

Aberrant Accounts: William Dugdale's Handling of Two Tudor Murders in *The Antiquities of Warwickshire*

JAN BROADWAY

Queen Mary, University of London

This article examines two accounts of Tudor domestic murders which appear in *The Antiquities of Warwickshire*. It explores the sources from which Dugdale derived his accounts and the circumstances in which he wrote the narratives and incorporated them into his text. It shows how these stories had a particular appeal to their author in the aftermath of the king's execution, since they could be shaped to suggest that crime would eventually be punished. It argues that Dugdale abandoned his usual scholarly standards in order to preserve the providential interpretation of the stories. Yet, since these narratives occur in a scholarly work, they have acquired an authority that they would not have been granted if published in a polemical or sensational context.

KEYWORDS William Dugdale, murder, providence, Warwickshire, historiography, oral history

In recent years 'true crime' literature of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries has attracted considerable attention from scholars. Murder pamphlets have been studied as a literary and polemical form, while alongside contemporary collections of lurid tales they have enriched our understanding of early modern attitudes to crime and domestic violence.¹ In what follows I want to consider two accounts of Tudor

¹ The most extensive work in this area has been undertaken by Peter Lake: P. Lake, 'Puritanism, Arminianism and a Shropshire Axe-murder', *Midl. Hist.*, XV (1990), 37–64; P. Lake, 'Popular Form, Puritan Content? Two Puritan Appropriations of the Murder Pamphlet from Mid-Seventeenth-Century London', in A. Fletcher and P. Roberts (eds.), *Religion, Culture and Society in Early Modern Britain* (London, 1994), 313–34; P. Lake, 'Cheap Print, Protestantism and Murder', in K. Sharpe and P. Lake (eds.), *Culture and Politics in Early Stuart England* (London, 1994), 257–83; P. Lake, *The Antichrist's Lewd Hat* (New Haven, 2002). The literature represents an important source for the study of murder as a crime in M. Gaskill, *Crime and Mentalities in Early Modern England* (Cambridge, 2000), and J. Bellamy, *Strange, Inhuman Deaths* (Stroud, 2005); see also R. Helgerson, 'Murder in Faversham: Holinshed's Impertinent History', in D. Kelley and D. Sacks (eds.), *The Historical Imagination in Early Modern Britain* (Cambridge, 1997), 133–58; F. Dolan, *Dangerous Familiars* (Ithaca, 1994).

murders that share many features in common with the bulk of this literature, but which occur in an unusual setting. These are the slaying of Sir Walter Smith by his wife Dorothy in Mary's reign and that of Thomas Webb by Lodowick Greville in 1585, which are two of the most frequently cited passages in William Dugdale's *The Antiquities of Warwickshire*. In the first case the apparently natural death of Sir Walter was revealed by a drunken servant to have been murder, resulting in the trial and execution by burning of the young widow. In the second Greville murdered a tenant and forged his will to make himself heir. He was found out after the subsequent killing of a servant who threatened to reveal his crime and was pressed to death, when he refused to enter a plea. Inevitably these accounts acquire some measure of authority because they occur within the context of a scholarly work and are supported by its paratextual apparatus.² Yet, as I shall show, their handling contradicts Dugdale's reputation for scrupulous regard over the verification of his sources and gives us cause to question his perceived preference for written evidence over oral. In this article I want to explore these episodes in detail, to ask why Dugdale chose to include them and to consider the nature of his evidence and its presentation. I shall also consider how the timing of the incorporation of these accounts in the text relates to the wider context of Dugdale's life and the process of the compilation of his great work on Warwickshire history.

One of the characteristics of the development of local history in the century before William Dugdale published *The Antiquities of Warwickshire* in 1656 was an increasing respect for written evidence and a corresponding decline in the credence accorded to oral testimony. Daniel Woolf goes so far as to suggest that Dugdale believed that whatever failed to survive in manuscript or inscription was irretrievably lost, and that he wholeheartedly adopted a prejudice in favour of documentary evidence. It is undoubtedly true that the seventeenth century witnessed the growth of a scholarly respect for the use and citing of documentary sources among local historians that increasingly divorced them from earlier generations, who relied on oral tradition and unattributed anecdotal material. It is also true that William Dugdale was at the forefront of this development. According to Woolf, Dugdale would report oral traditions for amusement, but took a 'pedantic, almost malicious delight' in correcting or disproving them from the documentary evidence. An example of this relates to the alleged murder of his wife by a returning crusader following a false accusation against her of infidelity and the subsequent founding of a monastery in expiation. Dugdale declared, 'I somewhat doubt the truth thereof', since his documentary evidence suggested that the Burdet family acquired the land at a later date. While Dugdale referred to 'credible tradition' on a number of occasions and frequently cited oral reports as supporting evidence, his reputation is as a scrupulous researcher, who demanded documentary evidence for what he was prepared to vouchsafe in print. This has led to Dugdale's acceptance as an authority by subsequent historians. Yet, as I shall show, the accounts of the murders committed by Dorothy Smith and Lodowick Greville challenge the accepted view of Dugdale's authority.³

² Dugdale's *Antiquities of Warwickshire* is used as an authority by reference works such as the *Dictionary of National Biography* (hereafter DNB), *Victoria County History* (VCH) and *History of Parliament*.

³ D. Woolf, *The Social Circulation of the Past* (Oxford, 2003), 367–8; D. Woolf, 'The "Common Voice": History, Folklore and Oral Tradition in Early Modern England', *Past and Present*, CXX (1988), 26–52; W. Dugdale, *The Antiquities of Warwickshire* (London, 1656), 813; I discuss the use of various types of source by local historians including Dugdale in J. Broadway, *No Historie so Meete* (Manchester, 2006), chapter 4.

For historians, the question of the reliability of the evidence on which we depend is crucial. We know that the survival of primary sources is incomplete and unsystematic. This is particularly true before the modern period, when the management of records and the activities of record keepers were largely unregulated. Early modern historians are often forced to rely on sources which report the existence of evidence that has since been lost, destroyed or mislaid. The trust we can place in such evidence is grounded upon the authority of the source. Once such authority is established and generally accepted, there is little incentive to question it. Indeed, our reliance on such sources may make us positively reluctant to query whether their general reliability can be applied in all cases. Or modern scholars may treat different aspects of a source's output in isolation, creating a dichotomy between the reliable authority and the unreliable polemicist. In this way the providential stories largely dependent on oral sources included by John Foxe in the *Book of Martyrs* have been separated from the historical narrative written from documentary evidence. However, recent scholarship has shown that Foxe did seek to validate the providential stories as assiduously as his historical content, although his pursuit of evidence was predicated upon the desire to provide examples of the action of God's judgement. As I have shown elsewhere, the didactic content of the *The Antiquities of Warwickshire* was important to Dugdale and in parallel with Foxe it was in this area that he was most willing to use oral sources. Consequently, the didactic application of the Smith and Greville stories made Dugdale determined to incorporate them, even though he lacked documentary evidence and was forced to rely on testimony that he would usually regard with suspicion. Unlike Foxe, however, Dugdale is not regarded as a polemical writer and the inclusion of these stories within his work lends them authority despite their providentialist characteristics.⁴

