Richard Topcliffe and the Book Culture of the Elizabethan Catholic Underground

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Richard Topcliffe (1531–1604) was the most infamous torturer of Elizabethan England. He was also a professional reader. Historians of the book are interested in how repressive regimes read the books of their enemies. This essay identifies a number of books that contain Topcliffe's marginalia and have not previously been studied by scholars. It argues that Topcliffe's reading was forensic in nature, and was utilized directly by the Elizabethan regime in its campaign against Catholicism. This investigation reveals the connection between racking and reading, and demonstrates the ways in which Topcliffe's reading legitimated state-authorized violence.

INTRODUCTION

RICHARD TOPCLIFFE (1531–1604) was the most infamous torturer of Elizabethan England.[1] The son of Robert Topcliffe of Somerby, Lincolnshire, and Margaret, daughter of Thomas, Third Baron Burgh, he came from an aristocratic family and bore a coat of arms.[2] Topcliffe spent his career in search of Catholic priests and of evidence that could be used against them at trial. His reputation for malevolence emerges from even the most casual reading of the sources. He is alleged to have been a rapist and is reported to have

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[1] I give dates in New Style, expand abbreviations and supply conjectural emendations using square brackets, and omit the abbreviation "sig." in signature references. Unless otherwise noted, all translations are my own.

[2] J. A. Morris, 2.

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groped Queen Elizabeth (r. 1558–1603) herself.[3] His victims loathed him. The intelligencer Richard Verstegan (ca. 1550–1640) reported that Topcliffe was permitted to set up a torture chamber in his own home.[4] The Jesuit John Gerard (1564–1637) said that "he was old and hoary and a veteran in evil."[5] A sample of invective drawn from succeeding generations of historians reveals the consistently negative tenor of nearly all scholarship on this figure. John Hungerford Pollen called him "notorious as a coarse braggart, lewd as well as mendacious."[6] Augustus Jessopp termed him "the most unmitigated scoundrel I have ever had to do with in ancient or modern times" and promised "an article upon him and his misdeeds when some learned Doctor of Philosophy shall undertake to edit a Biographical Dictionary of Rogues and Murderers."[7] To J. Charles Cox, Topcliffe possessed "as mean a disposition and as bloodthirsty a vindictiveness as the byepaths of history have ever brought to light."[8] These treatments reveal the bias that typically characterizes the study of early modern Catholicism down to the middle of the twentieth century. The secularization of the academic study of this field has nevertheless produced but a modest harvest of new work on this figure.[9]

Topcliffe's surviving handwritten marginalia, and his discussion of his own reading within his voluminous correspondence, however, offer one of the richest archives anywhere of sixteenth-century anti-Catholic violence and aggression.[10] Richard Topcliffe was in fact a professional reader of the most serious kind, and it is under this category that all of his work, including his activities as a torturer, must be understood.[11] William H. Sherman used Topcliffe's reading to frame his important monograph *Used Books: Marking Readers in Renaissance England*.[12] Sherman describes the Huntington Library's copy of William

[3] The allegation dates from 1592 and is found within "A copy of certain notes written by M[r] Pormort Priest and Martir, of certaine speeches used by Top[clif] unto him," reprinted in Pollen, 209–11. The brackets are present in the original.

[4] "Because the often exercise of the rack in the Tower was so odious, and so much spoken of of the people, Topclif hath authority to torment priests in his own house, in such sort as he shall think good": Pollen, 212. On Verstegan, see Arblaster.

[5] Caraman, 68.

[6] Pollen, 209.

[7] Jessopp, 1877.

[8] Cox, 332.

[9] The best accounts are J. A. Morris; Brownlow, 2003. Topcliffe is of secondary interest in Teramura; Yates. On the secularization of the study of Catholicism, see Shagan.

[10] Previous studies of Topcliffe's marginalia are Rowse; Sherman.

[11] J. A. Morris, 4, 12, describes Topcliffe as "a Renaissance figure" who "took every scrap of news, weighed it and sorted it carefully, then proceeded to use it."

[12] Sherman, xvii–xx.

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Allen's *True, sincere, and modest defense of English Catholics* (1584), which Topcliffe annotated, as "an emblem for the signs of life (and death) in the margins."[13] In building upon Sherman's work, this essay presents new evidence of Topcliffe's reading, drawn from surviving Catholic books and manuscripts that preserve his marginalia. The ensuing investigation describes the part played by Topcliffe's forensic and prosecutorial reading in the bureaucratic and persecutory machine of the Elizabethan regime. The argument builds upon recent scholarship on the Catholic publishing underground by Nancy Pollard Brown, Earle Havens, and Elizabeth Patton, among others,[14] but branches in a new direction by examining the fate of surreptitious Catholic books after their confiscation by Topcliffe and his allies.

Topcliffe's reading habits are comparable to those of the Cambridge academic Gabriel Harvey (1553–1631), and of other Elizabethan professional readers.[15] In the words of Lisa Jardine and Anthony Grafton, the professional reader's approach to the book was "intended to *give rise to something else*."[16] Such reading "was always goal-oriented," they argue, "an active, rather than a passive pursuit. It was conducted under conditions of strenuous attentiveness; it employed job-related equipment (both machinery and techniques) . . . [and it] was a public performance, rather than a private meditation, in its aims and character."[17] Jardine and Grafton's analysis of the Elizabethan professional reader helps explain Topcliffe's extraordinary marginalia. As a pursuivant and torturer, Topcliffe raided the lodgings of his victims, confiscated the books he found there, annotated select passages in his very distinctive hand and signature, and passed them to members of the regime who were in a position to deploy the coercive power of the state against Topcliffe's victims.[18] Topcliffe's part in efforts to suppress Catholics played out in multiple locations, from the raids and confiscations to the sites of execution, and he read and wrote at every stage in this circuit. Given his interest in suppressing treason, his confiscations tended to be printed polemics and incriminating manuscripts of various kinds, rather than devotional works. Topcliffe's marginalia were used to generate formal indictments, which were drawn up by government agents in order to accuse

[13] Sherman, xvii.

[14] See, e.g., Brown; Havens and Patton; Bela, Calma, and Rzegocka.

[15] On Harvey's reading, see www.archaeologyofreading.org.

[16] Jardine and Grafton, 30 (italics in original). See also Jardine and Sherman.

[17] Jardine and Grafton, 30–31.

[18] On the government's confiscation of Catholic books, see Walsham, 2000, 84–88. Governmental raids of Catholic premises and seizure of Catholic books were not uncommon: see Havens and Patton, 184; Havens, 225, 231–33, 237–43, 248–51, 255–56.

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Catholics of disloyalty. These indictments reveal the utility of Topcliffe's reading, and the direct use to which it was put by the regime.

Historians of the book and of reading during the Renaissance are interested in how authoritarian regimes read books that they viewed as dangerous. In his influential "communications circuit" model of book history, Robert Darnton describes "political and legal sanctions" as factors in a book's reception.[19] In their reply to Darnton, Thomas R. Adams and Nicolas Barker argue that "absolute rulers aimed at absolute control of publications," and "the character and effectiveness of a publication must, at any particular time or place, be judged in relation to the nature and effectiveness of official control."[20] They also acknowledge that "the problem of penetrating a reader's mind—to say nothing of groups of readers—makes [reception] one of the most difficult aspects of the history of the book," while stressing that "understanding reception is most important if we are to evaluate what impact the book has had."[21] Topcliffe's reading documents an important, and not well understood, phase in the reception of contemporary Catholic propaganda. The underground circulation of Elizabethan Catholic books can, in fact, be reconstructed from the regime's point of view by taking Topcliffe's reading as a point of departure.

Richard Topcliffe was a bookman linked to the core centers of Elizabethan state power—its lawyers and prosecutors, and members of the Privy Council. Scholars are beginning to understand the kinship and material networks that linked Catholic gentry and other lay recusants to the suppliers and smugglers of prohibited books.[22] These were distributed from locations including prisons, as Catholics assembled libraries of works produced by Elizabethan missionary priests and post-Tridentine Continental authors.[23] The use of books by Topcliffe and his correspondents differed from established Catholic distribution networks in purpose, but not in kind; through Topcliffe, Catholic books continued to circulate, but now they communicated to new audiences within the government.[24] Evidence of Topcliffe's reading has long been hidden in plain sight, as it were, within the pages of books that passed through his hands. The findings presented here have yet to see the light of day because, (1) biased historiography clouded earlier scholarly judgment concerning the evidence of

[19] Darnton, 67–69.

[20] Adams and Barker, 24.

[21] Adams and Barker, 27.

[22] Havens and Patton; Havens.

[23] Black, library lists 212–28, which document books inventoried from Catholic prison libraries during the 1580s, and library nos. 242–52, which contain documentation of books confiscated in raids of Catholic houses in 1584–86.

[24] Adams and Barker, 25. On the similarity of recusant and government surveillance networks in Elizabethan England, see Yates, 64, 71.

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Topcliffe's reading, and (2) Topcliffe usually did not hold the books that he read and annotated, but instead passed them to a variety of individuals, and this has resulted in the dispersal of available evidence into widely separated modern archival collections.

Richard Topcliffe was equally adept in using both rack and pen, and he performed his reading not just in the study, but also in the torture chamber, courtroom, and at the gallows. Topcliffe's reading literally legitimated state-authorized violence. Attending to Topcliffe's activities as a bookman at once expands understanding of the Elizabethan Catholic book world and the disturbing connection between racking and reading, between the absorption of ideas and their use by an oppressive regime determined to eliminate its enemies.

"A FALSE SEDICCOOS & IMODEST OFFENCE"

Following Elizabeth's accession to the throne, in 1558, she parted company from her half-sister, Mary Tudor (1516–58), by returning England to the Protestant faith. Catholic intellectuals set up communities in exile in France and the Low Countries, and a flood of controversial literature soon poured into the country.[25] William Allen (1532–94) established a seminary in Douai in 1568 to train priests for the English mission. In 1569, the Northern Rebellion rose against Elizabeth's rule, and in 1570, Pope Pius V (r. 1566–72) excommunicated the queen and absolved subjects of their loyalty to her. A royal proclamation on 28 September 1573 banned the ownership of Catholic books.[26] The problem of unwanted books and priests remained acute: the 1581 statute "Against sedicious Wordes and Rumors" coincided with the queen's proclamation, on January 10 of that year, calling for the arrest of Jesuits.[27]

During the late 1570s and the Jesuit mission (1580–81), Catholic books were printed secretly within England.[28] Following the execution of the Jesuit Edmund Campion (1540–81), on 1 December 1581, his associate Robert Persons (1546–1610) returned to the Continent and set up a press in Rouen that published works of Catholic devotion, and some polemics, intended for the English market.[29] Meanwhile, in a royal proclamation dated 1 April 1582, the queen labeled priests traitors, and the 1585 statute "Againste Jesuites, Semynarie Priestes and such other like disobedient Persons" assigned the

[25] Veech, 50–112; K. Gibbons; Milward, 1–25, 39–77.
[26] Hughes and Larkin, 2:376–79.
[27] Hughes and Larkin, 2:481–84; *Statutes of the Realm*, 4:1.659–61 (23 Eliz. I, c. 2).
[28] Southern, 349–59.
[29] Havens and Patton, 172–74; Havens, 221–22.

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death penalty to those who harbored Catholic clergy.[30] Following the Babington Plot against Elizabeth's life, in 1586, the regime executed Elizabeth's heir presumptive, Mary, the Catholic Queen of Scots (1542–87), and in 1588 the Crown declared martial law against any found in possession of Catholic books.[31] By the time of Elizabeth's death, in 1603, the regime had imprisoned at least 285 Catholics, and executed about 116 of them.[32]

The Topcliffe figure, a bookman who presides over scenes of torture, reveals the close connection between writing and judicial violence in the eyes of the Elizabethan regime. Giovanni Battista Cavalieri's *Ecclesiae Anglicanae Trophaea* (The victories of the Church of England, 1584) supplies an etching of the racking of the Catholic martyrs Campion, Ralph Sherwin (1550–81), and Alexander Briant (1556–81) (fig. 1).[33] Beside victims who are "tortured by the method depicted here until they suffer complete numbness of their limbs,"[34] a reader sits at the center of a table surrounded by other officials, but also by pens and books, material evidence of criminal activity. Topcliffe was just such a man. It is important to remember that although Catholic books might stoke controversy, owning them did not itself constitute treason. Topcliffe envisioned his marginalia as demonstrating precisely how the books he seized actually proved treason or established felonious behavior in terms of Elizabethan statute law. The act "whereby certayne Offences bee made Treason" (1571) forbade anyone "malitiously advisedly and expressly [to] utter or declare by any Pryntinge Wrytinge Cyphryng Speache Wordes or Sayinges" that Elizabeth ought to be harmed, that any person ought to succeed her, or that a foreign power ought to invade England; such statements "shalbe taken deemed & declared . . . to be High Treason."[35] The statute "Against sedicious Wordes and Rumors" (1581) declared as a felon anyone who, "with a maliciouse intente" against the queen, chose to "devyse and wrighte printe or setforthe, any manner of Booke Ryme Ballade Letter or Writing, conteyning any false sedicious and slanderous Matter," or anyone who would "procure or cause any suche" document "to be written printed published or set forth."[36] It assigned the penalty of "paynes of Deathe and Forfeyture as in case of Felonye ys used."[37]

[30] Hughes and Larkin, 2:488–91; *Statutes of the Realm*, 4:1.706–08 (27 Eliz. I, c. 2).
[31] Hughes and Larkin, 3:13–17.
[32] Walsham and Havens, 136.
[33] Milward, 73 (no. 265). On Cavalieri's work, see Dillon, 175–231.
[34] The translation of the Latin caption is in Dillon, 227.
[35] *Statutes of the Realm*, 4:1.526 (13 Eliz. I, c. 1).
[36] *Statutes of the Realm*, 4:1.659 (23 Eliz. I, c. 2).
[37] *Statutes of the Realm*, 4:1.659 (23 Eliz. I, c. 2).

