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Robert Barret and the Making of an Early Modern Occasional Spy.

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Abstract: This article examines letters written by the soldier-author Robert Barret in 1581 describing his travels in France and Italy, while a runaway apprentice during the 1570s, that led him to the English College in Rome. Barret's letters constitute a valuable, hitherto overlooked source of firsthand information about British and Irish Catholics in continental Europe, complementing better-known sources by Anthony Munday and Charles Sledd. Barret latterly recast his travels as an intelligence-gathering opportunity in which he collected detailed information both on Catholic exiles (including Thomas Stukeley, Bishop Thomas Goldwell, and Cardinal William Allen) and on putative plans to invade England. The letters provide an exemplary record of the—not uncommon—experiences of someone compelled by circumstances to adopt the role of an occasional spy. This article not only analyses the value of the letters' contents but discusses broader questions concerning the pliable, shifting nature of early modern intelligence and intelligence-gatherers.

On Saturday 14 January 1581 Robert Barret arrived in England after over half a decade spent working, travelling, and possibly fighting in continental Europe. Almost immediately upon his return Barret wrote a series of letters directed to a senior member of Elizabeth I's government offering extended accounts of what he did while abroad, where he had been, who he had seen, met, and spoken to, whose service he had entered, and the circumstances

that took him from London to Antwerp and onwards into France and Italy. Barret is best known as the author of probably the most sophisticated, forward-thinking military manual of the late Elizabethan period, *The Theorike and Practike of Moderne Warres* (published 1598). He was also an experienced literary translator and produced translations of poems by the Huguenot poet Guillaume de Salluste, sieur du Bartas, and transformed William of Tyre's twelfth-century chronicle of the First Crusade into an epic poem entitled *The Sacred Warr*.[1] All of these works were written following Barret's retirement in the early 1590s from a life spent mainly 'in the profession of Armes [...] among forraine nations', including in French, Dutch, Italian, and Spanish armies.[2] Barret was an accomplished English practitioner of early modern soldier authorship, one of a considerable body of Tudor and Stuart fighting men who also turned their hands to technical, tactical, or literary compositions.[3]

I'm very grateful to Prof. Maurice Whitehead, Archivist and Schwarzenbach Fellow at the Venerable English College, Rome, for his generosity and assistance when I visited the College.

[1] Both works exist only in manuscript: Washington, DC, Folger Shakespeare Library MS V.b.224 (Du Bartas translations); Oxford, Bodleian Library Add. MS C.281 (*The Sacred Warr*).

[2] Robert Barret, *The Theorike and Practike of Moderne Warres* (London, 1598), sig. ¶2r. Hereafter cited as *Theorike.*

[3] See D.J.B. Trim, 'The art of war: martial poetics from Henry Howard to Philip Sidney', in Mike Pincombe and Cathy Shrank (eds), *The Oxford Handbook of Tudor Literature, 1485-1603* (Oxford, 2009), pp. 587-605; Adam McKeown, *English Mercuries: Soldier Poets in the Age of Shakespeare* (Nashville, 2009); Paul Scannell, *Conflict and Soldiers' Literature in Early Modern Europe* (London, 2015).

This essay focuses, however, on writings of a very different nature that Barret composed earlier in his life, long before he displayed any literary ambitions. Drawing on a rich, hitherto overlooked source of biographical information about Barret, this essay examines the journeys he undertook during his twenties and the experiences and ordeals that he faced. It demonstrates how Barret's letters—termed 'discourses' by their author—are of great value to historians of early modern espionage due to the multiple different functions that they served. In order to convince the English authorities of his continued political and confessional loyalty, for reasons set out below, Barret recast his travels as an intelligence-gathering opportunity during which he was able to collect detailed information on both Catholic exiles overseas and putative plans to invade England spearheaded by the Pope and King of Spain. The essay examines the activities and written record not of a regular, paid agent or established member of one of the later Elizabethan intelligence networks, but an individual who provided information to the authorities on a single occasion and who may have been compelled to do so by the compromising situation he faced upon returning to England. Moreover, the essay makes the case for the value of recovering the experiences of one of the furthermost nodes of Elizabethan intelligence networks by demonstrating how Barret's discourses enable us to reconstruct the story of the making of an occasional spy. The discourses provide an exemplary record of the—not uncommon—experiences of one who found himself induced by circumstances to adopt the role, if only latterly or temporarily, of an occasional intelligence gatherer. This essay therefore also discusses broader questions concerning the pliable, shifting ontology of early modern intelligence gatherers and the intelligence they provided.

I

Robert Barret was the third and youngest son of Thomas Barret of Kingswood, Wiltshire and his wife Edith Bridges of the Forest of Dean. Heraldic visitations of Wales and the Marches reveal that the family was armigerous and descended from the Barrets or Bareds of Pendine in Carmarthenshire, Wales.[4] Extensive information about Barret's immediate family background and early life can be found in the four discourses composed in and dated 1581.[5]

[4] S.R. Meyrick (ed.), *Heraldic Visitations of Wales and Part of the Marches* (2 vols; Llandovery, 1846), I, p. 146; Nick de Somogyi, 'Robert Barret', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* [*ODNB*]. A grant of arms for Thomas Barret was drafted on 6 February 1591 at the request of his second son Richard with the agreement of the other brothers who were all entitled to use the arms; see London, College of Arms, Vincent MS 157, Old Grants 2, fo. 478r. My thanks go to College Archivist James Lloyd for supplying a copy of the grant. Barret reproduces his family's arms in *Theorike*, sig. Y6v.

[5] The discourses are now TNA, SP 12/147/38-41. Discourse one is dated by the author 20 January 1580 (i.e. 1581 new style). Discourse two is marked faintly 'March 1580/81' in a different hand to the author's. As discussed below, this discourse carries an endorsement in William Cecil's hand. Discourse four bears a date of January 1580/81 in a later hand. All four discourses are in Barret's hand (matching that of the Du Bartas and William of Tyre translations) and signed 'Robert Barret'. The discourses' sequence is authorial, as identified by titles in Barret's hand ('The fyrst discorse', etc.). Each is written on a single sheet folded in half. They were foliated 79r-86v when calendared; in-text parenthetical citations use this numbering. In 1885 the manuscript of *The Sacred Warr* was sold at Sothebys with '10 sheets of MS. relating to Barret': De Somogyi, 'Robert Barret', *ODNB*. The discourses were

Read together, the discourses provide a synoptic account of Barret's travels and experiences in continental Europe between 1575 and his return to England in January 1581. Barret can be frustratingly imprecise and contradictory when recalling the dates and durations of his travels, and the names of individuals encountered. He also never identifies his addressee. It has been conjectured that they were directed to Sir Francis Walsingham although this is challenged below.[6] The first three discourses deal predominantly with Barret's eventful journey home and the intelligence he now offered. It is in the fourth discourse, however, that Barret provides the most detailed autobiographical information.[7] This is proffered in part to address some anxiety he appears to have had about his family background and the reasons for his travelling that he may have miscommunicated to the discourses' recipient at an earlier point, either orally or in another, now-lost letter. As he writes:

> Where as I declared vnto your W: that I had (when I was in Ingland) served one m*aste*r Gielles Read, who laye som tyme at my ffatherin lawes [here meaning stepfather's] howse, who was called Rychard Davis, of Myrtton by Tewxbury [...] but I did not declare the Iust [i.e. exact] tyme there of but yt was Longe before the tyme that I towld your W: (fo. 85r)

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calendared in the State Papers by 1865; these are not the auctioned (now lost) sheets. I'm indebted to Dannielle Shaw for her help in accessing these documents.

