially (over Walter Travers) permitted to exercise his authority and use his discretion. After several years away, Davison's credit with the Dutch remained so high that he played a pivotal role in both the negotiations for and implemetation of the Treaty of Nonsuch. His work in autumn 1585 in particular revealed a level of skill far beyond his official status, as he used his own authority to make treaty alterations, and seized the cautionary towns despite a multitude of obstacles. Indeed, the issue with Henry Norris and the keys to the Brill confirmed that the Dutch regarded Davison much more highly than his colleagues. It is therefore not a stretch to say that Anglo-Dutch relations in the 1570s and 1580s hinged on Davison personally. Davison essentially fulfilled the role of a privy councillor or extraordinary ambassador in 1585 before his official promotion to the Privy Council – so much so that the Queen, famously reluctant to make appointments, selected Davison for the secretaryship as a 'man of her owne choyse'.[2] His omission from the scholarship has therefore not only hindered our recognition of Davison's importance, but also our understanding of Anglo-Dutch relations, as many crucial moments, in which Davison was the central player, have been entirely overlooked until now.

[2] Harley MS 290 f. 240.

Davison continued to be a key political player upon his accession to the Privy Council. The historiographical neglect of his agency in the execution crisis has further contributed to his mischaracterisation as a mid-rank figure or man-of-business, and has perpetuated an incomplete narrative of the crisis based on senior actors and institutions. Yet, in reality, the execution crisis would not have happened without Davison. He did not simply mimic or obey his superiors, but rather acted independently, based on his own personal political creed, in order to ensure Mary's execution. If not for Davison's decision to share the signed death warrant with Burghley, the events of 1587, and indeed the rest of the reign, could have gone very differently.

Davison's unique career trajectory has also provided a lens through which to achieve a more holistic, complex view of the mid-Elizabethan polity. Above all, Davison's work is crucial for understanding the cohesion of domestic and diplomatic service. Diplomacy was not a separate entity, but rather one part of a broader Crown service and political culture. Davison and his colleagues, whether at home or abroad, were all part of the same machine, with the same aim of preserving their Queen and (protestant) commonwealth. Davison's political creed was not copied from Burghley or Walsingham, but was rather, as we have seen, developed independently through his service in the Low Countries. His behaviour was always governed by his commitment to the protestant cause, from his counsel to the Queen over military intervention, to his support of Walter Travers, and finally to the dispatch of the death warrant. The decision here of Davison, Burghley and others to take drastic action for the preservation of the commonwealth was typically monarchical republican, a concept exclusively applied to the domestic setting, yet, for Davison, these beliefs were forged in the heat of the Dutch revolt. His use of counsel to achieve his aims, both abroad and over the Queen of Scots, further illustrates not only the inclusion, but the importance, of diplomats within mid-Elizabethan political culture. Diplomats were an integral part of the conciliar process, not only in gathering

information for their patrons to base their own counsel on, but also for supplying expert counsel themselves based on their own eyewitness experience. They worked together with their domestic counterparts within the same culture to achieve the same aims, and were not bound by a separate set of rules. Whilst the work of the New Diplomatic History has uncovered much about specifically diplomatic culture, further investigation into traditionally domestic culture in the diplomatic setting is still needed in order to achieve a fully holistic view.

Finally, Davison's career has exposed the complexity and fluidity of Elizabethan political relationships and hierarchies. The political system was built upon patron-client bonds, but this did not meant that these relationships were stable or these hierarchies immutable. Again, this was a fact of life for Elizabethans, but has often been glossed over in the historiography, or simplified into categories. In particular, we can see that Davison's status as a client or non-councillor did not preclude him from exercising significant authority. His work as *de facto* interim governor of the Low Countries was particularly important, as it illustrated that, title aside, he was equally if not more skilled than a privy councillor – something which Leicester himself acknowledged, writing that 'I must not lack you when I come thether', and 'without him I confes my self quyte maymed'.[3] It is therefore inaccurate and reductive to label Davison as a man-of-business, certainly after 1584, and, if one wishes to apply this label during his early career, one ought to consider why the same has not been done for Walsingham or Robert Cecil. This is not to say that men-of-business did not exist, but rather that the term must be used carefully, to avoid oversimplifying the contributions of diverse political actors.