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Figure 1. The racking of Campion, Sherwin, and Briant, from Giovanni Battista Cavalieri, *Ecclesiae Anglicanae Trophaea* (Rome, 1584), fol. 31[r]. Folger Shakespeare Library, BR 1607 C7 1584 Cage. Used by permission of the Folger Shakespeare Library under a Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike 4.0 International License.

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In accordance with this language, Topcliffe intended his marginalia to demonstrate that a given book or document sought the regime's overthrow, that it did so "malitiously" or "advisedly," or "with a maliciouse intente," or, perhaps especially, that the book or manuscript in question contained "false sedicious and slanderous Matter." Use of terms like *seditious*, *slanderous*, and *malicious* is formulaic within Elizabethan polemical literature, but in these cases, events gave an edge to Topcliffe's glossing. These statutes were not anti-Catholic in nature per se, but the papal excommunication of Elizabeth occasioned the 1571 act mentioned above, as well as a second statute that criminalized the distribution of papal bulls.[38] Likewise, the statute against seditious words (1581) followed hard upon the arrival of Persons and Campion and the onset of the Jesuit mission. At issue in both cases was the pope's status as a foreign prince and his perceived power to depose the queen, and it was on this point that William Cecil, Lord Burghley (1521–98), composed his *Execution of justice in England* (1583), in order to justify the regime's treatment of priests as traitors. This work was translated and printed for an international audience in simultaneous Latin, Italian, Dutch, and French editions.[39] Topcliffe's marginalia accordingly follow the wording of these statutes fairly closely. He is unlikely to have possessed familiarity with the intricacies of statutory language, but he did briefly attend Gray's Inn, one of the Inns of Court,[40] and he would have shared with his correspondents the knowledge of how evidence operated within any prosecution at law.

Topcliffe acquired Catholic books and marked them up so that they might be repurposed to legitimize violent action taken by the regime. The surviving marginalia themselves reveal the existence of these aims, and the nature of the network through which these annotated works passed. The Ushaw College copy of Allen's *True defense* (fig. 2) tells on its title page what Topcliffe did with his books: "Lent for y^{e} service of God, Qveene Elizabethe, & Eng[land] | x^{iiii} Ivnij: 1599 / By mee | Ric: Topclyf[fe]," he says. Topcliffe facilitated the movement of the book, and his mention of "y^{e} service of God" points to the connection between reading and violence, the very "service" that he has in mind. On the title pages of four of the five copies of Allen's *True defense* known to me that contain Topcliffe's marginalia, Topcliffe wrote, "To bee redd & vsed for Q. Elizabethes service & not otherwise," or a variation of

[38] *Statutes of the Realm*, 4:1.528–31 (13 Eliz. I, c. 2).

[39] *A Short-Title Catalogue of Books Printed in England, Scotland, and Ireland, and of English Books Printed Abroad, 1475–1640* (hereafter, *STC*), 4902, 4904, 4905, 4906, and 4907.

[40] Richardson.

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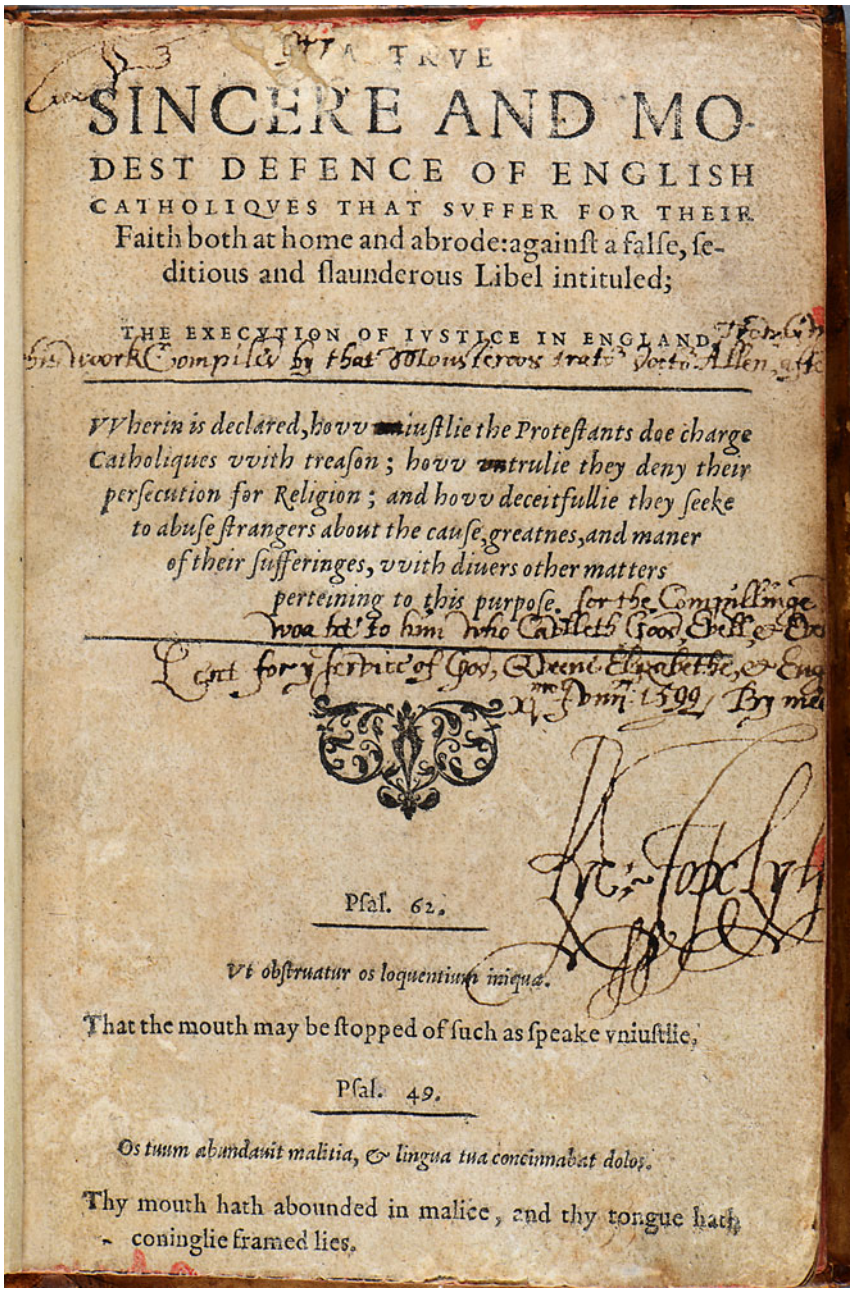
A TRVE
SINCERE AND MO-
DEST DEFENCE OF ENGLISH
CATHOLIQVES THAT SVFFER FOR THEIR
Faith both at home and abrode: againſt a falſe, ſe-
ditious and ſlaunderous Libel intituled;
THE EXECVTION OF IVSTICE IN ENGLAND
VVherin is declared, howv iniuſtlie the Proteſtants doe charge
Catholiques vvith treaſon; howv untrulie they deny their
perſecution for Religion; and howv deceitfullie they ſeeke
to abuſe ſtrangers about the cauſe, greatnes, and maner
of their ſufferinges, vvith diuers other matters
perteining to this purpoſe.
Pſal. 62.
Vt obſtruatur os loquentium iniqua.
That the mouth may be ſtopped of ſuch as ſpeake vniuſtlie,
Pſal. 49.
Os tuum abundauit malitia, & lingua tua concinnabat dolos.
Thy mouth hath abounded in malice, and thy tongue hath
coninglie framed lies.

Figure 2. William Allen, *A true, sincere, and modest defense of English Catholiques* (1584), title page. Ushaw College, Durham, XVIII.G.7.25. Used by permission of Durham University Library and the Ushaw College Trustees.

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that statement.[41] Rejection of other uses ("not otherwise") implies that Topcliffe's delivery of Catholic books might serve to spread their ideas in a more positive way, a possibility that he definitely wishes to close down. The Cambridge University Library copy of the *True defense* contains a further note on its title page, in another hand, which reads, "M^{r} Toplifs gifte/."[42] This need not mean that Topcliffe himself gave the book, but it does suggest someone's belief that Topcliffe had facilitated the transfer of ownership. Topcliffe's reading is not entirely atypical; members of the government pored over Puritan books with similar violent intent, as debates at the trial of the controversialist John Penry (1563–93) over the use of extracts taken from his seized papers make clear.[43]

Topcliffe retained some of his annotated books. His second edition of Girolamo Pollini's Italian adaptation of Nicholas Sander's hostile history of the English Reformation, *L'historia ecclesiastica della rivolvzion d'Inghilterra* (The ecclesiastical history of the rebellion of England, 1594), was owned by the historian A. L. Rowse (1903–97) and now resides at the University of Exeter.[44] Sander (ca. 1530–81) was one of the most prominent opponents of Elizabeth's reign among all of the Catholic exiles; his *De Origine ac Progressu Schismatis Anglicani* (On the origin and progress of the English schism, 1585) is the basis of Pollini's adaptation and appeared posthumously after Sander participated in the Desmond Rebellion (1579–83) against English rule in Ireland.[45] One of Topcliffe's glosses in the Exeter Pollini mentions his confiscated copy of Gregory Martin's *Treatise of schisme* (1578) by name, and confirms that it remained in his possession after 1594: "whiche Englishe Coppy I have Extant to y^{er} Shaymes," he says.[46] His correspondence frequently discusses the books he's located. His short letter to Sir Robert Cecil (1563–1612), dated 10 June 1596, reveals the movement of books: "It may please yo^{r} hono^{r} to remember the wrytten halffe booke in paiper that I did lett yo^{w} have to pervse," Topcliffe says, "for I shall stande nede to have it very

[41] Allen, 1584d, title page. The other copies read, "To be redd & vsed for the service of Q Elizabethe" (Allen, 1584e); "To bee redd & vsed for y^{e} Service of God, & Q Elizabethe, & the peace of Englande, & for No othe^{r} pvrpose, Or Cavse" (Allen, 1584f); "To be redd & vsed for the service of God Q. Elz & the peace of England & for No othe^{r} cavse or purpose" (Allen, 1584a).

[42] Allen, 1584a, title page.

[43] Cross.

[44] Sander, 1594; Allison and Rogers, 1:992. This work was not at Exeter when it was described by Rowse, and its whereabouts were unknown to Sherman, xviii. Its mention by Neale, 153, predates its arrival at Exeter. On Pollini, see Wyatt, 128–30.

[45] On Sander and the popularity of his work, see Highley.

[46] Sander, 1594, 575.

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shortlye // And yow shall pervse the resedew as sowne As I have it from y^{e} Lo Cheeff iustyce of England."[47] He sometimes sent books with couriers. Along with the bearer of a 6 January 1593 letter to Sir John Puckering (1544–96), lord keeper of the great seal, Topcliffe sent "the vile trateroos booke I did tell yo^{r} Lo: of, at yo^{r} Last beinge at Coorte, w^{ch} is vnbownde, for the more speedy cu[m]minge to yo^{r} Lo: hande[s]."[48] Delivery of this "vile" and "trateroos" work is meant to impugn its contents under the terms of statute law, and thereby lead to violent prosecution. Topcliffe's surviving correspondence allows the movement of books to be tracked in this manner.

Topcliffe's is a flowing secretary script characterized by long descenders and flourishes, and an occasionally idiosyncratic spelling: he frequently employs a double *o* where one might expect *ou*, for example, as in his *tratoroos* and its adverbial form, *tratoroosly*e.[49] These features enable the reasonable identification of his distinctive hand without a great deal of difficulty. Topcliffe nearly always adds his prominent italic signature at least once on every document he annotates, often beside his marginalia.[50] He also punctuates his correspondence and marginal glosses with a characteristic manicule, or pointing hand, and sometimes a hand-drawn gallows. Because early modern readers personalized their manicules, they can at times be used to identify specific readers, and Topcliffe used his as a nota bene mark, as William Sherman recognized.[51] Script, manicule, and spelling together can identify Topcliffe's hand, even when Topcliffe's name is not present.

The five annotated copies of Allen's 1584 *True defense* form part of a cache seized by Topcliffe. Allen's work defends Catholic missionary priests against Cecil's *Execution of justice in England*.[52] The *True defense* is among those books printed by Persons from his Rouen press on the Continent and smuggled into England, and for this reason the regime associated it and other books like it with the activity of the missionary priests.[53] Smugglers and distributers disseminated copies of the work throughout the country. A copy of this book was confiscated in 1585 from Edmund Reynolds, MA (1538–1630), brother to the controversialists William (1544?–94) and John Reynolds (1549–1607).[54]

[47] Hatfield House, Cecil Papers (hereafter, HH, Cecil Papers), 51/107.