[6] *Calendar of State Papers (Domestic), Elizabeth, 1581-90* (London, 1865), p. 4.

[7] None of the information contained in the dicourses and discussed below features in the current *ODNB* entry for Barret: De Somogyi, 'Robert Barret', *ODNB*.

Barret never mentions serving Read in the other discourses but proceeds to address an apparent omission by detailing what transpired between that earlier point of his life and his later travels.[8] His family background and early career were closely linked to the cloth trade, for which Tewkesbury in Gloucestershire was an important centre.[9] Mercantile connections would also play a significant role during his travels abroad. Barret's mother was 'desyrouse to see her chylldren to prosper & do well' and, through Read and Barret's eldest brother Richard, arranged for him to be apprenticed to Henry Smith of St Mary-le-Bow in London, a merchant adventurer and member of the City's Girdlers' Company. Barret left home aged 'about syxtene or eightene' and was apprenticed to Smith by 1571. Smith's will of 8 April 1571 bequeathed ten pounds to 'Robert Barratt my aprentice'.[10] Smith died before 7 May 1573 (when his will was proven) and Barret, who had served his master for two years by this point, was taken on by Smith's cousin Philip of the Haberdashers' Company, for whom he worked in Hamburg and Lübeck. If Barret was aged at least between sixteen and eighteen when Smith made the will and served, as he reports, for two years until Smith's death, we can establish his approximate birthdate as being between 1553 and 1555. Barret's apprenticeship was claimed subsequently by the Girdlers who placed him with one of their

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[8] This may be the Giles Read who inherited lands in Walton Cardiff (located just outside Tewkesbury) in 1558 and who is referred to as lord of the manor for the village in 1608: TNA, C 142/118/55; *A History of the County of Gloucester: Volume 8*, ed. C.R. Elrington (Victoria County History; London, 1968), p. 239.

[9] Caroline Litzenberger, *The English Reformation and the Laity: Gloucestershire, 1540-1580* (Cambridge, 2002), p. 106.

[10] TNA, PROB 11/55, fo. 120.

own Company, Robert Cobbe, a merchant based in St Mary Colechurch, Cheapside, for whom Barret worked for two years in Flanders and Antwerp.[11] At some point in 1575 disaster struck: after lending out significant sums of money he fell foul of a duplicitous Italian debtor. Facing the ignominy of being shipped home by Cobbe ('a man of a hastie & rashe brayne') and his consequent 'dyscreditt' among fellow merchants, he fled to Paris (fo. 85v).

Barret mentions none of this in his first discourse, which he introduced instead by explaining that some five or six years earlier (i.e. in the mid-1570s) he had travelled from London to the Low Countries and thence to Paris, being simply 'desirous to travell forrane Countryes' (fo. 79r). An expression of interest in learning about foreign places and languages was frequently used as a catch-all explanation by subjects who left England without a passport from the queen.[12] Anthony Munday and Charles Sledd, whose contemporaneous continental travels are discussed below, prefaced their own accounts with a similar

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[11] 'St. Mary Colechurch 105/21', in D.J. Keene and Vanessa Harding, *Historical Gazetteer of London Before the Great Fire: Cheapside* (London, 1987) <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/no-series/london-gazetteer-pre-fire/pp529-539> [accessed 4 January 2021]. The Girdlers' Company Minute Books from before 1622—which may have confirmed the transfer of Barret's indenture—were destroyed by fire in 1666: W. Dumville Smythe, *An Historical Account of the Worshipful Company of Girdlers, London* (London, 1905), p. 80.

[12] Stephen Alford, *The Watchers: A Secret History of the Reign of Elizabeth I* (London, 2012), p. 88. On the 'speciall Licence' required from the queen: 'An Acte agaynst Fugytyves over the Sea', 13 Elizabeth c.3 (1571), in *The Statutes of the Realm* (11 vols; 1810-22), I, pp. 531-4.

formula.[13] Barret uses it here to obscure details of his broken apprenticeship indenture and outstanding debts. While in Paris Barret met several travelling Englishmen, including Arthur Gorges and Silvanus Scory, and also entered the service of a Frenchman, 'Monsieur Cannett', with whom he remained a year.[14] No further information is given about 'Cannett', nor about the 'Sir Iuan Battista' of Milan into whose service he enters for a further five or six months 'beinge very willinge to see the part*es* of Italy' (fo. 79r).[15] Barret accompanied Battista into Italy, travelling by the 'French route' via Lyon and Mont-Cenis, before parting company at Turin.[16] He then went south to Genoa where he served on one of the city's galleys, either as a paid oarsman or as one of the boarding companies that such vessels

[13] Anthony Munday, *The English Romayne Lyfe* (London, 1582), sig. B1r; Charles Sledd's 'A generall discorse of the Popes holynes devices' (hereafter cited as Sledd's 'Discourse'), British Library [hereafter BL], Add. MS 48029, fo. 121r-42v.

[14] Gorges was a recent Oxford graduate and minor courtier; Scory was a wastrel and former soldier, later in the Earl of Leicester's service: Colin Burrow, 'Arthur Gorges', *ODNB*; Andrew Pettegree, 'John Scory' [Sylvanus's father], *ODNB*; John Bossy, *Giordano Bruno and the Embassy Affair* (New Haven, 1991), p. 34.

[15] One possible candidate for 'Cannett' is the Protestant François de Barbançon, sr de Canny of Picardy; see David Potter (ed.), *Foreign Intelligence and Information in Elizabethan England: Two Treatises on the State of France, 1580-1584* (Cambridge, 2004), pp. 98-9 n264.

[16] John Bossy, 'Rome and the Elizabethan Catholics: a question of geography', *Historical Journal*, 7/1 (1964), p. 135.

carried and used recently to great effect at the battle of Lepanto (1571).[17] After three months on the Genoese galley Barret spent a further seven or eight months aboard a galley of Malta, *La Victoria*, before landing in the Spanish-controlled kingdom of Naples and entering into the service of one 'Signore Carlo Spinello' for nearly two years. This individual appears to have been a scion of the great Neapolitan Spinelli family, an ancient, noble line with an illustrious military tradition. One possibility is that Barret served the Carlo Spinello who was *maestro de campo* of a *tercio* forming part of the respected Neapolitan contingent of the Spanish army.[18]

In Spinello's service Barret saw 'sundrie partes of Italie', his second discourse recording visits to Naples, Milan, Siena, Bologna, and Florence, and the names of English and Welsh subjects encountered in each. Particular attention is paid to Catholic exiles and those receiving pensions from foreign or papal paymasters: in Naples he saw Dr Nicholas Morton, then in the service of the city's archbishop; in Florence he met Anthony Standen who was in the pay of Francesco de' Medici, grand duke of Tuscany.[19] It was in Sicily during

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[17] On free and paid oarsmen: Louis Sicking, 'Naval warfare in Europe, c.1330-c.1680', in Frank Tallett and D.J.B. Trim (eds), *European Warfare, 1350-1750* (Cambridge, 2010), p. 246.