Davison's individual relationships also reveal much about the nature of patronage and clientage. His juniority did not preclude friendship with his patrons, specifically Killigrew (whom he soon matched in status) and Walsingham, who treated him as an intellectual equal.

[3] SP 84/4 no. 103; Harley MS 285 f. 182.

Indeed, the historiographical view that friendship and patronage could not co-exist would have been baffling to humanists like Francis Bacon, who believed the two perfectly compatible. On the opposite end of the spectrum, Davison's career shows us the instability of patronage through the collapse of his relationships with both Leicester and Burghley. Whilst patronage was the bedrock of the political system, it was not immune to political crises, which undermined the conventions of patronage, and exposed the loyalties and priorities of each individual. Davison's unusual experience of patronage following his disgrace further confirms the fluidity of the system, as he was reduced once again to the position of client, yet continued to be respected by the political nation. Davison's career is therefore a unique window into the reality of this system, beyond neat historiographical categories and boundaries.

Davison's omission from the scholarship has therefore, until now, obscured our view of the mid-Elizabethan polity. His position was unique, but there are nevertheless several of his colleagues whose careers could further illuminate these issues. In particular, the diplomat Thomas Wilkes stands to further develop our ideas of patronage – like Davison, Wilkes became embroiled in conflict with the Earl of Leicester, but, unlike Davison, managed to recover his career following a period of imprisonment. Like Beale, both Wilkes and Daniel Rogers also served as clerks of the Privy Council, and can thus deepen our understanding of the connection between domestic and diplomatic service. This rehabilitation of Davison has shown that we cannot base our understanding of the mid-Elizabethan polity primarily on Burghley, Walsingham and Beale – these conversations must be diversified. Again, though, it must be emphasised that Davison was not one of a group of so-called men-of-business including Rogers, Beale and Wilkes. These were his colleagues, but, as this thesis has shown, Davison demonstrated peerless skill throughout his career, hence his promotion. The secretaryship did not make Davison great – Davison was already great, so he won the secretaryship.

This ought not to be the end of work on Davison. Indeed, no-one believes the limit to have been reached on Davison's conciliar colleagues – Burghley, Walsingham, Leicester, and Essex have been the subject of numerous modern biographies and continue to inspire fresh work, such as the forthcoming collection on Burghley edited by Janet Dickinson and Neil Younger.[4] Each of Davison's missions would fill a thesis in itself – as mentioned in Chapter 2, the calendars for his resident mission fill over 700 pages.[5] In particular, there remains much to uncover on the mechanics of Davison's dealings with the States-General, and on his intelligence gathering in the Low Countries. Davison has not been 'completed', but, like his conciliar colleagues, is an ongoing project.

By restoring Davison to the centre of the frame have we now achieved a clearer picture of the mid-Elizabethan polity. He was one of the most important politicians of the period, whose unique career trajectory enables a holistic view of the polity beyond historiographical boundaries. Whilst this revelation of Davison's importance is new within the historiography, it would not be new for his contemporaries. His political significance had long been acknowledged by his peers, both before and after his promotion to the secretaryship. For Leicester, Davison was 'the most sufficient man to serve hir majesty that I know of all our nation'; likewise, Burghley knew 'not a man in England so furnished unyversally for the place he had nother know any that can cume neare hym'.[6] This thesis has therefore not been too ambitious, or too defensive of Davison – it has simply restored him to the high position he once held. In closing, we ought therefore to return to Burghley, who, despite the subsequent collapse of their relationship, nevertheless best articulates my case: 'for a servant in that place, I think

[4] Janet Dickinson and Neil Younger (eds.), *Burghley at 500: Quincentennial Essays on William Cecil* (Boydell and Brewer, forthcoming).
[5] See p. 66.
[6] Harley MS 285 f. 188; Lansdowne MS 102 f. 6.

it hard to find a like qualified person. Whom to ruin, in your heavy displeasure, shall be more your majesty's loss than his'.[7]

[7] John Strype, *Annals of the Reformation and Establishment of Religion*, Vol. III Pt I (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1824 (1728)), pp. 542-3 – 11th February 1587, Burghley to the Queen.

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