[48] The National Archives (hereafter, TNA), State Papers (hereafter, SP) 12/244, fol. 5^{r}.

[49] Philip Caraman calls Topcliffe's spelling "abominable," and Augustus Jessopp points to "the wretch Topcliffe's peculiar style of composition and more peculiar spelling." Caraman, 278; Jessopp, 1879, 145.

[50] Preston and Yeandle, 52–55.

[51] Sherman, xvii, xix, 25–52.

[52] For an account of Cecil's and Allen's books, see Kingdon.

[53] Allison and Rogers, 2:14. On Catholic book smuggling, see Walsham and Havens, 132.

[54] Black, library list 250.1.

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The same year, the Oxford recusant John Barber (fl. 1586) confessed that he "received a trunk with certain books therein directed unto him by a superscription, as he thinks from Mr. Alfield, to be conveyed to Gloucester, and that he opened the same trunk, and saw therein one book against the execution [i.e., the *True defense*]."[55] At least one copy circulated at the royal court, if a contemporary gloss in the copy now preserved at Emmanuel College, University of Cambridge, is to be believed.[56] In his search for copies of Allen's book, Topcliffe represented the queen's power and person; a warrant survives in the British Library, similar to the one he must have possessed, which authorizes the bearers to enter "all such howses as they shall thincke mete" and "to sease all manner of letters, writinges, papers, bookes, and all other thinges Carryinge Note of suspicion."[57] Forceful seizure of books and documents invariably served as Topcliffe's prelude to vituperative annotating and violent execution.

This cache of Allen's book may have come from Thomas Alfield (1552–85), a seminary priest and book distributor, who distributed between "ffyve or six hundredth" copies of Allen's *True defense* from All Saints parish, Bread Street, in September 1584.[58] Topcliffe had seized copies of Alfield's *True reporte of the death and martyrdome of M. Campion* (1582), which Richard Verstegan had secretly printed.[59] A document in Topcliffe's hand preserved among the State Papers, and titled "M^{r} Toplyfs note of certain seminary priests," records two separate raids in which Topcliffe obtained six and forty copies of the *True reporte*, taken, respectively, from the seminary priest Edward Osborne (1555–1600) and from Edward Cooke (fl. 1582), who is described as "Servant to proctor Smythe in p^{r}noster Row."[60] Osborne's six copies are said to be "the Tratorus books of Campyans, Sherwyn and Bryans m^{r}terdom as they terme it" (i.e., Alfield's *True reporte*), and in Cooke's desk, Topcliffe "founde xl^{ty} of the said

[55] TNA, SP 12/178, fol. 83^{r}, quoted in Havens, 231–32. See also Walsham and Havens, 148; Black, library list 243. A John Barber is cited in the Recusant Rolls for 1593–94 for Oxfordshire, as the husband of Ann Barbor, a convicted recusant. Havens, 232.

[56] A secretary hand has written, "This booke was brought vnto me as officer beinge founde in y^{e} court scattered out of a dowblett of S^{r} foxes caried by Bell ye elder to y^{e} Taylors": in Allen, 1584b, O8^{v}.

[57] Brownlow, 2003, 166–67. British Library (hereafter, BL), Harley MS 6998, fol. 46^{r}, transcribed by Brownlow, 2003, 173–74.

[58] Pollen, 118; see also *The life and end of Thomas Awfeeld*, A4^{v}; Walsham, 2000, 86; Havens, 220.

[59] Allison and Rogers, 2:4; Southern, 358–59.

[60] TNA, SP 12/152, fol. 97^{r}, printed in Pollen, 26–27. See Questier, 188–89; BL, Lansdowne MS 35/26 (printed in Pollen, 27–30), on this sequestration.

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Tratorus books to publyshe," according to the report.[61] Alfield's arraignment is dated 5 July 1585.[62] His imprisonment coincided with that of the priest William Wiggs (fl. 1577–85), who was charged with the "dispersing of slanderous books against the execution of justice," and who is mentioned as a book distributor in a surviving inventory of more than six hundred Catholic titles that were disseminated from London's Marshalsea and Newgate prisons.[63]

Topcliffe must have marked up his copies of Allen in connection with Alfield's arrest because the language of Alfield's indictment is based upon Topcliffe's marginalia preserved within at least two separate books, one of which is the annotated Huntington Library copy of Allen's *True defense*. This connection between Topcliffe's reading and the Alfield indictment has not to my knowledge previously been identified, and suggests conclusively that Topcliffe either involved himself in drawing up the indictment or enabled someone else to do so. In each of his copies of the work, Topcliffe has modified the title in such a way as to frame the contents as specifically treasonous, and his word choice employs statutory language. The top margin of one of two annotated Bodleian copies, for instance, reads, "A [fal]se sed[iccoos & Imodest o]ffence set ovt by Englishe Trai[tors] sume abroade & sume at home groaninge for the Gallows v[nder] cullo^{r} & shadow of:."[64] This phrase, when placed immediately before the printed title, revises the whole to describe the book as written by traitors who wish to deceive readers into believing that it offers a true defense. Modifications of this kind were not unusual in the sixteenth century,[65] but a second Bodleian copy reveals nearly identical revisions to its title page. This copy's unique use of *gall vs* in the title page gloss implies the "maliciouse intente" Topcliffe needed to establish.[66]

The better-preserved title page alteration of the Huntington copy allows for conjectural reconstruction of the similar inscription preserved in fragmentary form on the other four copies.[67] On the basis of this evidence, the title page of the copy now at Ushaw College was probably similarly marked, even though every word of Topcliffe's gloss, save "of," has now been cropped away; this copy also preserves Topcliffe's characteristic signature and manicule (fig. 2).[68]

[61] Pollen, 27. Whether Topcliffe annotated any of these, and their current whereabouts (if indeed they still survive), is unknown to me.

[62] Pollen, 117.

[63] Havens and Patton, 175–76. The inventory is BL, Lansdowne MS 33, fol. 152$^{r–v}$.

[64] Allen, 1584d, title page.

[65] Walsham, 2010, discusses such appropriation.

[66] Allen, 1584e, title page. The gloss is partly worn away, but "Trators sume abroade, & sume at home . . . gall vs, vnder shadowe of" can be discerned.

[67] Allen, 1584f, title page. The image is reproduced in Sherman, xviii.

[68] Allen, 1584c, title page. This copy is discussed in Underwood.

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Replacement of the word *immodest* with *slanderous* in the gloss on the title page of the Cambridge University Library copy is apropos because "false sedicious and slanderous Matter" constituted felonious evidence, whereas immodest material did not.[69] Topcliffe's unusual choice to annotate at least five copies of Allen's book points toward his obsessive anti-Catholic aggression and might indicate his decision to supply copies to multiple individuals directly rather than circulate a memorandum explaining his findings. None of these copies contain Topcliffe's marginalia beyond the title page, save the Huntington copy, which is annotated in hostile fashion throughout. Topcliffe must have selected the Huntington copy from among the cache to read in full, and then marked up the other title pages in a programmatic way before sending forward the entire group.

The copy of the indictment against Alfield, preserved among the Lansdowne manuscripts in the British Library, assembles a series of quotations from Allen's *True defense* that Topcliffe has specifically flagged in his glosses in the Huntington copy.[70] In this very direct way, Topcliffe's reading facilitated Alfield's death. Beside a passage in which Allen discusses the danger of heretical princes, Topcliffe has written into this copy, "heryzye for the[m] y^{e} deathe of Christ is not suficie[n]t for o^{r} salvacion."[71] The corresponding paragraph in Allen is quoted in the indictment, which there reads, "By the fall of the kinge from the fayth the daunger is so evident and inevitable that God had not sufficiently p[ro]vided for our salvac[i]on and the p[re]servac[i]on of his Churche and holy lawes yf there were no waye to depriue or restraine Apostate Princes."[72] The indictment also tracks Allen's description of Queen Elizabeth's father, Henry VIII (r. 1509–47), by inserting a passage flagged by Topcliffe in the Huntington copy: "This our Countries scourge," the indictment reads, "p[ro]ceedinge wholye of o^{r} notorious forsaking the Catholike Churche and sea Apostolique, began first in King Henrie the eight beinge Radex peccati of o^{r} dayes."[73] This corresponds directly to Allen's language and appears in the annotated Huntington copy opposite Topcliffe's manicule and gloss, which reads, "Radix peccati" ("root of sin").[74]

[69] Allen, 1584a, title page: "A [false Sedicioos] & slandroos [offence, set ovt by] [English] Trators summe abroade & summe at home Groaning for t[he] Gallows vndr cullo^{r} of."

[70] "Howfielde Enditem^{t}," BL, Lansdowne MS 33, fols. 130^{r}–139^{v}, reprinted in Pollen, 112–17; *A Catalogue of the Lansdowne Manuscripts*, 1:66.

[71] Allen, 1584f, 114.

[72] BL, Lansdowne MS 33, fol. 133^{r}; cf. Allen, 1584f, 114.

[73] BL, Lansdowne MS 33, fol. 138^{r}; cf. Allen, 1584f, 188.

[74] Allen, 1584f, 188.

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The Alfield indictment includes discussion of papal policy as pertains to Ireland, and in particular mentions that "the sea Apostolique hath an old clayme to the Sou[ver]aigntye of that Countrie."[75] Topcliffe had in his possession a manuscript of Edmund Campion's *Histories of Ireland* (1571).[76] In his Pollini Sander, Topcliffe wrote concerning these *Histories*, "I have this history writte[n] wth his ovne hande (as it is Saide)" beside its account of Campion's execution. Elsewhere in the same volume, in a gloss concerning Persons and Campion, Topcliffe says that Campion, "a Malecontent," "went Into Irlande & hee did write A history of y^{e} disruipsio[n] of Irland (whe^{r}in hee Seemed a protestant)."[77] Although this autograph Campion manuscript has not come to light, mention of Ireland in the indictment reveals the attempt to link Alfield to the recent rebellion in Ireland and to Nicholas Sander, in order to discredit Alfield; authorities had made a similar attempt in the case of Campion.[78]

Topcliffe's reading also facilitated the government prosecution of William Carter (ca. 1549–84), the printer who was responsible for Gregory Martin's *Treatise of schisme*.[79] As its subtitle indicates, this *Treatise* was written to demonstrate why *al Catholikes ought in any wise to abstaine altogether from heretical conuenticles* (that is, English church services), and joins other works in that subgenre, including Persons's *A brief discours contayning certayne reasons why Catholiques refuse to goe to church* (1580).[80] Martin cites the biblical story of Holofernes slain by Judith, "whose godlye and constant wisedome," he says, "if our Catholike gentlewomen woulde folowe, they might destroye Holofernes, the master heretike."[81] Topcliffe's copy of the Pollini Sander contains a marginal gloss in which Topcliffe links Carter to Martin: "Thys W^{m}

[75] BL, Lansdowne MS 33, fol. 137^{r}.

[76] Campion, 1963.

[77] Sander, 1594, Kk4^{v}, Mm7^{r}.

[78] Kilroy, 307. Kilroy's account (126–30, 179–85) of Sander's involvement in the Irish rebellion is critical of Sander; see also Veech, 259–92. Two non-autograph manuscripts of Campion's *Histories* (Bodleian Library, University of Oxford, MS Jones 6; Dublin, Farmleigh MS IV.E.6) do not contain Topcliffe marginalia. The indictment may be quoting Richard Stanyhurst's *De Rebus in Hibernia Gestis* (1584). I owe this information to Gerard Kilroy.

[79] *STC* 17508; Allison and Rogers, 2:524. Other copies were confiscated from the landowner William Shelley (1582); an otherwise unknown "Master Travers," whose copy was seized in Winchester goal (1583); Lady Isabel Hampden of Buckinghamshire (1584); and the conspirator Anthony Babington (1586), whose copy was in manuscript. Black, library lists 220.2, 227.1, 242.32, and 248.11. See also Havens, 243.

[80] *STC* 19394; Allison and Rogers, 2:613. Walsham, 1993, 24–25.

[81] Martin, D2^{r}.