[18] Luis Cabrera de Córduba, *Historia de Felipe II* (3 vols; Valladolid, 1998), II, p. 596. A *tercio* was a form of Spanish infantry regiment, commanded by a *maestro de campo*, combining companies of arquebusiers, swordsmen, and pikemen. Barret himself provides definitions in *Theorike*, sigs. Y5r-Y6r.

[19] Barret's reference places Standen in Florence slightly earlier than assumed previously; see Paul E.J. Hammer, 'An Elizabethan spy who came in from the cold: the return of Anthony Standen to England in 1593', *Historical Research*, 65/158 (1992), pp. 277-95.

this period that he first met a group of English merchants from Exeter who would prove instrumental in facilitating his return home. Barret's later writings drew productively upon this period of travel around Italy. *Theorike* includes a very well-informed section detailing guards and watches in Milan's Castello Sforzesco.[20] An extraordinary ten-page digression from Barret's source text in *The Sacred Warr* imaginatively recreates the journey that crusader Bohemond of Taranto took from Apulia to Paris in 1104 and describes cities along the route using observations taken from the translator's own experiences.[21]

The most problematic part of all Barret's travels is the period he spent in Rome. This is mentioned initially in the first discourse:

> In Rome I was had before m*aster* Stukly one m*aster* Shelly who calleth him selfe lorde Prior of Inglande, & one owld man Called gowldewell sometyme [...] a byshope in the papisticall tyme, in ingland, before whom I was sharply examyned. (fo. 80r)

Barret's examiners here are the English adventurer Thomas Stukeley, Sir Richard Shelley, grand prior of the Knights of St John, and Thomas Goldwell, formerly bishop of St Asaph in Wales.[22] Shelley had been in Rome since 1576. Goldwell had been on the continent since

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[20] *Theorike*, sigs. Y1v-Y3r.

[21] Bodleian, Add. MS C.281, pp. 315-24.

[22] Questioning of potential students arriving at the College—regarding their family, faith, and intentions—was formalised by Robert Persons when he became Rector in 1597. Records of these examinations offer an indicative illustration of those faced by Barret and

1560, attended the Council of Trent in 1561, and was largely based from this time at the English Hospice (later the English College) in Rome.[23] Stukeley was in Rome by 1575 attempting to garner support for a papal-backed Spanish invasion of Ireland. After a brief period in Flanders in early 1577, he was in Rome until his departure on 3 February 1578 upon the ill-fated expedition which, although originally bound for Ireland, became diverted into the Portugese attack on north Africa.[24] Stukeley died at Ksar-el-Kebir on 4 August that year. Thus, the *terminus ante quem* for Barret's arrival in Rome is early February 1578. The first discourse rehearses the names of scholars and priests Barret saw at the recently established English College before closing with his assurance that 'I did never vse [i.e. practice or worship] amongest them' (fo. 80r), as the Exeter merchants Francis Tucker and Richard Colthurst were said to be able to attest.

The fourth discourse, however, presents a very different version of events. Here we learn that Barret parted from Spinello at Rome and, increasingly destitute and friendless, sought out 'some other french or Italyan service' (fo. 85v), possibly of a martial nature. He also remained, he stresses, determined to abjure the company of his Catholic countrymen based in the city. Barret failed on both counts. After heading to Campo de Fiori ('wher all such as do seeke service, & monylesse merchantes do haunt') he encountered Dr Henry

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his contemporaries: *The Responsa Scholarum of the English College Rome, 1598-1621*, ed. Anthony Kenny (Catholic Record Society [CRS] 54; London, 1962), p. xii.

[23] T.E. Bridgett and T.F. Knox, *The True Story of the Catholic Hierarchy Deposed by Queen Elizabeth* (London, 1889), pp. 208-63; T.F. Mayer, 'Thomas Goldwell', *ODNB*.

[24] Juan E. Tazón, *The Life and Times of Thomas Stukeley (c.1525-78)* (Aldershot, 2003), pp. 210-20.

Henshaw, a priest from the English College located nearby on Via di Monserrato. Henshaw offered him employment; poverty and hunger led Barret to accept. Barret's rehearsal of what transpired next can be read productively alongside other contemporary accounts of English Protestant travellers who spent time at the College, namely Munday's 1582 *The English Romayne Lyfe* and the manuscript 'Discourse' that Sledd presented to Walsingham in May 1580 following his own return from Italy.[25]

Under Cardinal William Allen's direction, the College had been transformed in 1576 from a place of refuge for exiled English and Welsh Catholics into a college to train men for the priesthood along the lines of Allen's seminary at Douai. During the period in which Barret arrived in Rome the College was embroiled in disputes between the Warden Morris Clynnog and Owen Lewis (both Welshmen) and the new generation of English students relocated from Douai. The latter objected to preferential treatment given to their Welsh peers, and to a conservative, fundamentally passive vision of the College's objectives.[26]

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[25] Sledd's 'Discourse' was transcribed in *Miscellanea: Recusant Records*, ed. Clare Talbot (CRS 53; London, 1961), pp. 193-245. A modern scholarly edition of the 'Discourse', collated with Robert Beale's copy (BL, Add. MS 48023, fo. 94r-109v) and cross-referenced with Barret's discourses, is much needed. As Talbot noted, Sledd's 'Discourse' calls for cautious interpretation since it includes names and facts of which he could have had no direct knowledge (p. xii).

[26] On the English College's foundation and early factional struggles: Francis Gasquet, *A History of the Venerable English College, Rome* (London, 1920), esp. pp. 69-78; Michael E. Williams, *The Venerable English College, Rome: A History* (Leominister, 2008), pp. 5-12. See also Anthony Kenny's series 'From hospice to college', in *Venerabile*, 19/4 (1960), pp. 477-

These students—many of whom Barret met—were inspired by ideas of returning to England as missionaries to reclaim the country for the Catholic faith and lobbied Pope Gregory XIII to repurpose the College for these ends. In April 1579 the Pope agreed to these petitions and appointed the Jesuit Alfonso Agazzari as Rector; the official foundation of the College dates to 1 May that year.

The College was closely linked with major Catholic military and missionary enterprises to England, including that of Robert Persons and Edmund Campion; indeed, as Anthony Kenny, noted 'the seminary had been conceived as a by-product of the English exiles' projects for the invasion of England'.[27] Several different invasion projects were proposed during the 1570s. Clynnog submitted a detailed plan to the Vatican in 1575 involving a fleet fitted out in the Mediterranean 'as if for an expedition against the Turks or the Barbary pirates', armed with 6,000 Italian soldiers led by the Lepanto hero Marc'Antonio Colonna. This would land in Wales, march into England rallying Catholics en route, and place Mary Stuart on the throne.[28] Stukeley had been pitching schemes involving landfall in Ireland to King Philip II of Spain since 1572, as had the exiled English priest Dr Nicholas

85; *Venerabile*, 20/1 (1960), pp. 1-11; *Venerabile*, 20/2 (1961), pp. 89-103; *Venerabile*, 20/3 (1961), pp. 171-96.

[27] Kenny, 'Hospice', *Venerabile*, 20/2, p. 91.

[28] J.M. Cleary, 'Dr Morys Clynnog's invasion projects of 1575-6', *Recusant History*, 8 (1965-6), pp. 300-22; Maurice Whitehead, *Piety and Patronage: The Venerable English College, Rome, the Earls of Worcester, and Links with Wales, 1578-1679* (Rome, 2016), p. 10.

