

Literature and Favoritism in Early Modern England



CURTIS PERRY

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For writers in the early modern period, thinking about royal favorites inevitably meant thinking about the uneasy intersection of the personal and the public in a political system traditionally organized around patronage and intimacy. Depictions of favoritism in a variety of texts including plays, poems, libels, and pamphlets explore the most fundamental ideological questions concerning personal monarchy and the early modern public sphere, questions about the nature and limits of prerogative and about the enfranchisement or otherwise of subjects. In this study, Curtis Perry examines the ideological underpinnings of the heated controversies surrounding powerful royal favorites and the idea of favoritism in the late Elizabethan and early Stuart period. Perry argues that the discourse of corrupt favoritism is this period's most important unofficial vehicle for exploring constitutional unease concerning the nature and limits of personal monarchy within the balanced English constitution.

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Though no section of the present volume more substantial than a half-paragraph has been printed elsewhere, I would like to note a number of related essays that have played a role in my thinking about early modern favoritism and that overlap with this book in minor ways. Two printed essays represent early stages in my thinking about Marlowe's *Edward II* and the problem of favoritism. They are "The Politics of Access and Representations of the Sodomite King in Early Modern England," *Renaissance Quarterly* 53 (2000): 1054–83, and "Inwardness as Sedition in Heywood and Marlowe," in *The Future of the Middle Ages and the Renaissance: Problems, Trends, and Opportunities for Research*, ed. Roger Dahood (Turnhout, Belgium: Brepols, 1998), 109–28. Though neither of these pieces has been repackaged here, some sentences and key formulations have found their way from each of these essays into the present study and I am grateful for permission to reuse the material. Likewise, a handful of sentences scattered throughout chapters 1, 3, 5, and 6 of this book appear in a very different context in "1603 and the Discourse of Favouritism," forthcoming in *The Accession of James I: Historical and Cultural Consequences*, ed. Glenn Burgess, Rowland Wymer, and Jason Lawrence (New York: Palgrave). My basic argument about Elizabeth Cary in chapter 6 of the present study is extended and recontextualized (though none of the specific language is reproduced) in

“‘Royal Fever’ and ‘the giddy Commons’: Cary’s *History of the Life, Reign, and Death of Edward II*,” forthcoming in *Elizabeth Cary*, ed. Heather Wolfe (New York: Palgrave).

Much of this book was researched and composed during time wrested away from the demands of parenthood. It is appropriate, therefore, to acknowledge not only the awe-inspiring competence of my wife Jaya, but also the terrific daycare that both of my children have received while their parents have been at work. Most of all, though, I want to thank my children themselves – Vikram and Roshan – for being so loving to their sometimes-harried parents. I cannot imagine a greater privilege than participating in their lives, nor a greater antidote to the solitude of scholarship. This book (like its author) is dedicated to them.

A note on texts

When quoting from edited or unedited primary texts, I have for the most part reproduced spelling and punctuation from the editions of the documents that I have consulted. Except in other people's titles, though, I have modernized *i/j* and *u/v*, and in a small number of cases I have silently expanded contractions, emended obvious typographical errors, or repunctuated unedited Renaissance texts in order to make them legible to modern readers.

*“Prerogative pleasures”: favoritism and monarchy
in early modern England*

From the appearance, in 1584, of the enormously popular libel known as *Leicester’s Commonwealth* to the assassination of the Duke of Buckingham in the summer of 1628, hostility toward seemingly all-powerful royal favorites played a central role in the development and articulation of anti-court sentiment in England. Even after Buckingham’s death, royal favorites continued to loom large in the English political imagination, providing a convenient shorthand for corruption and tyranny in numerous plays, poems, and polemics composed and circulated during the personal rule of Charles I. This heated and ongoing controversy over the institution of royal favoritism functioned during this entire period as both an arena in which deep-seated political and ideological concerns were contested and as a crucial symbolic vehicle for their public expression.

The sentiment behind the period’s interest in favoritism comes across loud and clear in the remarkable title given to one of Sir Dudley Diggs’s speeches from the parliament of 1626 as reprinted in 1643: *A speech delivered in Parliament concerning the evill consequences that doe attend this state by committing places of trust into the hands of court-favourites wherby it doth plainly appear to be the originall of all publick grievances and combustions of this kingdom.*¹ Behind this extraordinarily sweeping claim about the significance of court favoritism lies the fact that thinking about royal favorites inevitably meant thinking about the uneasy intersection of the personal and the public in a political system traditionally organized around patronage and intimacy. Writers arguing about favoritism therefore do so in part to explore the most fundamental ideological questions concerning personal monarchy and the early modern public sphere, questions about the nature and limits of prerogative and about the enfranchisement or otherwise of subjects. I want to argue, in fact, that the discourse of corrupt favoritism is this period’s most important unofficial vehicle for exploring constitutional unease concerning the nature and limits of personal monarchy within the balanced English constitution.

The list of controversial Elizabethan and Jacobean figures seen as royal favorites includes men like Sir Walter Raleigh, Robert Devereaux, 2nd Earl of Essex, Sir Christopher Hatton (said to have had “more Recourse unto her Majestie in her Pryvye Chamber, than Reason would suffice, yf she weare . . . vertuouse and well inclined”), and Philip Herbert, Earl of Montgomery (King James’s first English favorite).² But by and large the cultural stereotype of the Machiavellian court favorite was developed in England in relation to three particularly high-profile figures: Robert Dudley, the Elizabethan Earl of Leicester, Robert Carr, Earl of Somerset, the Scottish bedchamber favorite who rose to prominence following his knighthood in 1607 and who fell from grace in 1616 after being convicted of poisoning his associate Sir Thomas Overbury, and George Villiers, the much-loathed Buckingham, who replaced Carr in King James’s affections and who managed to become in time the favorite of Charles I as well.

Each of these men was influential in his day, and so the resentment that their influence fostered in the hearts of rivals and opponents has everything to do with the cut and thrust of court maneuver.³ It is hard, though, to read much that was said and written about these figures without realizing that there is more to the discourse of favoritism than just a series of isolated court contests: the kinds of invective leveled against successive favorites are so consistent as to hint at habits of political imagination that extend beyond the context of any single career. This is true in terms of the striking recurrence of what Robert Shephard has called the “bogey myths” of favoritism – the way each favorite attracted a similar set of lurid scandal tropes – but also, more subtly, in the way that successive favorites are pigeonholed by observers into the same ethically charged stereotypes set in meaningful opposition to traditional models of honor and duty and service.⁴ Well before Buckingham burst onto the scene, in other words, Englishmen were likely to imagine royal favorites as religiously apostate, cowardly upstarts, skilled in dancing but lacking in wisdom or military training, dependant entirely upon the monarch’s errant whim, treacherous and sexually omnivorous, and all too ready to make use of the black arts of sorcery and poison. In fact, there is considerable reason to believe that a figure like Buckingham attracted these forms of opprobrium because they were already current as ways to think about the problem of the royal favorite before his political debut.

The figure of the all-powerful royal favorite, in other words, is a cultural fantasy, one developed in relation to historical persons and situations but one best understood in larger mythic or ideological terms. The appropriate questions to ask, therefore, have to do with the cultural work performed by

representations of favorites: why were the recurring stereotypes concerning favorites compelling? To whom were they compelling? What larger theoretical questions are raised in the discourse of favoritism? What kinds of answers are supplied? What, in this larger sense, is the period’s fascination with the idea of the all-powerful favorite really about? Asking these questions quickly leads beyond the world of court politics narrowly construed, for the discourse of favoritism includes images of corrupted court intimacy and its socio-political affects that clearly appealed to a broader cross-section of the population than the direct rivals of the favorites themselves. English writers of all kinds produced an avalanche of plays, chronicles, verse histories, epigrams, memoirs, prose fictions, and polemics that explored the contours of the problem of royal favoritism. For example, though only a small handful of them are well known today, there are upwards of fifty extant plays from 1587–1642 that deal centrally with the problem of royal favoritism. Add to this the number of plays containing anticourt satire that pointedly alludes to Leicester, Somerset, or Buckingham, or that feature sustained thematization of the politics of intimacy, and that number could easily be trebled. Likewise, historians and literary scholars are only now beginning to take note of the massive corpus of politically topical poems and polemics that circulated widely in manuscript, especially from the 1620s on.⁵ These deal prominently, though not of course exclusively, with the controversial royal favorites who became figureheads for anticourt sentiment. All of these disparate kinds of writing – fictions, histories, libels, and polemics – constitute the discourse of favoritism.

That phrase may seem to impose too much unity on what is, finally, a very heterogeneous body of texts. But it is a central premise of this book that we can in fact uncover, by attending carefully to the tropes, stories, and *dramatis personae* with which favoritism is figured, a sustained and often sophisticated engagement with key theoretical questions about the ancient constitution and the limits of prerogative. This is a book, in other words, about the way literature in general helps perform a kind of cultural work usually thought of only as the job of political theorists. The Elizabethan and early Stuart fascination with the figure of the corrupt royal favorite, I want to argue, reflects a profound ambivalence about the legitimacy of personal intimacy as a political mechanism and thus, by extension, explores questions concerning the nature of the relationship between monarch and subject that contribute, ultimately, to the emergence of proto-republican ideas about public service, to what Annabel Patterson has recently discussed as the seventeenth-century origins of a liberal political thought, and to what Jürgen Habermas has famously called

“the structural transformation of the public sphere.”⁶ Though I am of course leery of the teleological impulses that have typically accompanied this kind of argument, it is worth being very specific here about the ways that Elizabethan and early Stuart debates about court favoritism help lay the groundwork for larger transformation of the kind theorized by Habermas. Most obviously, these arguments help re-imagine the relationship between the personal and the public. That is, hostility to favoritism tends toward the emergence of a critique of personal monarchy and, as Habermas argues, “civil society came into existence as the corollary of a depersonalized state authority.”⁷

We might also think of the impact of the discourse of favoritism on the emergence of a public sphere in terms of its impact upon the dissemination of news and the encouragement of thought and conversation about public matters beyond the confines of the court. Before the advent of printed newspapers, a great deal of politically sensitive information was circulated in manuscript. Much of this material deals with controversial favorites, of course. More significantly, interest in controversy concerning favorites played an important role in the development of manuscript culture and thus in the kind of readerly counterpublics made possible by it. H. R. Woudhuysen has suggested that manuscript circulation of *Leicester's Commonwealth* (a libel that was vigorously suppressed by the government in its printed form) may have provided the key model for the subsequent circulation of politically charged material, and it is possible too that demand for information concerning the scandals that beset Somerset in 1613–16 resulted in a general strengthening of the networks by which manuscript news and libels were disseminated.⁸ There can be no question, certainly, that libels concerning Buckingham are among the most widely circulated manuscript materials throughout the 1620s and 1630s. Because the circulation of manuscript material conforms to pre-existing social networks, it is to some degree a phenomenon limited to the elite. But there is considerable evidence that these materials were read by a broad cross-section of literate subjects, and not only in London.⁹ Moreover, Alastair Bellany has recently argued that the circulation of ballads, rhymes, and oral gossip as well as libels and newsletters would have helped make court scandal a topic of discussion among an even wider variety of ranks and classes.¹⁰ It seems appropriate to say, therefore, that the furor surrounding favoritism is an important part of the pre-history of Habermas's bourgeois public sphere both because of the kinds of political ideas explored within the discourse of favoritism and because of the kinds of semi-public exchange this discourse participated in and helped to encourage.

To avoid teleology, though, it helps to think of the ongoing debate over favoritism not (or not only) as a precursor to more modern forms of political thought but as the manifestation of a fissure built into the edifice of English constitutional monarchy, the system of government described by Sir John Fortescue as “*dominium politicum et regale*” (political and royal dominion).¹¹ Fortescue, famously, distinguishes between English constitutional monarchy and absolutist monarchs on the continent who rule according a system of civil law whose first premise is that “what pleased the prince has the force of law.”¹² By contrast, the English king, ruling “politically” – with parliament and by means of native common law – triumphs as a ruler by suppressing his own will, thereby minimizing its potential to lead him into tyranny:

a king is free and powerful who is able to defend his own people against enemies alien and native, and also their goods and property, not only against the rapine of their neighbours and fellow-citizens, but against his own oppression and plunder, even though his own passions and necessities struggle for the contrary. For who can be freer and more powerful than he who is able to vanquish not only others but also himself? The king ruling his people politically can and always does do this.¹³

Fortescue is interestingly ambivalent, here and elsewhere, about the personal aspects of royal government. For even as he praises the English constitution for helping to rein in the monarch’s personal weaknesses, he treats the resulting self-abnegation as a kind of neo-stoic personal triumph of royal character itself. Our kings, Fortescue seems to be saying, are personally great because they govern themselves and they govern themselves because our institutions govern them. This ambivalence about the royal will, I would argue, survives more or less intact in the early modern English political imagination, and helps contextualize the period’s anxious uncertainty about the status of royal favorites, real or imagined political agents who owe their wealth and influence to their status as that which “pleased the prince.”

The resulting ambivalence about the validity of royal pleasure and the politics of intimacy is encapsulated by the useful phrase “prerogative pleasures” that I have chosen as the title of this chapter. This phrase originates as a description of royal favoritism offered up in an anonymous play called *The Faithful Friends* that was most likely written during the 1620s. This play, set in pre-republican Rome, opens with a debate about the preferment of a young royal favorite named Marcus Tullius who, to the consternation of his political rivals, has just been appointed to lead the Roman armies against the Sabines. The ensuing controversy was no doubt designed to

evoke for contemporaries the controversy surrounding Buckingham, who was made admiral of the English navy in 1619. Criticism of Buckingham's performance in that office – particularly after the military failures of the mid-1620s – was widespread, but *The Faithful Friends* is an essentially royalist play, one that defends not only the king's choice of servants but more generally his right to choose them. And here, in the play's opening scene, the vituperation of Tullius's enemies is rebutted with what is apparently supposed to be a stirring defense of favoritism by a upstanding young man named Marius:

pardon mee
 if I make question of your loyalties
 that dare disprarrage thus my sovereigns choyce
 of his respected subject, it infers,
 a doubt made of his wisdome, why should wee
 tax the prerogative pleasures of our Prince
 whom he shall grace, or where bestowe his favors
 that Law's allowed to every private man,
 then to confine or disallowe a king
 were most injurious and preposterous.¹⁴

Marius's argument moves uneasily between two highly conventional but subtly contradictory defenses of favoritism. First, he argues that to oppose the favorite is to challenge the king's right to make appointments and is therefore tantamount to treason. This defense hinges, we might say, on the uniqueness of the king and on the notion that the king's "wisdom" is beyond question: favoritism as *arcana imperii*. But then, awkwardly, Marius shifts his ground, suggesting that to deny a king freedoms enjoyed by private men is a preposterous inversion of hierarchical order. The bestowal of personal favor is thus imagined as at once a representative act of the king's political wisdom and, by analogy, as a personal choice appropriately protected from public scrutiny.

The phrase "prerogative pleasures" acts as the pivot between these two formulations, and nicely captures the uneasiness of their conjunction. For there is a kind of latent semantic tension between the resolutely political connotations of the word "prerogative," particularly in the context of an argument about royal appointments, and the defense of pleasure as a private pursuit. A "private man" is a man who does not hold office, and we can therefore hear, in Marius's use of the word "private," Habermas's definition of it as "the exclusion from the sphere of the state apparatus."¹⁵ The problem with "prerogative pleasures," though, is that they are not so excluded, a

nagging dissonance that becomes even more vexed as the speech progresses. Kings, Marius explains, are “subject to their passions.” Thus:

Alexander the great had his Ephestion
 Philip of Spaine his Lerma, not to offend.
 I could produce from Courts that I have seene
 More royall presidents, but ile not give
 such satisfaction to detractive tounge
 that publish such fowle noyse gainst a man
 I know for truly Vertuous.¹⁶

Given that the correlation between government and self-government is an absolute commonplace of early modern political theory (as in Fortescue), the declaration that kings are subject to passions is ambiguous at best as a defense of personal favoritism. And the examples cited do not reassure. To Englishmen in the 1620s, the court of Spain was the very house of treachery, and so Marius’s invocation of Philip III is a poor defense of his “soveraigns choyce / of his respected subject.” Alexander, too, is frequently used to exemplify precisely the conflict between royal greatness and the disfiguring effects of passion. One thinks of Lyly’s *Campaspe* (1584), where Alexander has to overcome his own affection for the title character, or of Fluellen’s description of him as a flawed and overly passionate ruler (“a little intoxicates in his prains”) in Shakespeare’s *Henry V*.¹⁷

Even Marius seems to recognize, albeit somewhat belatedly, that his list of precedents could as easily be used as ammunition for the “detractive tongs” of Tullius’s opponents as for the defense of “prerogative pleasures.” Hence his hasty-sounding decision to cite no further examples. And the shakiness of Marius’s defense of favoritism reflects an equivalent uncertainty on the part of the play’s authors. The speech stands under double erasure in the sole manuscript copy of *The Faithful Friends*: the whole speech is marked for deletion in one hand and the second half again marked for deletion by another.¹⁸ Marius’s awkward defense of favoritism is, in other words, a kind of monument to the difficulty early modern writers had conceptualizing the role of the king’s affections and pleasures within a system of political thought that lacked a fully articulated distinction between the public and private spheres.

One upshot of this conceptual difficulty is a tendency to imagine the ideal ruler as being impossibly free of personal intimacies. This is what Shakespeare does with Henry V (Fluellen’s antitype of Alexander).¹⁹ I’m thinking here not only of the banishment of Falstaff – an attempt, perhaps, to exorcise the specter of Richard II’s wanton favorites – but also of the

scene in *Henry V* where the king exposes and excoriates the treachery of his bedfellow and confidante Lord Scroop, one whom, as Exeter says, Henry has “cloyed with gracious favours” (2.2.9):

What shall I say to thee, Lord Scroop, thou cruel,
 Ingrateful, savage, and inhuman creature?
 Thou that didst bear the key of all my counsels,
 That knew'st the very bottom of my soul,
 That (almost) mightst have coin'd me into gold,
 Wouldst thou have practic'd on me, for thy use?
 (2.2.94–99)

One purpose of this scene is to reverse the moral polarity of the banishment of Falstaff, so that instead of seeing the king as the betrayer of his intimates we might see him instead as one betrayed by them. But it is striking that Shakespeare goes to such lengths to establish the king's freedom from personal entanglements as an authorizing attribute – he takes counsel from representative figures from the church and peerage in Act 1, but not from intimates like Scroop who might require special treatment or reward. Instead of intimacy and bounty, Henry's rule can as a result be conceived of in terms of what the chorus calls “a largess universal, like the sun” (4.0.43).

This idea of monarchy uncorrupted by the personal makes more sense as an ideological fantasy than as a practical or proscriptive idea of government. No early modern king ruled impersonally. It is not even clear what that would mean in terms of real, lived experience. I am struck, moreover, by the dissonance between this fantasy of rule and the emphasis elsewhere in Tudor political writing upon the importance of intimacy for securing sound and reliable counsel for the monarch. For, though intense personal friendship is not the only way of imagining the bond between the king and his agents, and though (as Laurie Shannon has recently described) there are subtle tensions between the egalitarian language of classical friendship and the realities of political hierarchy, intimacy and friendship are nevertheless an important and persistent way of imagining the laudable relationships that make up the king's service and provide much needed advice.²⁰ Early modern England, in other words, emphasizes the importance of the king's personal relationships while fantasizing that he or she might be able to rule without them. This dissonance is encoded in the awkward crosscurrents of Marius's speech about “prerogative pleasures.”

Despite the real political influence of figures like Leicester, Somerset, and Buckingham, the all-powerful royal favorite is also an ideological construct,

the exact inverse of the dream of the impersonal monarch. For at the core of the culture’s paranoia concerning the royal favorite resides an impossible figure of total apostasy and disaffiliation, a figure empowered entirely and exclusively by the will of the monarch and thus freed from the kinds of alliances and loyalties that might otherwise involve ethical constraint. As I will argue in chapter 2, this is the great innovation of the influential libel *Leicester’s Commonwealth*, a text that depicts the Elizabethan earl as a fully protean and rapacious figure, an upstart from an upstart family unrestrained by any larger system of religious or political loyalty. Of course, nobody, not even a Leicester or a Buckingham, could operate politically while floating free of the densely interconnected networks of obligation and affiliation that shaped the horizons of possibility in the close-knit political world of early modern England. But this radically disaffiliated figure, the monstrous progeny of royal affection, is surprisingly prominent in the period’s figurative imagination. Where Shakespeare’s *Henry V* offers up the fantasy of a king without attachments – all prerogative, no pleasures – the cultural fantasy of the corrupt royal favorite embodies the opposite extreme: he is the creature of the king’s prerogative pleasures, the symptomatic expression of what happens when “what pleased the prince” trumps law and custom. That is to say, recalling Fortescue’s analysis, the figure of the protean and all-powerful royal favorite that figures so centrally in the period’s political imagination is the personified manifestation of absolutism and its perceived tendency toward tyranny.