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Carte[r] I did discove[r] & Apprehende," Topcliffe says; "Hee [be]cam skillfvll in y[e] arte of printing, & was Learned in y[e] Tvnges: hee did printe many tratoroos Books As The Treatise of Scisme w[ch] was co[m]piled By Gregory Martyne, vnto whiche Gregory Martyn did Svbscribe his hande, & Nayme . . . whiche Englishe Coppy I have Extant to y[er] Shaymes."[82] A further gloss in Topcliffe's Pollini Sander claims that Topcliffe had also found a manuscript copy of Martin's work on Carter's premises: "This Booke cawlled the treatice of Scism[e] I did finde in W[m] Carte[rs] Chamber & the write[n] Coppy [i.e., a manuscript] Sent from Roome vnder y[e] hand of doct[r] Allen & Gregory Martyn who Compylled y[t] Booke most trato[r]rooslye."[83] Referred to under the category of "writing" in the treason statutes, manuscripts proved particularly valuable to Topcliffe because of their admissibility as written testimony if taken into evidence at trial. The printed copy of the *Treatise* now in the Bodleian Library contains yet another note in Topcliffe's hand, in which he records its discovery, along with the manuscript, "at W[m] Cartirs in his hovse at the Towe[r] hill w[th] the Origenall Coppy sent from Rhemes."[84]

Carter was convicted of treason on 10 January 1584, and a summary of the trial was printed as part of the enlarged second edition of the compilation *Concertatio Ecclesiae Catholicae in Anglia* (The strife of the Catholic Church in England, 1588).[85] According to this account, Carter was charged with conspiring to assassinate Elizabeth. Topcliffe's marginalia helped the regime link Martin's work to the 1571 statute law against royal assassination. This book is said to have encouraged Catholic Englishwomen to destroy their heretical leader, Elizabeth, who is described as a latter-day Holofernes, the Babylonian general slain in the deuterocanonical Old Testament book of Judith.[86] The interpretation given at the trial begins with Topcliffe's own gloss beside the relevant passage, where he says, "A Tratorus meaning of y[e] Aucto[r] et prynte[r], to o[r] gentilwome[n] catholicke, to becum like Ivdeth to destr[oy] Hol: to amayse etc."[87] Working from this very allegation of Topcliffe's, the prosecuting lawyer, Thomas Norton (ca. 1530–84), alleged that Martin's book encouraged "subordinates of the Queen's Majesty" to "refuse to be subservient . . . [to] bring about

[82] Sander, 1594, Nn8[r].

[83] Sander, 1594, Tt6[r].

[84] This note appears on a blank sheet inserted into Martin in place of its title page. The marginalia are reproduced by Birrell, 32–33. On the date of the raid, see Birrell, 24.

[85] Gibbons and Fenn, fols. 127[r]–133[r]. Allison and Rogers, 1:525. On Carter's trial, see also Kilroy, 361–62.

[86] Gibbons and Fenn, fol. 127[r].

[87] Martin, D2[r]. See also Kilroy, 361–62.

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sedition, and not be frightened to give the Queen to death."[88] In his defense, Carter argued for an alternative reading of the biblical episode: "this sense was," he said, "to designate by the name Holofernis Cacadaemon and wickedness; which kind of Allegory is not infrequent among Theologians."[89] Presiding over the proceedings, Bishop John Aylmer (1521–94) called Carter's interpretation of the passage "nonsense and inept sophisms."[90] Carter was condemned, and executed the following day.

TOPCLIFFE'S WAGES

Topcliffe's means of support reveal the extent to which the regime committed itself to his methods of reading. He did not fund his activities independently, from his own family wealth, as has sometimes been thought.[91] Topcliffe is described as esquire of the queen's body in a suit dating from ca. 1589, and as the queen's servant by the Privy Council as early as 1573.[92] He took pride in his grandfather's service as chamberlain to the queen's mother, Anne Boleyn (ca. 1500–36), and his maternal uncle's marriage to Henry VIII's former wife, Katherine Parr (1512–48).[93] The Elizabethan patent rolls preserve a series of royal orders authorizing reimbursement to Topcliffe for charges incurred in prosecuting Catholics. One such commission, dated 26 February 1593, authorizes Topcliffe and others to seek out foreigners, recusants, and other suspected persons, and to interrogate and imprison them, with reimbursement not to exceed £6 13s. 4d. "for the charge of conduction of each prisoner."[94] Topcliffe is named, along with others, and the same reimbursement authorized, in separate letters patent dated 26 March 1593 and 6 June 1594.[95] A similar commission survives, dated 21 June 1595, which again names Topcliffe and others, and which promises an unspecified "allowance for conduct money."[96] He appears also to have possessed the right of first refusal to his victims'

[88] Gibbons and Fenn, fol. 129^{r}. I owe this and the following two translations to J. Christopher Warner's unpublished translation of this portion of the *Concertatio*.

[89] Gibbons and Fenn, fol. 130^{v}.

[90] Gibbons and Fenn, fol. 131^{v}.

[91] E.g., Brownlow, 2003, 164.

[92] *Acts of the Privy Council*, 8:213. In 1601, Topcliffe wrote to Sir Robert Cecil that he had served Queen Elizabeth for forty-four years. HH, Cecil Papers, 86/88, cited and quoted in Brownlow, 2003, 163, 175n7.

[93] Brownlow, 2003, 163. Cf. relevant marginalia in his copy of the Pollini Sander, discussed in Rowse, 187–88.

[94] *Calendar of Patent Rolls 35 Elizabeth I*, 569.

[95] *Calendar of Patent Rolls 35 Elizabeth I*, 570; *Calendar of Patent Rolls 36 Elizabeth I*, 830.

[96] *Calendar of Patent Rolls 37 Elizabeth I*, 718.

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movable property, which was forfeited in cases of a treason conviction.[97] During the summer of 1583, Agnes Carter, mother to Carter the printer, petitioned Sir Francis Walsingham (ca. 1532–90) that her son's possessions be restored to him following his imprisonment in the Tower of London; the request indicates that Carter's possessions were subject to dispersal by the regime.[98] When Topcliffe and William Fleetwood (ca. 1525–94), the recorder of London, seized the priest Thomas Worthington (1549–1626) and his three nephews near Islington that same year, Topcliffe kept their horses for himself.[99] Topcliffe also entered into a £50 bond with William Cecil.[100]

Topcliffe sought and received more lavish emoluments. Following the 1569 Northern Rebellion he sued for the Yorkshire lands of Richard Norton (d. 1585), the dispossessed head of a leading rebel family, and shortly thereafter he was on Burghley's payroll.[101] In 1594, he facilitated the incarceration of Robert Barnes (fl. 1593–98), a courier and guide of missionary priests, and Jane Wiseman (d. 1610), for maintaining a priest; Barnes was tried in 1598, but both were reprieved.[102] The reason for their release becomes clear in a letter dated 12 July 1598 and written by Wiseman's nephew, the poet Henry Lok (d. ca. 1608), to Sir Robert Cecil.[103] Lok requests control of both his aunt's and Barnes's estates; he values these at £68 and £140, respectively, and informs Cecil that the latter's will dissolves at Barnes's death.[104] Because Topcliffe was competing for the same money, he could ill afford Barnes's execution. This interpretation is strengthened by a second Lok letter, written to Cecil, on July 26, in which he protests that Topcliffe is outmaneuvering Lok. "I humbly craue that I may not be cownterpesed in this sute by sutch a riual's intrusion," he says, "Especially he being one by his place abeler to liue then my self, & hauing obtained 1000^{li} more by his seruis (then I am like) alredy."[105] Lok may exaggerate when he mentions Topcliffe receiving £1,000; nevertheless, his testimony is corroborated by a better-known story of Topcliffe's ongoing effort to

[97] Pollen, 363; J. A. Morris, 19. See also *Statutes of the Realm*, 4:1.527 (13 Eliz. I, c. 1).

[98] TNA, SP 12/206/92, calendared in Lemon, 1865, 450; printed in Pollen, 39. I owe this reference to J. Christopher Warner.

[99] Foley, 2:130. It is worth noting that when the government confiscated the estate of the conspirator Anthony Babington, on 13 September 1586, Queen Elizabeth granted a portion of his possessions to Sir Walter Raleigh. Havens, 248n65.

[100] Lemon, 1856, 467.

[101] Brownlow, 2003, 163; Jessopp, 1877, 271.

[102] On Barnes, see Questier, 204, 244–50.

[103] The events are summarized in Pollen, 362–64. See also Walker.

[104] Henry Lok to Robert Cecil, TNA, SP 12/268/3; printed in Pollen, 370.

[105] Henry Lok to Robert Cecil, TNA, SP 12/268/10; printed in Pollen, 374–75. See also Brownlow, 1993, 21–22.

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ruin Sir Thomas Fitzherbert (1514–91), after his nephew, also named Thomas, promised Topcliffe a £3,000 bond if he would bring about the deaths of his uncle and father. The resulting dispute was considered too sensitive to discuss in open court.[106]

Following this affair, Topcliffe obtained possession of the Fitzherbert estate at Padley, Derbyshire, and was confirmed in possession after the young Thomas sued him for it in Chancery.[107] Topcliffe also pursued a protracted negotiation with the Privy Council over the right to control the livings of two Lincolnshire parishes, presumably because one or both had been promised to him in exchange for his services. On 8 October 1586, the council intervened in a dispute between Topcliffe and Sir Christopher Wray (ca. 1522–92), chief justice of the court of Queen's Bench, concerning "the tythes and proffites belonginge to the Prebend of Coringham and Stowe in the cowntie of Lincolne."[108] Topcliffe had requested the queen herself to arrange for the council to adjudicate this disagreement, a possible indication that Topcliffe's wages were based upon handshake deals.[109] After dragging on for a decade, the variance reached a resolution on 20 June 1596, when the Privy Council awarded the Stowe monies to Topcliffe, in order "that he maie the better followe and travaile in those her Majestie's services and the service of the State wherein her Highenes is pleased and our selves of her Counsell often to imploie him."[110] This is as open an admission of Topcliffe's direct employ, and tacit acknowledgement of payment for services rendered, as one is likely to find.

TOPCLIFFE'S READING NETWORK

Topcliffe's reading propped up a circuit of surveillance, which connected raids and interrogations to the torture chamber and courtroom and thence to the gallows. In a March 1592 dispatch to Persons, Verstegan described the Tyburn execution of a priest called Patteson (d. 1592). This account reveals Topcliffe as a latter-day Pilate, who writes the charge against Patteson, and tacks the document onto the gallows after delivering an oration to the crowd, just as Pilate did for Christ.[111] The biblical irony of Topcliffe's deeds was not lost upon some of his victims: Swythen Welles (d. 1591) of Hampshire, for

[106] Brownlow, 2003, 168–70. See Black, library list 214, for books confiscated from Fitzherbert in the Fleet prison in 1582. Topcliffe's diagram of the Fitzherbert family tree survives in his hand, TNA, SP 12/235/88, and is reproduced with analysis in Yates, 72–74.

[107] Brownlow, 2003, 169–70; J. A. Morris, 3.

[108] *Acts of the Privy Council*, 14:242.

[109] TNA, SP 12/173/1, fols. 124^{r-v}.

[110] *Acts of the Privy Council*, 25:484.

[111] Pollen, 208.

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instance, hanged in Gray's Inn fields, prayed for Topcliffe prior to execution, "desiringe that God would make him of a Saul a Paul."[112] According to a record preserved by the secular priest Thomas Leake (fl. 1595), Topcliffe gave testimony at the trial of the Jesuit Robert Southwell (1561–95), whom he had tortured, to the effect that he had found Southwell in a "corner tredding vpon books," when he had apprehended him at the residence of Richard Bellamy (fl. 1581–92), a recusant who resided at Uxenden Hall in Harrow, outside London.[113] Topcliffe supplied copies of letters and books that he obtained during this raid, in great numbers and in the presence of the judge, "but nothing was red of them," according to Leake, "nor of other papers nor books which he poured out of a bag."[114] For each bag of Catholic books assembled for a judge's desk, Topcliffe provided himself a cartload of books and other paraphernalia taken from victims' homes.[115] Seeking a means to capture Southwell, Topcliffe moved against Anne Bellamy, the daughter to Richard, in January 1592. Topcliffe allegedly raped her and arranged for her marriage to his assistant, Nicholas Jones, if she would reveal to him the location of priest holes—hiding places used to harbor Catholic priests—in her parents' home, which had previously sheltered the conspirator Anthony Babington (1561–86) and his associates.[116] According to a dispatch from Verstegan to Persons, Topcliffe's 25 June 1592 raid brought him not only Southwell, but much else: he "fell to searching of the house," Verstegan says, "fynding there much Massing stuf, papisticall bookes and pictures; all which he caused to be laid in a carte which was redy prvyded, and sent to his loging at Westminster."[117]

Topcliffe's trouble with the Bellamys played out over a number of years. A document among the Harleian manuscripts at the British Library offers a glimpse into the conflict, and sheds light on the contents of Topcliffe's book cart.[118] Written on a single bifolium in a contemporary hand, the document is laid out in two columns, titled "M^{r} Topliffe his exceptions to this petition" and "A trewe aunswere to M^{r} Topliffes exceptions against Richard Bellamy and his wyffe." This preserves Topcliffe's response to a petition by Bellamy and his

[112] The record is from a catalogue of martyrs, 1587–94: Pollen, 292. See also Marotti, 76–77.

[113] "Leake's Relation of the Martyrdom of Father Southwell, after February 1595": Pollen, 333–37 (335).

[114] Pollen, 335.

[115] Walsham and Havens, 153–54, supplies other examples of simultaneous confiscation of books and other property.

[116] Questier, 245. Babington was apprehended at the Bellamy house in 1586, and executed. His confiscated library is cataloged at Black, library list 242.

[117] Petti, 68. See also J. A. Morris, 13–14.

[118] The document is a single bifolium, BL, Harley MS 6998, fols. 23$^{r–v}$; reprinted in J. Morris, 2:53–57.