A belief in providence as the active intervention of divine justice in human affairs was an essential component of the world view of seventeenth-century English men and women. For strict Calvinists, whose theology was dominated by the doctrine of predestination, every event in their lives was imbued with providential significance for personal salvation. The providentialism of the majority of the population was less intense and introspective, but still they believed that God intervened directly in daily life to reward good and punish evil. Although humans might not understand why certain things happened, they could be sure that it was all part of God's great purpose.⁵ In the seventeenth century there was no police force and no understanding of the use of scientific forensic skills to solve crimes. Consequently providence represented an important force in the detection and successful prosecution of crimes. Divine intervention could, for example, cause bodies to bleed and the dumb to speak in the presence of a murderer and so provide evidence of guilt. For contemporaries without the intervention of divine providence it seemed that criminals would literally

⁴ Thomas S. Freeman, 'Fact, Faction, and Fiction in Foxe's *Book of Martyrs*', *Hist. Jnl.*, XLIII (2000), 601–23; Broadway, *No Historie so Meete*, ch. 6.

⁵ For a detailed exposition of the significance of providence, see A. Walsham, *Providence in Early Modern England* (Oxford, 1999); see also B. Worden, 'Providence and Politics in Cromwellian England', *Past and Pres.*, CIX (1985), 55–99; J. Spurr, '"Virtue, Religion and Government": the Anglican Uses of Providence', in T. Harris, P. Seaward and M. Goldie (eds.), *The Politics of Religion in Restoration England* (Oxford, 1990), 29–47.

get away with murder. Within the context of local histories such as *The Antiquities of Warwickshire* providence was also commonly invoked to explain the decline of families. While in some cases dynastic failure was interpreted in terms of the classical image of the wheel of fortune, in others the specific actions of family members were seen as having provoked divine judgement. The latter belief can be seen in Dugdale's account of Baddesley Clinton, which was acquired by the Ferrers family by marriage in the early sixteenth century. In 1468 Sir John Brome was killed as a result of a dispute with the earl of Warwick. His son Nicholas subsequently avenged the murder of his father by killing the culprit. For this there was ample supporting evidence. According to Henry Ferrers, a prominent local antiquary and inheritor of Baddesley Clinton, Nicholas Brome subsequently found 'the Parish-Priest chocking his wife under the chin' in the parlour at Baddesley and killed him. While Ferrers claimed to have seen the pardons received from the king and pope, Dugdale was reliant on the authority of his source when he included Ferrers' account in *The Antiquities of Warwickshire*. (Following Ferrers' death his son allowed Dugdale and his patron Sir Simon Archer access to his antiquarian papers, but the chest in which they were stored had become damp and many were lost.) Although Brome's epitaph was reported to have recorded the event, this had been 'torn away' by the mid-seventeenth century. The inclusion of the story in *The Antiquities of Warwickshire* represents a relaxation of Dugdale's usual standards for supporting evidence in line with its didactic potential.⁶

The two narratives that are the focus of this paper are the only detailed accounts of domestic murder in *The Antiquities of Warwickshire*.⁷ Both occurred in the sixteenth century. If these were the only significant murders that occurred in the county, this would suggest that, by comparison with seventeenth-century Shropshire, sixteenth-century Warwickshire was a far less violent place. Richard Gough describes ten homicides occurring within the vicinity of Myddle.⁸ Certainly Gough wrote about a wider range of social groups than Dugdale, so might be expected to have more examples to draw on. Yet it is also true that Dugdale omitted accounts of other violent deaths that involved the Warwickshire gentry in the century before the civil war. Among the most celebrated cases were the murders of Sir Fulke Greville and Sir Thomas Overbury, the mysterious death of Amy Robsart and the homicidal attack on his cook by Sir Thomas Holte in 1606. Only the murder of Sir Fulke Greville received any notice from Dugdale, and that was limited to a single sentence relation of the facts. The Holte case was notorious at the time, since when another local gentleman accused him of murder he took an action for slander. As Sir Thomas Holte was still alive when Dugdale was compiling *The Antiquities of Warwickshire*, this may have encouraged reticence about his case. The failure to mention Amy Robsart,

⁶ Dugdale, *Warwickshire*, 710–11; Bodleian Lib. (hereafter Bodl.L), Eng. lett. b. 1, fo. 94. Visitors to Baddesley Clinton (now in the hands of the National Trust) are still shown the bloodstain in the library, which is reputed to remain as evidence of Brome's crime.

⁷ Other domestic murders mentioned, but in less detail, include the stabbing of his wife by a returning crusader, the thirteenth-century murder of Thomas Charlecote by three servants, the fourteenth-century murder of Sir Thomas Murdak by his wife and her lover and the murder of Fulke Greville by his servant in 1628: Dugdale, *Warwickshire*, 494, 495, 572, 611.

⁸ R. Gough, *The History of Myddle* (Harmondsworth, 1981), 23 and *passim*.

given the enmity towards Robert Dudley demonstrated elsewhere in his text, is more surprising. It might be objected that the Robsart and Overbury cases involved deaths that occurred outside Warwickshire, but this was also true of the Greville case.⁹ Both the murders that attracted Dugdale's particular attention involved the landed gentry as perpetrators and adult males as victims. This alone makes the crimes he selected unusual in sixteenth-century England. Women were more often victims than perpetrators of domestic crime and the most common victims were children and apprentices.¹⁰ These murders were also unusual for other reasons. Each case involved a gentry family that in the seventeenth century was associated with the catholic minority. Both cases involved an initially undetected crime, which was subsequently brought to light through the unreliability of a servant. It is this aspect of the stories which I believe attracted Dugdale. Their narrative arc involved murderers initially appearing to have got away with their crime and then being brought to book by the action of providence. By contrast the Robsart and Holte cases involved no punishment of the alleged guilty parties and, although punishment was meted out in the Overbury case, the earl and countess of Somerset escaped comparatively lightly. These cases were not appropriate for what I conceive to have been Dugdale's didactic purpose. Although the Smith and Greville cases must have been highly significant at the time, and as related by Dugdale included sufficient novelty to satisfy sensationalist appetites, the crimes attracted no attention in the contemporary popular literature. Both stories were received by Dugdale as anecdotes, for which he found little collaborative evidence.