Sanders.[29] Allen too, upon arriving in Rome in 1576, submitted his own proposals to Philip.[30] As Persons later observed, disagreements between the various parties impeded the realisation of many such projects.[31] That said, Stukeley set sail with good intentions in 1578 and a papal-backed entry into Ireland was achieved at Smerwick, Co. Kerry in July 1579, which caused elation among the Roman exiles, as Sledd observed.[32] The College's associations with successive enterprises against England represented both a liability and an opportunity for Barret when he revealed his own connections with this community.

Barret's claim that necessity prompted him towards the College needs some qualification. All English visitors there received eight days' free board and lodging, and alms if they were in need—a legacy of its original function as a pilgrims' hospice.[33] Munday and Sledd enjoyed such provision.[34] The evidently desperate Barret never mentions availing himself of the same, however, and his relationship with the College and its community appears to have been of a different nature. Two Englishmen visited the College in winter 1577-8 but were ultimately refused admission: one was a pirate who eventually joined Stukeley's expedition; the other was a runaway apprentice, who (as Kenny puts it)

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[29] Munday, *English*, sigs. B3r-B3v; Tazon, *Stukeley*, pp. 164-8.

[30] Kenny, 'Hospice', *Venerabile*, 20/1, pp. 2-6.

[31] Robert Persons, 'A Storie of Domesticall Difficulties', in *Miscellanea II*, ed. J.H. Pollen, et al (CRS 2; London, 1906), p. 64.

[32] Sledd, 'Discourse', fo. 143r.

[33] Gasquet, *History*, p. 43.

[34] Munday, *English*, sig.C3r; Sledd, 'Discourse', fo. 132r.

'remained in Rome to grumble'.[35] If this grumbling runaway were Barret there is perhaps the remote possibility that he may have attempted initially to enter the College as a scholar.

Following Barret's examination by Stukeley and Shelley, Bishop Goldwell took him into his service—a significant detail omitted from the first discourse. Goldwell was a long-established fixture of the College community by the time Barret arrived, and had his own chambers there in or near which his servant would likely have attended and resided.[36] Barret says he served Goldwell grudingly for about a year 'seekinge every daye some meane to gett myself homeward' (fo. 85v). His time in Rome overlapped with the period in which Munday was at the College (1 February until no later than 23 April 1579). He too no doubt witnessed the lavish mealtimes, institutional factionalism, treasonous table-talk, and penitential rigours of college life described salaciously in *The English Romayne Lyfe*. Munday and Barret never mention each other in their writings.[37] Barret also makes no mention of Sledd in his discourses although the two met on 6 July 1579 shortly after the latter's arrival in Rome and had been acquainted previously in England, most likely through Cheapside

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[35] Kenny, *Venerabile*, 20/2, p. 99. Barret arrived at the College before either of the two main registers for visitors and scholars, the *Liber Ruber* and *Pilgrim Book*, were started; see Henry Foley, *Records of the English Province of the Society of Jesus* (7 vols; London, 1875-83), VI, pp. 548-650; Wilfrid Kelly (ed.), *The Liber Ruber of the English College Rome 1*: *Nomina Alumnorum 1579-1630* (CRS 37; London, 1940).

[36] Gasquet, *History*, p. 58.

[37] Barret also never mentions encountering anyone using Munday's likely alias 'Hawley' or his travelling companion Thomas Nowell; see Anthony Munday, *The English Roman Life*, ed. Philip J. Ayres (Oxford, 1980), p. 20, note to line 477.

mercantile connections.[38] Sledd visited the College and was questioned at length by Henry Smith and Nicholas Owen who were eager to discover the reasons for his visit, and keen to identify whether he was someone who might join their scholarly community or, alternatively, a spy. He benefitted from important, possibly life-saving advice from Barret, who by this time was evidently well-settled at the College, and also revealed the kinds of intelligence to which Barret had been privy while in Goldwell's service:

> [Barret] in secret talke willed me to take god to myselfe & be verye sarcomspect in my speache other wise I might chaunce to purchase imprisonement by cause I was thought to be an espye, ye he said further to me th*a*t Smithe & Owen were sent to me porposlye to syfte & entrape me, he also shewed me that there were greave

[38] Sledd, 'Discourse', fo. 132r-132v. Sledd had earlier worked for Cheapside merchant adventurer Michael Lok; see TNA, SP 12/131/20, fo. 89r. Lok incurred huge debts during the fallout from Martin Frobisher's abortive gold prospecting voyages to Baffin Island in 1577-8. He was subsequently attacked by Frobisher for alleged financial irregularities and imprisoned for debt; see James McDermott, *Martin Frobisher: Elizabethan Privateer* (New Haven, 2011), p. 254; Stephen Alford, *London's Triumph: Merchant Adventurers and the Tudor City* (London, 2017), pp. 163-71. Sledd too was threatened by Frobisher and may have parted company with Lok and, indeed, felt compelled to leave the country following his master's disgrace. No mere lackey, Sledd evidently held some financial standing in his own right—at least prior to the Frobisher debacle—since he loaned money to the English merchant Salomon Aldred two years before he arrived in Rome in July 1579: 'Discourse', fo. 133r.

> matters in hand to be practised againste england verye shortlye by the Pope and the Kinge of Spaine as he had heard his master Tho. Goldwell Bishope & other englishemen talke who had diuers meetings & conferences porposlye about the same newe devices saying th*a*t yf I did staye longe in Rome I should here of them, but he for his parte wolde declare nothinge & therfore they dide feare prive spyes, he instructed me how I should at 8 dayes end goo to St. Peters to confessione wh*i*ch in no wise I should misse where I should see the penitenser for the englishe natione, he also instructed me so well th*a*t I was able to use my selfe as well as any of the catholikes in Rome.[39]

Sledd's rehearsal of this encounter indicates how Barret himself may have dissembled his religious sympathies and passed outwardly as a Catholic. When Sledd followed this advice and went to confess at St Peter's he received a Latin certificate from the Jesuit Thomas Derbyshire that affirmed, should he be challenged, that he was a good Catholic.[40]

At some point during summer 1579—after 6 July—Barret injured his leg and was cast out of Goldwell's service. Fortunately, he again encountered Francis Tucker and the Exeter merchants he had earlier met in Sicily who supplied him with the means to recover his health and passage home. Barret boarded a *frigatta* bound for Naples but the ship was intercepted halfway by Turkish ships and ran aground near Monte Circello in southern Lazio. After fighting on the shore and wounding his foot, Barret and his crew fled to nearby Terracina where he again confronted the Turks. Both sides suffered losses, but the Turks

[39] Sledd, 'Discourse', fo. 132v.

[40] Sledd, 'Discourse', fo. 132v-133r.

eventually withdrew. Barret boarded another vessel to Naples and was there to spend between six and nine months recovering. He reports being in Naples when Cardinal Allen arrived in Rome in late August 1579 and it was during this time that he witnessed the build-up of Spanish-led military forces described in his third discourse. Tucker again offered aid and placed Barret on a Flemish hulk under a master van Mynden of Lübeck. By April/ May 1580 this ship had reached Cadiz where it and its crew were pressed into the service of Spain as part of Philip II's preparations to assert his claim to the Portugese throne. (Spanish forces invaded Portugal that June; Lisbon fell to the Duke of Alva on 27 August.) Barret reports having journeyed inland to Seville in response to the ship's impressment. He remained there with Plymouth-based merchant William Stallenge until that October. Hearing that the English *Bark Talbot* was at Malaga, he made for the coast again. In the first discourse he says he remained in Malaga for a month with another English merchant, Hugh Wilde, before sailing on 14 December. In the third discourse, however, he never mentions Wilde and says he left Malaga on 14 November and called at Gibraltar later that month where he heard rumours of further Spanish naval enterprises from soldiers on Sicilian galleys harboured there. Thereafter he sailed to England, arriving in Portsmouth on 14 January 1581.