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wife, Catherine, daughter of William Forster of Cobdock, Suffolk, with the Bellamys' counter-response.[119] Topcliffe laments the "horrible and most traitorous books both printed and written," which he says "were found by me in that house [Uxenden Hall] by multitudes, besides many dispersed; so as their houses were like stationers' shops."[120] In particular, he alleges that "both he and his wife received and harboured Doctor Bristow that writ the 'Motives,' a most traitorous book and slanderous against the Queen's Majesty."[121] Topcliffe refers to Richard Bristow's so-called "Motives," *A briefe treatise of diuerse plaine and sure wayes to finde out the truthe in this . . . time of heresie* (1574).[122] Bristow incorporated articles of faith that had been written by William Allen and were controversial because some of the articles concerned papal obedience. In their reply to Topcliffe, the Bellamys sarcastically quip that "the books which he fo[und] in [the house] were there left by his mother unknown to him."[123]

Among the books that certainly passed through Richard Bellamy's hands is Edmund Campion's *Rationes Decem* (Ten reasons, 1581), which had been printed on Persons's secret press at Stonor Park, near Henley-on-Thames, in Oxfordshire.[124] Some copies were shipped downriver to Southwark, where they were bound by the Catholic bookbinder Rowland Jenks (fl. 1577–81).[125] As Gerard Kilroy has discovered, one copy survives still bound in its original parchment binding, and this parchment preserves a document, dated 1562, that records the conveyance of a lease of land, originally belonging to Sir Thomas Docwra (d. 1527), "Prior of the late hosp[ital] [of St. John]," to the possession of "Rycharde Bellamy," with William and Dorothy Bellamy also mentioned.[126] Richard Bellamy or a member of his household must have been involved in the binding of *Rationes Decem*, since the lease is otherwise unlikely

[119] J. Morris, 2:46.

[120] J. Morris, 2:55.

[121] J. Morris, 2:53.

[122] Bristow; *STC* 3799; Allison and Rogers, 2:67. Anthony Babington owned a copy; BL, Lansdowne MS 42/78 records a list of "Trayterous and popish books intercepted" that includes "Motiues to the catholicke faith, by Richard Bristowe" (cited in Southern, 391); see Black, library list 242.5.

[123] J. Morris, 2:55 (brackets in original).

[124] *STC* 4536.5; Allison and Rogers, 1:135.1. On the work and the response it provoked, see Kilroy, 199–204.

[125] Kilroy, 207.

[126] William is likely the William Bellamy (d. 1566), father to Richard, and Dorothy Richard's sister. J. Morris, 2:49. The Bellamy pedigree is preserved in BL, Harley MS 1551. See Cooper, 286–87; Kilroy, 207–08.

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to have been used for this purpose.[127] Although none of the surviving copies of *Rationes Decem* contain Topcliffe's marginalia, Topcliffe does say, in a gloss preserved within his copy of the Pollini Sander, the he "can proove father Robert parsons to bee a trato^{r} vnde^{r} & by his ovne hande Extant," and of Campion, "hee did Envey y^{e} fortvne of othe^{res} So mvtche That despiracio fecit Ihezewitam."[128] Again, in both the petition and this gloss, Topcliffe reveals his awareness of the value of manuscripts to establish treasonable intent. Both Campion and Persons were frequent users of the Bellamys' "wel furnishd Librarie" at Harrow, and at his trial, Campion was specifically pressed to refute Bristow's "Motives."[129]

This was the book world at Uxenden Hall into which Topcliffe inserted himself. In their reply to "M^{r} Topliffe his exceptions," the Bellamys do not deny the use of their house to facilitate the movement of Catholic propaganda. The Ushaw copy of *The apologie of Fridericus Staphylus* (1565) has been signed in an italic hand by "Rob[er]te Belamy" on the verso of the final leaf, along with the initials "RB" and "WB". It may have been the property of Richard Bellamy's brother Robert, who was himself committed to Newgate in 1585 by Topcliffe's associate Richard Young, a JP for Middlesex, and was subsequently convicted for the hearing of Mass; by April 1593 Robert Bellamy was in the Marshalsea, where he was said to be fifty-two years of age.[130] Staphylus (1512–64) was a German theologian and convert to Catholicism.[131] Two actual Topcliffe confiscations from Richard Bellamy survive at the Beinecke Library at Yale University. Titled by Topcliffe "A Consolatorye l[ett]re to a trato^{r} Neare y^{e} Gallowes fownde at Bellamyes at vxenden," it consists of two letters, dated 27–28 May 1582, and addressed to "my deere M: N:".[132] The letters are followed by "peers plowghman hys answer to the doctours Interrogatoryes," a manuscript of twelve folios offered "in stede of

[127] This book is identified in both Allison and Rogers and the *STC* as residing at St. Edmund's College, Ware, but is in fact the copy dispersed from St. Peter's Presbytery, Winchester, where it resided from at least 1914 until several years ago; after a brief loan to the Bodleian Library (where I examined it on 11 July 2014), the volume is now on deposit at Stonor Park, in Henley-on-Thames. The book is stab-stitched with a double-string that rests on the outside of the parchment, so this must be the earliest binding. I am grateful to Gerard Kilroy for discussing the book's provenance with me (private correspondence, 1 February 2018), and for providing me with his transcription of the lease document. See also Kilroy, 207–08.

[128] Sander, 1594, Kk4^{v}.

[129] Kilroy, 207; Southern, 390–91, 519–23.

[130] J. Morris, 2:49–51. If this identification is correct, "WB" is more likely to designate one of Robert's heirs than his father, William, who died the year after this book was printed.

[131] Staphylus; *STC* 23230.

[132] Beinecke Library, Osborn MS a18, fol. 1^{r}, with Topcliffe's title at fol. 4^{v}.

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an Apology for the late martyrs of noble memory."[133] These documents are written in the same hand and were apparently copied together. Topcliffe has annotated both, which suggests that he confiscated them at the same time. He has drawn gallows in the margin throughout, as was his custom when annotating martyrological documents of this kind. Topcliffe also leavens his glossing with his recognizable manicule.

The plowman tradition of social complaint dates from William Langland's fourteenth-century dream vision *Piers Plowman*, and underwent modification when sixteenth-century Protestants gravitated toward the plowman figure as an agrarian radical.[134] Use of the plowman to educate Catholic readers on proper responses to governmental interrogation represents a departure from what scholars sometimes assume to be an evangelical Protestant tradition. Topcliffe rejects the appropriation of this figure in the service of Catholic martyrology: above the title, he writes, again emulating statutory language concerning treasonable offense, "Ageinst y^{e} Q^{en} , & stait, Evell & sediccoos at y^{e} Beginninge, Bvt towarde y^{e} Ende & At y^{e} End most Tratoroos." On an otherwise blank bifolium, which encloses "peers plowghman hys answer," he writes, "A very tratorroos woorke pretended to bee the answers of peyres plowman to the printed Interrogatorees of alleadgeance Bvtt in trewthe a waye to instrvct pap[is]^{te}[^{s}] how to answe^{r} tratorooslye, & defendethe trato^{rs} for Martyrs y^{t} dyed at Tybvrne in A° 1582." "Printed Interrogatorees of alleadgeance" refers to the so-called bloody questions, which were used during interrogation of suspected Catholics.[135]

The survival of Topcliffe-annotated books, or records of books that he seized, opens up the underground Catholic book world at its point of contact with the Elizabethan government. Topcliffe's bookshelf preserves his efforts to reaffirm professional connections and friendship networks. Beside his cart of contraband, his surviving copy of a Latin Bible, printed in Paris in 1541, asserts his status as a favored servant of the regime. He says that he received the book as the gift of Sir Francis Drake (1540–96), the celebrated navigator, who had himself confiscated it in Santo Domingo. On a page listing the Old Testament books, Topcliffe reassures himself of his membership in a privileged circle that also includes Drake: "Emongs othe^{r} favo^{rs} he bestowed this Iewell vpo^{n} mee: w^{ch} will indewe^{r} for eve^{r}, & his fayme Longe," he says, before signing the page with his trademark signature.[136] Topcliffe's crystal-clear signature

[133] Beinecke Library, Osborn MS a18, fols. 1^{r}–12^{v} (1^{r}).

[134] King, 51–52.

[135] McGrath.

[136] The 1541 Latin Bible (*Biblia Sacra Iuxta Vulgatam quam Dicunt Aeditionem* [Paris, 1541], Huntington Library, shelf mark 112999) is illustrated and discussed in Sherman, 77–79 and figure 19.

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takes on a notarizing function, a self-flourish mark of the authenticity of both book and relationship. He was ever in search of incriminating manuscripts that he might leverage against his enemies. After interrogating the mariner and book smuggler William Randal (fl. 1592) in the Gatehouse prison in Westminster, in 1592, Topcliffe prepared for Puckering a document detailing "The Dispocition, Condycceons, and doinges of Wm Randall."[137] In a section that Topcliffe labeled "The co[n]fessyons of Miles Gerode & dyckensons Seamenary p^{r}stes Execvted at Chetam Emongs y^{e} marryne^{res}," he said that Randall conveyed throughout England "All Ihezew^{tes}, Seamenary preestes, tra-tors & fewgetyves, & there treasons Bookes, Lybells, [and] l[ette]res," referring to printed books as well as manuscripts.[138]

He also commandeered books from his victims in prisons, which were porous, bookish spaces at that time.[139] Topcliffe's annotated copy of *A treatise, shewing the possibilitie* (1596), a work on the sacrament of the altar by the Jesuit Thomas Wright (ca. 1561–1623), survives at Ushaw College in Durham. Topcliffe tantalizingly reports in his title-page gloss that he confiscated the book at Newgate prison in London. The work bears an Antwerp imprint, but this, says Topcliffe, is "favlse & vntrewe for it was written & Imprynted in London & abovte London & tayken by mee in Newgait & in othe^{r} popishe playcess Nvmbers of them" (fig. 3).[140] Topcliffe's gloss corroborates the testi-mony of one Thomas Dodwell (fl. 1584), who confessed that seminary priests hid from authorities in the Marshalsea prison, along with "their books in such secret places that when any search is . . . they can find nothing."[141] If Topcliffe did in fact confiscate "Nvmbers" of copies of Wright's book "in Newgait & in othe^{r} popishe playcess," additional copies of this book containing his marginalia have not come to light. However, the existence of apparently successful Catholic book distribution schemes that operated from Newgate and other pri-sons undermines the tone of confidence in Topcliffe's statement.

[137] BL, Harley MS 6998, fols. 214^{r}–215^{v}: "The dispocition, Condyccons, and doinges of W^{m} Randall an Englishe marryner & pylott, Borne in Waymowthe Now a presoner in the gaytehowse whiche I can proove vnder his owne hande bysydes that whiche is knowen to other men: hee beinge blowen in to the Westcuntree wth too Seamenary preestes goinge into Skottlande to practize treason Imediatly frome the kinge of Spaigne, & his Covnsell To the rebellioos Lordes the^{r} abovt. 1592."

[138] BL, Harley MS 6998, fol. 214^{r}. In a 26 August 1594 letter to Sir Robert Cecil, Topcliffe wrote further of Randall, and mentioned his connection with William Allen and Persons. HH, Cecil Papers, 27/106.

[139] Walsham and Havens, 140–41.

[140] T. Wright, title page; *STC* 26043.5.

[141] TNA, SP 12/168, fols. 80^{r}–83^{v}, 84^{r}–85^{v}; quoted in Havens and Patton, 177.

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Because Topcliffe often recorded where he found books, and his opinions on the nature of their contents, his activities illuminate the movement of books repossessed by the government. These might travel far into the regime's administrative machine. He reports on the title page of his copy of Wright's book that he had handed it over to the queen's cofferer, Sir Henry Cook (fl. 1597–1603), and that it had been "falsely & frantikly written By Thom[a]s Whright a tratoroos Seamenary priest" in order "to vnde[rcut] the Chvrch of Chry[st] Established theis 40 yea[rs]."[142] During his interrogation of Robert Barnes, Topcliffe apparently seized from him a written anthology of documents concerning a series of exorcisms performed by Catholic priests, in 1585–86, in the vicinity of Denham, Buckinghamshire.[143] Bishop Samuel Harsnett (ca. 1561–1631), author of *A declaration of egregious popish impostures* (1603), knew that Topcliffe had obtained it from Barnes. This "Book of Miracles" found its way into the papers of the Ecclesiastical Court of High Commission and was presumably destroyed with the rest of that archive during the Civil War.[144] Topcliffe also apparently confiscated a copy of *A conference about the next succession to the crowne of Ingland* (1594), a controversial tract on the succession, by Persons and others, published under the pseudonym R. Doleman.[145] According to a manuscript account of Barnes's 3 July 1598 speech during his trial, Topcliffe related in court his dealings with George Hethersall, the priest Barnes was accused of harboring. Topcliffe had imprisoned him in Bridewell prison "for a Book of Succession, wherein he would have had the puppet of Spain to have had right unto her majesty's crown."[146] Topcliffe "shewed forth the book" then and there, and asked Barnes "if [he] did not know the same."[147] Topcliffe also obtained from Southwell a copy of Southwell's own *Humble supplication to her Maiestie* (1591), which he delivered to Sir Francis Bacon (1561–1626).[148] Topcliffe

[142] T. Wright, title page.