The timing of the inclusion of the accounts of the Smith and Greville cases is essential for understanding their role in *The Antiquities of Warwickshire*. The evolution of the work took place over a period of more than two decades. The text was not written sequentially, but as atomised accounts of separate manors and families. The initial text was written in the late 1630s and extensively revised in 1640. Further revisions were made particularly to the accounts of churches and pedigrees in the late 1640s and early 1650s. Both of the incidents studied here were incorporated into the text while Dugdale was working on the manuscript in retirement at Blythe Hall near Coleshill, during the period following the execution of Charles I. Dugdale also revised the account of Baddesley Clinton in this period and may have incorporated the Brome story from Henry Ferrers' papers at the same time.¹¹ This is significant, because during this period Dugdale lacked access to archives in London. In 1650 he made light of this limitation, suggesting that he had all the material that he needed available at

⁹ DNB, Sir Thomas Holte (1570/1-1654). The note concerning Holte's death is one of the latest additions to the text of *The Antiquities of Warwickshire*, 639. Dugdale's account of the assassination attempt on Elizabeth I by John Somerville and the execution of his father-in-law Edward Arden for treason draws heavily on 'sundry aged persons of credit, I have often heard' and blames the conviction of Arden on the 'spleen' of the earl of Leicester towards him: Dugdale, *Warwickshire*, 611-12, 681.

¹⁰ J. A. Sharpe, 'Domestic Homicide in Early Modern England', *Hist. Jnl.*, XXIV (1) (1981), 29-48.

¹¹ The surviving letter from Sir John Smith can be dated to c. 1648 and the Smith case is mentioned in correspondence in December 1650; the account of Milcote dates from after the death of Lionel Cranfield, earl of Middlesex in 1645; Dugdale's diary and correspondence reveal that he worked on *The Antiquities of Warwickshire* in 1650 and 1651, when he did not visit London: W. Hamper (ed.), *The Life, Diary and Correspondence of Sir William Dugdale* (London, 1827), 97-9, 246; BL, Add. MS. 22, 916, fo. 55.

Blythe: 'As for my confinement it is not at all prejudiciall to my worke in hande, for all materials that I could any where imagine might be got, I have obteyned. I meane from records.'¹² However, this optimistic assessment is belied by the lack of evidence presented by Dugdale to support the two stories that concern us here. The only documentary evidence he produced in support of the account of Dorothy Smith's crime was based on the records of local officials in Warwickshire. No supporting evidence was referenced for the Greville case, although as we shall see there was material available in John Stow's *Annales of England*, a source that Dugdale used elsewhere in his work. I believe that these particular narratives were incorporated because they were of special significance to Dugdale at that time. Further, I would suggest that, in the aftermath of the king's execution, Dugdale went hunting for examples of narratives that proved that murderers would not go unpunished, even if they escaped justice for a time. Thus, Dugdale's domestic murders played a parallel role for him to the anti-Royalist prodigies of *Mirabilis Annus* for radical dissenters at the Restoration.¹³ In November 1651 the garrison at nearby Maxstoke castle was removed and around the same time Dugdale was able to travel to London once more to assist Roger Dodsworth with the completion of the *Monasticon Anglicanum*.¹⁴ Although Dugdale was to continue to augment his text until its eventual publication in 1656, other demands on his time prevented him from working in a sustained way on the history of Warwickshire. The need to locate supporting references for the anecdotes he had incorporated in his enforced exile from London may have been overlooked, but it is likely that he avoided the risk of finding evidence that undermined the narratives. He wanted the stories of these murders to remind his readers that justice would eventually prevail in an unjust world.

The period during Dugdale's retirement at Blythe was also significant because it represented the period when he emerged from the direct influence of a patron. William Burton, the historian of Leicestershire, who had influenced his early interest in county history, died in 1648. Sir Simon Archer, with whom he had worked closely in the 1630s, had ceded authority over the project to Dugdale in 1638. The two men had found themselves on different sides during the civil war, which had inevitably interrupted their antiquarian correspondence. Although this was re-established during Dugdale's retirement at Blythe, the relationship between the two men was far more equal than before and Dugdale was no longer Archer's client. Since 1638 Dugdale's chief patron had been Sir Christopher Hatton, with whom he had worked in close proximity during the civil war in Oxford, when Hatton had been made comptroller of the household and elevated to the peerage. Lord Hatton had gone into exile in France in 1646. Dugdale had accompanied Lady Hatton to Paris to join her husband in 1648, but had returned to Warwickshire after three months. Lord Hatton was to return to England and to re-establish his relationship with Dugdale around the publication of *The Antiquities of Warwickshire*, but in the interim Dugdale lacked a scholarly patron. Once he was able to travel to London, Sir Thomas Cotton filled Hatton's place to some extent, but around 1650 Dugdale was unusually free of

¹² Shakespeare Birthplace Trust Record Office (hereafter SBTRO), Stratford-upon-Avon, DR422/165.

¹³ K. Thomas, *Religion and the Decline of Magic* (Harmondsworth, 1973), 111.

¹⁴ Hamper, *Sir William Dugdale*, 266–7.

influence directing his scholarly interests. The additions made to *The Antiquities of Warwickshire* in this period consequently take on a particular significance. Within the limitations imposed by his circumstances they reflect Dugdale's own interests and preoccupations rather than those of his patrons. Moreover, it must have seemed doubtful at this time that his work would be published, since this would require significant financial support and his own presence in London. It is probable that Dugdale sat down to revise his text in the expectation that it was more likely to be circulated in manuscript, which generally allowed greater freedom of expression. However, since his antiquarian circle extended beyond those who shared his own political views and his personal circumstances were eased by parliamentary friends, even manuscript circulation necessitated some restraint. Once a manuscript was circulated, it passed beyond the direct control of its author.¹⁵



The account of the murder of Sir Walter Smith by his wife Dorothy occurs towards the beginning of *The Antiquities of Warwickshire* in the account of Shirford (Shelford) in the north-east of Warwickshire.¹⁶ As given by Dugdale, the story was a morality tale of the descendents of a Coventry merchant marrying into the county gentry and suffering for their pretension. In the reign of Mary I an elderly man, Sir Walter Smith, married a young bride, Dorothy Chetwynd, intended for his son. Quickly dissatisfied by her marriage, Dorothy took a lover and planned to murder her elderly husband. Enlisting the help of her waiting gentlewoman and groom, she strangled him and, the death being accepted as due to natural causes, took up a new life in London. Some time later the groom, who was in the service of Sir Walter's son, got drunk one night in Coventry and admitted his part in the crime. Realising his danger, the groom escaped and fled to Wales, but was pursued and apprehended by the vengeful son. The groom, his former mistress and the maid were taken to Warwick and tried. Initially all denied the murder, but eventually confessed the truth of the groom's story. Dorothy Smith was burnt at the stake on Wolvey Heath, while the maid and groom were hanged at Warwick.

The frequent retellings of the murder of Sir Walter Smith, the guilt of his wife and her subsequent execution all derive entirely from Dugdale. The source referenced by Dugdale is Sir John Smith of Crabbet, Sussex, and his uncle Richard Wallop of Bugbrooke, Northamptonshire. There are no surviving contemporary assize court records relating to the case. Dugdale appears to have heard the story as an oral account and then applied to Sir John Smith, Sir Walter's grandson, for further information sometime after his return from France. Sir John describes Dugdale as having had 'true relation' of the story on the whole, although 'the discoverie of the same was otherwise (then the intelligence you received)'. If the story of the murder of Sir

¹⁵ The pre-eminent work on manuscript circulation is H. Love, *Scribal Publication in Seventeenth-Century England* (Oxford, 1993). In 1649 Dugdale was urging D'Ewes to publish, evoking Selden and Sir Thomas Cotton as supporters of print over manuscript. Sir Thomas Shirley by contrast was able to be openly partisan in the *Catholic Armorer*, because it circulated only in manuscript: R. Cust, 'Catholicism, Antiquarianism and Gentry Honour: The Writings of Sir Thomas Shirley', *Midl. Hist.*, XXIII (1998), 58.