Just as the discourse of favoritism includes many kinds of texts, so it contains a wide range of attitudes and postures concerning the link between favoritism, absolutism, and tyranny. There are texts (*Leicester’s Commonwealth* is one, I think) whose attitude is evasive, attempting to explore corrupt favoritism as the expression of royal will while finessing the awkward question of the king’s complicity. Other texts (we might think here of Marlowe’s *Edward II*) seem carefully designed to explore the link between favoritism and the king’s prerogative pleasures. In Jonson’s *Sejanus* and in later Roman plays influenced by it, what looks at first like corrupt favoritism turns out to be a screen for the workings of autocratic tyranny. In Caroline court plays like Davenant’s *The Fair Favourite* (1638) the impulses of royal will are themselves recuperated from accusations of tyranny along with the institution of favoritism. But for all their manifest differences, the focus on favoritism shared by all of these texts (and many more, discussed in the pages that follow) is animated by a larger interest in prerogative pleasures: in, that is, the nexus of concerns linking favoritism to larger questions about

royal will, the limits of prerogative, and the political enfranchisement of subjects.

The idea that the period's endless debates about favoritism encode deeper socio-political concerns is hinted at in a remarkable letter delivered to King Charles from an anonymous "Ignoto" during the impeachment proceedings against Buckingham in 1626. For one thing, Ignoto argues explicitly that attacks on Buckingham mask a deeper regicidal intent. Even more suggestively, the letter supplies a nicely paranoid history of controversy over favoritism as an ongoing contest over the nature of monarchy itself. Puritans and other malcontents, the letter argues, began to make trouble "about *anno* 23. *Eliz.* and spit their venom not only against the Bishops, but also against the Lord Chancellor Hatton, and others, the Queens Favourites and Councillors, as they do now against the Clergy and the Duke." Faced with similar dissent, King James "strengthened himself ever with some Favourite, as whom he might better trust than many of the Nobility tainted with this desire of Oligarchy." Therefore: "It behoveth, without doubt, His Majesty to uphold the Duke against them; who if he be but decourted, it will be the Corner-stone on which the demolishing of his Monarchy will be builded. For if they prevail with this, they have hatched a thousand other Demands to pull the Feathers of the Royalty."²¹ Though this letter clearly reflects the specially paranoid mentality of the 1620s, the manner in which Ignoto reads the attack on Buckingham provides a useful glimpse into the ideological significance of the conflicts surrounding favoritism from the days of Hatton on: to attack favoritism *is* in a sense to attack the nature of personal monarchy, or, more precisely, the personal aspects of royal power.

For this reason, I am not satisfied with the conventional notion that attacking the king's servants provides a way to voice dissent while maintaining a fundamental loyalty to the king. To be sure, this is very often the rhetoric within which public attacks on the king's associates are framed – and one recognizes at once the utility of such a position for public discourse under a king – but it makes just as much sense to argue that attacking favorites provided a way to articulate criticism of a king and his government that would otherwise have had to remain unspoken.²² To put this another way, the idea that criticizing the king's intimates and counselors deflected criticism away from the king is a variation on a common type of sociological argument, the safety valve theory by which the expression of resentments in encoded and displaced forms serves a socially conservative, cathartic function and thus enables the persistence of the system that generated resentment in the first place. So: attacks on favorites are a safety

valve propping up monarchy by giving disgruntled subjects something to rail against instead of the king. I am persuaded, though, by James Scott’s alternative account of the operation of such displaced modes of expression of oppositional sentiment as the mechanism by which oppositional affect and related kinds of conduct are perpetuated despite the countervailing pressures of decorum and orthodoxy. In this way, as Scott argues, we can think of a lively culture of displaced or deflected opposition as “a condition of practical resistance rather than a substitute for it.”²³

Thinking of debates about favoritism as involving key questions about the limits of personal monarchy helps explain the ongoing affective power of the cultural stereotypes surrounding favoritism even after the violent death of Buckingham in 1628. Though the duke had no real successor – no subsequent Caroline courtier derived enormous political influence from special personal intimacy with the king – Charles’s decision to rule without parliament ensured that questions concerning the legitimacy of personal rule would remain on the front burner. Throughout the period of personal rule, court gossip kept heralding the emergence of new favorites, as if it were hard to imagine a court, in the wake of Buckingham, without one.²⁴ Two Caroline plays – William Davenant’s *The Cruel Brother* (1627) and Lodowick Carlell’s *The Fool Would Be A Favourite* (1632–38) – feature subplots in which bumpkins attempt unsuccessfully to become court favorites, and though the ambition is mocked in each case both plays assume that there is something like an office of the favorite, a regular position at court that a person might aspire to fill.²⁵

The memory of Buckingham likewise helped structure subsequent animosity toward other Caroline court figures. Henrietta Maria, deeply resented by Protestant polemicists like William Prynne, was cast as a royal favorite since she self-evidently owed her influence to her intimacy with her husband the king.²⁶ Though the Earl of Strafford did not enjoy a special personal bond with King Charles, polemics surrounding his trial and execution in 1641 nevertheless constructed him as a corrupt royal favorite in the tradition of a Leicester or a Buckingham.²⁷ One libel from 1640 even drew an analogy between Archbishop Laud and astrologer John Lamb, who was murdered in the street by a London mob for his association with Buckingham in 1628: “Charles and Marie do what they will, we will kill the archbishop of Canturbury like Dr Lambe.”²⁸ We get a very literal sense of the way old animosities were being recycled when we note that this libel is itself a somewhat garbled updating of an earlier squib predicting Buckingham’s death in 1628: “Let Charles and George do what they can, / The Duke shall die like Dr. Lambe.”²⁹ Buckingham

remained a prominent figure in the Caroline political imagination long after his death, and this has to do in part with his usefulness for thinking about the problematic nature of personal rule and its prerogative pleasures.

The persistence of favoritism in the culture's political imagination was facilitated, too, by the publication and re-circulation, in the years following the collapse of Star Chamber, of numerous controversial texts associated with Leicester, Somerset, and Buckingham. These included speeches by men like Dudley Diggs and Sir John Eliot who were remembered as Buckingham's chief parliamentary opponents, as well as multiple editions of notorious scandal sheets like *Leicester's Commonwealth*, *The Five Years of King James* (a particularly lurid history featuring a vivid account of the rise and fall of Somerset), and *The Forerunner of Revenge* (a tract accusing Buckingham of poisoning King James).³⁰ The collecting habits of manuscript compilers contributed to this discursive continuity as well: anti-Buckingham material is ubiquitous in manuscripts compiled in the 1630s, where it is often set next to controversial texts relating to the ascendancy of favorites like Carr, Leicester, Essex, or Raleigh. This kind of juxtaposition in collections of political libels often seems to point toward an interest in favoritism as such, a desire to consider the institution and its implications by comparing the varieties of favorites in recent memory.

The discourse of favoritism is characterized to a considerable degree by the uncanny recurrence of tropes and motifs as well as by the explicit recycling of old texts and ideas. This opens up vexed questions about continuity and discontinuity, cause and effect. If, as I suggest, the response to Buckingham is preconditioned by earlier texts, and if the remarkable hatred engendered by the duke helps shape anticourt discourse long after his death, then should the discourse of favoritism be thought of as a meaningful part of the pre-history of the civil war? Yes and no. I do not wish to argue, certainly, for any strong and specific causal relationship between the discourse of favoritism and the outbreak of hostilities against Charles I. But I do want to make two interlocking suggestions about the historical significance of this material. The first is simply that the texts I take up in the chapters that follow provide ample evidence of real and persistent constitutional unease, especially in the 1590s and from the 1620s on. Secondly, that the discourse I am surveying here is a significant native tradition of semi-theorized radical thought not because it provided anybody with a political program but because writers kept returning to the inherited language of corrupt favoritism to frame responses to new political circumstances. There is real continuity within the discourse of favoritism, but it

is best conceptualized in non-teleological terms as a gradual accretion of useful structures of feeling in continual dialogue with specific, unique, and unforeseen political circumstance.

For reasons that I have suggested above, I also want to suggest that the royal favorite as an imaginative construct expresses a real anxiety about absolutism – the tyranny of the king's personal will – and does so long before the reign of Charles I. I make this argument despite my admiration for the work of Glenn Burgess, who has argued that the practice of Jacobean politics was governed by a consensual language "based not on uniformity of opinion (or even of theory), but on a recognition by most players in the political game that there were a variety of languages of politics, each appropriate in some areas and for some audiences."³¹ More specifically, where historians and literary critics have tended to treat the more strident-sounding Jacobean assertions of divine right as evidence of absolutism, Burgess argues – persuasively, I think – that such language is used only in carefully circumscribed contexts and that it coexists with the assumption (as in Fortescue) that the English monarch rules via the common law. Thus, King James was not really an absolutist, nor was absolutism an important political position for his followers and defenders. Meaningful conflict concerning such matters, Burgess suggests, emerged only during the reign of Charles I, who "muddled the language of absolute prerogative with that of common law" and thus put undue pressure on the consensual position maintained more skillfully by his father.³²

Literature, though, gives us access to a different set of players involved in different kinds of language games in which consensual decorum is no longer the main concern. To reverse Sidney's formula: where official discourse shows us a golden world of consensus, literary fictions can give us access to the imaginary life of the brazen one. In some cases, like the chronicle play *Woodstock* (1591–94), where the favorites of Richard II make a mockery of property law and condemn as traitors all those who would "set limits to the King's high pleasure," corrupt favoritism is linked quite explicitly to the notion that monarchs were not bound by law.³³ More often, though, fascination with favoritism registers paranoia about the encroachments of prerogative pleasure upon the laws and liberties of the ancient constitution in subtler, more figurative ways. Still, as I hope will become clear in the case studies that make up the individual chapters of this project, reading the discourse of favoritism in these terms casts considerable light on meaningful continuities between the constitutional concerns stirred up by Charles in the 1630s and anxieties about the nature of personal monarchy in play from at least the late 1580s onward.

As this might suggest, I do want to claim some kind of methodological affiliation (whether they'll have me or not) with historians of the seventeenth century who, noting that revisionist historiography has overemphasized consensual aspects of official political discourses, have increasingly looked to literature and other less official forms of political discourse as a corrective. Renewed interest in the historical significance of literary texts holds out the promise of further interdisciplinary collaboration between historians and literary scholars, a consummation devoutly to be wished. But this prospect involves significant methodological challenges for historicist literary study, too. Most urgently, I think we need to break out of the crippling hermeneutic circle in which historicist questions are posed based on intuitions related to recollections of canonical texts (most likely plays by Shakespeare, of course) and then answered by reexamining those same texts more ingeniously and perhaps in greater detail than before. We need to read more comprehensively or we run the risk of allowing a very narrow canon to stand for something like the imaginary life of an entire culture. In the specific case of favoritism, this means looking beyond a handful of familiar plays – especially Marlowe's *Edward II* – and trying to attend to the enormous interest in favoritism manifested and explored in a large number of comparatively unexamined texts.

William Harrison, in his unpublished, late-Elizabethan "Chronologie" of England, includes the following notice of the death of Leicester in 1588:

Robert, Erle of Leicester, dieth, who in his time became the man of grettest powre (being but a subject) which in this land, or that ever had bene exalted under any prince sithens the time of Peers Gavestone & Robert Veer, some time duke of Ireland. Nothing almost was done, wherein he had not, either a stroke or a commoditie; which, together with his scraping from the church & comons, spoile of her majesties thresure, & sodeine death of his first wife &c. procured him soche inward envie & hatred, that all men, so farre as they durst, rejoyced no lesse outwardlie at his death, then for the victorie obtained of late against the Spanish navie.³⁴

The striking thing about this brief account is its conflicted sense of the historical meaning of Leicester's prominence and the animosity it generated. In its comparison of Leicester to the controversial favorites of Edward II and Richard II, Harrison implicitly treats Leicester's kind of career as a recurring problem, an epiphenomenon of monarchy with which England is cursed from time to time. But at the same time, the rhetoric of the passage evokes a Leicester of impossibly total malevolence, a figure so monstrous that England's deliverance from his clutches is comparable to the miraculous

defeat of the Spanish Armada. Harrison's account, of course, draws on the black legend of Leicester codified in *Leicester's Commonwealth*, and we can see the same double perspective on the earl's career enshrined in the rhetoric of that text's more sustained attack. The author of the anonymous but widely read libel compares the earl to a catalogue of disastrous royal favorites (including Vere and Gaveston) marshaled to demonstrate that "too much affection towards . . . unworthy particular persons" is "so common and ordinary as it may well seem to be the specialist rock of all other whereat kings and princes do make their shipwracks."³⁵ Hard on the heels of this observation, though, we learn that Leicester "by the favor of her Majesty so afflicteth her people as never before him either Gaveston, or Spencer, or Vere, or Mowbray, or any other mischievous tyrant that abused most his prince's favor within our realm of England."³⁶

This dual perspective, in which favoritism is both commonplace and monstrous, is ubiquitous in the response to Elizabethan and early Stuart royal favorites from Leicester on, and could be described therefore as a structuring principle of the culture's response to the problem of favoritism in general. *The Five Years of King James*, a widely circulated manuscript account of the early Jacobean scandals, likewise makes a point of describing the Earl of Somerset in relation to a catalogue of precedents that he nevertheless easily outstrips: "we cannot reade of any that ever was so great a Favourite as *Somerset*, neither the *Spencers* with *Edward* the second, nor the Earle of *Warwick* with *Henry* the sixth, nor the Duke of *Suffolke* with *Henry* the eighth, as this man was with the Kinge."³⁷ And though Buckingham's opponents compared him publicly to the notorious favorites of Edward II, they also clearly thought of him as monstrous singularity. This is made literal by Sir John Eliot who, during the impeachment proceedings of 1626, compared "the inward character of the Duke's mind" to "the beast (by the ancients) called *stellionatus*, a beast so blurred, so spotted, so full of foul lines they knew not what to make of it."³⁸ The term "stellionatus," from the Latin word *stellio* which names a kind of spotted lizard thought to be specially malicious and deceitful, is used in civil law as a term denoting fraud.³⁹ But Eliot's use of the term here clearly connotes more than this: the duke is subhuman, beyond all moral compass, inexplicably unique in his wickedness.

This dual perspective contains within it more than a shred of truth: early modern royal favorites were both like and unlike the late medieval precedents cited by Harrison and others. Personal monarchy inevitably involves some variety of politicized intimacy and this, for reasons that are self-evident, often comes under fire at moments of larger political conflict.

But it will be useful, in terms of the conceptualization of this project, to attend briefly here to some practical and institutional innovations that separate favoritism in the Tudor and early Stuart period from earlier instances of related controversy. Broadly speaking, the emergence of royal favoritism as a distinctly early modern problematic must be understood in terms of two closely linked developments: the expanded scope of the king's role in national politics and the attendant reconfiguration of the institutions governing the crown's intimate patronage. Each of these developments has early Tudor roots, dating back at least to the reign of Henry VIII, and we might think here of G. E. Aylmer's useful remark that the Tudor period saw "a decisive shift, away from bureaucracy within the framework of household government and towards departmental 'out of court' bureaucracy."⁴⁰

Though the nature of early Tudor political centralization has been especially controversial, it does seem clear that the sixteenth century saw a gradual and important increase in the scale and extent of national governance, both in terms of the increasing burdens placed on the central administration and the crown itself and also in terms of expanded local participation in "processes of social and political organisation which were self-evidently national in orientation."⁴¹ One might think, for instance, of Henrician attempts to expand the king's personal authority and to bring the realm under a more uniform administrative authority by abolishing semi-autonomous liberties and franchises. Or of the expansion of royal authority into the ecclesiastical sphere after the Reformation.⁴² These developments, and others like them, may not add up to any constitutional revolution, but they do gradually alter the structure of relationships between king and subject, making practical and affective loyalty to the king more important for more people.

Though the specific personalities of figures like Cromwell, Wolsey, and Henry VIII himself obviously matter here, it makes sense too to think of this process as something both inevitable and glacial, a gradual adjustment to the new pressures – national in scale – placed on the monarchy by things like the cost of warfare and the increasing demands for royal reward during the sixteenth-century.⁴³ One very general way to understand conflict over favoritism would be to think of the early modern favorite as the ad hoc response of personal monarchy to challenges posed by the demands of national government and the expansion of royal patronage. For the great favorite – a Buckingham, say – administers the crown's patronage, operates as an administrator and policy-maker on the king's behalf, and provides a buffer between the king and the crush of his responsibilities.⁴⁴ This conceptual framework has the added benefit of beginning to explain

the historical coincidence that saw issues of favorites and favoritism being hashed out all over Europe in the late sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, a development examined from a variety of perspectives in the fine recent collection *The World of the Favourite*.⁴⁵ Though the essays in that volume make it clear that issues of favoritism (the responsibilities taken up by the favorite as well as the manner in which favoritism was attacked and defended) take on different shapes in different national traditions, the gradual, improvised transformation of the personal machinery of medieval kingship is clearly a recurrent theme.⁴⁶

In England, as Judith Richards has argued, one manifestation of this change in the scale of monarchy is the emergence of a national language of political love to express the reciprocal bonds between sovereign and subject in more general ways than had been possible within what she calls “the vocabulary . . . of function-specific feudal relationships.”⁴⁷ We might see Shakespeare’s evocation of Henry V’s “largess universal” as an instance of this innovative recasting of the role of the king, for it imagines the monarch’s generous love for his subjects as something held in general and it implies, crucially, that the reciprocal obligations of affective loyalty to the crown extend likewise to the entire nation. This reconceptualization of monarchy (as we see in *Henry V*) puts tremendous pressure on the practice of intimate favoritism, underscoring a tension between the general love supposed to be shared by the monarch and his people and the personal intimacies enjoyed by one subject at the expense of others. This is precisely the conflict that Marlowe emphasizes at the beginning of his *Edward II* when Mortimer Senior, speaking on behalf of the aggrieved Peers, exclaims “If you love us, my lord, hate Gaveston.”⁴⁸ What Mortimer Senior requests here is the categorical priority of the general love that a monarch shares with his nation over all prerogative pleasures that a private man might enjoy. Thus, though Marlowe’s play looks backward in much the same manner that Harrison and others do, it offers a distinctly contemporary formulation of the problem of personal favoritism within a nationalized, Tudor understanding of monarchy.

This gradual broadening of the relationship between the king and the nation (and by this I mean at once a network of administrative relationships and an imagined community) was accompanied by a transformation in the institutions governing access to the king, the sine qua non of court politics. As David Starkey and others have argued, the Tudor development of the Privy Chamber – at once an architectural and an administrative innovation – put the politics of court intimacy on a new footing by creating a threshold beyond which most courtiers would not be allowed to pass. This

was inaugurated by Henry VII, who used his Privy Chamber as a way to maintain distance from suitors, but it was Henry VIII who first chose to staff his Privy Chamber with men of sufficient status to capitalize on the unique access made possible by their intimate service.⁴⁹ “The effect,” as Starkey puts it,

was to put a frontier within the palace and to establish an equally clear line of demarcation between those royal servants who could cross it and those who could not . . . out of the hundreds of servants of the royal household only a score or so – and once again chiefly the Privy Chamber – came into any but the most formal contact with the king.⁵⁰

The regular access thereby granted to some courtiers – particularly Gentlemen of the Privy Chamber under Henry VIII or Gentlemen of the Bedchamber under James I – resulted in considerable material reward and, not surprisingly, in the resentment of those less fortunate. And it is no coincidence that the reigns of both Henry VIII and James I are characterized by factional conflict surrounding control of the politics of access. Strikingly, under both Henry and James, the Chamber became the site of important administrative work too, so that in each case there was rivalry between the staff of personal intimates and more traditional administrative arms of government.⁵¹ Moreover, this institutionalization of the politics of access put added pressure on the always blurry distinction between the favorite and the minister – between, that is, the courtier who owed his influence to personal intimacy with the monarch and the courtier whose status depended upon the competent administration of official functions – and this distinction in turn helps contribute to an emerging critique of intimacy as a corrupt basis for administrative influence.