[143] In his 23 July 1598 letter to Sir Robert Cecil, Barnes, writing of his capture by Topcliffe, remarks, "and as concerninge the booke of exorcismes w^{ch} he showeth, the trewth is this, I beeinge newlie a catholike, wright a coppie therof at the request of a frende, and utterlie dislikinge therof, never kept any coppie for my selfe": HH, Cecil Papers, 62/79, fols. 146$^{r–v}$.

[144] Brownlow, 1993, 22.

[145] Allison and Rogers, 2:167; *STC* 19398.

[146] Dodd, 3:cxcvii. The document is Stonyhurst College, MS Anglia A II/41. See also Questier, 247–48.

[147] Dodd, 3:cxcvii. The whereabouts of this and the following book, if they remain extant, are unknown to me.

[148] I owe this information to Frank Brownlow. See also McCoog, 2017, 294.

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Figure 3. Thomas Wright, *A treatise, shewing the possibilitie, and conueniencie of the reall presence of our Sauiour in the blessed Sacrament* (1596), title page. Ushaw College, Durham, XVIII .F.8.14. Used by permission of Durham University Library and the Ushaw College Trustees.

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may have seized an otherwise unidentified history of the Jesuit mission in England containing his marginalia and hand-drawn gallows.[149]

Topcliffe understood how books and documents could be framed as evidence for use in establishing felonious or treasonous activity. After examining the Jesuit John Gerard, Topcliffe taunted him by showing his write-up of their conversation. Gerard's promise to respond in writing was a ruse, for he knew Topcliffe "was hoping . . . to get a sample of my handwriting. If he had this he could prove that certain papers found in the search of the houses belonged to me. I saw the trap and wrote in a feigned hand."[150] The example of his proceeding in York against the priests Henry (1558–95) and Thomas Walpole (b. 1567) and Edward Lingen (d. 1635) further reveals Topcliffe's obsession with textual documents, and the way his writing repurposes them for use in a court of law. Thomas Walpole helped Topcliffe confiscate papers from his brother, Henry, including parchment cipher strips. Small in size and ephemeral in nature, two of them read, "of the orig[in]all of this is wrytten a nayme torned wth the other" and "of this ioyned wth y^{e} othe^{r} another nayme."[151] According to Topcliffe's description of this cypher, the bearer can earn the trust of a stranger by producing the appropriate matching parchment half-slip. Afraid to risk the originals with a courier, Topcliffe created simulacra of these strips, and sent them to Puckering on 25 January 1594 (fig. 4); in the margin of this letter he remarks, "The very orygenalls his Lo: will Send by mee they bee not fitt to be hazardid."[152] As evidence that might be leveraged under the terms of the 1571 treason statute, these were too valuable to send via post. Thomas Walpole also confessed to having received letters, which were found "all wyett w^{r} rayne," says Topcliffe in the same letter; these were brought to York, where Henry Hastings, third Earl of Huntingdon (1536?–95) (the "lord" mentioned above), "leape[t] for Ioye" at their discovery. Topcliffe concludes his excited report with an account of his reading of this contraband. "Before a fyer[,] his Lordship [i.e., Hastings] & I so tenderly handelyd the same," he says, "that wee vnfovldid xxij l[ett]res & dyrections w^{ch} were every One, & in All those xxij not One tyttill blemyshid."[153]

[149] See Kermode, 143: "Topcliffe's copy of a history of the Jesuit mission survives, with his gloating marginalia: beside the name of a missionary the words 'I racked him,' beside the name of someone hanged a little stick figure dangling from a gallows." I have been unable to identify this specific book. Kermode might be referring to the Pollini Sander, which lacks the gloss "I racked him" but contains examples of hand-drawn gallows.

[150] Caraman, 69.

[151] TNA, SP 12/247, fol. 32^{r}, slips attached to margin.

[152] TNA, SP 12/247, fol. 32^{v}.

[153] TNA, SP 12/247, fol. 32^{v}. See also McCoog, 2012, 154–57.

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Figure 4. Richard Topcliffe, autograph letter to Sir John Puckering, with simulacra parchment cypher slips containing text in Topcliffe's hand. 25 January 1594. The National Archives of the UK, ref. SP 12/247, fol. 32[r].

Evidence that Topcliffe used the manicule for the benefit of others appears throughout his correspondence. His 7 September 1596 letter to Sir Robert Cecil, concerning his son, Charles, contains seventeen of Topcliffe's manicules.[154] In his letter to Puckering on Henry Walpole, Topcliffe writes, "Ther also is fownde abovt the Ihezew[r] A Bracelett of gowlde Flagon fashyon & vpon the Loope a Cypher or m[r]ke of Armes that will bewray the sender in

[154] HH, Cecil Papers, 44/65.

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Spaygne or in the lowe cuntrees"; beside this, Topcliffe has drawn a manicule and noted, in a marginal gloss, "Theis I bringe vpp to her Ma^{ty} also."[155] Topcliffe's report to Sir Robert Cecil concerning the family and patronage connections of the recusant Edmund Thurland (fl. 1595) appears to respond to a separate request from Cecil for this information. The document is dated 12 June 1595 and survives in Topcliffe's hand among the Cecil papers at Hatfield House.[156] Topcliffe employed the manicule to flag passages for the benefit of his addressees in letters that he had written, and in the manuscripts and printed books that he seized.[157] When Topcliffe annotated the 13 June 1594 confession of Henry Walpole, he marked nine passages for emphasis with his large, recognizable manicule.[158] On 31 August 1590, Topcliffe and Young took the written confession of Richard Floyd, alias Lloyd (fl. 1590), an imprisoned seminary priest, and Topcliffe marked five passages with a similar manicule.[159] When he raided the printer Carter's premises in July 1582, Topcliffe confiscated two manuscripts describing conferences held in the Tower of London between Campion and representatives of the government; one of these was written by the scribe Stephen Vallenger (1541–91).[160] Topcliffe used his manicule here to flag passages concerning the nature of the visible church and of adiaphora (beliefs not essential for salvation), presumably for use in the government's case against Carter.[161] These manuscripts went from Topcliffe to John Foxe (ca. 1516–87), the martyrologist, possibly because he no longer valued them as criminal evidence; Foxe had interceded to the Privy Council on Campion's behalf.[162]

Topcliffe's labor against Catholic priests occasionally sheds light upon the wider network of priests and their lay supporters, sustainers of a religious culture under assault. His annotation of a six-page memorandum designed to bring about the conviction of Robert Gray is a case in point.[163] A former Marian priest who had remained in England after Elizabeth's accession, Gray had served

[155] TNA, SP 12/247, fol. 33^{r}.

[156] HH, Cecil Papers, 32/94.

[157] This use of the manicule also appears in Topcliffe's 1601 request to Cecil for a commission to seek out recusants: HH, Cecil Papers, 90/2.

[158] TNA, SP 12/249/12.

[159] BL, Lansdowne MS 64, fols. 10$^{r–v}$. On Young, see Kilroy, 369–70.

[160] BL, Harley MS 422, fols. 136^{r}–147^{v}, 161^{r}–167^{v}. On the MS and its provenance, see Kilroy, 283–84.

[161] BL, Harley MS 422, fols. 161^{r}, 165^{v}.

[162] Kilroy, 173–74, 284, 331, 361, 378.

[163] TNA, SP 12/245/138: "The Substance of the Confessyons of Robart Graye Preest, And matter wherwth he may be Chardged: found In his first Confession the vith of August 1593 & in his Seconde Confessyon &c." The document accompanies a confession of Gray's.

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as chaplain to Anthony Browne, Viscount Montague (1528–92), who sustained a network of clergy against whom Topcliffe moved during 1592–93.[164] Topcliffe was one of the addressees of a 24 June 1593 Privy Council letter, which authorized him to search Montague's properties for any surreptitious "letters, papers and writinges" belonging to Gray and others among his retinue.[165] The marginalia identify Gray's supporters and engage in ad hominem attack (e.g., "he shewed him self very obstinayte"[166]). Topcliffe asserts his role in capturing Gray and identifies among the books found on his person a work that allegedly encouraged subversive Catholic conformity: "After theis Exam^{ons} Gray y^{e} preest did flye & breake preson in y^{e} night at Windso^{r} But was tayken agein by my diligeince: And after that I fownde all his popish booke[s], relycke[s], & lewde trashe hidden Emong[s] whiche Ther was a wrytten Booke kept for a great Iewell wherin was an Exortacyon: That Catholycks showlde dessemble & runne to o^{r} Service & Sermons yea to bee of o^{r} parleam^{te}[^{s}] & y^{e} Cownsells of heretycks So it were of pvrpose & wth an intent to distroye o^{r} Lawes: & many wryten Badd Books: ageinst the Chvrche of y^{e} protestants & y^{e} stayt:."[167] Topcliffe appears to have found Gray in possession of a manuscript copy of the priest Alban Langdale's *Arguments to prove it lawful for a Roman Catholic to attend the Protestant service* (ca. 1580). Langdale was also among Montague's circle at Cowdray, Sussex, and his work, which discouraged recusancy, circulated only in manuscript, and elicited a hostile reply from Persons, which has not survived.[168] Beside Topcliffe's declaration in this memorandum, another hand identifies the book in question as a manuscript that Gray obtained directly from Langdale:[169] "this boke he sayeth was D^{r} Langdales & this ex[aminent] after y^{e} doctors deathe had it at cowdrie among d^{r} Langals bokes. a written boke it was. but this ex[ami]nent red lease of yt but knew what it was for y^{e} title of yt was against going to y^{e} churche."[170] Topcliffe's reference to "many wryten Badd Books" indicates his knowledge of the underground circulation of Catholic manuscripts, his use of the adjective *written* pointing to manuscripts.[171] If the second annotator is correct to identify this work as a copy of

[164] Questier, 175.

[165] Questier, 199; *Acts of the Privy Council*, 24:328–29.

[166] TNA, SP 12/245/138, fol. 1^{r}.

[167] TNA, SP 12/245/138, fol. 3^{v}. Gray had earlier eluded Topcliffe in Buckinghamshire and Yorkshire; see Questier, 201.

[168] J. Wright. Persons's reply is not Persons, 1580 (*STC* 19394), which encourages recusancy, but rather another, lost work. See Southern, 137–44.

[169] Perhaps the hand is that of Sir Henry Brouncker, whose initials appear beneath this gloss and whose full signature appears at the bottom of the first page of the document.

[170] TNA, SP 12/245/138, fol. 3^{v}.

[171] Cf. *Oxford English Dictionary*, s.v. "written," *adj*. 1a.

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Langdale's *Arguments*, Topcliffe and his fellow annotator fail to understand the nuances of intra-Catholic debate on this issue.

TOPCLIFFE AND QUEEN ELIZABETH

Topcliffe's marginalia supply a veritable treasure trove of evidence that documents the movement of illicit Catholic books and their detection and seizure by the government. The list of his addressees is noteworthy for its prominent absences. He rarely wrote to bishops or other churchmen, corresponding instead with those secular officials with whom he had developed a working relationship. Topcliffe's methods were not necessarily representative; even Burghley himself, writing to the sheriff of Buckhamshire concerning the recusant Thomas Palmer, in 1587, could advise his recipient to "forbeare to seise anie of his [Palmer's] books, beinge such as by the lawes of the Realme he maie lawfullye use," since Palmer was "geven to his Booke, and for ought I have hard to honest studie."[172] It is the more remarkable, therefore, that Topcliffe claims to have supplied at least one book to Queen Elizabeth herself. The evidence is preserved within the most copiously annotated of his volumes, the second edition (1594) of Girolamo Pollini's adaptation and translation of Nicholas Sander's *De Origine ac Progressu Schismatis Anglicani*. Because they preserve Topcliffe's recollection upon his career, this book and its marginalia reinforce the connection between Topcliffe's reading and the judicial violence of the regime.

On 13 April 1582, Topcliffe raided a London house near to where books by Persons had been printed on a secret press.[173] There he found Thomas More of Barnborough (b. 1531), a grandson of Thomas More, King Henry VIII's lord chancellor, who would not recognize the validity of the king's marriage to Anne Boleyn. Topcliffe seized a manuscript copy of a biography of More by Nicholas Harpsfield (1519–75), the former archdeacon of Canterbury. Now residing at Emmanuel College, Cambridge, this book contains the following note in Topcliffe's hand on its opening flyleaf: "This booke was fovnde by Rich: Topclyff in M^{r} Tho: Moare studdye emongs othe^{r} books at Greenstreet M^{r} Wayfarers hovse whe^{r} M^{r} Moare was app^{r}hended: the xiijth of Ap^{r}ll 1582."[174] The seizure of this Harpsfield manuscript connects Topcliffe to William Carter, who was Harpsfield's amanuensis, and whose premises Topcliffe raided in July 1582. After Harpsfield's death, in 1575, after an extended imprisonment in the Fleet, Carter retained Harpsfield's *Nachlass* (unpublished manuscript writings) and operated a scriptorium, possibly

[172] Huntington Library, MS STT 194. I owe this reference to Rosemary O'Day.

[173] See Southern, 353–54, on the secret Catholic press at Greenstreet House, East Ham.