¹⁶ Dugdale, *Warwickshire*, 37–9.

Walter Smith was indeed part of the folk history in the vicinity of Shelford, then Dugdale may have known it for many years from his schooldays in Coventry or through his kinsman and fellow antiquary, Samuel Roper, who lived nearby at Monk's Kirby. He may well have been shown the place of Dorothy Smith's execution by the 'Country people'. If Dugdale was familiar with the story through its survival in the oral record, there is no evidence that he attempted to validate the details before the civil war. While the focus of Sir John Smith's estate had shifted from Warwickshire to the Sussex/Surrey border, he retained the manor of Fletchamstead in Stoneleigh. The intermediary mentioned by him in his letter to Dugdale was Francis Blith of Allesley, the brother of Dugdale's friend and neighbour Walter Blith. This connection is one that presumably could have been established before the civil war. Indeed, since Sir John was a catholic, Dugdale a royalist and Blith an active parliamentarian, their communications at this time were presumably predicated upon their pre-war relationship.¹⁷ Sir John Smith was at best an indirect source of substantiating information for the murder of Sir Walter Smith. He had been less than two years old when his father, Richard Smith, had died in 1593. His account depended upon the testimony of Richard Wallop, who had been 'much conversant' with Richard Smith and had heard the story from 'his owne mouth'. Significantly, Richard Wallop was not born until more than a decade after the alleged events and by the time he became indirectly Dugdale's informant was a man of eighty. The obvious similarities between Sir John's account of the murder and other, better known cases, such as the those of Ardern of Faversham and George Saunders, suggests that popular sources influenced the narrative.¹⁸ The surviving letter from Sir John Smith to Dugdale, with underlining and marginal notes in red ink by the historian, is noticeably short on details:

I will assure you this my relation is most agreeable to trueth and the verie substance of the storie, though my defect is the want of true intelligence of the Chrystian names and the particuler places of abode of some parties concerned therein, likewise the judges names that condemned them and the daie and tyme of there tryall, but I am not out of hope to bee somethinge more perfected in this sad storie¹⁹

Since Sir John was not 'out of hope' of receiving more information from his uncle, it is possible that there were further communications that have not survived.²⁰

What is noticeable about the Smith story is the lack of corroborating evidence provided by Dugdale. In contrast to the copious references that he provides for other entries in *The Antiquities of Warwickshire*, in the story of the Smiths there are

¹⁷ J. Thirsk, 'The Fashioning of the Tudor and Stuart Gentry', *Bull. of the John Rylands Lib.*, LXXII (1990), 69–85; VCH. *Warws.*, VI, 234–5. Like Dugdale, Sir John had close connections to parliamentarians. By his mother's second marriage he was the half-brother of William Monson, who sat a regicide judge but did not sign the death warrant.

¹⁸ The inter-relationship of oral, manuscript and printed texts is fully explored in A. Fox, *Oral and Literate Culture in England 1500–1700* (Oxford, 2000).

¹⁹ Bodl.L, MS. Dugdale 15, fo. 319.

²⁰ The story of the murder of Sir Walter Smith is followed in *The Antiquities of Warwickshire* by an account of the cheating of his son out of his inheritance, also referenced to the testimony of Sir John Smith. Since this story is not mentioned in the surviving letter, this indicates that there was further correspondence or a face-to-face meeting between Dugdale and Sir John Smith.

only two. These, concerning the date of Sir Walter's death and the age of William Robinson, the alleged lover, were both derived from the records of inquisitions post mortem held by local officials. In December 1650 Dugdale was seeking information about the case from the public records through John Julian, a clerk in the Six Clerks office in Chancery, but the restrictions on his movements meant that he had to do this remotely through Dodsworth and was apparently unsuccessful.²¹ The evidence of a privy council order relating to the trial would not have been available to Dugdale, as these did not form part of the accessible public records in the seventeenth century. However, Dugdale should have been able to cast doubt upon Sir John's statement that 'I have bine informed from verie good handes, the first overture of maryage was betwixte my father and herself' until his grandfather was 'soe captivated with her excellent beauty' that he married her himself on better terms than he had been prepared to offer for a marriage to his son.²² Sir Walter's marriage to Dorothy took place in 1553. One of the deeds included in the inquisition used by Dugdale as evidence of the date of Sir Walter's death showed that Richard Smith was married to Frances Stafford in December 1551. Nevertheless the assertion that Sir Walter acquired a bride originally intended for his son survived into Dugdale's account. Other evidence relating to the Smith family was to be found in the collections of the Gregorys of Stivichall and Leighs of Stoneleigh, which were used by Dugdale in the course of compiling *The Antiquities of Warwickshire*. He had consulted the Chetwynd family papers in 1639. Evidence to corroborate or refute aspects of the narrative presented by Sir John Smith should have been available to him, although it is possible that it was not immediately to hand in 1650. (In 1649 some of Dugdale's papers that had been 'set aside for safety' had not been retrieved and it is possible that he had also left papers in London.) It is doubtful, however, how far Dugdale was inclined to seek evidence to undermine Sir John's evidence. The guilt of Dorothy Smith was necessary if her story was to serve his providential purpose, and to cast doubt on his major source would have been to undermine the certainty of that guilt.²³

The role of providence in revealing the murder of Sir Walter is directly invoked in Sir John Smith's letter in two ways. First, the groom 'having played the goodfellowe, and being taken in drinke, of his own accorde, without anie incytement or provocation more than his own guilt of conscience (as god was pleased to haue it) disclosed it to my father'. The strong association of the Smith family with Coventry serves to reinforce the idea of providential action driving the groom's confession at that particular time and place. Secondly, once the groom had realised his danger and escaped into Wales, he was caught 'having attempted his escape *three tymes* upon the sea, yet all these severall tymes by godes mercy with contrarie *windes blowne backe* againe'. When he incorporated the story into *The Antiquities of Warwickshire*, Dugdale did not invoke the role of God directly as his source did. Despite this his

²¹ Hamper, *Sir William Dugdale*, 246.

²² The phrase about Dorothy's beauty was underlined by Dugdale and survived intact into his narrative.