Elizabeth’s Privy Chamber was staffed by women, who were disallowed by their gender from accruing the same level of political influence enjoyed by the minions of Henry VIII or James I. Nevertheless, Elizabeth’s chamber continued to provide the queen with a “cocoon” from within which she could carefully regulate access.⁵² Competition over access therefore remained central to court politics under Elizabeth, and male courtiers had to find new ways of maneuvering to secure intimacy. Leicester, who became Queen Elizabeth’s Master of the Horse, took advantage of the access ensured by that position during the Queen’s excursions, and his example transformed the position into an office for royal favorites. Subsequent holders of this position included Leicester’s successor Essex and James’s favorite Buckingham. Of course, Leicester’s proximity to the queen, like that of Chamber favorites before and after, was doubly

beneficial: he benefited from access to the queen as well as from the prestige derived from the perception of intimacy. The importance of the latter is the subject of an exemplary fable recounted in *Leicester’s Commonwealth*:

You remember (I doubt not) the story of him that offered his prince a great yearly rent to have but this favor only, that he might come every day in open audience and say in his ear God save your majesty, assuring himself that by the opinion of confidence and secret favor which hereby the people would conceive to be in the prince towards him, he should easily get up his rent again double told.⁵³

The cynicism of this tale derives from a larger cultural paranoia about the possibility of “secret favor,” and this concern is clearly exacerbated by the institution of the Privy Chamber as the key structuring element of the competition over access in Tudor and early Stuart England.

Policing the all-important threshold to the private chambers of the monarch gave the advantage to a new class of courtiers who, as Starkey puts it, “served both of the ‘two bodies’ that contemporary lawyers and theorists distinguished as making up the entity of ‘king’.” As servants of the king’s body, these men enjoyed regular access to the king in his most informal and private moments, and they were able to parlay this access into political power.⁵⁴ We can understand the resulting animosities in terms of this same conventional legal language. In theory, the king’s participation in the mystical body politic was supposed to help purify him by drawing off his moral and physical weaknesses: as the Elizabethan jurist Edmund Plowden put it, “the Body natural and the Body politic are consolidated into one, and the Body politic wipes away every Imperfection of the other Body.”⁵⁵ The political prominence enjoyed by courtiers on the basis of their access to the king’s body natural, though, could easily be seen as a preposterous inversion of this sacralizing idea of kingship, the triumph of the body natural over and against the kinds of ceremonial public kingship most in tune with the idea of the king as a deathless embodiment of a representative ideal.⁵⁶ This conception of the problem of intimate favoritism is likewise implied by the term “prerogative pleasures,” which conflates the satisfaction of personal desire with the authority attached to the body politic.

Almost immediately upon the heels of the establishment of Gentlemen of the Privy Chamber, Henry’s other counselors began to complain about “certain young men in his privie chamber” whom they characterized as being too “familiar and homely” with the king.⁵⁷ Cardinal Wolsey, wary of rivals, had a number of Henry’s minions ousted in 1519, and from that point on competition over the politics of access plays an important role in

the factional turbulence characteristic of Henry's volatile court. The new emphasis upon the politics of intimacy enforced by the institution of the Privy Chamber contributed, as Seth Lerer has argued, to a Henrician court culture obsessed with eroticized scenarios of intimacy and access worked out in fictional and poetic fantasies of secret assignations and cunning court panders.⁵⁸ And Henrician court literature is certainly fascinated, as one would expect, with the volatility of favor and the instability of personal rule.⁵⁹ In fact, John Skelton's anti-Wolsey satire "Why Come Ye Nat To Courte?" anticipates some of the recurring tropes later prevalent in attacks on Leicester, Carr, and Buckingham: there is one section in which Skelton imagines that the Cardinal has become the king's "swete hart," by "sorsery."⁶⁰ It would, I think, be possible to write a history of early modern favoritism beginning with Henrician ministers like Wolsey and Cromwell, and with the king's so-called minions, men like Charles Brandon, Duke of Suffolk, who (as quoted above) was compared with Robert Carr in *The Five Years of King James*.⁶¹

This is not the book I have written. The simple fact is that the all-powerful royal favorite does not really take its central place in literature's menu of prevalent stereotypes until the tail end of Elizabeth's reign. Skelton notwithstanding (and Wolsey's personal relationship to Henry VIII is often downplayed in Skelton's satires), there is as far as I know nothing in early Tudor literature to match the problematic favorite figures conjured up in late Elizabethan texts like *Leicester's Commonwealth*, *Edward II*, *Sejanus*, *Woodstock*, or even the anonymous *A Knack to Know a Knave* (1594). One reason for the lag between Henrician innovations and a full-blown literature of favoritism has to be the intervening emergence of the public theater as an institution, a development that encouraged the mass production of elaborate political fictions freed somewhat from the decorums of the patronage system. Other Elizabethan catalysts include the rediscovery of the works of Tacitus, which has been described as a possible source for interest in the figure of the favorite all over Europe, and English attention to the controversy surrounding the minions of Henri III in France.⁶²

But the emergence of the figure of the all-powerful royal favorite also – and not coincidentally – coincides with a burgeoning late-Elizabethan concern with court corruption fueled in part by the factionalism of the 1590s and in part by unhappiness with the queen's turn toward mechanisms of reward (monopoly grants, customs farms) that shifted the burden of bounty "from the crown to the commonwealth."⁶³ In a recent essay, Linda Levy Peck has linked the importance of favoritism in early Stuart England to

an "increase in monopolies, manufacturing and licensing" that "extended court favour into everyday life."⁶⁴ I think we can push this useful analysis back a few decades. For, as Simon Adams has argued, the increased use of such forms of reward, which he calls "a major re-shaping of the patronage of the crown," is an innovation of the 1570s and 1580s.⁶⁵ And, as Adams also suggests, the burdens that such concessions placed upon consumers and competitors likewise generated widespread criticism and helped foster the perception of court corruption. Though *Leicester's Commonwealth* features a bevy of eye-catchingly lurid fantasias, it is also very specific at several points about ticking off the earl's monopolies and the discontent to which they give rise. For, as one of the speakers says early in the piece, "no suit can prevail in Court, be it never so mean, except he [Leicester] first be made acquainted therewith and receive not only the thanks, but also be admitted unto a great part of the gain and commodity thereof."⁶⁶ The favorite's real or imagined domination of the politics of intimacy becomes an increasingly valuable way to imagine corruption on a national scale as court politics themselves expand further into other realms of commerce and regulation.

The individual case studies that make up the remainder of this volume attempt to provide something like a cultural history of the Elizabethan and early Stuart discourse of favoritism. I do not mean that the progression from one chapter to the next follows a chronological order or maps out a linear chain of causes and effects, but rather that though each of the following chapters stands on its own, I have tried to arrange things so that their accumulated impact adds up to more than the sum of the parts. My aim in this regard is to give anyone who reads the book from front to back a deeply interwoven account of a literature whose various strands are meaningfully intercomplicated. Each of the subsequent chapters, moreover, is built around what I hope are persuasive and interesting close readings of a wide range of documents. One purely literary critical argument that runs tacitly throughout this (often historically minded) book is that the explanatory frameworks made available by a focus on favoritism can in numerous cases render intelligible literary texts that have been ignored hitherto or dismissed as second-rate, primitive, or simply bizarre. This, I think, is one way to take the measure of any piece of historicist literary criticism – it is a test, that is, of the resonance or explanatory power of its approach within the culture studied.

Leicester and his ghosts

It is an early Stuart commonplace to laud Queen Elizabeth for her skillful handling of the ambitions of her most powerful courtiers. Fulke Greville, for instance, in his *Dedication to Sir Philip Sidney*, praises Elizabeth for avoiding “the latitudes which some modern princes allow to their favorites as supporters of government and middle walls between power and the people’s envy.”¹ As a result of this wise policy, “she never chose or cherished a favourite – how worthy soever – to monopolise over all the spirits and business of her kingdom.”² As has often been noted, this judgment seems to have at least as much to do with Greville’s hostility to James and his government as with enthusiasm for the late queen’s famous memory.³ Likewise Sir Robert Naunton, in his posthumously printed *Fragmenta Regalia* (1633, printed 1641): “Her ministers and instruments of state . . . were many, and those memorable. But they were only favorites not minions, such as acted more by her own princely rules and judgment than by their own will and appetites.”⁴

It is by no means clear that Naunton – a former client of Buckingham, once described as the duke’s “creature” – wanted to criticize early Stuart government by his praise for Elizabeth.⁵ But his widely read account of Elizabeth’s reign nevertheless formed the basis for a strain of politicized nostalgia in which the corrupt favoritism and domestic tyranny of James and Charles was contrasted with an idealized vision of the Elizabethan past in which the management of faction helped ensure a healthy state.⁶ Thus, Francis Osborne, writing from the vantage point of the 1650s, describes factional conflict at the Elizabethan court as the crucial mechanism ensuring an inclusiveness that contrasts favorably with the corrupt insularity of the Stuart courts:

Whereas such instruments of State as Queen Elizabeth had use of, being strained through the double and contrary interests of a divided Party, not vertue was excluded, or vice admitted, in any way beneficial, or of prejudice to Prince or People; contrary to the custom of later Times, wherein the most probable designs were pinched and miscarried, through the smalness of their parts were employed to keep them on foot.⁷

There is plenty of reason to be skeptical of this assessment, but it is clearly an important construct for an early Stuart politics of nostalgia.⁸

As with all nostalgia, Osborne's recollection depends upon the suppression of alternative historical narratives. In this case, it involves discounting the idea – one widely circulated in late Elizabethan England and deeply fascinating to numerous early Stuart writers and readers – that Elizabeth's greatest favorite, Robert Dudley, the Earl of Leicester was himself an all-powerful and all-corrupting royal favorite: Naunton himself, in order to sustain his account of Elizabeth's king-craft, must "dissent from the common and received opinion that my Lord of Leicester was absolute and alone in her grace and favor."⁹ The rhetorical purposefulness of Naunton's remark here is obscured by the fact that in this case he happens to be right. It is basically true that none of Elizabeth's personal favorites enjoyed the kind of monopolizing control over royal patronage that later upset opponents of James's favorite. Even Leicester, Elizabeth's most durable and powerful favorite, had to work in tandem with Sir Christopher Hatton as well as with fellow council-members like Burghley and Walsingham. Naunton's comment, though, bears witness to the fact that by the 1630s Leicester was commonly recalled as an Elizabethan harbinger of early Stuart favoritism, and that the image of the queen in *Fragmenta Regalia* is made possible by the willed rejection of a set of shared ideas about her greatest favorite.

The image of Leicester as all-powerful favorite became "common and received opinion" largely because of contemporary libels, most notably the Catholic libel that has come to be known as *Leicester's Commonwealth* (1584). This tract, certainly one of the most effective and influential pieces of political slander ever written, depicts the queen's favorite as a "*Dominus factotum*, whose excellency above others is infinite, whose authority is absolute, whose commandment is dreadful, whose dislike is dangerous, and whose favor is omnipotent."¹⁰ One striking thing about the image of Leicester promulgated in *Leicester's Commonwealth* (and in other contemporary libels concerning the earl), is that it has a great deal in common with the nightmare images of royal favoritism penned in the context of early Stuart political conflict.

Discussions of the more notorious early Stuart favorites – Robert Carr, Earl of Somerset and George Villiers, Duke of Buckingham – typically treat the libels and gossip that dogged them as colorfully exaggerated but rhetorically transparent reactions to the striking facts of their individual careers: Somerset, after all, was involved in a spectacular series of scandals culminating in his trial and conviction for the murder of Sir Thomas Overbury, and Buckingham enjoyed a monopoly over royal favor and patronage

that was in many ways unprecedented. Small wonder then that these men attracted interest and resentment and small wonder too that this should result in colorful accounts of their power and corruption. But to read libels this way is both to neglect the symbolic work done by their lurid figurations and to sever this symbolic work from traditions and habits of thought that give it shape. Leicester libels are of crucial importance to recovering these symbolic associations and habits of thought because they use the earl to construct an influential set of stereotypes concerning the domineering favorite that continue to shape perceptions and responses to court corruption for the next sixty years. Unpacking these stereotypes makes it clear that the figure of the corrupt and corrupting royal favorite is a symbolic construct designed to explore socio-political concerns about the nature of political participation stemming from the persistence of quasi-republican forms of constitutional thinking within personal monarchy. The persistence of the image of the favorite therefore points toward constitutional concerns that run far deeper than the facts of any individual career.

Though it was vigorously suppressed and repudiated by the government in 1584, *Leicester's Commonwealth* was in wide circulation from its original appearance through its reprinting in 1641, and seems to have accrued added significance in the eyes of its readership as political controversy over favoritism became increasingly intense under James and then Charles.¹¹ The libel itself enjoyed an extraordinarily robust circulation in manuscript during this entire period, it spawned the poem *Leicester's Ghost* (possibly written as early as 1605, published in 1641), and its spectacular allegations about the earl's corruption were widely retailed and informed popular depictions of court corruption in drama. The ongoing popularity of *Leicester's Commonwealth*, in short, extended its influence well beyond the alignment of interests that led to its publication and circulation in 1584. One of the concerns of this book as a whole is to demonstrate the cumulative nature of the discourse of favoritism, examining the ways in which key texts and stories stay alive in the culture's political imagination, helping to shape perception of current events while simultaneously being recast in response to them. The changing uses of the image of Leicester provide an excellent case study of the longevity of topical reference and also of the sheer malleability of politically charged images of royal favoritism. My central contention in this chapter, therefore, is that widespread interest in *Leicester's Commonwealth* and its offspring reflects a long-standing interest in royal favoritism more generally as a vehicle for exploring tensions inherent in the centralization of government and expansion of royal patronage in Elizabethan and early Stuart England.

As the example of *Fragmenta Regalia* suggests, early Stuart interest in the figure of Leicester also involves a rather complex involvement with the politics of Elizabethan nostalgia, for the earl is always available to early Stuart writers either as a representative figure from a better time or as a precursor of the present. Insofar as early Stuart writers were inclined to remember Elizabethan England as the model monarchy, this means that invoking Leicester's ghost inevitably dredges up comparative questions about the state. For Naunton, the point of discussing Leicester may be to prove to disgruntled contemporaries that the politics of personal intimacy are not incompatible with regal government. But the point could easily be reversed: for the many who recalled Elizabeth's favorite as a kind of Buckingham figure, "absolute and alone in . . . favor," the lesson might be that personal monarchs – even exceptional ones like Elizabeth – are structurally susceptible to the corrupting influence of all-powerful favorites. Leicester, as a figure from an idealized past who nevertheless prefigures early Stuart concerns, becomes in time a kind of complex signifier precisely for the rich possibilities of this comparative perspective.

"HIS PESTELENT NATURE": FIGURING FAVORITISM

Leicester's Commonwealth is one of a number of Elizabethan conspiracy theory tracts written to serve the interests of the Catholic aristocracy by depicting Protestant courtiers like Leicester or Burghley as dangerous machiavellian innovators.¹² Formally, the libel is a dialogue in which a scholar and a gentleman converse with an "ancient" Catholic lawyer who is "not a little beloved . . . for his good conversation, notwithstanding some difference in religion" (p. 65). The exchange that frames the vitriolic attack on Leicester thus focuses on the problem of religious difference, with the interlocutors agreeing that "not only those whom you call busy Papists in England, but also those whom we call hot Puritans among you . . . may be called all traitors" (p. 67). Religious differences fracture the commonwealth, the piece argues, and the resulting disharmony is exploited by greedy royal favorites for personal gain: "if in England we should live in peace and unity of the state . . . and that one should not prey upon the other, then should the great falcons for the field (I mean the favorites of the time) fail whereon to feed" (p. 72). This launches the specific discussion of Leicester, whose corrupt ascendancy is contrasted with "the first dozen years" of Elizabeth's reign during which there was no "faction in religion" and "all was peace, all was love, all was joy, all was delight" (p. 182).

Though most of *Leicester's Commonwealth* is given over to a sustained attack on the earl himself, the text's larger rhetorical strategy is twofold: in addition to consolidating an image of Leicester-as-monster, the text sets that figure up against a system of traditional social values that the absolute power of the favorite threatens to undo. We can see this in the piece's epistle – from the fictional author of the piece to an anonymous Mr. G. M., his “dear and loving friend” (p. 64) – which locates *Leicester's Commonwealth* within a tradition of communal, collaborative, and disinterested intellectual engagement associated with humanist scholarship (and thus appropriate to the dialogue form) that was felt to be antithetical to the kind of selfish profiteering associated with Leicester in the text itself. And we can see it too in the dialogue's *dramatis personae* – the gentleman, the scholar, and the grave lawyer – representative figures from the nobility, the universities, and the courts respectively. The shared good fellowship of this particular set of men – and by extension of the institutions and classes they stand for – is designed to embody a larger public harmony. This is not merely a dinner party, in other words, it is a mini-utopia, an invocation of social cohesiveness against which we are to read the scathing account of Leicester's corrupting influence.

As part of its depiction of the utopian good-fellowship at the gentleman's estate, the text emphasizes the patience, temperance, rationality, and moderation of its interlocutors. The scholar, in the piece's first speech, praises the gentleman for discoursing politics “more substantially . . . with less passion” than others (p. 65). In the same speech, he praises the lawyer for his “moderation” (p. 65). And then again, the gentleman is lauded for his “temperate behavior” (p. 66). As the trio wind their way into a discussion of religion and national politics, the gentleman says: “I could wish with all my heart that either these differences were not among us at all, or else that they were so temperately on all parts pursued as the common state of our country, the blessed reign of her Majesty, and the common cause of true religion were not endangered thereby” (p. 71). It is in response to the gentleman's call for temperate discussion that the lawyer broaches the subject of “the great falcons for the field (I mean the favorites of the time).” From the outset, therefore, royal favoritism is associated with a bestial and aggressive predatory passion that is the polar opposite of the moderation and dispassionateness valued by the speakers. This sets up a conventional stoic dichotomy that structures virtually all of the subsequent Leicester libels: where reason governs passion, temperate self-government makes possible the trustworthy adherence to public duties and the honoring of public bonds; where bestial passion overthrows reason, the demands of

selfish appetite overthrow the constraints of public obligation.¹³ Leicester – first figured as a predatory falcon and then referred to as a “Bearwhelp” (p. 73) after the Dudley crest with its image of a bear tied to a stake – becomes in *Leicester’s Commonwealth* the epitome of the latter.

This basic dichotomy structures the text’s portrait of Leicester. And because the earl is depicted primarily as a figure of intemperate appetites, the distinction between his political ambitions and his sexual desires is surprisingly shaky. The earl is depicted as a serial killer, murdering anyone who stands in the way of what are alternatively sexual and political ambitions. First he kills his own wife, Amy Robsart, in order to make himself available to marry the queen (her body was found at the bottom of a staircase with a broken neck – *Leicester’s Commonwealth* suggests that this was staged to make her murder look accidental [p. 81]). Then, waffling between dynastic and erotic desires, he falls for Lady Sheffield and poisons her husband. Not satisfied, he poisons the Earl of Essex and marries his widow (p. 82). Throughout, the appetite for power (marrying the queen) and for sex (with the other women) are conflated, seen as two aspects of the same unregulated appetite:

you must not marvel though his Lordship be somewhat divers, variable, and inconstant with himself, for that according to his profit or his pleasure, and as his lust and liking shall vary (wherein by the judgment of all men he surpasseth not only Sardanapalus and Nero, but even Heliogabalus himself), so his Lordship also changeth wives and minions by killing the one, denying the other, using the third for a time, and then fawning upon the fourth. And for this cause he hath his terms and pretenses . . . as for example, after he hath killed his first wife and so broken that contract, then forsooth would he make himself husband to the Queen’s Majesty and so defeat all other princes by virtue of his precontract. But after this, his lust compelling him to another place, he would needs make a postcontract with the lady Sheffield, and so he did, begetting two children upon her . . . But yet after, his concupiscence changing again (as it never stayeth), he resolved to make a retract of this postcontract (though it were as surely done, as I have said, as bed and bible could make the same), and to make a certain new protract . . . with the widow of Essex. (pp. 86–87)

The libel’s over-passionate Leicester is thus an emblematic figure of failed self-government, a figure of inconstant and irrational desires incapable even of holding constant to a wicked purpose.