[174] Emmanuel College, University of Cambridge, MS 76, front fly leaf. See Hitchcock, xiii–xv.

under the patronage of John, Lord Lumley (ca. 1533–1609), for the transcription of Catholic manuscripts.[175] These included controversial historical works written by Harpsfield during the previous reign.[176]

Topcliffe's interest in Carter and his house symbolized his attempt to deny any connection between Catholic resistance to Henry VIII, the revival of Catholic worship under Mary, and the Catholic opposition to Elizabeth. Carter straddled the overlapping worlds of print and manuscript, print shop and scriptorium. Carter linked More via Harpsfield to Marian Catholicism, for, as Eamon Duffy has demonstrated, Harpsfield's writings were instrumental in articulating the Marian regime's vision for religious renewal.[177] The present Catholic threat symbolized by Campion went through Carter because Carter was in possession of manuscript accounts of conferences in the Tower of London between Campion and representatives of the regime; these Topcliffe marked up before sending them to Foxe. Carter thus joined the present with the past, and this union helps explain why Topcliffe directed such astringent invective against Carter in his copy of the Pollini Sander so many years after the fact. Topcliffe might also have annotated his Pollini Sander during his brief imprisonment in 1595, as a way of reminding himself of his value to the regime.[178]

T. A. Birrell has identified titles from Carter's stock from which he prepared copies for clients and patrons. They include manuscripts of Harpsfield's *Treatise on the pretended divorce* and *Cranmer's recantacyons*, which had both been written during the 1550s. Envisioned as an appendix to Harpsfield's biography of More, the *Pretended divorce* opposes Henry VIII's divorce from Catherine of Aragon (1485–1536), while the *Recantacyons* treats the 1556 heresy trial of Thomas Cranmer, archbishop of Canterbury (1489–1556). The confiscated manuscript copy of the latter work now resides at the Bibliothèque nationale in Paris, perhaps after being taken to France on an embassy.[179] A further record of books seized from Carter appears in a handwritten memorandum of the raid written by Thomas Norton, the prosecuting lawyer at Carter's trial, who coauthored *Gorboduc* (1561), the first Senecan tragedy in English blank verse.[180] Norton possessed a commission to examine Catholic prisoners from 1578 to

[175] Birrell, 23–25, 37–40.

[176] Duffy, 181–86.

[177] Duffy, 181–86.

[178] On Topcliffe's imprisonment, see Richardson.

[179] Birrell, 38. For the *Treatise on the pretended divorce*, see Harpsfield, 1878. For *Cranmer's recantacyons*, see Harpsfield, 1877–84. Gairdner's preface to this edition reports that the manuscript of *Cranmer's recantacyons* contains the inscription, "This booke was founde in my house amongst doctour Harpsfeldes writinges. Will'm Carter": Harpsfield, 1877–84, v; Bibliothèque nationale, MS 6056.

[180] BL, Additional MS 48,029, fols. 58^{r}–59^{v}.

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1583, and was described by Persons as "Rackmaister."[181] Now preserved at the British Library, this memorandum was probably drawn up for Carter's trial, for it mentions Carter as the printer of Martin's *Treatise of schisme* (1578).[182] Norton supplies titles of the entire cache taken from Carter. According to Norton, Harpsfield "did p[resen]tly drawe him selfe sondrie bokes, whereof diuers are found in possession of William Carter printer his late seruante, w^{ch} Carter affirmeth that the same were Harpsfeildes bokes."[183] Carter "so is thought to haue kept his ma^{rs} purpose to publish" these books, "and in the meane time to spred them by written Copies."[184] To the manuscript of the *Pretended divorce*, this list adds additional works. They include Harpsfield's *Life of More*; a printed copy of Harpsfield's *Dialogi Sex* (Six dialogues, 1566); a Latin miscellany; and "a long treatice," in English, "purposely made to deface the marriage of hir ma^{tie}[^{s}] mother as vnlawefull and incestuous."[185] Norton does not mention Topcliffe in this document, but in addition to Topcliffe's copy of *Cranmer's recantacyons*, the Bibliothèque nationale preserves a manuscript that I believe is the "long treatice" in Norton's list. Topcliffe has annotated the manuscript, describing it as a "Vita" of Henry VIII; and Carter himself has inscribed this as having been confiscated from his house.[186] This coincidence suggests that Norton and Topcliffe worked in collusion on the confiscated file of Carter materials. Furthermore, surviving manuscripts of the *Pretended divorce* testify to the same raid, by including the following, or a variant statement of it, among their preliminary leaves: "This Coppie was taken from the originall, which was found by M^{r} Toplyffe in the house of William, sometyme seruant to the said Doctor Nicholas Harpesfeild who confessed that two leaues of the said originall, were of his said Masters owne hand writinge."[187] Topcliffe must have repossessed these manuscripts on Henry VIII from Carter,

[181] Persons, 1582, 8 (*STC* 19401; Allison and Rogers, 2:624). William Charke defends Norton in Charke, 28–29 (*STC* 5009). I owe this reference to Earle Havens.

[182] BL, Additional MS 48,029, fol. 59^{v}; *Catalogue of Additions to the Manuscripts*, 133.

[183] BL, Additional MS 48,029, fol. 58^{v}.

[184] BL, Additional MS 48,029, fol. 58^{v}.

[185] BL, Additional MS 48,029, fols. 58^{v}–59^{r}.

[186] Bibliothèque nationale, Latin MS 6051, fol. 1^{r}: "This booke was founde in my house amongst docto^{r} Ha[rpsfields] writings. Will[ia]m Carter"; fol. 28^{v}, in Topcliffe's handwriting: "Vita he[n]rici .8 founde in Will[ia]m Carters hovse 17 Julij .1582." Topcliffe's marginalia appear in this MS at fols. 2^{r}, 4^{v}, 7^{r}, 7^{v}, 8^{r}, 9^{v}, 10^{v}, and 11$^{r–v}$. For a modern edition, see Bémont.

[187] New College, University of Oxford, MS 311A, fol. 322^{r}. I have identified six early manuscripts of the *Pretended divorce*, or extracts from it. Of the four complete manuscripts known to me (BL, Additional MS 33,737; BL, Additional MS 48,066 [formerly MS Yelverton 72]; and New College, University of Oxford, MSS 311A–B), only BL, Additional MS 48,066 lacks this statement. See also Harpsfield, 1932, cciv–ccv.

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in addition to Martin's *Treatise of schisme*, for the surviving copies bear witness of Topcliffe's involvement in this raid.

Topcliffe's Pollini marginalia contain new evidence of the fate of some of Topcliffe's Carter books, and point directly to Topcliffe's reading Catholic books simultaneous with, if not in the very presence of, Queen Elizabeth herself. Of all of Topcliffe's connections within the regime, the most important is his relationship with the queen, who knew of and countenanced his activities.[188] It is fitting, therefore, that she be counted among the recipients of books that Topcliffe had read. Topcliffe claims to have sent at least one book from the Carter haul to Elizabeth, and the meticulous nature of these marginalia records his desire to document precisely how his reading buttressed the regime and suppressed its enemies. In his trademark title-page gloss, Topcliffe says that the contents of Sander's book derive from Harpsfield's writings taken from Carter: "Thys Booke was [devized by] . . . trators Cheefly ovt of . . . harpesfilde y^e^ Civilian ^booke^," Topcliffe says, "who was one of Bishope Bonners Chapleyne^s^ . . . & a haytfvll Enemy to Qveene Elyzabeth, w^ch^ Booke of docto^r^ harpesfild I [took] from w^m^ Carte^r^ there . . . a trato^r^ mencyoned in y^e^ Ende of this Booke"[189] Topcliffe's characteristic manicule accentuates the point. When one follows Topcliffe's instruction by turning to the end of the work, one finds Pollini's index, and there, beside its entry to Carter, Topcliffe supplies further details to justify Carter's execution for treason: "I did taike him & hee was Execvted for his pvblishinge & Sellinge divers tratoroos Books, Emongs whiche was docto^r^ Nicolas harppesfilds Booke, of w^ch^ he sovlde written Copy^s^ for xx^li^ a Coppye / & owt of one of theis written Coppyes Sentt To the trato^r^ Cardenall Allen This false & trato^r^roos historye [i.e., the Pollini Sander] was Compile^d^ & written: & That same Orygenall written Booke By docto^r^ Nicolas harppesfild I did fynde in this w^m^ Carters Cvstodye, whiche the Q^s^ Ma^ty^ hathe Seene, & hathe Redde of, & her highnes did Co[m]mavnde mee to keepe, whiche I have Extant still for he^r^ ma^tes^ service: Ric: Topclyffe:."[190] Violent seizure of Carter's property, and his subsequent execution, serve as prelude to Topcliffe's commemorative reading and writing, and his first-person narration offers a form of testimony by documenting his role in unearthing valuable criminal evidence.

In this account, Topcliffe lodges the implausible claim that Sander or Pollini had access to copies of Harpsfield's manuscripts, which derived from Carter. If this is the case, Sander must have obtained these in Spain in the 1570s, as he

[188] Brownlow, 2003, 162–66.

[189] The gloss is difficult to read in full due to tearing and cropping. Sander, 1594, title page.

[190] Sander, 1594, Ddd1^r^. The idea that Carter worked for £20 a copy cannot, to my knowledge, be independently corroborated.

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drafted the work upon which Pollini's *Historia* is based, his *De Origine ac Progressu Schismatis Anglicani*. After Sander's death, this was posthumously expanded by the seminary priest Edward Rishton (1550–85), revised again by Persons and Allen, and then translated and adapted by Pollini.[191] Copies of one or more of Harpsfield's historical works might have reached Sander in exile; Sander's *De Origine* must have circulated in manuscript because Rishton, in his preface to his 1585 edition of the work, notes that copies could be found in both Italy and Spain.[192] The channels of communication that linked Continental seminaries and the royal courts of Catholic Europe with Catholics who remained in the British Isles are in need of further study. Carter confessed under torture that he had printed Martin's *Treatise of schisme*, and employed a false imprint identifying the printer as John Fowler, the English printer in exile who produced editions of Catholic texts from the Low Countries during the 1560s and 1570s. Knowledge of both the statecraft and spycraft that surrounded and sustained such international networks remains underdeveloped. However, because Topcliffe is not likely to have known of these specific manuscript copies of Sander's work, his gloss is motivated more plausibly by his hatred of English Catholics.[193]

The best matches among Harpsfield's writings for the work Topcliffe delivered to the queen are Topcliffe's "Vita he[n]rici 8" or the *Pretended divorce*, which share Sander's hostile view on the history of Henrician England; elsewhere in this copy of Sander, Topcliffe identifies this Carter book as "a writte[n] Cronicle or history (By doct^{r} Nicolas harpesfild y^{e} Cyvilian,"[194] which points more toward the "Vita." This interpretation is corroborated by Topcliffe's remark, at the same location, that his copy is "vnde^{r} harpesfilds, & Cart^{er}[^{s}] ovne hande, Extant" and is "By y^{e} Q^{s} ma^{ts} Commdement to Keepe."[195] Topcliffe may refer to the marked-up Bibliothèque nationale copy of the "Vita" of Henry VIII, which Carter has indeed signed. In either case, Topcliffe states in both Pollini glosses that he sent this Harpsfield work directly to the queen herself, who read it and returned it to Topcliffe for safekeeping.

The Sander and these Harpsfield materials would have infuriated both Topcliffe and Elizabeth. The conclusion to the *Pretended divorce* regales the reader with sensational anecdotes of the queen's father's tyranny, fraudulence,

[191] On the posthumous editing of Sander's book, see Domínguez, 27–164; Houliston.

[192] Sander, 1585, a2^{r}: "especially a certain preeminent work on the beginning and progress of the Anglican Schism, some copies of which (although very few) exist in manuscript, both in Italy, and also in Spain." Allison and Rogers, 1:972.

[193] A similar version of the gloss appears at Sander, 1594, Dd4^{r}.

[194] Sander, 1594, Tt5^{v}.

[195] Sander, 1594, Tt5^{v}.

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bestiality, and corpulence, describing him, for instance, as an "insatiable glutting Charibdis and Sylla," monsters from Homer's *Odyssey*.[196] Among other accusations, the "Vita" describes Henry VIII as "Grand Captaine Paunch."[197] That Topcliffe displayed an acute sensitivity to this kind of material appears at his extraordinary manicule, which he entered across the width of the whole page against Sander's incendiary claim that Henry VIII had fathered Anne Boleyn and thus committed father-daughter incest (fig. 5). Topcliffe's sprawling marginalia, and unusually large manicule, dismiss the plausibility of this hostile allegation outright, by going on the counterattack and defending his own grandfather (and, by extension, himself), in an accompanying gloss, as one who protected the Tudor state: "Thom^{a}s: 1: Lorde Bvrghe my Grandefathe^{r} (Beinge lorde Chamberlayne) did ope[n]lye pronovnce him A villayn in y^{e} Coorte," Topcliffe says, "(when his Qveene was sent to y^{e} Towe^{r}) & did $^{\wedge Cast}$ dovne his Gloove Emong svtch Gentilmen & Noble men, As did (for popery) speake agenst her Fayme, To whome hee hadd beene Lorde Chamberlayne: & for y^{e} sayme hee was threatened to bee Sent to y^{e} towe^{r} of London: w^{ch} Infamye was to Lyke Effect spoaken of y^{t} godly Q^{en} Ane As here is printed."[198] In the succeeding gloss, Topcliffe clings to the fiction that his Harpsfield history had been jointly written from London's Marshalsea and Fleet prisons by his enemies, whom he names as Sir Thomas Fitzherbert; Edmund Bonner, bishop of London (d. 1569); Sander; and Harpsfield.[199] The note is facetious: Harpsfield had been imprisoned in the Fleet, and Bonner in the Marshalsea prison, but Sander and Fitzherbert were exiles, so they would have encountered difficulty undertaking such a collaboration. This attribution reveals Topcliffe's method of ascribing guilt by association, and demonstrates the kinds of people whom he believed his reading had helped to destroy.[200]

[196] Harpsfield, 1878, 287.