²³ TNA, E 215/461; H. E. Chetwynd-Stapylton, *The Chetwynds of Ingestre* (London, 1892), 147; Herts. Record Office, DE/Si/41536 (incorrectly dated in catalogue as 1556); SBTRO, DR/10, DR/18; Hamper, *Sir William Dugdale*, 193; Bodl.L, Dugdale MS. 15, fo. 79; BL, Add. MS. 22, 916.

readers would have appreciated that the confession of the servant 'so sensible of his villany, when he was in his cups' and the adverse weather conditions which prevented his escape were the result of divine intervention. These providential methods of revealing murder in the absence of a corpse were staples of the literature.²⁴

Significantly, the surviving letter from Sir John Smith identifies the lover only by his surname (underlined by Dugdale in both red and black ink), stating:

as for Robinson which was the surname of the ladies paramour (his Christian name I remember not) though he consented to the murther, yet beinge not a present actor therein at the verie fact doinge, there was noe provition in the lawe at that tyme to condemne him, but she never marryed him afterwarde, but undervalewed him, prizinge her beauty and her birthe much above his qualeitie.

It is a note in Dugdale's hand which indicates that William Robinson of Drayton Basset would have been of an appropriate age. Although Sir John might theoretically have been correct that Robinson was beyond the law, there were earlier precedents for taking action against accessories. In the fourteenth-century Warwickshire case recorded by Dugdale of Sir Thomas Murdak's murder by his wife at the instigation of her lover both parties were arrested and imprisoned, although only the wife was ultimately executed. Moreover, in 1551 George Bradshaw was executed for his (apparently innocent) involvement in the conspiracy to murder Thomas Arden, although he was certainly not present.²⁵ It seems certain that a lover who conspired with his mistress to murder her husband would have faced arrest and arraignment in 1555. A close comparison of Sir John Smith's letter and the printed account of the murder reveals that Dugdale allotted Robinson a far more active role in the plot than his source. Dugdale states that Dorothy resolved to murder her husband 'with the assistance' of Robinson and 'though Robinson failed in coming on the designed night (perhaps through a right apprehension of so direfull a fact) she no whit staggered in her resolution'. Smith by contrast says no more than that Robinson consented to the murder. What is clear is that William Robinson of Drayton Bassett was not convicted of any felony in 1555, since he was in possession of his estate in September 1562 when he wrote his will. It seems very likely that he has been the victim of mistaken identification by Dugdale, who settled upon Robinson as someone of suitable age, who held land in the area and fitted the description of Dorothy's lover as of a lower social status. Robinson's father was a rich merchant from London, who had established his family within the local gentry through the acquisition of monastic lands. His family was not of the same social standing as the Chetwynds. Moreover, William Robinson's heirs lost their footing in local society in Elizabeth's reign. This could be interpreted by Dugdale as evidence of Robinson's guilt, in the light of the Old Testament warnings that the sins of the father would eventually be visited

²⁴ See Gaskill, *Crime and Mentalities in Early Modern England*, 214–20; Walsham, *Providence in Early Modern England*, 88–90; Lake, 'Cheap Print, Protestantism and Murder', 69–74. The underlining in Sir John's text is Dugdale's.

²⁵ Bellamy, *Strange, Inhuman Deaths*, 20, 122; S. J. Payling, 'Murder, Motive and Punishment in Fifteenth-Century England', *Eng. Hist. Rev.*, CXIII (1998), 1–17; Dugdale, *Warwickshire*, 494.

upon his descendents. The known facts about William Robinson allowed Dugdale to identify him as the lover of Dorothy Smith, but it seems likely that he was already married to someone else before the murder occurred.²⁶

Beyond the inquisitions post mortem the only supporting evidence mentioned by Dugdale was that of the country people, who showed the curious the spot where Dorothy was supposedly burnt. This is a source that the historian would ordinarily treat with extreme scepticism or dismiss out of hand, except as providing support for a story verified by other evidence. Although Dugdale makes reference to the 'good jointure' provided for Dorothy Smith, he references no public records showing property being escheated to the crown on her conviction or being restored to the rightful heir. Nor is any source given for various picturesque details of the story. The murder itself is described by Smith in his letter, but there is no mention of Sir Walter waking and crying out, 'Help, Doll, help'. Although such a detail might have come out in a court trial, in the absence of such contemporary evidence the victim's last words must be an invention either derived from oral tradition or Dugdale's own imagination.²⁷ Nor did Sir John state that Thomas Chetwynd, Dorothy's father, 'spared not for arguments to perswade his daughter to accept of Sir Walter'. The complicity of parents who forced their daughters into unsuitable marriages with tragic consequences was a common trope of murder pamphlets, suggesting that Dugdale was further shaping the story for his purposes.²⁸ Indeed, Sir John did not know the names of Dorothy's father and brother and it is likely that this information derived from Dugdale's own knowledge of the Chetwynd family. As well as embellishing the story as told to him by Smith, Dugdale also suppressed certain aspects and altered others. According to Smith, the maid was burnt alongside her mistress rather than hanging at Warwick with the groom. This would have been the correct punishment by law, since the crime of petty treason for which the penalty was to be burnt applied to a wife murdering her husband and to a female servant murdering her master. Nor does Dugdale mention the support for Dorothy from the Chetwynds and her 'manie greate and powerfull frendes', which was stressed by Richard Smith's son to emphasise the 'constant resolution' of his father in pursuing the prosecution. The potential danger of Dorothy's friends influencing the prosecution was recognised by the privy council, who wrote to the sheriff warning him to ensure that his officers were not corrupted in the matter of Lady Smith.²⁹ Dugdale does describe the groom 'most impudently' accusing Richard Smith of corrupting him to accuse his stepmother falsely, in order that her jointure might be recovered. His dismissal of the

²⁶ TNA, PROB/11/46/273; *Calendar of State Papers Domestic* (hereafter CSPD), 1547–1580, 285; Stebbing Shaw, *The History and Antiquities of Staffordshire*, 2 vols. (London, 1798–1801), II, 1–11. The date of the marriage of William Robinson and Grace Fitzherbert and the births of their children cannot be precisely dated, but it seems likely to have occurred in the reign of Edward VI.

²⁷ The alleged dying words of the victim were included in the indictment for a murder examined in Payling, 'Murder, Motive and Punishment in Fifteenth-Century England', 11–12.

²⁸ Lake, 'Cheap Print, Protestantism and Murder', 267.

²⁹ Walter Chetwynd (d. 1669) was Dorothy Chetwynd's great-nephew. He worked on the history of Staffordshire and Dugdale had access to his papers in 1639: Bodl.L, Dugdale MS. 15, fo. 79; *Acts of the Privy Council* 1554–56, 100.

issue precludes the possibility that Dorothy Smith might have been the innocent victim of a conspiracy to recover the family's property from such a young widow. With our knowledge of other contemporary cases, the apparent lack of initial suspicion concerning Sir Walter's death and the powerful friends who could have spoken on Dorothy Smith's behalf, it seems surprising that Richard Smith succeeded in convincing the justice of the peace who heard the groom deny the accusation 'with manie and deepe oathes' to have Dorothy and her maid arrested and committed to trial at the assizes. It might have been expected that her friends would have got the case transferred to the court of King's Bench, where an acquittal was more likely, or have sought a pardon for her after conviction. At very least it might have been expected that her friends would have secured a less agonising death for Dorothy than burning. There is an obvious parallel with the case of Agnes, Lady Hungerford, who was convicted of the murder of her first husband in 1523 after the death of her second husband removed her protection. It is probable that the prosecution was secured through the influence of Sir Edward Hungerford's heirs, intent on recovering the widow's jointure. On conviction Agnes was hanged rather than being burnt, a more merciful fate presumably recognising her social status.³⁰ The manner in which Dugdale condensed the account he received from Sir John concerning the trial and executions obscures the questions surrounding the account and contrasts with the way in which he amplified the description of the courtship and murder.