This image of Leicester – driven to excess by a “divers, variable, and inconstant lust” – becomes a staple of subsequent Leicester libels as well. One unnamed libel written shortly after the real earl’s death imagines him coming to Saint Peter at the gates of heaven bearing the mark of his patron spirit “Sarcotheos” or “god of the flesh.” Leicester erroneously assumes that

the mark of this spirit will help him get in to heaven, but he is quickly informed of his error:

Trew it is that he [Sarcotheos] attended upon you one the earth, but not by Gods appointment but of his owen accorde to abuse you and to draw you into all delicasy and wantonnes of the flesh, thereby to make you to forgett God, as also he did, for who lived so carnaly as you did or who made flesh his god so much as you in all the worlde, so that in very truth you were obsequious unto him.¹⁴

For his sins, Leicester is hurled to Hell by his penis, where (among other charming developments) he has eternal intercourse with a fiery devil whose infernal genitals char the offending member.¹⁵ Less spectacularly, the linking of unchecked lust and selfish political manipulation is summed up succinctly in a anti-Leicester libel entitled “Letter of estate sent too his friende HR in Gratiouus Strete.” This piece, which is indebted to *Leicester’s Commonwealth* in many of its particulars, deplores Leicester’s “flowerepott of Machivell strategems and Aritenicall practices.”¹⁶ The association of Machiavelli with Pietro Aretino, notorious as the erotic writer par excellence, nicely encapsulates the continuum between unregulated passion and “insatiable” ambition (*Leicester’s Commonwealth*, p. 125): Aretino served in England as a demonized foreign representative of unregulated sexuality, much as Machiavelli was the demonized foreign representative of political hypocrisy.¹⁷ “Machivell stratagemes” originate from the same moral defect as “Aritenicall practices” in that both betray the passionate greediness of the private individual at the expense of duty, morality, and propriety. The essence of this idea of Leicester is his greedy individualism, a disaffiliated self-regard that stems from a basic inability to govern bestial passion.

Leicester’s Commonwealth and other libels accordingly emphasize the plasticity of the earl’s religious affiliation, arguing that he cares for nothing but himself and that he uses religious parties only as they happen to serve his interests: “whereas by the common distinction now received in speech there are three notable differences of religion in the land, the two extremes whereof are the Papist and the Puritan, and the religious Protestant obtaining the mean, this fellow being of neither maketh his gain of all.” (*Leicester’s Commonwealth*, p. 72). This image of Leicester as the embodiment of disaffiliated greed likewise extends to his status as a political upstart whose low birth is an affront to the traditional aristocracy. And just as he is a selfish servant of the state, so he is a selfish master. *Leicester’s Commonwealth* tells of a man named Gates, a servant of the earl’s, who committed robbery in expectation of his master’s protection only to find himself hastened to his death by Leicester’s influence in the courts:

My lord of Leicester was not only not his favorer but a great hastener of his death . . . which thing when Gates heard of he easily believed, for the experience he had of his master's good nature, and said that he always mistrusted the same, considering how much his Lordship was in debt to him and he made privy to his Lordship's foul secrets. (p. 101)

The earl is imagined as being unconnected to any religion, unaffiliated with networks of aristocratic blood, and unconstrained by considerations of reciprocal loyalty either to the crown or to his own servants. Recall, too, that the portrait of the earl's disaffiliated rapaciousness developed in the dialogue is set against the framing image of hospitality and good fellowship at the gentleman's estate.

As the Gates episode suggests, *Leicester's Commonwealth* is also concerned to demonstrate that the favorite's selfish passion has an atomizing effect on the realm as a whole, corrupting and breaking down traditional hierarchies and social bonds and thereby encouraging selfishness in other reward-seekers. The earl is blamed there not only for his treacherous treatment of a servant like Gates, but also for preferring that kind of ruffian in the first place. At court, the author of the libel argues, Leicester manages office-giving "without respect either of reason, order, due, right, subordination, custom, conveniency, or the like," and the distribution of rewards is similarly corrupted "in all other places where matters should pass by order, election or degree" (p. 97). Leicester's influence over the distribution of office and reward is subsequently alleged and decried in the universities, the church, local government, parliament, and courts of law.

"The Letter of Estate" contains an anecdote similar to the Gates episode, but one that is much more elaborately explicit about the way Leicester's selfishness spreads and corrupts others. This libel tells of a "gentillman of good estate" who "had a longtime desire to gett the whit beare and raged stafe on his backe, thinkinge if once hee might but get that on his sleve hee might lord it with the beste gentillmann or squire in the country" (p. 33). He gains admission into the earl's service by means of bribes, and begins to put on airs himself:

where as a fore a semly sute would have served to have worne among his friends and honest neybars, now no thinge but velvet and sattine wolde serve him, with his chaine of goulde folded twice doble about his necke, costly bractetes aboute his wrists, and rings on every finger of his hand, and with all the reste of his apparell correspondent, so as if his three hundred pound had bine three thousand a yeere it wold not have sufficed. (p. 33)

Living prodigally gets the gentleman into debt and he is forced to ask the earl for assistance. Leicester, seeing an opportunity, calls the man into “his secret chamber” and makes him an offer he can’t refuse, promising to pay the man’s debts if he will commit a “willful murther” (p. 34). The man does so, is apprehended, and (like Gates) is betrayed by his confidence in the earl’s protection. In this case, the earl promises him that his pardon is “already sealed” and then leaves him to hang (p. 34).

What this story adds to the Gates episode is its description of the gentleman’s transformation from respectable to proud to monstrous as a direct result of the earl’s example. The unchecked power wielded by the earl provides the hapless gentleman with an aspirational model that leads him away from “his friends and honest neybor” and toward a similarly unchecked ambition. Corruption – the efficacy of bribes in place of merit – makes his entry into the earl’s cohort possible. And once in he loses sight of what is “semly” and veers toward becoming a murderer like his new master. The story is introduced in “The Letter of Estate” as an anecdote designed to demonstrate what the author of the piece calls Leicester’s “pestelente nature” (p. 33), a formulation which nicely captures the kind of moral contagion shown to spread outward from the favorite’s own repugnant example.

Leicester’s Commonwealth, in keeping with its stance of rhetorical and political moderation, bends over backwards attempting to reconcile Leicester’s cancerous influence with the innocence of the queen whose favor makes his career possible. The opening epistle announces that the dialogue to follow includes nothing “repugnant to . . . our bounden duty toward our most gracious Princess or country” (p. 64), and descriptions of Elizabeth’s favor for the earl are as coy as possible on the subject of her culpability:

There is no man that ascribeth not this [Leicester’s domination of royal favor] unto the singular benignity and most bountiful good nature of her Majesty, who measuring other men by her own heroical and princely sincerity cannot easily suspect a man so much bounded to her grace as he is, nor remove her confidence from the place where she hath heaped so infinite benefits. (pp. 73–74)

This is clearly a difficult rhetorical position to sustain. For the hoary dodge of deflecting blame from monarch to counselor is strained to the breaking point by this villain’s special and exclusive dependence upon royal favor.

In fact, the libel’s characterization of Leicester as an isolated and atomizing figure unconnected to traditional hierarchies of rank and merit and thus unconstrained by custom and duty requires an exaggerated insistence

upon the earl's exclusive reliance upon royal favor. There is no mention, for instance, of the Dudley family's claim to antiquity of blood, which is why the response penned by Sir Philip Sidney – Leicester's nephew – focuses specifically on rebutting its derogatory remarks about the Dudley pedigree.¹⁸ This is the text's primary rhetorical dilemma. It tries to sound moderate and to exonerate Elizabeth, but its depiction of Leicester as the opponent of all customary social structures requires it to insist upon the earl's complete and total reliance upon errant royal favor: "you must not think that this man holdeth anything abroad in the realm but by violence, and that only upon her Majesty's favor and countenance toward him" (p. 193). Loyalism notwithstanding, the unmistakable implication here is that the personal authority of the monarch threatens – by way of Leicester – to overturn the customary bonds that should underpin a harmonious commonwealth.

The author of *Leicester's Commonwealth* is clearly conscious of the problem, for the text attempts a number of patently unsatisfactory gambits to disassociate the queen from the guilt of her favorite. Blaming him on Elizabeth's "singular benignity and most bountiful good nature," for example, implies with uncomfortable directness that good qualities in a monarch can lead to catastrophic public damage and thus that a monarch's personal virtue does not correlate to good government. This rather radical position is not sustained for long. Elsewhere, the text treats Elizabeth as a prisoner of her favorite, emphasizing his domination of the queen's chambers and his ability to surround her with his own followers. By this means "he shutteth up his prince in a prison most sure, though sweet and senseless" (p. 93). Likewise, by controlling access to the queen, Leicester is able to place "as it were a lock upon the ears of his prince" (p. 95). Treating Elizabeth as a hapless victim of her Machiavellian favorite is clearly somewhat less than flattering to her, however, and so it too clashes with rhetoric of obedience and love toward the queen prominent elsewhere in the text.

For the most part, *Leicester's Commonwealth* attempts to finesse such rhetorical problems by discussing Leicester as if he were himself king or tyrant, comparing him at various points (as we have seen above) to Nero and other figures of royal/imperial excess. But wherever the question of the queen's role is broached, the text betrays uneasily that attacking the favorite as the enemy of tradition entails imagining the monarch as flawed or ineffectual. There are moments in the text that show the strain quite clearly. At one point, for instance, the libel compares indignation at Leicester's trespasses to "the example of the Tarquinians among the Romans" adding

“here also in our own realm, we have registered in chronicle how that one King Edwin above six hundred years past was deprived of his kingdom for much less scandalous facts than these” (pp. 87–88). Since both examples involve ousting the sitting ruler, it isn’t hard to read in these comparisons a thinly veiled threat against the queen despite her “singular benignity.”

Only at the end of the piece does the structural problem of royal favoritism – its connection to personal monarchy as an institution – receive sustained discussion. Here the criticism of Elizabeth inevitably becomes more overt, as does the threat of rebellious violence. The gentleman rehearses “examples of sundry princes in all ages and countries whose exorbitant favor to some wicked subject that abused the same hath been the cause of great danger and ruin, the sins of the favorite being returned and revenged upon the favorer” (p. 187). Turning to English history, the libel draws a comparison between Leicester and the favorites of Edward II, Richard II, and Henry VI, adding that favorites of these monarchs dominated “much after the fashion of the earl of Leicester now, though yet not in so high and extreme a degree” (p. 188). Elizabeth is accordingly urged to disregard her “particular and peculiar inclination” and withhold favor from so corrupting and corrupt a figure. By shifting the emphasis briefly from Leicester’s tyranny to his status as favorite to Elizabeth, the author of the libel in effect lays bare the problem of royal favor that it had been skirting as carefully as possible up until this point. Strikingly, Sidney’s rebuttal picks up on this change in emphasis, using the brief account of the problem of royal favorites to bolster his demonstration of the text’s treasonous nature. Anticipating seventeenth-century debates about favoritism and reform, Sidney argues in effect that attacks on favoritism are of necessity attacks on monarchy:

He himself in some places brings in the example of Gaveston, Earl of Cornwall, Robert Vere, Duke of Ireland, and De la Pole, Duke of Suffolk. It is not my purpose to defend them, but I would fain know whether they that persecuted those councilors, when they had their will in ruining them, whether their rage ceased before they had as well destroyed the kings themselves, Edward and Richard II, and Henry VI. (Appendix C, *Leicester’s Commonwealth*, pp. 252–53)

Other anti-Leicester polemics were sometimes less circumspect about drawing connections between Elizabeth’s favor and Leicester’s “pestelente nature.” Where *Leicester’s Commonwealth* refrains from retailing gossip about Leicester’s alleged sexual encounters with Queen Elizabeth, these form an important part of the image of lustful Leicester developed in contemporary gossip. Carole Levin offers numerous examples of this persistent

item of gossip, the most inflammatory no doubt taken from *An Admonition to the Nobility and People of England and Ireland Concerning the Present Warres*.¹⁹ This tract, apparently circulated in England by William Allen to legitimate the overthrow of Elizabeth in anticipation of the triumph of the Spanish Armada in 1588, describes Leicester as “one speciall extortioner, whom [Elizabeth] tooke up first of a Traitor & woorse then naughte, only to serve her filthy luste” and then offers the following inflammatory account of his role in the Elizabethan court:

[he] of an amorous minion advaused to high office, degree, & excessive welthe, is becum her chiefe leader in all her wicked and unwonted course of regiment, her instrument of the destruction of the nobilitie, by many indirect meanes . . . living only of briberie, spoile, and roberie: wherby, and throughe the favoure of the pretended he hathe this many a yeare overruled the chamber, courte, counsell, parliament, portes, fortes, Seas, Shippes, borders, men, munition, and all the cuntrie.²⁰

In a sense this polemic makes overt what *Leicester's Commonwealth* labors to conceal: the fact that the construction of Leicester as upstart unconstrained by customary loyalties or duties hinges on a critique of the “particular and peculiar inclination” of the monarch.

Alan Kendall, Leicester's most judicious modern biographer, sums up the popularity of *Leicester's Commonwealth* as follows: “the fact that it had such a success would seem to indicate that it was very much what people wanted to hear about him.”²¹ Perhaps, though this hardly explains the republication of the book in multiple editions a half-century after the earl's death! I would argue instead that the extraordinary popularity of the text – during Leicester's life and beyond – has to do not only with animosity toward the historical earl, but with its vividly realized anatomy of favoritism and its corruption. Its portrait of the favorite as a figure of ravenous and unregulated selfish appetites disconnected from the traditions and institutions of public life and dependant solely on the personal whim of the monarch gave symbolic expression to deep and recurring political tensions inherent in the ongoing centralization of the state: tensions between royal favor and blood as the basis for status, tensions between centralized monarchy and the traditional governance of the localities, tensions about the respective authority of law and custom as opposed to the “particular and peculiar inclination” of the king. As the period's first major figuration of the royal favorite we can see how *Leicester's Commonwealth* might have appealed to a broad politically minded readership, and when thought of in such terms it is less surprising that the text should have been as influential for as long as it seems to have been.

LEICESTER'S LEGACY AND THE LANGUAGE OF CORRUPTION

One can see something both of the influence and utility of this image of Leicester as “pestelente” and omnipotent favorite by looking at its absorption into popular fictions of court corruption. Allusions to Leicester libel have long been recognized, for instance, in Thomas Kyd's *The Spanish Tragedy* (1587) and John Webster's *The White Devil* (1610–12), each of which uses the crimes attributed to the earl to depict court corruption more generally. In Kyd's play, as Fredson Bowers and others have long ago pointed out, the Machiavellian Lorenzo uses his subordinate Pedringano in a manner reminiscent of the Gates episode from *Leicester's Commonwealth* or of the misled “gentillman” in the “Letter of Estate.”²² Pedringano commits a murder for his patron, and – like Leicester's foolish “gentillman” – trusts his benefactor to provide a pardon. Lorenzo of course allows his servant to hang, in this case sending an empty box in place of the promised pardon so that Pedringano expects to be rescued until the end. Moreover, as Bowers has shown, broader recognition of the parallel between Leicester's treachery and Lorenzo's is demonstrated by the way the Gates episode is retold in *Leicester's Ghost*, Thomas Rogers's verse redaction of the Leicester libels, which in turn borrows the detail of Lorenzo's empty box:

Therefore, all future mischiefe to prevent,
I let him [Gates] slipp away with my consent:
For his reprivall, like a crafty fox,
I sent noe pardon, but an empty box.²³

Kyd's depiction of Lorenzo was influenced by the black legend of Leicester, and the connection between the two figures is here acknowledged.

The connection between Leicester libel and *The Spanish Tragedy* is important, I think, because Kyd's play itself proved to be such an influential early dramatic depiction of corruption. And we underestimate the literary importance of a text like *Leicester's Commonwealth* if we treat it merely as a storehouse of ideologically inert anecdotes to be raided by writers like Kyd. The broader thematic connections between Leicester libels and the vision of court corruption in Kyd's play are in fact quite suggestive. Kyd's Lorenzo, like the figure of the Earl of Leicester depicted in *Leicester's Commonwealth* and allied texts, is a Machiavellian courtier whose scheming undermines traditional reciprocal bonds of duty and obligation. In *The Spanish Tragedy*, as in *Leicester's Commonwealth*, this extends to a radically cynical account of royal impotence, since in each text the powerful courtier (Leicester/Lorenzo) is able to keep his ruler in the dark. Kyd's revenger,

Hieronimo, anguished over the loss of his son who has been killed by Lorenzo, decides to take his case before the King of Spain. But he is unable to get an audience because Lorenzo first attempts to block his access to the king (“Back, see’st thou not the king is busy?”²⁴) and then intercedes to ensure that Hieronimo’s rantings are misunderstood. Kyd stages the scene so as to emphasize the degree to which the king is ignorant of what has been taking place in his kingdom, for he is shown to be unaware of Horatio’s death (3.12.61–62).

I do not mean to suggest here that *The Spanish Tragedy* can be read as a *roman-à-clef* or that Lorenzo should be taken as a veiled figuration of Leicester. In fact, in some ways the politics of Kyd’s play and *Leicester’s Commonwealth* are exactly opposed: where *Leicester’s Commonwealth* reacts against the perceived marginalization of traditional (Catholic) aristocracy at court, Kyd’s play hinges on the brutal animosity of a princely aristocracy toward the upward mobility of non-aristocratic court servants like Hieronimo and Horatio.²⁵ Nevertheless, attending to the thematic similarities between these texts – their shared participation in a late Elizabethan concern with the limitations of personal monarchy – may suggest some ways in which the anatomy of corruption pioneered in *Leicester’s Commonwealth* was taken up in Kyd’s influential play. By imagining the favorite as a kind of personified pestilence who disenfranchises the monarch and infects the institutions that should secure public duty, texts like *Leicester’s Commonwealth* or “The Letter of Estate” give vivid expression to anxieties about the perceived failure of a social contract that also interest Kyd. This in turn suggests that the impact of *Leicester’s Commonwealth* may have had less to do with the specific polemical agenda of its author or authors and more to do with the fact that its evocation of spreading social corruption struck a chord and could be appropriated for other uses.

The allusions to Leicester in *The White Devil* are much more overt. As Brachiano lies dead in Act 5, Gasparo and Lodovico exult over his body as follows:

LODOVICO. O you slave!

You that were held the famous Pollitian;

Whose art was poison.

GASPARO. And whose conscience murder.

LODOVICO. That would have broke your wives necke downe the staires

Ere she was poison’d.

GASPARO. That had your villainous sallets.

LODOVICO. And fine imbrodered bottles, and perfumes

Equally mortall with a winter plague.²⁶

This is a tissue of allusions to the scandals narrated in *Leicester's Commonwealth*. Leicester of course was accused of having ordered his first wife murdered by being thrown down a flight of stairs. He was also accused of having poisoned Sir Nicholas Throckmorton with poisoned salad oil (*Leicester's Commonwealth*, p. 85) and in general of being a cunning politician and a serial poisoner. Earlier in the play, Brachiano employs a Doctor Julio to poison his wife Isabella, and given the play's other allusions to Leicester this seems like an allusion to the "Doctor Julio" (really Giulio Borgarucci) who is alleged to be Leicester's poison consultant in *Leicester's Commonwealth* (pp. 80–82, for example).

As with the parallel between Leicester and *The Spanish Tragedy's* Lorenzo, the connection between Leicester and Brachiano seems pretty remote. Despite their shared interest in court corruption, it is difficult to find more specific areas of overlap between *The White Devil* and the Leicester libels. My guess is that Webster thought of the earl because Brachiano shares with the Leicester of legend a penchant for both poison and adulterous lust. That is, Brachiano becomes, in Webster's drama, another figure for "Machivell strategems and Aritenicall practices": for the unregulated desires that undermine public duty and so prove particularly pestilential at the highest ranks. Webster's allusions imply that Leicester had come to stand as a kind of allusive shorthand for the unregulated selfish passions of the great and for their corrupting influence at court. This in turn suggests that by 1612 the anatomy of corruption worked out in *Leicester's Commonwealth* and elaborated in subsequent libels was absorbed into what we might call a symbolic vocabulary of corruption to such a degree that it might be used with virtually no connection to the specific polemical contexts in which it originated.