[197] I quote from a contemporary English translation: BL, Sloane MS 2495, fol. 53^{r}.

[198] Sander, 1594, b3^{r}.

[199] "Ohe rabell of trato$^{re[s]}$ docto^{r} Nicolas harpsfilde, S^{r} Thomas fitzharbert: kn^{t}: docto^{r} Bonne^{r} Bish: of London, doctor Sanders, who did all Compile togethe^{r} y^{e} Englysh history whiche I have Extant, writen by docto^{r} harpesfild when y^{ey} togethe^{r} All were presoners in y^{e} fleet & In y^{e} Marshallsee: IA^{o} :1: & 2: Elyza [line lost]": Sander, 1594, b3^{r}.

[200] E.g., on the allegedly scandalous paternity of William Allen, see Sander, 1594, a3^{r}, a4^{v}, F6^{v}, N1^{r}, N2^{r}, Eee4^{r}; on the presumed collaborative authorship of the Harpsfield, see Sander, 1594, a4^{v}, B3^{v} (which expands the list of collaborators to include John Feckenham, abbot of Westminster [ca. 1510–84]; Thomas Watson, deprived bishop of Lincoln [1513–84]; and the Jesuit William Weston [1550–1615]), B4^{r}, Tt5^{v}.

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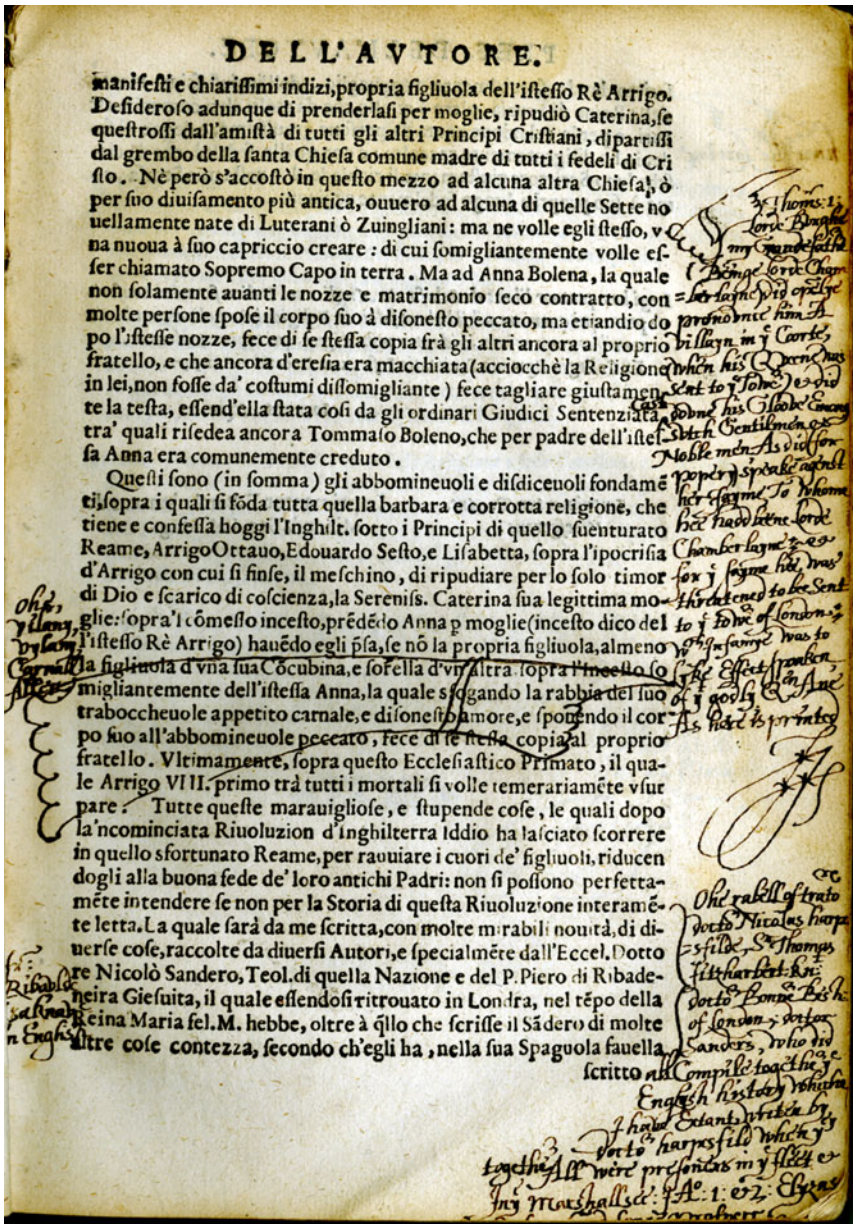

DELL'AVTORE.

manifesti e chiarissimi indizi, propria figliuola dell'istesso Rè Arrigo. Desideroso adunque di prenderlasi per moglie, ripudiò Caterina, se questrossi dall'amistà di tutti gli altri Principi Cristiani, dipartissi dal grembo della santa Chiesa comune madre di tutti i fedeli di Cristo. Nè però s'accostò in questo mezzo ad alcuna altra Chiesa, ò per suo diuisamento più antica, ouuero ad alcuna di quelle Sette nouellamente nate di Luterani ò Zuingliani: ma ne volle egli stesso, vna nuoua à suo capriccio creare: di cui somigliantemente volle esser chiamato Sopremo Capo in terra. Ma ad Anna Bolena, la quale non solamente auanti le nozze e matrimonio seco contratto, con molte persone spose il corpo suo à disonesto peccato, ma etiandio dopo l'istesse nozze, fece di se stessa copia frà gli altri ancora al proprio fratello, e che ancora d'eresia era macchiata (acciocchè la Religione in lei, non fosse da' costumi dissomigliante) fece tagliare giustamente la testa, essend'ella stata così da gli ordinari Giudici Sentenziata, tra' quali risedea ancora Tommaso Boleno, che per padre dell'istessa Anna era comunemente creduto.

Questi sono (in somma) gli abbominevuoli e disdicevuoli fondamenti, sopra i quali si föda tutta quella barbara e corrotta religione, che tiene e confessa hoggi l'Inghilt. sotto i Principi di quello sventurato Reame, Arrigo Ottauo, Edouardo Sesto, e Lisabetta, sopra l'ipocrisia d'Arrigo con cui si finse, il meschino, di ripudiare per lo solo timor di Dio e scarico di coscienza, la Serenis. Caterina sua legittima moglie: sopra'l cõmesso incesto, prẽdẽdo Anna p moglie (incesto dico del l'istesso Rè Arrigo) hauẽdo egli pisa, se nõ la propria figliuola, almeno la figliuola d'vna sua Cõcubina, e sorella d'vn'altra. sopra l'incesto somigliantemente dell'istessa Anna, la quale sfogando la rabbia del suo trabocchevole appetito carnale, e disonesto amore, e spõendo il corpo suo all'abbominevole peccato, fece di se stessa copia al proprio fratello. Vltimamente, sopra questo Ecclesiastico Primato, il quale Arrigo VIII. primo trà tutti i mortali si volle temerariamẽte vsurpare. Tutte queste marauigliose, e stupende cose, le quali dopo la'ncominciata Riuoluzion d'Inghilterra Iddio ha lasciato scorrere in quello sfortunato Reame, per rauuiare i cuori de' figliuoli, riducendogli alla buona fede de' loro antichi Padri: non si possono perfettamẽte intendere se non per la Storia di questa Riuoluzione interamẽte letta. La quale sarà da me scritta, con molte marabili nouità, di diuerse cose, raccolte da diuersi Autori, e specialmẽte dall'Eccel. Dotto re Nicolò Sandero, Teol. di quella Nazione e del P. Piero di Ribadeneira Giesuita, il quale essendosi ritrouato in Londra, nel tẽpo della Reina Maria fel. M. hebbe, oltre à q̃llo che scrisse il Sãdero di molte altre cose contezza, secondo ch'egli ha, nella sua Spaguola fauella, scritto.

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Figure 5. Nicholas Sander, *L'historia ecclesiastica della rivolvzion d'Inghilterra*, ed. and trans. Girolamo Pollini (1594), b3^{r}. University of Exeter Special Collections, shelf mark Rowse/POL. Courtesy of Special Collections, University of Exeter.

CONCLUSION

As a professional reader, Richard Topcliffe was a workhorse for the Elizabethan regime, and his marginalia offer a rare and focused glimpse of the government's stance toward the Catholic religious culture that it had outlawed. The dean of Exeter, Matthew Sutcliffe, described Topcliffe as "more graue and honest then the chiefe inquisitor of Rome for all his scarlet robes," and the opinion must have been shared, even if Topcliffe's superiors, beneficiaries of his labor, opposed him at times and are not always effusive in their praise.[201] The regime needed Topcliffe and his reading in order to dress its tyranny in a shred of legitimacy. For this reason, identifying and locating subversive books and manuscripts was as important, or nearly as important, to Topcliffe as was the discovery of bodies.

In describing Topcliffe's encounter with Catholic propaganda, I have not sought to demonstrate how specific titles were perceived to be controversial in previously unknown ways; scholars have long known that works such as Martin's *Treatise of schisme* or Bristow's "Motives" incurred official wrath. Topcliffe's marginalia and reading instead cast new light on the bureaucratic workings of the regime as it moved against Catholic books and against their readers and owners. The relationship of reading and torture was understood by Tudor authors,[202] but Topcliffe's treatment of the margin intensified it. His needle and crimson thread pierced the margins of numerous leaves within at least one book, perhaps as a surrogate for the bodies he desired to crush.[203] Marginalia, and perhaps the pen itself, took on violent association in Topcliffe's hand.[204] By identifying Topcliffe's treatment of Catholic books and documents, and sketching how Topcliffe's recipients read them, and what they did with his reading, this investigation opens the door for scholars to identify other surviving Topcliffe-annotated books. The presence of these marginalia in so many books whose catalogue descriptions usually do not describe Topcliffe's markings also suggests a need to rethink the assumptions and premises upon

[201] Sutcliffe, 325 (*STC* 23465), responding to Persons, 1602, fol. 7^{r} (*STC* 19418; Allison and Rogers, 2:640).

[202] See, e.g., Askew.

[203] Sherman, xvii, xx.

[204] A related example concerns the iconography of students murdering Cassian of Imola, the fourth-century bishop of Brescia, with styli. In the 1570 edition of his celebrated *Actes and Monuments*, John Foxe incorporated a large, three-page foldout woodcut poster, titled "A Table of the X. first Persecutions of the Primitiue Church" (reproduced at www.johnfoxe.org). It includes, among other scenes of torture, a picture of this scene. The medieval tradition may be glimpsed in this illustration from a manuscript of Prudentius's *Peristephanon* 9: http://www.e-codices.unifr.ch/de/bbb/0264/121/0/Sequence-33.

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which such apparently simple terms as *archive*, *library*, and *historical record* have been defined, even in the current digital age.

Rather than viewing Topcliffe as a torturer who read books, he must be understood as a professional reader whose official responsibilities also included the torture of Catholics. He leveraged his goal-oriented reading into a career for himself in Elizabethan England. His marginalia paint an intellectual portrait of one possessed of sufficient knowledge to serve the legal machinery of the regime—not a sophisticated thinker by any stretch of the imagination, but a brutally intelligent man who apparently saw himself to the end as the queen's loyal servant. Distaste for the nature of Topcliffe's labor has prevented earlier generations of scholars from understanding the ways in which reading and torture could fit together hand in glove during this era; but Topcliffe's prosecutorial reading accommodated his torture in haunting fashion, not least because he was so unabashed in leaving a clear paper trail of his murderous intent. Scholars are obligated to look past Topcliffe's deeds in search of knowledge of the influence of Catholic books, and particularly of specific ways in which the regime turned these books against their producers.

Topcliffe's unparalleled marginalia demand that scholars ask how the Elizabethan government read these books. The answer is that members of the regime used the books to reinforce the definitions of treason that they had codified, and they relied upon Topcliffe's reading to help them do so. From Carter's illegal printing press, to Topcliffe's pen, to Queen Elizabeth, to her officials, Catholic books moved into and out of an underground network of reading, copying, and distribution. Illicit scriptoria like Carter's disseminated controversial books under the noses of the authorities. Members of the regime themselves did not possess the time required to locate, read, and act upon this explosion of books. Their response to this difficulty was to employ Topcliffe to read for them, and his written remains reveal the ways in which Elizabeth's government read the works of its victims before punishing them.

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