Significantly, Dugdale does not support his account of the murder of Sir Walter Smith with references to the previous generation of local historians, such as Henry Ferrers or Sampson Erdeswicke, who was a neighbour of the Chetwynds in Staffordshire. Both are used elsewhere in *The Antiquities of Warwickshire* as credit-worthy sources to support oral history and almost certainly had direct knowledge of the events described. In 1650 Erdeswicke's surviving records were beyond Dugdale's reach. He was in correspondence with Ferrers' son at that time and may have sought corroborating evidence from his papers, but the neglect they had suffered presumably meant that anything relating to the Smith case had been lost.³¹ The story of Sir Walter Smith's murder does not feature in the contemporary chronicles or annals. This seems surprising, since the prescribed punishment of burning at the stake for husband-murder was rarely invoked. As a rich, young gentlewoman Dorothy Smith was also an unusual murderess, whose trial and execution might have been expected to attract notice. It is possible that measures were taken to reduce the notice attracted by the case. This would explain why the execution took place in the rural obscurity of Wolvey Heath rather than at Warwick. Since the justification for such a painful death was the salutary effect it would have on those tempted to copy the criminal, it was usual for burnings to take place in towns. It may be that the significant number of burnings for heresy which occurred in the south-east from the spring of 1555 meant that the execution of Dorothy Smith in a remote part of

³⁰ DNB, Hungerford, Agnes (d. 1523). For the possible influence of friends, see the career of Margaret Freeman, as described in Bellamy, *Strange, Inhuman Deaths*, 191–9.

³¹ *Acts of the Privy Council* (hereafter APC) 1581–2, 144; S. Erdeswicke, *A Survey of Staffordshire*, ed. T. Harwood (London, 1844), 61–4, 231; BL, Add. MS. 4102, fos. 8–9, 29v.

Warwickshire did not attract the attention of London-based chroniclers as it might have done during less dramatic periods of English history.³²



The second murder to which Dugdale gave detailed treatment occurs in the account of Milcote, near Stratford-upon-Avon, and concerns Lodowick Greville, a kinsman of Sir Fulke Greville.³³ In this case the victim was not a spouse but a wealthy bachelor and tenant called Webb, who Greville invited to spend Christmas with him at his manor of Sezincote, Gloucestershire. The description of his crime shows him sinning against the duty of hospitality, by having his victim strangled by two of his servants while in his house. An elaborate charade was then played out, to enable a will to be drawn up by the local parson in Greville's favour, as one of the servants impersonated the dead man. Once again the initial crime went undiscovered, but was eventually uncovered when one of the servants got drunk and threatened to expose Greville. The other servant obeyed Greville's order to kill his fellow murderer, but the body was discovered. Both master and servant were tried at Warwick. Greville refused to plead and suffered the penalty of being pressed to death, thereby preventing the seizure of his estate as he was not convicted as a felon. He was succeeded by his son Edward. To emphasise the cursed nature of the Grevilles, Dugdale told how Edward had become the Greville heir when he accidentally shot his elder brother dead with a bow and arrow and that his father had made light of the incident. But Lodowick's sacrifice in refusing to plead came to nothing, as Edward incurred great debts and had no male heir. Consequently, the Greville estate was dissipated within a generation. This story was particularly apposite for Dugdale's providential purposes, for it showed that for all Lodowick's efforts justice could not be evaded, only delayed.

The source of the Greville story is described by Dugdale as 'credible tradition' and he gives no references to any documentary sources. The most obvious source for his information was Sir Thomas Shirley, who was associated with Sir Edward Greville and a trustee for the settlement of his brother's estate in 1634. However, Shirley was only born around the time of Greville's execution and would have received the story second-hand some years after the event. A potentially more reliable informant was Henry Ferrers, who being from the previous generation would have had direct knowledge of the event. Other information concerning the Grevilles came from Ferrers, which Dugdale referred to as 'by tradition I have heard'.³⁴ However, Henry Ferrers

³² Alice Arden was burnt at Canterbury and Anne Brewen at Smithfield. Those burnt for heresy in Marian Warwickshire suffered at Lichfield and Coventry. After its publication by Dugdale, the murder of Sir Walter Smith did achieve some popularity as a providential tale: N. Wanley, *The Wonders of the Little World* (London, 1678), 92–3; H. Spelman, *The History and Fate of Sacrilege* (London, 1853, reprinted 2003), 45–8; W. Howitt, *Visits to Remarkable Places*, 2nd edn. (London, 1840), 152–8; J. Burgess, *Historic Warwickshire*, 2nd edn. (Birmingham, 1893), 59–63. Chetwynd-Stapylton refers to a novel based on the story by Burford Waring Gibsone, a Victorian vicar of Wolvey, but I have been unable to trace a copy or any other reference to this work.

³³ Dugdale, *Warwickshire*, 534–5.

³⁴ Centre for Kentish Studies, Sackville Manuscripts, U269/T279; Gloucestershire Record Office will, 1634/159; Dugdale, *Warwickshire*, 571.

had died in 1633 and Shirley had left the country during the civil war, so neither was available while Dugdale was writing his account of Lodowick Greville's crime. Since it was usual for Dugdale to identify his sources when they are reputable antiquaries, it seems probable that his account was obtained from some other informant. If Dugdale had received his information from Henry Ferrers, we would expect him to be informed about earlier incidents in Lodowick Greville's life. These included an attack on Sir John Conway which led to his appearance before Star Chamber and several months' imprisonment in 1579. Henry Ferrers had been a law student in Elizabethan London and was associated with the catholic circles in which Greville, the son-in-law of Sir William Petre, moved. He would undoubtedly have taken an interest in this and other cases that brought Greville to the attention of the privy council.³⁵