II

As noted earlier, none of the discourses name an addressee. The second discourse, however, carries an endorsement in William Cecil's distinctive hand indicating that it had been brought by the warden of Portsmouth, Sir Henry Radcliffe, who corresponded regularly with Cecil and gathered and forwarded intelligence from abroad carried by ships

arriving at the port.[41] Barret's discourse would appear to have been read by Cecil, whose endorsement tersely noted their contents, and they may also have found their way to Walsingham, to whom Sledd had directed intelligence on a similar subject the previous year. Although there is no additional evidence regarding how Barret's discourses were received, his social status and mercantile associations place him alongside the kind of figures Walsingham commonly employed as agents.[42] This probably informed the decision to identify the discourses' intended addressee as Walsingham when they were calendared. However, Barret may well have had more modest and immediate intentions for his discourses, for one of them reads as if it could be directed towards his initial point of contact with crown authorities, Radcliffe. The fourth discourse opens with a reference to how Julius Caesar was said to have acquired more territories by clemency than by 'dynte of sworde' and then attempts to identify similar qualities in the addressee: 'seeynge your W. to Imytate the steappes of suche heroicall wight*es*, I haue embowldened myself to vtter that vnto your W: a matter only towchinge myself w*hi*ch I thought not as yet to haue dyclosed' (fo. 85r). The appeal to one who has wielded the sword and now hopefully shows clemency seems a less appropriate comparison to make with statesmen like Cecil or Walsingham.

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[41] Wallace T. MacCaffrey, 'Sir Henry Radcliffe', *ODNB*.

[42] On both Walsingham and Cecil's employment of merchants as agents: Leo Hicks, 'An Elizabethan propagandist: the career of Solomon Aldred', *The Month*, 181 (1945), pp. 181-91; Alan Haynes, *The Elizabethan Secret Services* (Stroud, 1992), pp. 29, 99, 102-3; John Cooper, *The Queen's Agent: Francis Walsingham at the Court of Elizabeth I* (London, 2011), pp. 175-7: John Guy, *Gresham's Law: The Life and World of Queen Elizabeth I's Banker* (London, 2020), pp. 106-112, 129.

Radcliffe, who served and fought in Ireland from 1557-66 alongside his brother, Thomas, third earl of Sussex, is a more fitting figure for Barret's comparison.[43] Later in the discourse Barret draws an analogy that Radcliffe would surely have appreciated, comparing Turkish vessels that lay in wait around Isola di Ponza, west of Naples, to pirates that did the same near the Isle of Wight, across the Solent from Portsmouth (fo. 86r).

It should be stressed that the discourses never mention any existing relationship between Barret and their intended recipient. Indeed, part of their content works hard to establish how their author's background and circumstances might hopefully exonerate him from suspicion or censure. One cannot discount the possibility that the discourses constitute an account of his travels that Barret was instructed (by Radcliffe?) to write immediately upon his arrival. Multiple motives for writing the discourses emerge, albeit obliquely, as Barret approaches the same material and events from different angles. Initially, the discourses read as an explanation for unlicensed travel but the tone changes quickly as Barret alternates between exculpation and exposition and he attempts to defend his actions while simultaneously providing information he evidently believed would be valued by his reader—and those for or with whom that reader worked.

There are several significant reasons why Barret would have felt compelled to adopt such a defensive stance. The first is contextual. Barret arrived back at a critical moment when the English authorities were on full alert for returning Catholic exiles and for Jesuit priests sent to England as part of Allen's mission to recover the country for the Catholic faith. Barret certainly knew of this mission and Sledd had already provided Walsingham with

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[43] MacCaffrey, 'Radcliffe'; David Edwards (ed.), *Campaign Journals of the Elizabethan Irish Wars* (Dublin, 2014), pp. 3-11.

a detailed account of the many facets of the enterprise against Queen Elizabeth, including how successive groups of priests from Rome, newly inspired by Allen, had come to England during 1579-80. Robert Persons and Edmund Campion arrived in June 1580 and were being hunted as they moved around the country covertly. Several of the returning priests Barret saw at the English College, including Luke Kirby and Dr Humphrey Ely, had already been apprehended and imprisoned. Just before Barret returned, on 10 January 1581, a royal proclamation ordered the return of all English students from foreign seminaries and the arrest of all Jesuits in England.[44] A young Englishman arriving from Rome via Spain with an inconsistent story involving a broken apprenticeship and time spent at a foreign seminary serving the last survivor of the Marian church hierarchy would have aroused suspicion—at least until he could present his version of events.[45] The situation was complicated further in that, unbeknownst to Barret, his presence at the College and in Goldwell's service was reported to Walsingham in Sledd's 'Discourse', as noted above. Furthermore, he shared his family name with the Catholic scholar Richard Barret of Warwickshire, previously of the Douai and Rheims seminaries, who was at the Roman College at exactly the same time as

[44] Alford, *Watchers*, p. 99.

[45] According to a letter from Allen to Agazzari of 10 August 1580, Goldwell claimed he was still a 'marked man' with the English authorities, which prompted him to abandon returning to England that spring with priests from the Roman College; see *Miscellanea VII*, ed. Patrick Ryan, et al (CRS 9; London, 1911), pp. 28-9. Goldwell's name heads a list of English fugitives pensioned by Philip II compiled in 1580: TNA, SP 12/146, fo. 61.

him.[46] Barret never mentions meeting his namesake but the need to dispel suspicions of any family connection may explain the information about his Gloucestershire roots provided in the fourth discourse. One imagines Robert's relationship to Richard Barret would have also interested Stukeley, Shelley, and Goldwell when they examined the former upon his arrival at the College.

Sledd's 'Discourse' also contains another, potentially problematic reference to Barret that would have required explanation. Among the many English and Welsh Catholics, seminarians, Jesuits, and merchants that Sledd diligently records having encountered in Rome and elsewhere abroad is a reference, under the heading 'gone in the kinge of spaines army', to 'Robarte Barret about 4 yeres past prentise w*i*th Robart Cobbe m*e*rchaunt'.[47] Barret is listed alongside a John Taylor of Exeter; neither name appears with the letter 'P' Sledd used to denote a recipient of a papal pension. Again, one assumes Barret had no knowledge of this record but that does not take away the fact that such information could prove compromising were it to be revealed. Service in the armies of foreign powers was not uncommon in this period, particularly since there were neither standing armies in England nor opportunities at home for those with military experience to find employment.[48]

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[46] *Letters of William Allen and Richard Barret, 1572-1598*, ed. P. Renold (CRS 58; London, 1967), pp. xviii-xx.

[47] Sledd, 'Discourse', fo. 125v.

[48] Mark Charles Fissel, *English Warfare, 1511-1642* (London, 2001), pp. 137-53; Geoffrey Parker, *The Army of Flanders and the Spanish Road, 1567-1659* (Cambridge, 2004), pp. 24-6, 34, 42-4; Matthew Woodcock, *Thomas Churchyard: Pen, Sword, and Ego* (Oxford, 2016), pp. 150-4.