It is worth noting, too, that Webster's allusions to the scandals surrounding the memory of Leicester assume a ready familiarity with the stuff of *Leicester's Commonwealth* even a quarter-century after the earl's death. This is part of a mountain of evidence for the ongoing popularity of the libel throughout the early Stuart period. Some of this evidence is anecdotal, such as Lady Anne Clifford's account of having "a book called Leicester's Common Wealth" read aloud to her in December of 1619.²⁷ More striking, though, is the manuscript evidence, which suggests that the text enjoyed both an enormous and a longstanding circulation. In his modern edition of *Leicester's Commonwealth*, D. C. Peck lists a whopping fifty-six manuscripts that contain the libel (or, in a few cases, excerpts from it), adding "it appears that I have not seen only about five known manuscripts."²⁸ It is now pretty clear that this actually underestimates the number of surviving copies.²⁹

Moreover, it seems clear that a significant number of these copies were made (and thus presumably read) in the seventeenth century rather than in 1584 or soon thereafter. Of the twenty-three manuscript copies of *Leicester's Commonwealth* currently held by the British Library, for example, one (Landsdowne MS 265) is dated 1616 and at least eight others are contained in volumes that also include controversial political tracts from the seventeenth century.³⁰ This presumably reflects factors such as survival rates and the seventeenth-century growth of what we might call the political manuscript industry, but it seems pretty clear that the passing of Leicester and his personal opponents did little to dampen interest in or circulation of the libel.

It is tempting, though necessarily more speculative, to imagine what the libel may have meant to readers encountering it at later dates or in composite volumes with other controversial texts. Presumably whoever had it copied in 1616, for example, noted parallels between its allegations of poison, lechery, and treachery toward underlings and the explosive recent revelations made public in the trial of King James's favorite Robert Carr, Earl of Somerset, who was indicted in January 1616 (and later convicted) for conspiring to poison his underling, Sir Thomas Overbury. A connection between Somerset's well-publicized perfidy and the Gates episode in *Leicester's Commonwealth* would at any rate have been hard to miss. And the mixture of sexual and political corruption associated with Leicester might likewise have resonated with the unfolding scandals revealed in the Overbury trials, since the secret murder of Overbury was widely seen as the culmination of a sex scandal in which Frances Howard's marriage to the third Earl of Essex was annulled to pave the way for her to marry the favorite.³¹ It seems likely that the 1616 manuscript of *Leicester's Commonwealth* was in fact prompted by interest in Somerset, Howard, and the murder of Overbury. But at the very least it would have been hard to miss the basis for comparison; in the wake of the scandal surrounding the royal favorite, accusations against Leicester must have seemed like prophesies. And reading the libel in 1616 might also have suggested a troubling and recurring connection between royal favoritism and the list of crimes associated so publicly and spectacularly with Somerset.

The same process of recopying and recontextualizing continues throughout the controversial career of George Villiers, Duke of Buckingham. For example, British Library (BL) MS Harley 405 contains among other items both *Leicester's Commonwealth* and *The Forerunner of Revenge*, a pamphlet by George Eglisam first circulated in 1626 that accused the duke of poisoning King James. It is easy to imagine a volume like this as either stimulating

or reflecting comparison between the accusations aroused by the two great royal favorites, Leicester and Buckingham. BL MS Hargrave 168 is a late seventeenth-century folio volume containing ten political treatises (one dated 1668). The last two items are, respectively, a collection of excerpts from *Leicester's Commonwealth* and Sir Henry Wotton's "Of Robert Devereux, Earl of Essex; and George Villiers, Duke of Buckingham: Some Observations By Way Of Parallel, In the Time Of Their Estates of Favour."³² Though the inflammatory *Leicester's Commonwealth* is obviously unlike Wotton's extremely measured discussion, the juxtaposition of these two pieces may reflect a larger comparative interest in the phenomenon of favoritism. BL MS Hargrave 311 is a folio that opens with *Leicester's Commonwealth* and also contains material from the commons' attempt to impeach Buckingham in 1626 (p. 374 and following). In Houghton Library fMS ENG 868, Thomas Scott's *Vox Populi, Or Newes From Spayne* has been copied onto the remaining leaves of what is evidently a scribal edition of *Leicester's Commonwealth*.³³ Scott's tract – which implicitly criticizes King James and Buckingham for their diplomatic approach toward the Spanish match and the outbreak of the thirty-years war by depicting the gloating of the Spanish court at the divisions weakening England – was originally printed in 1620. Since these divisions were commonly blamed on the corruption of greedy courtiers – and especially on their supposed ringleader, Buckingham – the juxtaposition of these two texts may reflect a comparative perspective on the divisive nature of royal favoritism.

One could compile a larger list of manuscripts in which *Leicester's Commonwealth* is copied next to other political texts and tracts.³⁴ I do not want to insist on the significance of any specific example, but rather to point toward the pervasiveness of such juxtapositions in order to indicate the kind of topical resonance that *Leicester's Commonwealth* may have had for its early Stuart readership. Such speculative recontextualizations are warranted, I believe, by recent research into early modern reading practices which suggests, as Richard Dutton puts it, "that analogical readings, over-reading texts in the light of contemporary persons or concerns, was very much the norm, not the exception."³⁵ This is methodologically important, for it implies that texts were read topically without regard for interpretive limitations set by authorial intent: the author of *Leicester's Commonwealth* of course did not know about the controversy surrounding Somerset or Buckingham, but that does not mean that seventeenth-century over-readers did not come to it with these figures primarily in mind. Everything we know about topical reading suggests that they would have done so as a matter of course. Moreover, the accumulation of material in manuscript

miscellanies and compilations reflects and facilitates the habit of analogical reading. Manuscript miscellanies often seem to serve as memory banks within which striking political material is both kept at hand and associated with texts originating in different political contexts. The anthologizing of *Leicester's Commonwealth* in all of these seventeenth-century manuscripts is thus the material correlative of the readerly practice Dutton describes, in which texts are likewise endlessly re-situated in relation to contemporary concerns. Small wonder, then, that the text, with its elaborate depiction of the “pestelente” royal favorite, should have continued to be of interest in the days of Somerset and Buckingham.

Leicester's Commonwealth returned to print in 1641, and I think it makes sense to see the decision to reprint the libel as part of a reheated public debate on corrupt royal counsel occasioned by the trial, attainder, and execution of Thomas Wentworth, Earl of Strafford.³⁶ Though Strafford was not in any way a typical royal favorite – he spent much of the personal rule in Ireland and never enjoyed the close personal connection with the king that is the basis of power in the typical favorite's career³⁷ – the controversy surrounding him in 1641 was very much shaped by debates over royal favoritism held over from the days of Buckingham. We can see this, for instance, in the way Strafford is imagined as continuing Buckingham's corruption in Lucy Hutchinson's memoir:

The whole people were sadly grieved at these misgovernments, and, loath to impute them to the King, cast all the odium upon the Duke of Buckingham, whom at length a discontented person stabbed, believing he did God and his country good service by it. All the kingdom, except the Duke's own dependents and kindred, rejoiced in the death of this duke; but they found little cause, for after it the King still persisted in his design of enslaving them, and found other ministers ready to serve his self-willed ambition . . .

But there were two above all the rest who led the van of the King's evil counsellors, and these were Laud . . . and the Earl of Strafford, who . . . outstripped all the rest in favour.³⁸

Public interest in attacks on Strafford specifically, and on the idea of corrupt royal ministers more generally, led to the printing of a number of Buckingham-related pamphlets in the early 1640s: for example *The Fore-runner of Revenge* (1642), a redaction of it called *Strange Apparitions, or The Ghost of King James* (1642), Wotton's comparison of Essex and Buckingham (1641) as well as his *Short View of the Life and Death of George Villiers, Duke of Buckingham* (1642), and several transcriptions of speeches by or about Buckingham from the parliaments of the 1620s.

One can imagine a number of reasons for the lingering presence of Buckingham in the rhetorical battles surrounding the actions of the Long Parliament. For one thing, because of the hiatus during the personal rule, struggles with Buckingham were actually among the more recent institutional memories. For another, concentrating on a tradition of evil counselors leading from Buckingham to Strafford and beyond made it possible to step up resistance to royal policy without giving up the rhetoric of conciliation. Moreover, anti-Buckingham material was virtually ubiquitous in the manuscript miscellanies of the 1630s and so we might imagine that the cumulative effect of the massive animosity generated by Charles's last great favorite remained vital enough to help shape conflicts in the Long Parliament. Anti-Buckingham material provided an affectively satisfying frame of reference for the perceived breakdown of relations between the king and his subjects even in the absence of a really comparable successor as favorite.

Leicester's Commonwealth was printed in two full editions and an abbreviated epitome in 1641.³⁹ I think it owes its reprinting in the context of the Long Parliament's clash with Strafford to the fact that it had never really vanished from manuscript circulation and so remained in memory as a colorful and entertaining depiction of the paradigmatic evil minister. The multiple editions of course demonstrate considerable interest in the piece, as does the decision to print a cheaper and more easily digestible abbreviated version. We do not know who printed the different versions, but in October of 1641 Sir Edward Nichols, clerk of the Privy Council, wrote to the wardens of the Company of Stationers asking them to stay the printing and distribution of an edition of *Leicester's Commonwealth* being printed by John Dawson with the help of William Sheares. Both men printed plenty of material designed to capitalize on the taste for political and religious controversy in the early 1640s, though neither has an output that falls completely along lines of doctrine or ideology. There is certainly nothing in the record of either man to make the decision to publish *Leicester's Commonwealth* seem wildly anomalous or to go against the idea that it was printed to capitalize on interest in the problem of corrupt royal ministers. Sheares printed Wotton's life of Buckingham in 1642, presumably for similar reasons, and both men were involved in the printing of a number of controversial parliamentary speeches in 1641–43.

The two full versions of *Leicester's Commonwealth* follow the printed edition of 1584 closely. The abbreviated version – *Leicesters Common-Wealth fully Epitomiz'd* – is more interesting as a text because its selectivity shows what seemed essential in 1641. Though its title page promises a version “with

the full sense and whole meaning of the former Booke,” some dramatic changes are made to the sense of the piece via abbreviation. Most strikingly, the specifically Catholic slant of the original is almost completely excised in the epitome. It is no longer even possible to ascertain that the lawyer is Catholic. The speakers still begin by discussing religious controversy, and they still decry over-zealous innovators among papists and puritans alike, but the moderate conservatism of the piece’s frame is no longer specifically associated with an ancient and respectable strain of Catholicism. This emendation no doubt made the piece more palatable to a reading public that had seen Strafford as being dangerously cozy with papists. The anonymous author of *A Declaration Shewing the Necessity of the Earl of Straffords Suffering*, also printed in 1641, complains that “all Papists speake well” of Strafford and adds that “it is very likely in recompense thereof he would bring in Popery.”⁴⁰ It would have been considerably easier for readers in 1641 – hostile to the perceived popery of Strafford (and Buckingham, for that matter) – to draw parallels between Caroline favorites and the monstrous favorite of *Leicester’s Commonwealth* once that text’s original Catholic affiliation had been to some extent stripped away. When London readers of the epitome’s rousing conclusion came upon the complaint about the “open injuries” which the favorite “offereth daily to religion” they may have associated this accusation not with Leicester’s hostility to Catholicism but with Strafford’s alleged support of it.⁴¹

The request in *Leicester’s Commonwealth* to allow the favorite to stand trial must likewise have reverberated very differently in the wake of the trials and execution of Strafford. Despite the comparative brevity of the epitome, the passages in *Leicester’s Commonwealth* that request “her Majesty to call his Lordship to an account . . . and to see what other men could say against him” (6) are retained in full. This then-unlikely request is made a few times in the original, but in the abbreviated version of 1641 it is given emphasis as the argument’s conclusion. Here is how the epitome ends:

(if I say) we should lay together all those inormities before her Majestie, and thousand[s] more in particular, which might and would be gathered, if his day of tryall were but in hope to be granted: I doe not see in equity and reason, how her highnesse sitting in Throne, and at the Royall Sterne, as she doth, could deny her Subjects this most lawfull request: considering that every one of these crimes apart, requireth Justice of his owne Nature: and much more altogether ought to obtain the same, at the hand of any good and godly Majestrates in the world.

Before this discourse was fully ended the night came on apace, and it being Supper time the Mistris came to call them downe to Supper, wherefore there further speech was intercepted. (16)

The printed versions of *Leicester's Commonwealth* appeared just after Strafford's execution in 1641.⁴² If we read the epitome as a text created to be read in the wake of the earl's contested trial and subsequent attainder, we might see this manner of concluding as a neat piece of parliamentary propaganda: since Strafford's "day of tryall" and its upshot were both controversial, parliamentarians would have welcomed a text that emphasized the need for open justice against a favorite with royal protection. The epitome thus gives us a snapshot of how *Leicester's Commonwealth* may have been read in relation to Strafford's execution in 1641.

It is worth pausing here to make note of the apparent ironies of the text's re-appropriation. A text written in 1584 to serve the interests of Catholic aristocrats who resented both the domination of court politics by Protestants and upward mobility of the court favorite comes by 1641 to be used as propaganda by supporters of Pym and company who fear that a corrupt royal favorite will be soft on popery and hostile to the liberties of the people! This neat reversal – from Catholic to Protestant, aristocratic to popular – provides a striking illustration of the plasticity of precedent and the way texts and stories get reused and reshaped according to the demands of an ever-changing socio-political landscape. At the same time, however, the duration of the text's appeal allows us to trace some significant continuities in the way English subjects thought about royal favoritism, which in turn might help us construct the kind of intellectual pre-history for the radical ideas and actions of 1641.

For instance, the veiled threat to Queen Elizabeth in *Leicester's Commonwealth* – the way it praises her while suggesting ominously that she might be held accountable for Leicester's excesses – resembles the ambivalently oppositional rhetoric deployed in the 1640s concerning Charles I and his evil ministers. The anonymous author of *A Declaration Shewing the Necessity of the Earl of Straffords Suffering* brings to bear upon Strafford a number of the accusations brought against Leicester earlier: he "aims at Monarchy," has unworthy ancestry, and so forth. But despite calling for the execution of the king's trusted minister the pamphlet ends nonetheless with the following formulaic burst of conservative piety: "my prayer to God shall bee to open his majesties eies to see the danger he and all we are in."⁴³ This writer, like so many others, positions himself as a defender of monarchy in order to criticize the decisions of the actual monarch. This of course exemplifies what Conrad Russell describes as "a fascinating impersonalization of the notion of royal authority" during the waning years of Charles's authority, a development that, Russell argues, enabled parliamentarians to become increasingly hostile to the crown while avoiding "the necessity to formulate

any theory of resistance.”⁴⁴ As anyone familiar with the controversy over Russell’s revisionist historiography will recognize, this last point is central to his analysis of pre-revolutionary conflict.⁴⁵ The parliamentarians avoid formulating a theory of resistance because they, like the royalists, conceive of themselves as defenders of a traditional social order that was felt to be breaking down. The oddly conservative rhetoric that concludes *The Declaration* might thus typify Russell’s argument in that its author apparently sees no difficulty reconciling hostility to the king’s minister with basic allegiance to monarchy as an ideal.

One of the implications of this case study in the fortunes of *Leicester’s Commonwealth*, though, is that the “impersonalization of the notion of royal authority” itself has a long and robust intellectual history. If we think of this attitude toward monarchy as a central feature of the discourse of favoritism dating back at least to 1584, then perhaps this rhetoric of critical loyalism will begin to seem less like an avoidance technique for disgruntled parliamentarians and more like a longstanding vehicle for the expression of proto-republican sentiments concerning the duty of subjects and the nature of enfranchisement.⁴⁶ For of course *Leicester’s Commonwealth*, despite its overt conservatism and its praise of Elizabeth’s benevolence, can be read as articulating (not just avoiding) a radically restrictive theory of royal power: monarchy turns to tyranny when errors of the monarch’s “particular and peculiar inclination” result in the advancement of pestilential ministers; such men should be held accountable for the grievances they create or the monarch may suffer the consequences. What then is the role of royal inclination in the state? If favor is suspect, what alternative mechanism authorizes participation in the public sphere?

One consequence of this sort of thinking is the request, from the petition accompanying the Grand Remonstrance of 1641, that Charles allow parliamentary oversight of all his aides and intimates:

That your majesty will likewise be pleased to remove from your council all such as persist to favour and promote any of those pressures and corruptions wherewith your people have been grieved; and that for the future your Majesty will vouchsafe to employ such persons in your great and public affairs, and to take such to be near you in places of trust, as your Parliament may have cause to confide in; that in your princely goodness to your people you will reject and refuse all mediation and solicitation to the contrary, how powerful and near soever.⁴⁷

So much for the “particular and peculiar inclination” of kings! I think it makes sense to see such a request not only as an example of ad hoc resistance forged in the heat of the Long Parliament but also as a logical expression of

a strain of thinking carried out (among other places) in controversial discourse concerning favoritism dating back to the reign of Elizabeth. Here, as in the other case studies in this book, we can see how longstanding fascination with the problem of favoritism enables exploration of controversial and sometimes radical ideas about the nature of personal monarchy itself.

THE RESOURCES OF NOSTALGIA

There is another persistent image of Leicester in the early Stuart imagination, one that associates him with the brand of dashing Protestant heroism usually associated with Elizabethan figures like Sir Philip Sidney, the Earl of Essex (both kinsmen), and Sir Walter Raleigh. Though he took pains to cultivate a kind of neo-chivalric persona in entertainments and tournaments at court, Leicester's handling of military affairs in the Low Countries left him with the reputation of a poor soldier: one popular libel describes him sarcastically as "the valiant soldier / that never drew his sword."⁴⁸ Essex – who, as Francis Bacon says, consciously avoided "the resemblance or imitation of my Lord of Leicester" – was often seen by contemporaries as the antithesis of his mentor: dashing, aristocratic, and soldierly where Leicester was a cowardly upstart with courtly rather than military skills.⁴⁹ Retroactive memory, though, sometimes lumped Leicester in with Essex and other Elizabethan heroes in nostalgic recreations of bygone glories. This is clearly what is happening in plays like Thomas Dekker's *The Whore of Babylon* (1606) or the second part of Thomas Heywood's *If You Know Not Me, You Know Nobody* (1605): in the former play Leicester is apparently alluded to under the person of Florimell, and in the latter he appears as a named character. In each case, though, he is used as window-dressing for heroic depictions of Elizabeth's Protestant triumphs. He becomes therefore a generic figure, associated with the Elizabethan triumph over the Spanish armada and in particular with the queen's famous visit to his camp at Tilbury.

We can see tensions between these two seemingly incompatible versions of Leicester's memory in the poem *Leicester's Ghost*, written by Thomas Rogers at the opening of King James's reign and then printed (both alone and together with *Leicester's Commonwealth*) in 1641.⁵⁰ The epistle to the poem criticizes *Leicester's Commonwealth* for being too bitter toward the earl and promises a more balanced version of his life: he is one "whoe if his herocall vertues had not beene overwhelmed with insatiable ambition, might have beene worthely reputed one of the most excellent Courtiers in the World" (p. 3). This is also the note upon which the poem ends, suggesting

that Leicester “both in vice, and vertue, did excell” (“The Author’s Conclusion,” line 14). The poem achieves this balance, however, only by shifting awkwardly between sections that seem to praise the earl and sections that rehash the scandalous accusations of *Leicester’s Commonwealth*.