In contrast to the murder of Sir Walter Smith, the Greville case did attract the interest of commentators before Dugdale, although the accounts include significant differences from his. As we have seen, according to Dugdale Greville and his servant were tried at Warwick. However, John Stow in his *Annales of England* (1592) described Greville as having been taken from the Tower on 1 November 1589 to the King's Bench, Westminster, for trial as accessory to murder. Although Greville's case was transferred from Warwick assizes to the King's Bench, this did not help him to escape punishment. Having stood mute, Greville was pressed to death at the king's bench prison at Southwark on 14 November, while his servant as the principal in the murder was hanged at Westminster on the same day. Stow provides no details of the alleged crime. For him the interesting feature of the case was Greville's refusal to plead, which meant that he was not convicted of a felony and consequently his property was not forfeited to the crown.³⁶ This discrepancy concerning the location of the executions increases the likelihood that Henry Ferrers was not Dugdale's informant, as he was living in London in 1589 and would have been aware of Greville's execution there. Another of Dugdale's antiquarian circle, the Worcestershire historian Thomas Habington, was actually a prisoner in the Tower at the same time as Greville and can be ruled out as Dugdale's informant on the same grounds. However, Habington may have been the source of Sir Thomas Coventry's version of the story, which appeared in the *History of Sacrilege*, when it was published at the end of the seventeenth century. Alternatively Coventry, whose estate was in Worcestershire, may have heard the story from another neighbour, Sir Henry Bromley. The son of Elizabeth's lord chancellor, Bromley was the brother-in-law of Edward Greville, who had married his sister Jane six years before Lodowick Greville's execution. Coventry's account differed from Dugdale's in that it had Webb dying of poison rather than strangulation and made no reference to the second murder of the servant. Like Dugdale's account it provides no date for the events, but does mention that Greville was pressed to death. Coventry's version varies with reference to the story of the shooting of his elder brother by Edward Greville, specifying the weapon as a 'piece' or firearm rather than a bow and lacking any reference to his father taking the matter lightly. It also includes the information that Edward Greville had a

³⁵ APC 1578–80, 46, 67–8, 180–1, 184; APC 1558–70, 396–7; APC 1575–77, 50, 51, 55, 180.

³⁶ John Stow, *Annales of England* (1592), 1286–7; APC 1588–9, 345–7; CSPD 1581–90, 626.

son 'that breaking his leg over a style, dy'd'. This further evidence of a curse laid upon the Grevilles does not appear in Dugdale.³⁷ There is no way of knowing whether the story of Edward Greville shooting his elder brother is based on fact. Lodowick and his wife Thomasine did have an elder son, William, who unlike Edward was not mentioned in his grandfather's will in 1572. It is possible that his grandfather was making provision for the younger son, but it is more likely that William had not survived childhood. This would mean that William had died before the age of ten and, that if the incident reported by both Coventry and Dugdale was true, it occurred in the early childhood of both boys. The nature of the alleged accident, involving either a firearm or long-bow, suggests that this is inherently unlikely. Such a story would hardly have been preserved within the popular memory of the area around Milcote, since the family lived in Essex until after Sir William Petre's death. It might have circulated within the elite culture of the inns of court and been received by Dugdale from a source such as his lawyer kinsman Samuel Roper. What is undoubtedly an accretion engendered by subsequent events is the alleged comment by Lodowick Greville to his son that appears in Dugdale's account.³⁸

Since a copy of the will allegedly forged by Lodowick Greville survives in the public records, we are able to confirm that Dugdale's story is incorrect in a number of other points besides that of the location of the executions. The will of Thomas Webb of Drayton, Oxfordshire, was dated 10 November 1585 and proved in London a week later. So the events did not occur at Christmas. Nor was Webb a bachelor, since a wife is mentioned in the will and named as Katherine Webb in a probate sentence of 1589.³⁹ The will was written by Greville himself, not the local parson. There was no legacy to a Banbury attorney, although Simon Wickham of Banbury, yeoman, was named as executor alongside Greville. The will gave Greville all Webb's goods and livestock in Goldicote, Worcestershire, where Webb was Greville's tenant. Greville was also to receive two-thirds of Webb's manor and advowson in Drayton, Oxfordshire, as agreed 'upon a consideration', provided Webb died without legitimate issue; the other third was reserved to the widow. The will was witnessed by Thomas Barbour and Thomas Brock, Greville's two servants. The writing of the will by the major beneficiary and the speed with which the will was proved look suspicious, particularly given Greville's reputation for underhand dealing in financial transactions. Yet the evidence of the will suggests a far less dramatic narrative than the story told by Dugdale, in which no impersonation of Webb on his deathbed was required. Nor were the contents of the will inherently unreasonable for a man *in extremis* with no direct male heir. On the evidence of the will it would be possible to construct a narrative in which Webb died of natural causes and Greville took advantage of this to defraud his estate. This would be far less dramatic than the story presented by Dugdale and would present Greville in a somewhat less devilish light. It would also have made the story less attractive to Dugdale, who was looking for

³⁷ H. Spelman, *The History of Sacrilege* (London, 1698), 128–9. Coventry's testimony is dated 9 May 1626.

³⁸ C. Whitfield, 'Sir Edward Greville III, of Milcote', *Transactions of the Bristol and Gloucs. Arch. Soc.*, LXXXIV (1965), 82–100.

³⁹ TNA, PROB/11/68/395; PROB/11/74/73. There were no children of the marriage, although the will made provision for any born subsequent to its writing.

examples of cases of murder being brought to light and punished. The will was disputed by the widow and Webb's brother, Richard. This was one of three cases which brought Greville before the privy council in 1588. Sir Thomas Bromley, who was so closely linked to Greville through his daughter's marriage, had died in office the previous year. In September 1588 the Webb case was submitted to the new lord chancellor for determination.⁴⁰ Greville, who now lacked a powerful supporter on the council, was committed to the Tower in January 1589. At the beginning of June Katherine Webb obtained a sentence overturning the will, on the grounds that there was a problem with the probate rather than that the will was forged. The following month the privy council sent an indictment prepared by the law officers against Thomas Smith alias Barbour and Greville for the murder of Thomas Brock. This is consistent with the contention that Barbour and Brock knew that the will they had witnessed was forged and that Greville incited Barbour to murder Brock when he threatened to reveal all. However, it is not clear how far Greville was suspected of Webb's murder, since the privy council did not order an investigation into the circumstances surrounding Webb's alleged murder until two months after Greville and Barbour were dead.⁴¹ It is probable that, while Greville had run out of powerful protectors and finally exhausted the patience of the council, there was a reluctance to expose his extended family to the full consequences of his dubious career. The focus of subsequent retellings of the story, however, has been on the murder of Webb, rather than the more mundane killing of the servant Brock, who was in any case assumed to share the guilt of the first crime. This facilitated the story's interpretation as an example of the fatality that accompanies ill-gotten gains. The delay between the crime and its detection, which for Dugdale was such an important aspect of the narrative, was omitted from the version that appeared in the *History of Sacrilege* and seems to have less significance for other commentators.

For contemporaries, the most noteworthy aspect of the Greville case was that Lodowick chose to be pressed to death rather than enter a plea and so endanger his estate. This was the reason Stow included the case in his annals. In 1599 Henry Garnet writing to Guilio Pinoli in Venice referred to Sir Edward Greville as the man 'whose father was pressed to death'.⁴² Through this act Lodowick ensured that his family was not impoverished by his actions. Although Lodowick's sale of the manor of Drayton in 1565 suggests that he was experiencing financial problems within a few years of his marriage, their close connection to their Beauchamp Court kinsmen ensured them a role as one of the leading families in Warwickshire. Nor did they suffer an immediate loss in status following Lodowick's trial. After his father's death Edward Greville became a justice, served as sheriff in 1594–5 and sat for the county in parliament in 1593 and 1604. In 1597 he joined his kinsman the earl of Essex as a gentleman volunteer on the Azores voyage, for which he was knighted. This public life required considerable expense. Meanwhile, Lodowick's wife lived on at Sezincote, which she held as her jointure, for almost forty years. Despite the costs incurred by

⁴⁰ APC 1588, 59, 60, 66, 88, 94, 264, 265.