Volunteer companies from the British Isles had been fighting in the Low Countries for over a decade. During the mid-1570s, Sir Roger Williams spent three years fighting in the Spanish army of Flanders and returned with impunity to serve Walsingham, his experiences later informing his military manual *A Briefe Discourse of Warre* (1590).[49] Nevertheless, Barret (like Sledd) takes pains to identify other Englishmen serving in Spanish forces abroad; this was evidently information deemed worthy of report.[50] The reference to Barret having 'gone' with the Spanish army sounds more like he departed from Rome upon some sort of military service during Sledd's time there—i.e. between 5 July 1579 and 25 February 1580—rather than an allusion to the earlier period Barret spent, say, aboard Mediterranean galleys or with Spinello. Sledd may, of course, simply have been misinformed or misconstrued the circumstances involving Barret's departure from Rome. Barret was likely to have been in Naples again by the time Sledd left for England. By May 1580 when Sledd presented his 'Discourse' to Walsingham, van Mynden's hulk (with Barret aboard) was impressed into Spanish service, although it is unlikely that such news could have been obtained very quickly.

One possibility, however, is that Barret *was* in the Spanish army—or in some Neapolitan company thereof—in Naples during later 1579-early 1580. He may even have remained in this service, or taken up such service again, when he reached Spain in spring-

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[49] D.J.B. Trim, 'Sir Roger Williams', *ODNB*.

[50] Barret identifies a Master [Walter] Hynton and Robert Holland aboard the Neapolitan gallies (fo. 79v) and an Austin Clark serving Spain 'vppon an englysh shipp w*i*th certen englyshmen' (fo. 84v). Sledd too names Hynton and Holland as papal pensioners: Sledd, 'Discourse', fo. 125r.

summer 1580. Another oblique reference, this time in *Theorike*, appears to indicate that Barret was present at the Spanish attack on Lisbon in late August that year, i.e. in the period between when he arrived in Cadiz and when he says he visited Seville and Malaga:

> many times the Generall doth commaund to frame a battell of sundry Regiments together; as did the old *Duke de Alua* at the taking of *Lisbona,* and conquering of *Portugall.* Who commaunded, that of the *Tertios* of *Naples, Lombardie,* and *Sicilia,* there should be one battell made and framed; and of the *Tertios* of *Don Rodrigo Sapata,* and *Don Gabriell Ninio,* an other, and of the *Tertio* of *Don Luys Henriques,* another squadron: and that out of all the sixe *Tertios* there should be drawen 2100 shot, to serue to other purposes. And for as much as the Sergeant Maior was not very skilfull and ready herein, they found them selues much puzzelled in doing thereof; and fell into many faultes, in presence of their Generall and Princes: and in generall iudgement of the whole Campe wherein I then serued.[51]

Barret exhibits a detailed familiarity with contemporary Spanish military offices and practices throughout *Theorike* and speaks of having gained such knowledge firsthand. (He adopted a Spanish motto, seemingly of proverbial origin, 'Ozar morir, da la vida'—'to risk death is to live'—which appears on all his later printed and manuscript works.) There is also a reference to Barret's service with the Spanish in his family pedigree drawn up in 1597 by Lewis Dwnn, which records him as being (in the herald's idiosyncratic orthography) a

[51] *Theorike*, sig. H5v. Spinello is listed as being garrisoned in Portugal in 1580: Cabrera, *Historia*, II, p. 596.

'Katpen [i.e. captain] in Spaen'.[52] This reference was out of date by 1597, when he can be placed elsewhere (see below), though it evidently rehearsed earlier known information. There is no reference to such service in the discourses, however. Barret wrote evasively of seeking some 'french or Italyan service' when he got to Rome but although he alludes to time spent with Spinello *prior* to his arrival he never mentions explicitly taking part in military activity thereafter, other than his skirmish with the Turks near Terracina.

Barret is rather more candid when eventually recounting the full story of what took place with Cobbe. In the fourth discourse he outlines steps taken recently to make restitution to creditors he fled in Antwerp who, it transpires, assumed he was dead. Mercantile reputation and credit remain important to Barret throughout his discourses, and it is these he is concerned to restore. He appealed repeatedly to members of Exeter's merchant community to testify to his loyalty to his country and religion. He also instructed Robert Jolly, purser of the *Bark Talbot* and servant of George Talbot, sixth earl of Shrewsbury, to seek his brother Richard in London, who also had mercantile connections, to help clear his name with creditors. Evidently, he does not write to free himself from imprisonment or plead destitution, having fifty pounds of his own held by his uncle, John Bridges, a clothier of Kingswood (fo. 86v).

So, what were the discourses intended to do? Identifying the instrumental, exculpatory motives behind their production allows us to obtain a better understanding of their perceived function and of how they frame the information gathered during Barret's travels. The inconsistency between the discourses, and disagreement between Barret's accounts and information available from other sources, cannot help but prompt

[52] Meyrick, *Heraldic Visitations*, I, p. 146.

circumspection—as they may have done for their initial recipients. Testimonies from fellow merchants, repeated professions of loyalty, and selective recollection of key activities might only get Barret so far in establishing a credible explanation for his movements abroad. A major component of all four discourses is given over, therefore, to providing intelligence that Barret judged would be of great potential value to Radcliffe and the authorities. This takes the form of two of the most common sorts of news and intelligence submitted to Cecil and Walsingham in this period: the names of Catholic exiles abroad and information on their whereabouts; and military intelligence concerning plans (or rumours of plans) for an invasion of England and/or Ireland. When recounting the names of Englishmen, Welshmen, and Irishmen he encountered while travelling through France and Italy, Barret pays particular attention to those in mercantile and military employment. Again, he may have been responding to directed questioning here; Campion entered England disguised a jeweller, Persons as a soldier. Barret's focus turns to priests and scholars in his recollections of Rome and he identifies fifty-two individuals that he saw there, probably the best-known being Persons, including seven he suspected had entered England.[53] As Sledd indicated, Barret evidently possessed information about those at the English College who were involved in the various plans for military and missionary enterprises against England and had kept his eyes and ears open during his time there. The relative utility to his peers of Barret's written accounts, however, remains open to question. Barret appears to have worked from memory when composing the discourses upon his return. There are numerous appeals to recollection, to names now forgotten, a haphazard means of organisation, and little attempt

[53] The seven identified were John Askew, Dr Humphrey Ely, Sir Henry Gill, Luke Kirby, Thomas Lovell, Dr Gregory Martin, John Shert.

at a commentary that might help one assess the significance of who was identified. The level of detail given suggests that, unlike Sledd, Barret kept few notes as he travelled nor felt the need to, although he does claim to be able to recognise most of the English Jesuits he met in Rome by sight (fo. 81r).[54] He occasionally records a physical detail here or recipient of a papal pension there but there is little of the systematic recording of information found in Sledd's 'Discourse' nor evidence that Barret felt compelled to gather such information at the time.[55] This is intelligence gathering after the fact. Unlike Munday or Sledd, Barret was not called upon subsequently to provide testimony during the trials of returning Catholic priests.[56]

Barret is more attentive to details when rehearsing information about naval build-up in the western Mediterranean and evidence relating to a rumoured 'lege or Confederacie made betwixt the Kinge of Spaine, the Pope, & some other princes of Italie' (fo. 83r) for some unspecified purpose. The third discourse provides eyewitness reports of the arming of Italian ships for the Spanish king taking place during 1579-80 and scraps of news suggesting that after attacking north Africa, Genoa, or Portugal this force was bound for England, 'wh*ich* opnyun doth remayne in most mens myndes as yet' (fo. 83r). Barret supplies numbers of men and ships, and names of commanders (including Próspero Colonna and Dom Pedro de Medici), together with information gleaned from soldiers aboard Sicilian

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[54] Alford, *Watchers*, p. 85, suggests Sledd wrote his 'Discourse' in London from notes taken abroad.