Presented as a first-person utterance of the earl’s ghost, *Leicester’s Ghost* begins as a kind of self-defense, emphasizing the earl’s “heroicall vertues” and the loftiness of his political career. For much of the first 580 lines or so the earl presents himself as a great figure who is therefore above the reproaches of lesser men, and defends himself against charges of Machiavellian policy by insisting on his ultimate loyalty to Elizabeth:

Thinke ye I could forget my Sovereigne Lady,
That was to me so gracious and soe kind?
How many Tryumphes for her glory made I!
O, I could never blott out of my mynd
What characters of grace in her have shin’d:
But some of yow that were by her preferr’d
Have with her bones almost her name inter’d.
(lines 568–74)

More specifically, the poem’s emphasis on the problematic but heroic nature of the earl’s ambition attempts to shore up Leicester’s memory by recasting him in terms of the cultural memory of the Earl of Essex, who was often thought of (after his revolt and execution) as a figure for unruly but remarkable personal greatness.⁵¹ In fact, the poem’s modern editor has shown that Rogers actually drew upon a manuscript poem about Essex to flesh out his portrait of Leicester’s ambition.⁵² As a result, the picture of Leicester that emerges in this portion of the poem has little to do, finally, with the inherited depiction of Leicester as pestilent favorite. At one point during this portion of the poem, Leicester’s ghost sets his career in historical context by looking back to the reign of King Edward II. But instead of comparing himself to Gaveston he draws a parallel with Mortimer, the ambitious peer whose aggression led him into conflict with the king and garnered later comparisons with Essex (lines 347–57).⁵³

Eventually, the poem turns its attention to recounting the specific crimes popularized by *Leicester’s Commonwealth*, and once the earl confesses to some of these the sympathetic tone of the first portion is unsustainable. The pivot occurs in stanza 84, where the earl’s ghost first admits to poisoning his personal court rivals (lines 586–88). This can no longer be excused as cunning policy done for the queen’s sake, and much of the remainder of the poem is spent relating one sensational crime after another. The earl’s

passionate avowals of loyalty to Elizabeth are superseded by anecdotes that emphasize selfishness bordering on outright treason. At one point, for instance, he describes how he “procured an Act of Parliament, / Willing the Heyre apparent to conceale” (lines 1233–34) despite his recognition that this policy of secrecy might breed “great danger and offense” to Elizabeth (line 1242). Toward the end of the poem, as the earl sums up his own career, he again draws upon the story of Edward II, but this time he compares himself to “Gavestone” (line 1821) – the paradigmatic personal favorite – rather than Mortimer.

As a result, the second half of Rogers’s poem deals not with the problematic nature of noble ambition but with the structural vulnerability of monarchy to corrupt favoritism. This portion of *Leicester’s Ghost* would have resonated with controversy over royal favorites under James and then Charles:

O then lett not the *Soveraigne Monarch* trust,
 To anie one peculier Potentate,
 That ruleth not by reason, but by lust,
 Soe consequently brings himself in hate,
 And doth endanger his dread *Princes* state:
 This makes me wishe, none such, I beinge dead,
 May of the *Prince*, like me, be favored.

(lines 1814–20)

I do not think that the two versions of Leicester’s memory contained in *Leicester’s Ghost* can or should be reconciled. Instead, we can say that the poem’s interest lies in its oddly incompatible versions of Leicester, which provide a kind of snapshot of the competing traditions and contexts that went into the shaping of his legend. This early Jacobean version of the earl seems literally to be torn between resurrecting the monstrous favorite of *Leicester’s Commonwealth* and treating him as a heroic, Essex-like representative of lost Elizabethan greatness.

Increasing controversy over the politics of royal favoritism during the reigns of James and Charles put added pressure on these conflicting versions of Leicester. On the one hand, as we have seen, there is every reason to believe that *Leicester’s Commonwealth* continued to be reread for parallels with contemporary controversies during the entire early Stuart period. On the other hand, as writers like Greville make clear, dissatisfaction with the early Stuart politics and policy made it increasingly tempting to idealize the Elizabethan past. The intense animosity provoked by Buckingham in the 1620s, for example, seems to have given rise to a spate of nostalgic recollections of Elizabethan favorites Essex and Raleigh. The Puritan pamphleteer

Thomas Scott briefly imagines Raleigh as a crucial representative of lost English greatness in *Vox Populi* (1620) and then expands upon the idea in *Sir Walter Rawleigh's Ghost, or England's Forewarner* (1626). For good measure, Scott also trotted out the ghost of Essex to remind his readers of Spanish treachery in a pamphlet of 1624.⁵⁴ Part of the rhetorical impact of these texts depends upon the implied contrast between the Elizabethan favorites and Buckingham, who many thought had been too slow to recognize the treachery of the Spanish ambassador Gondomar in the negotiations over the marriage of Prince Charles and who was, by 1626, widely reviled by Protestant patriots of Scott's ilk. Leicester is certainly not as prominent in this strain of nostalgia as Essex or Raleigh, but his association with Tilbury, the defeat of the Armada, and Elizabethan glory would for example have been refreshed by editions of the second part of Heywood's popular *If You Know Not Me, You Know Nobody* printed in 1623 and 1633.

John Russell's *The Spy*, a vehemently anti-Catholic set of topical poems printed in 1628, encapsulates the earl's ambiguous legacy:

Now rise up *Rawleigh*, helpe me to unfold
 A mystery, shall make the bloud grow cold
 In all true *English* harts. Which to defeat
 Those boundless brains of thine did ever beate,
 (Till *Wisedome* swallowed *Spanish* figges.) and thou
 Great *Lesters* treach'rous ghost assist me now
 To unrip Treasons bowells. That (may be)
 Hath harbour'd in as great a *Peere* as thee,
 As highly honour'd, and as highly plac'd
 In Offices of weight: more highly *grac'd*.⁵⁵

On the one hand, Russell is clearly associating the memory of Leicester with a familiar brand of anti-Catholic Elizabethan nostalgia. Like Raleigh, Leicester represents a better time, a time before wisdom was poisoned by Spanish influence. On the other hand, the Russell's evocation of Leicester's "treach'rous ghost" is at best ambivalent. Though the sense is somewhat obscure, Russell seems here to invoke Leicester's ghost to help root out the treachery represented by Buckingham ("as great a *Peere*" as Leicester) on the theory that it takes one treacherous courtier to roust another. Leicester is thus simultaneously a figure for a superior Elizabethan past and a figure akin to the treacherous villains of the corrupt present.

One Caroline text in which Leicester does play a strikingly central role as a representative of nostalgia for Elizabethan England is *The Varietie* (1641), a comedy written by William Cavendish, later Duke of Newcastle, "with several reformatations made by [James] Shirley."⁵⁶ This play opens

with an ethical distinction, an exchange between two opposing types. On the one hand, we have Sir William, a unscrupulous young man of elegant manners. On the other, Jack Manly, a plain-spoken fellow. Cavendish's play is a comedy of manners, and it is preoccupied with the problem of social distinction. Accordingly, each of the characters we meet at the outset is in need of money to reinforce his place in the world. The ethical difference between them lies in how they propose to go about getting it: the smooth-talking Sir William is a gold-digger whose aim is to marry the rich widow Lady Beaufield; Manly, though, is unwilling to conflate love and money and so seeks his fortune by some more honest means.

Despite his admirable honesty, Manly seems destined to be the butt of jokes as the play opens, for we quickly learn that he has an odd predilection for dressing up in the "habit of Leister."⁵⁷ Sir William, who sees Manly's affectation as a grotesque and fantastical humor, plans to use him as comic entertainment for Lady Beaufield and sets up a meeting "to have the Ladies laugh at him" (p. 3). The joke backfires, though, when Manly shows up dressed as the earl in Act 3. He outfaces his would-be detractors with a diatribe about the general superiority of the Elizabethan period: clothes like Leicester's, he says, "serv'd in those honest dayes, when Knights were Gentlemen, and proper men tooke the walls of dwarfes" (p. 39).⁵⁸ "It was never a good time," he adds, "since these cloaths went out of fashion" (p. 40). Instead of laughing at Manly, Lady Beaufield falls for him, and at the end of the play she marries him. The amorous fortune-hunter, Sir William, is left to marry a rich but clownish country woman, the mother of the allegorically named Simpleton. Though a mildly comic figure at the outset, Manly winds up being the play's most admirable and admired character. The contrast between Sir William and Manly (whose name turns out to be appropriate) is a contrast between manners and virtue, style and substance. And Manly's triumph in the play's major courtship plot endorses the cluster of values he represents: plain speech and the lost propriety of the Elizabethan era.

The nostalgia embodied by Manly is further contextualized by the play's many satirical jabs aimed at the shallowness of social distinction in contemporary society. Simpleton, for instance, brings his mother to London so that she can learn the manners required of a lady, as if manners were all that was required. Toward the end of the play, when the corrupt judge Justice is told that Simpleton's wealthy mother wants to be made a lady by marriage, he makes plans to acquire a baronetcy (p. 74), a joke that alludes to the fact that King James created baronetcies in order to raise revenues in 1611. Though costly at first, overproduction of these titles drove the price down,

making them somewhat ridiculous in time, and Cavendish here uses them as a satirical shorthand for the sale of honors generally. Likewise, when Simpleton asks his servant James (another significant name?) to regale him with stories of “t’other reign” the latter describes the Jacobean period as follows:

nothing but Ambassadors, Masques, Playes, Entertainements, Hawking, Hunting, Winter and Summer, New Market and Roiston mourne now, ha! Had you seen the Court fox’d upon Gouries night, and the gunpowder treason began then; oh we had rare sport, and then every body was knighted, they hardly left a Gentleman in these dayes; and afterward they got the tricke of making Lords. (p. 47)

The upwardly mobile Simpleton is obviously pleased by the early Stuart inflation of honors, exclaiming excitedly that “every foole may be a Gentleman of three generations now” (p. 48). *The Varietie* pokes fun at a society in which rank and title have lost meaning, juxtaposing its topsy-turvy misrule with Manly’s impassioned evocation of Elizabethan times “when Knights were Gentlemen.”

What few commentators the play has attracted have called ample attention to its Elizabethan nostalgia and to its implicit criticism of the present.⁵⁹ What has not been noted is the way that the ideologically structured nostalgia of Cavendish’s play pivots around the issue of royal favoritism. For if Sir William is one antithesis of Manly, another is the ridiculous French dancing master Galliard who can teach, among other things, a dance called “le Buckingham” (p. 38). The name of the dance is appropriate, since Buckingham’s skill as a dancer was one of the things that endeared him to King James, and the presence of Galliard in the play in fact invokes a tradition of controversy over which qualities should and do contribute to success at court. Long before Buckingham there were complaints that English monarchs tended to favor dancers over statesmen. Sir Christopher Hatton, Leicester’s rival and colleague in the favor of Elizabeth, was said to have caught the queen’s eye while dancing. Hence Naunton’s snide assertion that “Sir Christopher Hatton came to the court . . . by the galliard.”⁶⁰ Cavendish’s Galliard is a walking satire of the idea that dancing might actually be a solid qualification for statesmanship and is thus a parody of the kind of courtly world that gives rise to Buckinghams. The Frenchman himself thinks that physical elegance ought to be the major prerequisite and is astounded that the English sometimes allow ungraceful men “to be neere a de King, a de Queene, de Prince, or de Princesse” (p. 17). But when Galliard mentions “le Buckingham,” Manly in his Leicester costume threatens to beat him and chases him off. What emerges as the subtext of this encounter, then, is

a kind of thumbnail history of Tudor-Stuart England in which Elizabethan greatness is supplanted by a world of inflated honors and empty affectation presided over by inconsequential, cowardly men like “le Buckingham” whose status is derived from royal favor based only upon the mastery of courtly gesture.

Anne Barton’s suggestion that Manly is based upon Thomas Howard, Earl of Arundel helps to cement the connection between nostalgia, satire of the inflation of honors, and hostility to the legacy of Buckingham.⁶¹ Arundel, who came to symbolize aristocratic disdain for Buckingham, apparently signaled his politics by affecting clothing “very different from that of the time, such as men had only beheld in the pictures of the most considerable men.”⁶² Cavendish, moreover, was well acquainted with Arundel and was in fact related to him by marriage.⁶³ *The Variety* suggests an affinity of outlook between the two men, for it endorses a number of attitudes associated with the Arundel circle: resentment of the sale of titles, hostility toward Buckingham for further decoupling preferment from blood or merit, and above all an emphasis on the importance of old aristocratic values. In the play, Lady Beaufield recognizes the natural virtue of Manly and chooses him over the more courtly Sir William, a comic courtship plot that encodes an essentially aristocratic fantasy that court preferment might similarly depend upon true nobility. In reality, as Cavendish himself later put it, “Thomas the Great Earle of Arundell, did Labor to bee of the Bedd chamber; Both those reynes [James’s and Charles’s] & could never obtayne itt.”⁶⁴

Decades later, on the eve of the Restoration, Cavendish set down his political experience in a tract composed to advise the soon-to-be King Charles II. The piece is striking to read in conjunction with *The Varietie* because it makes explicit a number of the play’s political attitudes. Cavendish must surely have thought of his character Galliard, for instance, when he penned the following criticism of the early Stuart courts:

There was a pretty way they had att Court, that meane people that were aboute the king, & the Queen, would Jeere the Greatest Noble man in England, Iff hee did not make the Laste months Reverance, a La mode, that came with the Last Dancer, from Paris, packt upp in his fiddle Case, & no matter of Regarde of the Nobility at All, but some few to Monopolise the king, & the Queen totaley to Themselves, this did Infinitely Discontent the Nobility, & Gentry, & one of the thinges that braught these wofull times, upon us.⁶⁵

Later, in a section on errors of state, Cavendish blames what he sees as a critical decline in the quality of public service upon the corrupting influence of early Stuart favorites:

In Queen Elizabeths dayes a gentle man would put his younger son, to the university, then to the Ins of Courte, to have a smaking in the Lawe, afterwards to wayte of an Embasador, afterwards, to bee his secretary, Then to bee Lefte as Agente, or resedent, behind him, then sent of many forrayne Employments, – & after some 30 years Breeding, to bee made a Clarke of the Signett, or a Clarke of the Counsell, – itt may bee afterwards, Secretary of state, – this was not onely breeding, but a breed of statesmen, fitt to serve the greateste monarke in the world, – Butt when the great Favoritts Came In, they Justled out the Breed of statesmen whoe soever would give a thousand pound more for the place, hee Had itt.⁶⁶

These same attitudes underpin the comic business of *The Varietie*: its Elizabethan nostalgia, its cynicism about Caroline modes of social distinction, its underlying hostility to the administration of recent “great Favoritts,” whose influence Cavendish here treats as the root of social disorder. In one of the ironies typical of the discourse of favoritism, Buckingham is blamed for destroying traditional institutions of public service and excluding the true nobility, accusations not that far removed from those originally levied against the favorite in *Leicester’s Commonwealth*.

Despite all this – despite, that is, Cavendish’s residual hostility to Buckingham, his affectionate desire to spoof Arundel, his contempt for baronetcies and the sale of titles, and his tendency to idealize Elizabethan government – Leicester remains a decidedly odd choice to be Manly’s idol. We need to explain why the hero of the play is associated with Leicester in particular, and not simply with Elizabethan glories in general. For the association is unusually specific and careful, from Manly’s costume, which everybody always recognizes as Leicester’s, to his description of himself as an unlicked bear (*The Varietie*, p. 56), a remark that evokes the bear on Leicester’s famous crest. Moreover, when Manly shows up in costume in the middle of the play he is jeered as “the Ghost of Leister,” a remark that seems to allude to Rogers’s poem and thus to the earl’s deeply ambiguous legacy (p. 31): this is not, then, the generic Leicester of Dekker and Heywood, a figure stripped of controversy and rendered suitable for nostalgic consumption. Why not associate Manly with Raleigh, for example, an Elizabethan hero later praised by Cavendish as a unique genius, a man “borne To Lead, & not to follow, to teache & not to Learne?”⁶⁷ Or Essex, who is more regularly remembered as aristocratic in his bearing and behavior than Leicester?

In his advice manual for Charles II, Cavendish refers to Leicester as “that great favoritt,” a phrase that reminds one of his analysis of the political decline that took place under James and Charles “when the great Favoritts Came In.”⁶⁸ It seems to me, therefore, that Cavendish invokes Leicester in

particular because he is the Elizabethan counterpart to Buckingham. This makes Leicester useful to Cavendish in the over-heated political climate in which he composed *The Varietie*, for by celebrating the earl so prominently Cavendish is able to satirize sins associated with Buckingham's memory without falling into the trap of blaming them on favoritism in general: if Leicester is the antithesis of Buckingham, as the play implies, then blame for the failure of social distinction can be placed squarely on Buckingham's shoulders rather than on the institution of favoritism or personal monarchy. The importance of this distinction circa 1641, when the *The Varietie* was originally performed, is suggested by recalling parliamentary arguments about Strafford and Buckingham discussed in the [previous section](#). If parliamentarians were coming to see favoritism – and thus the monarch's personal patronage – as a recurring structural impediment to the subject's liberties, Cavendish's satire is careful to suggest exactly the opposite.

Until recently, discussions of Elizabethan nostalgia in early Stuart England have been too undifferentiated, operating on the reductive assumption that praise for Elizabeth must necessarily have the primary purpose of criticizing her successors.⁶⁹ Accordingly, critics reading Cavendish's self-evidently nostalgic play have tended to see it as hostile to the government of Charles I and as the representative expression of a disaffected aristocrat.⁷⁰ To be sure, the play takes plenty of jabs at early Stuart government, but Martin Butler's characterization of Cavendish as a "king's man whose disappointment with Charles was pushing him" toward the positions of parliamentmen like Sir John Eliot does not quite square with what we know of the earl's attitude or career in the years leading up to the civil war.⁷¹ In 1638 Cavendish was made governor of the Prince of Wales, obviously a position of great trust and importance, and he became a Privy Counselor soon thereafter. He served as a general on the royalist side during the civil war and supported the king's cause with men and money. This is not a man we should look to for oppositional literature. Nor does it make sense to assume that a play written by such a man for the politically savvy crowd at Blackfriars in or around 1641 would express abstract political attitudes without considering how they might be taken amidst the political crises of the moment. Moreover, it was by no means uncommon for staunch royalists like Cavendish on the eve of civil war to recall Buckingham with distaste or to deplore as errors the policies and practices associated with him.⁷²

When considered in the context of popular and parliamentary attacks on favoritism – on perceived royal favorites, that is, and more generally on personal patronage as a valid part of the institution of monarchy – we

can recover a royalist agenda behind Cavendish's play. Its invocation of Leicester as a positive contrast to Buckingham can be read as an attempt to resist or refute discussions of favoritism tending toward the parliamentarians' radical request that "for the future your Majesty will vouchsafe to employ such persons in your great and public affairs, and to take such to be near you in places of trust, as your Parliament may have cause to confide in." Such a request, as I have argued, is born out of a comparative discourse of favoritism that increasingly sees the personal taste of kings – their "particular and peculiar inclination" – as an impediment to the legitimate operation of the institutions of government. But as royalists like Cavendish certainly recognized, circumscribing the personal patronage of a monarch involves separating the person of the king from the institution, an innovation tantamount to the eradication of monarchy itself. Hence the invocation of Leicester in *The Varietie* to defend the idea of royal favor: if Leicester is a positive antidote to Buckingham, then corruption resides in specific erroneous choices rather than in the fact of personal favor. This in turn means that monarchy as an institution requires no overhaul more radical than a conscientious return to sound judgment, ceremony, and decorum like the one already undertaken by Charles during the personal rule. Using Leicester allows Cavendish to put a conservative spin on criticism of Buckingham and on the heated controversy surrounding royal favoritism and the personal patronage of kings.

It is striking to find Leicester used in such different ways as a representative case for the validity of royal favoritism on the eve of the civil war. It is striking too to see the issue of royal favoritism so clearly and deeply entangled with core issues about the nature of monarchy. For, as we have seen, Leicester's ambiguous legacy allows him to serve simultaneously as a test case for opposing arguments about the role that a king's personal will should play in a well-run state. Leicester was an interesting figure to politically minded early Stuart subjects because his legacy helped shed light on early Stuart favoritism. But because he could be imagined either as a representative of Elizabethan virtue or as an early instance of the destructive potential of the greedy favorite, Leicester's memory was appropriated to support very different understandings of the early Stuart problem. Remembering Leicester involves a lively and contested engagement with the past as an ongoing element in the evolving imaginative vocabulary of the early Stuart political imagination.