⁴¹ APC 1588–9, 345–7; APC 1589–90, 324, 378–9. Some sources such as VCH. Oxfordshire, IX, 106 suggest that Greville murdered Richard Webb rather than his brother, but the evidence of the will appears conclusive.

⁴² CSPD 1598–1601, 266.

her persistent recusancy, she died a wealthy woman. Her long survival as a widow significantly affected the value of her son's estate, as did the support of his two unmarried brothers and sister. It is likely that even with optimal management the Greville estate was insufficiently robust to sustain a high public profile and the cost of the recusancy of several family members. By the reign of James I Sir Edward Greville was seriously in debt to Lionel Cranfield and Sir Arthur Ingram. One of his five daughters had married Sir Arthur's brother, Sir William Ingram, and in 1615 Sir Arthur acquired the Greville estate and married another daughter. Neither of the Ingram marriages produced children. The house and land at Milcote were exchanged by Ingram with Cranfield for land in Yorkshire, while Greville stayed on as the impoverished manager. Although two of his other daughters married into local catholic families and produced children, this branch of the Greville family was expunged in Warwickshire.⁴³ While justice had been repeatedly delayed, eventually punishment for the sins of Lodowick Greville was visited upon him, his son and his grandchildren.



Both the cases examined here provided evidence of the action of divine vengeance, through the way in which the crimes came to be brought to light and the guilty punished by providential means. For this interpretation to work Dugdale could not entertain the possibility of innocence in either case. The suggestion that the groom might have been suborned by Richard Smith to accuse his stepmother is not followed up, although the possibility of recovering her jointure would have presented a substantial motive. In this instance Dugdale, having dictated the interpretation through his presentation of the narrative, leaves the story to speak for itself, possibly out of respect for the Chetwynd family. When it came to the case of Lodowick Greville, where he need have no regard for the sensibilities of close relatives, he was less circumspect. While he might '*not take upon me to judge*' that the failure of the Greville line was the judgement of God for Lodowick's crime, his readers were left in no doubt that this was his belief. In opening his account Dugdale explicitly associated Greville's ambition with his crime, represented by his building of a castellated mansion and the consequent need to 'support his greatness'. During the building boom of the sixteenth century it was common for families to relocate their manor house to a more prominent position, but here it is made an aspect of Lodowick Greville's vainglory. Similarly, it is implicitly suggested that naming the house Mount Greville was evidence of unwarranted pride, since the family had not held the manor for very long.⁴⁴ The house was burnt down in 1644 during the civil war, leaving only parts of

⁴³ Gloucestershire Record Office, will 1627/175; will 1634/159; TNA, PROB 11/156/351: Thomasine his mother died in 1627, his brothers Peter and Charles in 1628 and 1634 respectively and his sister Valentine outlived her brother. Margaret Greville married Edward Pennell and had four daughters; Joyce Greville married Arthur Whitacre and had two sons.

⁴⁴ In the *View of Staffordshire*, which Dugdale transcribed in the 1630s, Sampson Erdeswicke had written of a house known as Blount's Hall, near Utcester [Uttoxeter]: 'A man would think that it should, by the name, be the ancient seat of the Blounts, but that is not so; for this is a house of no great account, and but lately built, by one that, being a little glorious, would have called it by his name', Erdeswicke, *Staffordshire*, 514-15.

the fabric to be observed by Dugdale at the time he was writing this part of the account of Milcote. When we consider that this narrative was written by a royalist in the months following the execution of the king, it is not difficult to see the pride and fall of Lodowick Greville as a metaphor for what Dugdale hoped would be the fate of the regicides. While criminals might benefit from evil actions for a time, divine retribution was certain.

Dugdale did not invariably adopt providential interpretations in his narrative accounts. Describing the case of John Somerville, who attempted to assassinate Elizabeth I and the consequent execution of Edward Arden, Somerville's father-in-law, he went against the current of popular interpretation. Where Holinshed represented this as 'a dreadfull example of Gods heavie judgement', Dugdale saw it as evidence of the power and malign influence of the earl of Leicester. While the expunging of the direct male line of the Ardens in 1643 might be providentially interpreted as further evidence of Arden's guilt, Dugdale draws no such conclusion. Edward Arden was 'a gentleman not inferior to the rest of his ancestors' and his grandson 'being much accomplit with learning and other excellent parts, died in the flower of his youth'. The Ardens were presented as victims of the machinations of the earl of Leicester and the catholic priesthood, not of divine vengeance.⁴⁵ Dugdale was not an inveterate collector of providential stories, nor did he necessarily adopt providential explanations when they were available. However, in 1650 he seems to have sought comfort in the belief that, while the regicides might appear to be successful for a period, God would eventually ensure that right would triumph.

The Antiquities of Warwickshire is a monument to the medieval gentry, their pedigrees, landholding, pious acts, military and public service. The narratives that have been examined here are unusual both because of the space devoted to them within Dugdale's text and their relationship to more recent history. Dugdale's enforced stay at Blythe was of comparatively short duration and represented an unparalleled opportunity for him to make extensive revisions and additions to *The Antiquities of Warwickshire*. By the beginning of 1651 he was once more visiting London and distracted by other demands on his time and skills. It is possible that had his incarceration lasted longer, *The Antiquities of Warwickshire* would have been a richer source of anecdotes about the Tudor gentry. If so, the primacy that Dugdale granted documents over oral sources would have been less obvious. I have argued that the narratives of these murders held a particular attraction for a royalist following the regicide because of their message that divine retribution might be delayed but not evaded. I believe that they were selected from a larger store of anecdotal material, which was less easily shaped to Dugdale's purpose and most of which has consequently been lost. By their rarity within a scholarly text these stories acquired a status that they would not have achieved within a more polemical or less authoritative work. Consequently, they have been cited on the authority of Dugdale without further evaluation of the evidence. The inclusion of a higher proportion of such material would have reduced the monumental status of Dugdale's work. As it is, these narratives represent a temporary escape from the scholarly standards of the

⁴⁵ Holinshed, *Third Volume of the Chronicles* (London, 1586), 1356; Dugdale, *Warwickshire*, 681.

antiquarian community which Dugdale did so much to promote. It is paradoxical that this escape was facilitated by the loss of his physical liberty.

Notes on Contributor

Dr Jan Broadway, Centre for Editing Lives and Letters, Queen Mary, University of London, London E1 4NS, UK; Email: j.broadway@qmul.ac.uk