[55] Barret recalls, for example, how Sir Henry Gill bore 'certayne black crosses vppon the right arme' (fo. 81v).

[56] Alford, *Watchers*, pp. 113-17.

gallies while he was in southern Spain. Nearly ninety vessels sailed from Italy to Gibraltar between 1579-80 carrying over 30,000 Italian, German, and Dutch soldiers. Barret reports that 5,000 men had deserted or died (Colonna included) by the time they mustered in Spain (fo. 83v-84r).

Much of that news was out of date by the time Barret returned home.[57] By late 1580, when he was in Malaga and Gibraltar, these gallies were headed homewards but there remained, he believed, a lingering threat: continued victualling and naval activity 'was a signe of some new preparacion w*hic*h should be made against this next springe' (fo. 84v), i.e. spring 1581. As Sledd attested, Barret had been privy to earlier rumours of a league between Philip II and the Pope during his time in Goldwell's company and had learned too of invasion plots, including that led by Stukeley. Sledd himself heard ambitious, though entirely speculative plans discussed over dinner on 29 November 1579 concerning an invasion plot that involved landing a force at Milford Haven.[58] Intelligence on a papal-backed Spanish naval enterprise had been routed to Cecil and Walsingham for over a year by the time Barret wrote his discourses, all of which echoed earlier rumours about the invasion projects discussed above. Three other reports on purported naval expeditions were

[57] Nearly a year before, Sir Henry Cobham, resident ambassador in Paris, submitted intelligence to Cecil and Walsingham on Colonna's troops: TNA, SP 78/4A (29 February 1580). See also BL, Add MS 48,126 fo. 107r-108v, a memorandum from Rome concerning a papal league dated 23 Feb 1580.

[58] Sledd, 'Discourse', fo. 134r.

submitted to them in January 1581 alone.[59] Radcliffe sent news on this matter to the Privy Council six months earlier based on reconaissance of the Spanish coast.[60] Historians have long challenged the existence of a papal league and/or concrete plans for an invasion in 1580-81 but the seriousness of the threat as then perceived by Elizabeth's government should not be underestimated.[61] This part of Barret's discourses would have been taken seriously even if some of the information about Catholic exiles was of limited value compared to Sledd's 'Discourse'.

There was potential value too in Barret's closing statement concerning his commitment to undertaking further intelligence gathering work, either at home or abroad, which is pitched to his addressee as an invitation to engage his services:

> yf I may serve my Prince or countrey in any respect, eyther here, or in any other forrayne realmes, I am hym w*hi*ch will as willingly & faythfully venture my Lyffe (as I am bound) in the same service as any pore yonge man in Ingland whosoever. This offer do I more over make that yf yt may please any of authoritie to vse & support me therein, & that yt be thought a thinge necessarie; that is, to bringe not only the names of such englysh, Iryshe, or Scottyshe papistes, I say of the most parte, bothe

[59] TNA, SP 15/27/1 fo. 2 (2 January 1581); SP 94/1 fo. 64 (10 January 1581); SP 78/5 fo.6 (13 January 1581).

[60] TNA, SP 12/140/10 (10 July 1580).

[61] J.H. Pollen, *The English Catholics in the Reign of Queen Elizabeth* (London, 1920), pp. 234-43; Alford, *Watchers*, p. 89; Mordechai Feingold, 'The reluctant martyr: John Hart's English mission', *Journal of Jesuit Studies*, 6 (2019), pp. 638-9.

> yonge & o[ld] as do remayne in fflaunders, ffraunce, Italy, or Spaygne (allthough the Last be very dyfficult & daungerous to be putt in practys) but allso the names of many [of] their Labourers & fawters here in Ingland. (fo. 86v)

These kind of earnest sign-offs are a stock feature of correspondence sent to Walsingham and Cecil by those seeking more regular employment as an agent.[62] Nevertheless, Barret's linguistic abilities, familiarity with Catholic exile communities, and military experience qualified him well for further assignments, particularly abroad.[63] The most likely assignment would be a return posting to Rome or possibly Lyon, or for him to be sent into Spain, although Barret himself recognised the last of these to be 'very difficult & daungerous'.

Despite those overtures advertising Barret's eagerness and ability to engage in intelligence work, however, no evidence has been located indicating that his offer was taken up—if, indeed, he was employed under that name, which is not a given. Barret writes in the later 1590s of having retired from a life serving as a career soldier in many different foreign armies, though one might hardly have expected him there to also mention any intelligence gathering work he undertook subsequent to his return in 1581.[64] The discourses and the information they provide would therefore appear to be the only recorded evidence of

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[62] See, for example, Nicholas Berden's letter to Walsingham of 24 April 1588: TNA, SP 12/209, fo. 161.

[63] Barret appears to have known Italian and Spanish and may have had some Dutch or German from his early apprenticeship days. His later translation work also demonstrates his proficiency in French and Latin.

[64] *Theorike*, sigs. ¶2r; C4r.

Barret's activity as an intelligence gatherer. Following his return, Barret was based in London during the mid-1580s. He married Mary Hughes of London at St James, Clerkenwell on 14 February 1586, the marriage licence recording his status as that of a gentleman.[65] A Robert Barret is listed as captain of *The Toby* in a certificate, dated 1 April 1588, of men and ships prepared in defence against the Spanish Armada.[66] This assignment is not corroborated in subsequent records of the engagement and one imagines that if this were the author of *Theorike* he might have recalled such significant recent naval experience when composing his manual.[67] Nevertheless, Barret was still active in the defence of the realm during the later 1590s and in *Theorike* recounts an episode 'not long since' involving his examination of a young Biscain Spaniard at Laugharne in south Wales, only five miles down the coast from the Barrets' ancestral territory at Pendine.[68] This appears to have been a survivor from the Spanish ships that attempted to land at nearby Milford Haven in October

[65] London Metropolitan Archives, P76/JS1/004, fo. 8v; *London Marriage Licences, 1521-1869*, ed. J. Foster (London, 1887), p. 86. Robert and Mary had four children by 1597: Meyrick, *Heraldic Visitations*, I, p. 146. Mary died on 8 August 1602, as Barret recorded in *The Sacred Warr*, p. 306.

[66] William Murdin (ed.), A *Collection of State Papers Relating to Affairs in the Reign of Queen Elizabeth from the Year 1571 to 1596* (London, 1759), p. 594.

[67] Robert Hutchinson, *The Spanish Armada* (London, 2013), p. 265.

[68] *Theorike*, sig. K6v.