It is of course a commonplace to suggest that the controversy over favorites and counselors in early Stuart England deflected criticism away

from the king because more direct opposition to the crown would have been impossible. There is a difference, though, between unthinkable and unspeakable, and the debate over favoritism implied in the contest over Leicester's memory provides a vehicle for thinking in searching and sometimes radical ways about the limits of personal monarchy. We can in fact see such questions being tested as early as 1584 in *Leicester's Commonwealth*. And though the author of that text attempts to avoid the explosive implications of his criticism of Elizabeth's favor, we can nonetheless see in the text a conscious grappling with the inadequacy of personal monarchy to safeguard against corruption from within. These same basic problems are still being hashed out, and still in terms of Leicester's legacy, in the attack on Strafford and in Cavendish's implied defense of favoritism as an institution in *The Varietie*. Royal favoritism necessarily focuses attention on the gap between the king's two bodies because it distributes portions of the wealth and power of the body politic according to the "particular and peculiar inclination" of the body natural. As a result, debating favoritism helps create a vocabulary with which to think and speak in complex ways about the authority, duty, limitations, fallibility, and guilt of the king. That this was rarely made explicit does not mean that it was unrecognized. Indeed, the nature of these texts, the care they take in their handling of such questions and the way they reshape and respond to each other around key points, suggests that their writers and consumers alike understood what was at stake. No wonder then that the legend of Leicester, with its suggestive range of possible meanings, was never allowed to fade away.

Amici principis: *imagining the good favorite*

The best-known literary treatments of favoritism that survive from the English Renaissance conceive of royal favorites as agents of socio-political corruption. Most contemporary observers, however, would presumably have accepted, in principle at least, that the bestowal of favor was part of the royal prerogative and that favoritism was therefore a normal aspect of functional monarchy. And since the classical humanist language of friendship authorized an idea of public service in which *amici principis* provided much-needed counsel, the personal favor of kings could also be regarded as a politically valuable feature of court life. Antonio Feros has argued that this positive notion of favoritism was less prevalent in England than on the continent, but certainly the idea that royal favoritism was normal – and possibly useful – was available in England as well.¹ It should come as no surprise, then, that a significant number of Tudor and early Stuart fictions feature intimate royal favorites who are heroic or virtuous, wise counselors and sound administrators, the very antitheses of the poisonous, scheming, and parasitical favorites who seem otherwise to predominate in the culture's political imagination.

Because royal favoritism raises concerns about the role of personal intimacy in the governing of the commonwealth, positive constructions of the institution tend to rely, implicitly or explicitly, upon a classical language of friendship that helped justify the personal nature of a range of politically important relationships in pre-bureaucratic Europe.² This notion of friendship, derived by humanists from classical sources, is an exacting one, describing an idealized relationship between two good men. As Cicero put it in his widely read *De Amicitia*, “virtue itself both produces and maintains friendship, nor can friendship exist by any means without virtue.”³ Since Cicero is careful to define virtue along publicly accepted lines (“let us count as good men those who are commonly thought to be so”), his notion of friendship implies a shared commitment to public values that must also be socially beneficial.⁴ Friends, in this classical model, are committed to

a program of reciprocated ethical counsel, and so the language of friendship functions in political discourse as a sanctifying rhetoric. This ethical emphasis makes the language of friendship especially useful for conceptualizing royal favoritism in terms of the king's need for trustworthy advice from loyal intimates: because good counsel was generally recognized as an essential requirement of effective government, the humanist language of friendship played an important, legitimating role in conceptions of intimate royal patronage. The friend-as-favorite is typically imagined in the period's fictions as offering moral rather than administrative advice, but given the utterly ubiquitous association between royal self-government and regal stewardship, moral counsel offered to the king as a friend is readily conceptualized as an essential contribution to public government.

The defense of intimate royal patronage based on the rhetoric of classical friendship was always fragile, however, fraught with internal tensions and readily vulnerable to ideological critique. For one thing, as Laurie Shannon has shown, the emphasis on equality built into classical friendship theory fits awkwardly with the singular status of kingship.⁵ It was possible to conceive of other kinds of equality – moral equality, say, conceived of as a shared commitment to the good regardless of hierarchical difference – but certainly there is a pervasive unease in the culture around the idea of royal friendship stemming from the contradiction Shannon describes. For another, the constant deployment of the conventional language of friendship within all kinds of patronage situations in pre-bureaucratic England robbed the classical ideal of some of its sanctifying power.⁶ Insofar as the language of friendship was routinely applied to relationships of obvious political or fiscal expediency, it was always possible for observers to remain cynical about the instrumentality of intimate favoritism. The language of friendship justifies an idealized form of intimacy, but what should the political role of personal intimacy be if one or both of the parties involved fails to live up to the stipulated moral standard? An understanding of favoritism authorized by the humanist language of friendship always coexists with the uneasy recognition that personal relationships between a monarch and his friends may not in practice meet Ciceronian criteria.

Discomfort with the idea of the friend-as-favorite was exacerbated too by a long-standing conflict between what John Guy calls a “humanist-classical” idea of counsel and an alternative “feudal-baronial” tradition.⁷ He explains one key difference between these received traditions as follows: “Whereas from a humanist-classical standpoint the appointment of royal counselors was a matter for the king alone, from a feudal-baronial standpoint the magnates were the king’s ‘natural’ counsellors.”⁸ Within a humanist

framework “a ruler was free to choose his own counsellors and could not be bound by their advice”; the alternative tradition, though, put limits on royal autonomy both in the selection of counselors and in the freedom to take or leave their advice.⁹ Though Guy is careful to avoid any strong claim about the ideological impact of this discrepancy, his argument suggests that ambiguities stemming from these two incompatible notions of counsel help structure animosities around favoritism and parliament, counsel and the council, up through the reign of Charles I. One provocative thing about Guy’s analysis, it seems to me, is the flexibility of the idea of natural counselors, a notion with republican implications that proves useful to bolster not only the resentments of Elizabethan peers feeling disenfranchised by the influence of upstart courtiers but also those of members of the early Stuart House of Commons claiming to represent the gentry.¹⁰ More generally, we might say that the persistence of these two incompatible notions of counsel frames discussions of the public role of *amici principis* and helps focus attention on uneasy-making questions about the political nature of the king’s personal favorites. In all, the powerful legitimating notion of the king’s friendships as a locus for moral and political counsel is undercut by the persistent idea that kings should stand alone, by practical suspicions of corruption, and by a more general set of questions concerning the nature of the counsel required for sound government.

These tensions lie at the heart of those literary fictions from the period that feature scrupulously moral royal favorites. Though it would be tempting to write such stories off as so many royalist fantasias, it would be more accurate, on the whole, to think of them as a series of thought experiments in favoritism as an institutional outgrowth of monarchy. They imagine the morally and politically valuable royal friend in order to theorize about the traits that such a figure would have to possess, and they locate the figure within fictional situations designed to examine the tension between the good favorite’s moral probity (his adherence, that is, to an overriding and thus impersonal moral code) and the demands and pressures of patronage (dependence upon the personal favor of a potentially flawed individual). If the texts I take up in what follows are any indication, questions about the utility and validity of *amici principis* persist from the reign of Elizabeth through the Long Parliament. What is even more interesting, though, is the way that changing political circumstances during this period inflect the ongoing debate about the nature of royal friendship. Attending to shifts in the way questions about the good favorite are asked and answered throughout the period, in other words, allows us to construct something like an intellectual history of the ideal of virtuous favoritism, an ideal that

undergoes major transformations during this period and that necessarily involves questions about the political significance of the king's own moral character and about the structuring principles governing the distribution of power and wealth at court.

ELIZABETHAN AMBIVALENCE AND THE PROTESTANT
GOOD FAVORITE

Late Elizabethan treatments of favoritism as a political mechanism are given shape by long-simmering tension between aristocratic Catholic families and Protestant families elevated by service at Tudor courts. The consolidation of Protestant control of court and council after 1570 made it increasingly plausible to understand Elizabeth's personal favor as a healthy mechanism for recognizing the merit of loyal, Protestant subjects.¹¹ This structure of feeling is the inverse of Catholic attacks on Leicester and Burghley as conspiring, ignoble arrivistes.¹² Where opponents of royal favorites typically dismiss them as upstarts unworthy of their social elevation, an Elizabethan, Protestant counter-discourse treats royal favor as a healthy challenge to the regressive efforts of the Catholic aristocracy. Another way to put this would be to say that an omnipresent uneasiness about the role of intimacy in government is balanced, in Elizabethan political discourse, by the idea that royal favor rewards merit and supplies the monarch with virtuous counsel.

The late Elizabethan period's uneasy fascination with issues of intimacy, favoritism, and counsel is perhaps best represented by Sir Philip Sidney's evolving, unfinished romance the *Arcadia*. The first version of Sidney's book, the so-called *Old Arcadia*, begins with (and hinges upon) the superstitious timidity of Basilius, king of Arcadia, who, seeking assurance about the future from the oracle at Delphos and not liking her obscure pronouncement, decides to retire to the countryside for a year. Though he is already resolved in his decision, Basilius decides "for fashion's sake" to consult "one chosen friend of his named Philanax, whom he had ever found a friend not only in affection but judgment."¹³ The distinction between affection and judgment invokes the humanist vocabulary of friendship as the basis for counsel. And Philanax wisely opposes Basilius's decision, though his advice is not heeded. The king, "wholly wedded to his own opinion," proceeds anyway to abandon the court for the pastoral countryside (*OA*, p. 8).

Sidney is quite clear both about Philanax's moral excellence in this episode and about the nature of Basilius's error: Basilius, we learn, would have been blessed to have such a counselor if he "had not resolved to use a

friend's secrecy rather for confirmation of fancies than correcting of errors" (*OA*, p. 5). Philanax is thus the wise counselor, the figure of judgment opposed to fancy, and responsibility for the failure of Philanax's counsel is laid at the feet of Basilius. Strikingly, Sidney treats the king's unwillingness to heed his friend's wise advice as an occupational hazard of monarchy: Basilius disregards counsel because he is "corrupted with a prince's fortune" (*OA*, p. 5). We can detect in this exchange a built-in tension between the humanist language of friendship – which emphasizes the moral equality of true friends – and the disproportion in power that necessarily structures a prince's service. Basilius disregards his friend's advice because the power relations inherent in the relationship ensure that he can. The failure of Philanax's counsel is thus designed to illustrate a central tension in the humanist rhetoric of counsel: good counsel – and thus the good favorite – depends upon a good king's willingness to heed it.¹⁴

The same basic anatomy of failed counsel appears in Book 3 of the revised *New Arcadia*.¹⁵ In a major new plot added to the revised text, Basilius's daughters are kidnapped and held prisoner by Amphialus (who is smitten with Philoclea) and his conniving, atheistic mother Cecropia. When the siege set up to recover the princesses becomes inconvenient to her, Cecropia threatens to kill her prisoners unless it is lifted. This puts Basilius in a quandary, and so he summons Kalender and Philanax for counsel. Kalender (who is himself in despair over his missing son and so understands Basilius's paternal anxiety) recognizes that the call for counsel is only a formality, and that Basilius will inevitably lift the siege to save his daughters: "You commaund me Sir . . . to speake, rather because you will keepe your wonted grave, & noble manner, to do nothing of importance without councell, then that in this cause . . . your mind needs to have any counsell" (*NA*, sig. Tt3v). Philanax, called upon to speak, urges Basilius to set aside personal feeling and to maintain the siege, adding "you are a Prince, & a father of people, who ought with the eye of wisdome, the hand of fortitude, and the hart of justice to set downe all private conceits, in comparison of what for the publike is profitable" (*NA*, sig. Tt4). Kalender counsels Basilius as a father, Philanax as a father to his country. At the conclusion of Philanax's speech, Basilius's wife Gynecia rushes in and urges her husband to raise the siege, a request he immediately grants. Gynecia's appearance at this pivotal moment supplies a conventional gender inflection for the distinction between "private conceits" and public interest that Philanax describes: the "tender minded" Basilius is swayed by effeminate fears and passions and is thus unable to view the situation with the rational detachment necessary in a ruler (*NA*, sig. Tt4). As Kalender points out,

there is no real suspense about the course of Basilius's action, since he takes counsel merely for fashion's sake and is already in a sense resolved.

If Philanax is Sidney's wise counselor, his opposite number is the buffoonish shepherd Dametas, the "principal herdman" to Basilius who presides over his pastoral household (*OA*, p. 6).¹⁶ Where Philanax is introduced as "a friend not only in affection but judgment," Dametas's prominence is traced directly to the king's blinkered fancy:

The beginning of this Dametas's credit with Basilius was by the duke's straying out of his way one time a-hunting where, meeting this fellow, and asking him the way, and so falling into other questions, he found some of his answers touching husbandry matters (as a dog sure, if he could speak, had wit enough to describe his kennel) not unsensible; and all uttered with such a rudeness, which the duke interpreted plainness (although there be a great difference betwixt them), that the duke, conceiving a sudden delight in his entertainment, took him to court, with apparent show of his good opinion; where the flattering courtier had no sooner taken the prince's mind but that there were straight reasons to confirm the duke's doing, and shadows of virtues found for Dametas . . . And so, like a creature of his own making, he liked him more and more. And thus gave he him first the office of principal herdman. And thus lastly did he put his life into his hands – although he grounded upon a great error; for his quality was not to make men, but to use men according as men were, no more than an ass will be taught to manage, a horse to hunt, or a hound to bear a saddle, but each to be used according to the force of his own nature. (*OA*, p. 28)

The loathing dripping from Sidney's descriptions of Dametas and his crude family is hard to miss and has its basis in a kind of aristocratic elitism likely to make a modern reader cringe. But his account offers a fairly rich narrative example of the way corrupt royal favor was sometimes thought to undermine the commonwealth. Basilius's "straying" fancy feeds a corrupt court culture in which flatterers – unlike Philanax – reinforce and magnify the errors of the prince's judgment. The result is a preposterous disruption of natural social order.

Dametas's office – "principal herdman" – gives him power over access to the retired Basilius, a form of control that he exploits ambitiously. When the disguised Pyrocles seeks access to the king's household, for instance, Dametas conflates his own officious will with the desires of the king: "I tell thee, here is no place for thee; get thee gone, I tell thee, it is the duke's pleasure. I tell thee, it is master Dametas's pleasure" (*OA*, p. 29). This, in Sidney's scheme, is a kind of usurpation, albeit one that is made possible by Basilius's own retirement. Indeed, Sidney's schematic exploration of the nature of personal service treats the politics of physical intimacy and access

as part of the system of court corruption that encourages the erroneous impulses of the king's fancy to override his discretion. Dametas owes his influence to mere intimacy where Philanax owes his to excellence and judgment.

This thematization of access and intimacy as corrupting aspects of court politics is if anything made more explicit in the *New Arcadia*, where it seems to preoccupy both the author and his principal characters. When Musidorus needs a cover story to explain his desire to seek admission to Basilius's household, for example, he concocts an elaborate fiction about the corruption of personal favor in Thessaly:

I told *Menalcas*, that I was a *Thessalian* Gentle-man, who by mischaunce having killed a great favorit of the Prince of that country, was pursued so cruelly, that in no place, but either by favour, or corruption, they would obtaine my destruction; and that therefore I was determined (till the fury of my persecutions might be asswaged) to disguise my selfe among the shephards of *Arcadia*, & (if it were possible) to be one of them that were allowed the Princes presence; Because if the worst should fall, that I were discovered, yet having gotten the acquaintance of the Prince, it might happen to move his hart to protect me. (*NA*, sig. L7)

Corrupt favoritism thus provides Musidorus with a pretext for his own duplicitous pursuit of access. This is apparently the kind of story that seems plausible in a world where access to “the Princes presence” has become a crucial and carefully guarded aspect of political power. A few pages later, Musidorus himself gains access to Basilius by bribing Dametas. Likewise, the narration of the travels of Pyrocles and Musidorus that Sidney added to Book 2 of the *New Arcadia* reads like a bestiary of tyrants and their corrupting intimates: the heroes encounter the melancholy prince of Phrygia and his “accusing sycophants” (*NA*, sig. S6v), the inconstant king of Pontus and flattering playfellows (*NA*, sig. T3), and, in Iberia, a uxorious king – Plangus's father – whose corrupt wife manipulates his chamber servants and undermines the representative institutions of government (*NA*, book 2, chapter 15).

We can see the evolution of Sidney's attitude toward the politics of intimacy in the way he revises the character of Philanax and thus rethinks the role of the good favorite. Because Philanax is otherwise an ideal figure, his seemingly unjust and overly passionate prosecution of Pyrocles and Musidorus in the final book of the *Old Arcadia* has been the occasion of some critical debate.¹⁷ The larger point there seems to be very much in keeping with one of the overriding psychological and ethical concerns of the early version of the romance: nobody, not even Philanax, is beyond the blinding

influence of passion.¹⁸ Sidney's emphasis upon the destructive capacity of Philanax's "extreme vehemency," though, also manifests a deep ambivalence about the role of affection in public government, for the apparent death of Basilius forces a disjunction between "desire of his master's revenge" and "care of the state's establishment" (*OA*, pp. 334, 305 respectively). Even the putatively sound friendship of Philanax and Basilius – a relationship that has clear public utility until the middle of Book 4 – results in a dangerous conflation of personal and public interest under extreme circumstances. Philanax – whose name means 'king lover' – turns out to be too loyal to the person of Basilius, a moral blind spot that underscores the fragility of Sidney's idea of the good favorite. At the end of the romance, Philanax is restored to favor and rewarded for his "singular faith" (*OA*, p. 360). But Philanax's momentary moral failure shows that Sidney is at the same time alert to the problematic instability of personal intimacy as the basis for public action.

This episode, of course, is not present in the unfinished text of the *New Arcadia*, and there is no way to be sure about Sidney's ultimate intention. We can say, however, that the new plot developments of Book 3 drastically change the nature of the threat to Arcadia, de-emphasizing the unruly passions of the central characters and shifting blame to Cecropia's terrorism. It seems likely, therefore, that Philanax's role in the eventual denouement was to have been very different as well. At any rate, Philanax's role as advisor and regent in the *New Arcadia* is changed in accordance with the revised text's greater suspicion of the politics of intimacy.¹⁹ Where the Philanax of the *Old Arcadia* briefly allows his love of the king to overrule his public responsibilities, the same character, as we have seen, offers advice in Book 3 of the *New Arcadia* that if followed might lead to the execution of Basilius's daughters. Presumably the more personally loyal Philanax of the *Old Arcadia* would have been more like Kalender – a well-meaning man whose concern for the feelings of his king blinds him to the greater good.

It is typical of Sidney's revision that Philanax's admonition against pastoral retreat is given to Basilius, in the *New Arcadia*, in the form of a letter rather than face to face. One effect of this change is to sharpen the distinction between Philanax's brand of loving counsel and Dametas's corrupt and corrupting intimacy. Philanax's advice, it is implied, stands on its own merits without requiring personal intimacy with Basilius for its presentation. The letter, in the *New Arcadia*, stands as a piece of exemplary counsel admired by readers at one remove from the king's intimate service. Basilius, we are told, left it out on a windowsill, and Clitophon – Kalender's son, who had served in the "bed-chamber" of Basilius before the latter's

retreat – copied it. Though he blames his son’s nosiness, Kalender reads the letter and shows it to his visitors, who likewise admire it (*NA*, sig. C5v–C6). The text of the letter is itself included in the *New Arcadia*, where it operates as a model document for the romance’s readers as well. The impersonal nature of the letter’s merits, attested to by the admiration it evokes in readers, becomes part of its symbolic exemplarity.

Sidney’s insistence upon the value of Philanax’s counsel and upon the way that Basilius’s princely “fortune” corrupts his judgment seems to point toward an ideal of limited monarchy and perhaps toward what Guy describes as a baronial idea of counsel: Philanax – by birth and merit alike – seems like Basilius’s “natural” counselor, and it is only the king’s autonomy that allows him to disregard his erstwhile friend’s potentially saving advice. It is therefore striking that Sidney’s exemplary king Euarchas (exemplary in the *New Arcadia* anyway) rules entirely without counsel.²⁰ Indeed, Euarchas’s exemplary government is demonstrated precisely by his ability to dispense with the corruptions of intimate court favor in his inherited realm:

This King left Orphan both of father and mother, (whose father & grandfather likewise had dyed yong) he found his estate, when he came to age (which allowed his authoritie) so disjointed even in the noblest and strongest lims of government, that the name of a King was growne ever odious to the people, his authority having bin abused by those great Lords, & litle kings: who in those betweene-times of raigning by unjust favouring those that were partially theirs, & oppressing them that woulde defende their libertie against them had brought in (by a more felt then seene maner of proceeding) the worst kind of *oligarchie*; that is, when men are governed in deede by a fewe, and yet are not taught to know what those fewe be, to whom they should obey. For they having the power of kinges, but not the nature of kings, used the authority as men do their farms, of which they see within a yeere they shal goe out: making the Kinges sword strike whom they hated, the Kings purse reward whom they loved: and (which is worst of all) making the Royall countenance serve to undermine the Royall soveraintie. (*NA*, sigs. R6v–R7)

Despite this rampant corruption stemming from past abuses of intimate favor, we learn that Euarchas – by virtue of strict discipline and transparent moral exemplarity – has been able to reform both his court and realm “within small time” (*NA*, sig. R7v). Euarchas, in effect, defeats favoritism. The flawed Basilius may require wise counsel to supplement his own limited understanding, but the ideal of monarchy in Sidney’s text is completely self-sufficient. This tension can be traced, I think, to Sidney’s growing suspicion of the politics of intimacy: though the good favorite like Philanax can be an invaluable asset to a flawed king like Basilius, it is finally easier

for Sidney to imagine good government as the product of solitary royal exemplarity.