1597 following the abortive 'third' Armada.[69] This episode may confirm Barret's location during the period in which he refers to the command that *Theorike*'s dedicatee, Henry Herbert, second earl of Pembroke (as Lord President of Wales) 'doth worthily hold over us, in these our Westerne parts and Wales'.[70] It is to these parts that Barret withdrew to write, as he describes himself at the start of *The Sacred Warr*, as a 'rowgh-heawen souldiar, retyred to a rustique Lyfe'.[71] The encounter with the survivor of the 1597 expedition surely put Barret in mind of the invasion plans to which he had been privy nearly twenty years earlier. The Spanish naval expeditions of the preceding decade—most significant that of 1588—realised all that had existed largely as table-talk for those he had served and observed in Rome. Indeed, it was with memories of the 1588 Armada emergency fresh in mind that Barret began his military manual, identifying a continued need to train the English populace for action and an occasion on which knowledge gained during his experiences abroad might once again be put to the service of his country, faith, and sovereign.[72]

III

To conclude: Barret's discourses remain valuable to historians of early modern espionage for three main reasons. Firstly, they represent a new source of firsthand information about

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[69] R.B. Wernham, *The Return of the Armadas: The Last Years of the Elizabethan War Against Spain, 1595-1603* (Oxford, 1994), pp. 187-9. The 1597 Armada is also discussed in Jonathan Roche's article in this volume.

[70] *Theorike*, sig. ¶3r.

[71] *The Sacred Warr*, p. xvii.

[72] *Theorike*, sig. A1r.

the composition of British and Irish Catholic communities in France and Italy during the 1570s that complements, and warrants cross-referencing with, the accounts by Barret's better-known immediate contemporaries Munday and Sledd. The discourses exhibit neither Munday's journalistic sensationalism nor Sledd's meticulous attention to biographical detail. They are important, nevertheless, for preserving a self-effacing, unheroic—though not uneventful—record of how an individual found himself drawn into compromising circumstances. Secondly, they show how that very same record offered a means for its author to attemptedly exculpate himself in the eyes of the English authorities using recalled information and explicit advertisement of his willingness to engage subsequently in similar activity, albeit with official sanction. Barret's closing statement (quoted above) concerning his eagerness to be hired for further intelligence gathering roles positions him alongside many other contemporary figures—such as Anthony Standen, John Hart, and Anthony Tyrell—who took on spying work to redress earlier transgressions.[73] As the examination above of what Barret chooses variously to rehearse and withhold reminds us, when examining the movements and motives of early modern intelligence gatherers, the relationship between self-interest and state interest merits careful scrutiny.

Thirdly, Barret's discourses present an opportunity to establish more information about the activities of individuals at the furthest reaches of Elizabethan intelligence networks. Too often when reviewing documentary evidence relating to these networks one encounters the fragmentary 'products' generated by the activities of occasional, all but anonymous intelligence gatherers but gets little sense of the producer of that intelligence or

[73] Hammer, 'An Elizabethan spy'; Feingold, 'The reluctant martyr'; Cooper, *Queen's Agent*, pp. 186-7.

of the circumstances that enabled or compelled them to gather information that they then proffered (most commonly) either to Cecil or Walsingham.[74] Modern historians of espionage acknowledge the difficulties attendant upon attempts to reconstruct the operational structure of Elizabethan intelligence gathering networks, and have been cautious about describing such networks as a 'secret service' comparable to twentieth- and twenty-first-century intelligence services.[75] They have identified, nevertheless, the existence of both a regular, trusted secretariat of personnel—including those like Thomas Phelippes—possessing skills in code-breaking and forgery, together with a wider cast of regular agents who provided intelligence from embassies, mercantile missions, prisons, and private households at home and abroad.[76] The latter group—including Robert Barnard, Nicholas

[74] See, for example, the intelligence on Spanish shipping submitted in January and February 1581 by the merchant John Donne of Exmouth and sailor David Perrin of Barnstaple, the 'Secrette aduertisements' of the scholar Samuel Pettingell (July 1581), and the letter to Walsingham penned by the misled legal student John Baker (dated 21 October 1588) concerning his travails abroad: TNA, SP 15/27/1, fo.2; SP 15/27/1, fo. 9; SP 12/149, fo. 190; SP 12/217, fo. 69.

[75] Cooper, *Queen's Agent*, p. 163.

[76] Conyers Read, *Mr Secretary Walsingham and the Policy of Queen Elizabeth* (3 vols; Oxford, 1925), II, pp. 322-35; Cooper, *Queen's Agent*, pp. 181-5; Stephen Budiansky, *Her Majesty's Spymaster: Elizabeth I, Sir Francis Walsingham, and the Birth of Modern Espionage* (New York, 2005), pp. 96-9; Robert Hutchinson, *Elizabeth's Spy Master: Francis Walsingham and the Secret War that Saved England* (London, 2006), pp. 91-100; Hsuan-Ying Tu, 'The

Berden, Maliverey Catlyn, and William Herle—were clearly involved in pro-active intelligence gathering and provide insightful periodic commentary on their methods and occupational identity as spies. Witness, for example, Berden's candid declaration to Walsingham of how he viewed his activities and motives: 'I profess myself a spy, but I am not one for gain, but to serve my country'.[77]

Judging from the evidence of the discourses, Barret does not fall into this category of agent, nor even does he appear to have purposively undertaken self-directed intelligence gathering, acting on his own initiative and sense of duty or zeal, in the same manner as, say, Munday, Sledd, or Dr William Parry.[78] Barret's place within the taxonomy of early modern intelligencers is rather more nebulous, though no less important to recognize and elucidate. At the fringes of the later Elizabethan intelligence networks were those whose roles and contributions are the hardest to discern and interpret. As Stephen Budiansky observes of the irregular personnel who submitted information to Cecil and Walsingham, these were 'less spies than reporters'.[79] This class of individuals raises difficult but significant questions about how one distinguishes actionable, serviceable intelligence from mere news—and

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pursuit of God's glory: Francis Walsingham's espionage in Elizabethan politics, 1568-1588', unpublished PhD thesis (York, 2012), pp. 68-102.

[77] Quoted in Hutchinson, *Elizabeth's Spy Master*, p. 107.

[78] Alford, *Watchers*, pp. 69-86, 139-51.

[79] Budiansky, *Her Majesty's Spymaster*, p. 91. For a discussion of the difficulties of defining early modern spies and intelligencers: Ioanna Iordanou, *Venice's Secret Service*: *Organizing Intelligence in the Renaissance* (Oxford, 2019), pp. 162-4, 187-8. See too Shaw's essay in this issue.

about how Cecil, Walsingham, and their staff understood and acted upon such distinctions. The majority of early modern human intelligence is by its very nature retrospective in that it is presented and appraised subsequent to when it is acquired, rather than in 'real time'. Barret's discourses remind us, however, that this raw data—be it news, observation, rumour—may be presented and, crucially, constituted as such subsequent to that moment of acquisition. That is to say, they invite us to consider that intelligence may well be conceived as such only at the very point at which it is recorded and/ or presented to another party. The discourses allow us to recover that moment of transition when recalled news can be refashioned as marketable intelligence. In Barret's case, this was an apparently singular occasion where, ever the merchant's apprentice, he attempted to give value to information he possessed by presenting it as a commodity: as a way to offset the potentially problematic circumstances whereby such information was obtained that might also enable him to offer his services to deliver more of the same. These documents therefore capture too that moment at which the reporter—here, a runaway apprentice—could be made, or seek to make themselves, into a spy, if only for that single occasion.