Though his counsel fails on two occasions to sway Basilius, the Philanax of the *New Arcadia* serves the realm ably as general in the siege of Amphialus and as regent during the king's retirement. In this regard, at least, his favor with Basilius is politically useful, and for this reason at least it would be inaccurate to claim that Sidney conceives of royal friendship and the intimate favor it gives rise to in negative terms. In fact, the precariousness and value of Philanax's administrative position are both emphasized in an interesting episode at the beginning of Book 3 of the *New Arcadia*, when Amphialus mobilizes rebellion by circulating the image of Philanax as a wicked, seducing counselor. After the princesses are kidnapped, when conflict with Basilius has become inevitable, Amphialus undertakes a twofold public relations program designed to win support within Arcadia for his open aggression against the royal family. First, he sends "privat letters" to all the variously disgruntled "Lords and gentlemen of the country," attempting to enlist their support for his campaign (*NA*, sig. Kk8). Then he has a justification of rebellion written and circulated among the populace. This document takes aim specifically at Philanax in order to discredit Basilius's reign. It describes Amphialus's actions as the just response to Basilius's self-imposed abdication, and complains especially that Basilius has "not only given over al care of government, but . . . put it into the hands of *Philanax*, (a man neither in birth comparable to many, nor for his corrupt, prowde, and partiall dealing, liked of any)" (*NA*, sig. Ll1). Calling for support of his rebellion, Amphialus's pamphlet argues that "if the Prince should command them otherwise . . . therein he was no more to be obeied, then if he should call for poison to hurt himself withall: since all that was done, was done for his service, howsoever he might (seduced by *Philanax*) interprete of it" (*NA*, sig. Ll1).

If Katherine Duncan-Jones is correct that Sidney broke off work on the revised *Arcadia* in the summer of 1584, then it would have predated the arrival in England of *Leicester's Commonwealth* (to which Sidney himself penned a rebuttal) by a month or so.²¹ The parallels are suggestive, though. Like Amphialus's libel, *Leicester's Commonwealth* attacked the favorite as mean of birth, proud, corrupt, poisonous, and seductive, and I suspect that Sidney's detailed account of Amphialus's rhetorical strategy has to do with the anti-Leicester sentiment codified in *Leicester's Commonwealth* even if it is not directly influenced by that notorious document. We might, accordingly, see the decidedly chivalric and aristocratic Amphialus as (among other things) a figure invoking the style of the aristocratic Catholic group,

centered around the Howards, who produced *Leicester's Commonwealth*.²² For this group, Catholicism was linked to the idea of ancient nobility and by extension to resentment of Protestant new men at Elizabeth's court. Moreover, as Simon Adams has shown, *Leicester's Commonwealth* is best understood as one of several pamphlets criticizing the new men of Elizabeth's court from this perspective, drawing on a tradition of conflict between Catholic aristocracy and Protestant courtiers dating back to controversy surrounding Thomas Cromwell in the 1530s.²³ Much has been made of similarities between Amphialus's justification of rebellion and tenets of Huguenot resistance theory with which Sidney was certainly familiar and likely sympathetic, and so there has been a tendency to see this document as a reflection of Sidney's own uneasiness with Elizabethan authority.²⁴ But in fact the line between Protestant and Catholic versions of resistance theory can be difficult to draw in practice.²⁵ Since Amphialus's position is morally untenable, and since his self-justification is rhetorically duplicitous, I think it makes more sense to see the document as an Arcadian libel that recapitulates the structure of the Catholic aristocratic party's resentment of "upstart men and the upstart faith."²⁶

Thinking of Amphialus as a figure for the Catholic aristocracy may also help explain Sidney's apparent ambivalence about him. Amphialus is a willing participant in Cecropia's evil schemes, but he is motivated to participate in them only by his fine, chaste love of the unambiguously excellent Philoclea. He is both a political schemer and also an accomplished practitioner of the brand of chivalric heroism that, elsewhere in the romance, characterizes the good and noble.²⁷ It seems likely to me that the ambiguity in the way the *New Arcadia* depicts Amphialus's chivalry has to do with real tensions within the Elizabethan notions of aristocratic honor that the protocols and conventions of chivalry tended to evoke for Sidney and his cohort.²⁸ In particular, we can see Amphialus as a princely figure from a Catholic ancient nobility in whom the aristocratic wellsprings of chivalry are present but perverted. That such a figure would sneer at the noble Philanax's pedigree and solicit rebellion among disaffected lords would presumably have made a great deal of sense to Sidney's coterie readership. Of course, to make this claim is not necessarily to disagree with accounts of the *New Arcadia* that have pointed toward connections between Amphialus and Cecropia and the villains of international Catholicism such as Catherine de Medici, her son the Duc d'Alençon, and Mary, Queen of Scots.²⁹ I do however want to suggest that the text's political allegory need not have been, strictly, a *roman-à-clef* in order to have made ideological sense to Sidney's readers. Rather, it seems to me that associations between the wickedness of Cecropia and

Amphialus and the threat of Catholicism accrue in a more general way, here associating the pamphleteering of the Catholic court party to the perfidiousness of other Catholic threats.

This episode, framed in the text by Philanax's staunch opposition to Amphialus's rebellion, contains the seed of a justification of favoritism that forms an important affective justification for the politics of favor under Elizabeth: royal favoritism allows for the rise of meritorious new men despite the encrustation of Catholic aristocratic privilege. In general, though, Sidney is anything but hostile to the idea of an aristocratic elite, and so it useful to see that the celebration of the favorite as virtuous upstart is much more robust in a text like the anonymous, late Elizabethan *True Chronicle History of the Whole Life and Death of Thomas Lord Cromwell* (1600), a sentimental history that stages the conflict between the Protestant Cromwell, who rises, during the course of the play, from his father's smithy to the height of power as favorite to Henry VIII, and the vested interests of Catholic courtiers represented primarily by Bishop Gardiner and the Duke of Norfolk. This crude but interesting play goes back to the Reformation in order to construct a Protestant defense of favoritism that is in a sense the reverse of Amphialus's attack on Philanax. In so doing, it dramatizes for us a strain of support for favoritism that has deep roots in Protestant court culture but was greatly encouraged by the popularity of Elizabeth's volatile favorite, Robert Devereaux, Earl of Essex. Cromwell himself had been Earl of Essex, and his association with the earldom remained "commonplace in radical circles" during the waning years of Elizabeth's reign and beyond.³⁰

Cromwell, as he is characterized in this play, owes his mercurial rise to a combination of ethical mercantilism and clear-eyed Protestantism. In this regard, the play's version of Cromwell is actually more of a piece with the upwardly mobile mercantile heroes in plays like Dekker's *Shoemaker's Holiday* (1599) or the second part of Heywood's *If You Know Not Me, You Know Nobody* (1605) than with the dashing and chivalric Essex. Each of these plays, moreover, dramatizes the reciprocity between the graciously condescending monarch and the plain, unaffected loyalty of wealthy citizens, and I think we can understand Cromwell's rise to royal favor as another version of this same basic sentimental plot. Like a Simon Eyre, Cromwell maintains both his common touch and his moral compass even as he rises to the heights of power.³¹

The play's Cromwell may not resemble Essex's persona, but its depiction of the role of favoritism would surely have resonated with the popular anti-Catholicism sometimes associated with the earl. Once installed as the personal favorite of Henry VIII, Cromwell attracts the enmity of Bishop

Gardiner and the Duke of Norfolk, who resent the reformation of the church and who see the upstart Cromwell as a “bubble” or a “puffe.”³² Gardiner enlists a pair of deceitful witnesses to swear that they have heard Cromwell speak of regicide, and they agree to do so because, as one says, “Cromwell never loved none of our sort” (4.5.36). “Our sort” apparently means Catholics, who – in contrast with Cromwell’s Protestant sincerity – are depicted as cunning, vindictive, and all too willing to be forsworn. In the event, the Protestant favorite falls prey to Gardiner’s popish plot. He is executed for treason and behaves with characteristic nobility on the scaffold. A messenger with a reprieve from King Henry comes moments too late, and even the wicked Gardiner at once wishes the deed undone: “My conscience now tells me this deede was ill: / Would Christ that Cromwell were alive againe” (5.5.146–47).

When Cromwell attempts to plead his case directly before the king, access is denied him by Gardiner and Norfolk. To Cromwell, whose staunch loyalty the play has been careful to establish, this reversal of fortune is a bitter reminder of the vicissitudes of favor:

No way admit me? Am I so soone forgot?
 Did he but yesterday imbrace my neck,
 And said that Cromwell was even halfe himselfe,
 And is his Princely eares so much bewitched
 With scandalous ignomie, and slanderous speeches,
 That now he dooth denie to looke on me?
 Well, my Lord of *Winchester* [Gardiner], no doubt but you
 Are much in favour with his Majestie:
 Will you bear a letter from me to his grace? (5.5.44–52)

Cromwell’s sarcastic address to Gardiner as the new favorite contains within it a germinal critique of the instability of the politics of intimacy. This is as close as the play comes to criticizing the king’s fickle affections. This aspect of the play would presumably have been felt to comment rather overtly upon the situation of Essex – who was tried during the summer of 1600 – and on the machinations of Robert Cecil – who was said to have averted the queen’s favor from her erstwhile favorite. In this regard, the play associates Cecil’s machinations with Catholic treachery, treating each as the natural enemy of forward Protestantism as represented by the popular royal favorite.

For the most part, though, the play is content to offer up proverbial wisdom about the vulnerability of the great while celebrating Cromwell and, by extension, the royal favor that enabled his rise. A pair of unnamed citizens,

for example, have the following exchange upon hearing of Cromwell's incarceration:

1. What, wast for treason that he was committed?
2. Kinde, noble Gentleman! I may rue the time.
All I have, I did injoy by him,
And if he die, then all my state is gone.
2. It my be doubted that he shall not die,
Because the King did favour him so much.
1. O sir, you are deceived in thinking so.
The grace and favour he had with the king
Hath caused him have so manie enemies:
He that in court secure will keepe himselfe,
Must not be great, for then he is envied at.
The Shrub is safe, when as the Cedar shakes;
For where the King doth love above compare,
Of others they as much more envied are.
2. Tis pittie that this noble man should fall,
He did so many charitable deeds.

(5.4.8–23)

Royal favor is recognized as a perilous avenue to greatness, but there is no sense here that it is inherently corrupt. Instead, it enables Cromwell to oversee the reformation of the church and to stand as advocate of London's citizens against the treacherous influence of the Catholic elite. The play, by hearkening back to this conflict between Cromwell and Gardiner, reminds its late Elizabethan audiences of the pre-history of contemporary ideological conflicts and thus offers a framework for the celebration of Essex's own popularity. In so doing, it treats royal favoritism as both a healthy engine for the advancement of Protestant merit and as an inherently unstable and unsatisfying basis for political action.

Between them, this anonymous play and Sidney's romance adumbrate a late Elizabethan, Protestant, humanist conception of royal favoritism which in turn implies an important set of assumptions about what the good favorite should and should not be. These assumptions, though, are fraught with internal tensions, so that the figure they frame is slippery and sometimes hard to pin down. For example, the good favorite (Cromwell, Philanax) is celebrated as a counterbalance to a dangerous Catholic elite (Gardiner, Amphialus), an instrument by which the king's friendships might override the regressive tendencies of entrenched privilege. In this sense, then, the upstart nature of the favorite, his dependence upon the king's judgment rather than upon blood, is an important aspect of his positive social utility. And yet the role of the king's judgment in determining

favor is also viewed with considerable skepticism in these texts: the same royal judgment that loves and elevates Cromwell proves vulnerable to Gardiner's insinuations and becomes the instrument of the worthy favorite's fall.

Because the personal can be so volatile, the relationship between king and good favorite is constructed according to the humanist idea of friendship as an anchor holding both parties firm to the canons of public virtue. This is what Sidney alludes to when he describes Philanax as a friend to Basilius "not only in affection but judgment." The importance of counsel makes the good favorite a figure of tremendous importance but, as we see in Sidney, the disproportion in power between monarch and counselor puts pressure upon the humanist ideal of equal friendship within which notions of intimate counsel are constructed. Since the king is easily tempted by the promptings of his own will, even the best counsel can easily be disregarded. Moreover, since the disproportion in power leaves discrimination between good and bad counsel in the hands of the monarch, intimacy can easily become an instrument of corruption rather than reform. We see this uneasiness about friendship growing as Sidney revisits the text of his *Arcadia*, and this of course puts added pressure upon the figure of the good favorite. The Philanax of the *New Arcadia* is Sidney's attempt to reconcile the notion of the good favorite with his suspicion of the politics of intimacy, and so it is essential that this figure be able to "set downe all private conceits" in favor of the public good. Sidney's thorough revision of the character of Philanax and the nature of his relationship with Basilius reveals an ongoing desire to grapple with the conflict between the utility of intimacy and its pitfalls. If we conceive of the *Arcadia* in its various states as an evolving project in political and psychological theory, then the transformations Philanax undergoes reveal a great deal about both the difficulty and the importance of the questions he evokes.

The *Arcadia* and *Cromwell*, between them, represent a fairly broad cross-section of late Elizabethan Protestant sentiment ranging from the aristocratic skepticism of Sidney's coterie romance and the somewhat jingoistic popular piety of the anonymous chronicle play. It is not my concern to argue that they speak directly to each other in any meaningful way, but rather to suggest that they illustrate something like a spectrum of responses to royal favoritism available within the structures of feeling associated with late Elizabethan Protestantism. The striking thing, it seems to me, is the way that pervasive anxiety over the volatility of intimacy is balanced by the recognition that a monarch's personal favor might provide a valuable avenue for counsel while rewarding meritorious upstarts. As Sidney's

Arcadia makes clear, a powerful critique of favoritism as a mode of government is certainly available, even among the close associates of Leicester. But it is also clear that a positive notion of royal favor, treating it as an avenue for the reform and rejuvenation of the state, likewise enjoyed considerable sentimental appeal within the brand of popular Protestant nationalism that associated the Tudor monarchy with England's status as the elect nation.

TESTING THE GOOD FAVORITE IN JACOBAN DRAMA

The accession of James I undermined this balance, rendering key aspects of the more positive Elizabethan discourse on favoritism untenable. For one thing, the new king's generosity towards his Scottish entourage meant that, to many, his favor seemed to be flowing toward unwelcome interlopers. For another, James's style of rule – the way he played up his own discursive authority and emphasized the sanctity of *arcana imperii* – raised immediate and persistent concerns about his willingness to seek and be guided by counsel.³³ This put enormous pressure on the conventional justification of royal favoritism in terms of reciprocal friendship and the need for intimate counsel, further eroding the positive discourse of favoritism that had served as a counterweight to the hostility and anxiety surrounding the favorites of Elizabeth I.

For James himself, the key point seems to have been not that his intimates were valuable counselors or natively virtuous, but rather that the right to elevate them is an unalienable part of royal prerogative. This is how he defended favoritism in his famous speech before parliament in March of 1610, a speech that is often, and appropriately, seen as representative of the kinds of claims James made for monarchy from the beginning of his reign:

God hath power to create, or destroy, make, or unmake at his pleasure, to give life, or send death, to judge all, and to be judged nor accomptable to none: To raise low things, and to make high things low at his pleasure, and to God are both soule and body due. And the like power have Kings: they make and unmake their subjects: they have power of raising, and casting downe: of life, and of death: Judges over all their subjects and in all causes, and yet accomptable to none but God onely. They have power to exalt low things, and abase high things, and make of their subjects like men at the Chesse; A pawne to take a Bishop or a knight, and to cry up, or downe any of their subjects.³⁴

Though this perhaps sounds unnecessarily strident, it is not an especially controversial position to stake out in 1610. James is not an absolutist: as

Glenn Burgess has argued, these assertions are part of a complex theory of royal authority that strikes a balance between assertions concerning divine right and concessions to the priority of common law.³⁵ The significance of such claims for our purposes, though, lies in the way they re-frame debate over favoritism in terms of abstract theory and prerogative, thus replacing the more practical Elizabethan defense of favoritism with an abstract and theoretical position that fails to justify the moral or political utility of *amici principis*. Instead of offering a theory of why kings should have favorites, James offers a set of reasons why they can have them.

One result of this is that writers penning stories about favoritism are increasingly inquisitive about the purpose of favorites, exploring questions about the nature of the good favorite in ways that implicitly subject the Jacobean position to an ethical and practical interrogation. It is, for instance, one indicator of the uneasy, exploratory nature of Jacobean plays dealing with the role of the favorite that so many of them actually feature contrasting types of favorite figures, inviting their audiences to compare and thus to think critically about the institution itself. The duke in Fletcher's *The Loyal Subject* (1618) has two favorites, a good one named Burris and a bad one named Boroskie. In Massinger's *The Duke of Milan* (1621) the wicked chamber favorite Francisco is contrasted with the duke's noble friend and counselor Pescara. Plays like these revive traditional ideas concerning the ruler's virtuous friendships, but draw sharp distinctions between such relationships and other kinds of favoritism based less in virtue than in corrupt self-interest. Such plays ask, in effect, for renewed critical discrimination about good and bad intimacy and thus implicitly challenge the Jacobean emphasis on the king's unchallenged right to make and unmake subjects.

We can get a sense of the immediate impact of James's accession upon conventional notions of virtuous royal service by attending to George Chapman's bizarre early Jacobean play *The Tragedy of Bussy D'Ambois* (1604).³⁶ For though the play is set in France, Bussy is first presented to us in the Elizabethan mold of the paradigmatic good favorite: he is introduced as an outsider to the court, praised for his valor and blunt virtue, opposed to the courtly and Catholic wiles of the Duke of Guise, and raised to the status of royal favorite on the basis of personal merit and valor. The play is quite literally about what happens to the Elizabethan good favorite figure in a different kind of court. Moreover, the play's engagement with Elizabethan ideals is overt, foregrounded by an extended episode in which King Henri III praises the English queen and her court. Elizabeth is

so great a Courtier,
 So full of majestie and Roiall parts,
 No Queene in Christendome may boast her selfe,
 Her court approoves it, That's a court indeede;
 Not mixt with Rudenesse us'd in common houses;
 But, as Courts should be th'abstracts of their kingdomes,
 In all the Beautie, State, and Worth they hold;
 So is hers, ampie, and by her inform'd. (1.2.14–21)

This inset bit of panegyric establishes an implied contrast between Elizabeth's court and the obviously less virtuous French court on display in the world of the play. And it is striking that France is contrasted with a vision of English exemplarity that would have been conspicuously nostalgic to Chapman's early Jacobean audience. I do not think the France of Henri III is supposed to stand transparently for the England of James I, but I do think that Chapman is interested in using the exaggerated difference between France and England to think about the contrast between Elizabethan and Jacobean styles of rule and upon the impact of this change upon the discourse of favoritism.

Even if James and other political players were capable of striking a practical balance between divine right and the priority of common law, it is easy enough to see how somebody might have been alarmed by James's assertion that kings "make and unmake their subjects." Chapman's play (which predates James's speech of 1610 by several years) is a kind of cautionary tale for Jacobean England, depicting a world where Jacobean-style pronouncements about divine right and absolute prerogative are not counterbalanced or limited. Kings simply make and unmake their subjects with impunity in *Bussy D'Ambois*, as we see at once when Monsieur announces that the king's will overrides all other forms of political agency:

There is no second place in Numerous State
 That holds more than a cypher: In a King
 All places are contain'd. (1.1.34–36)

This basic point is reiterated elsewhere in the play (e.g. 2.2.118–26), and provides the key to the play's essentially deconstructive project: in a milieu where royal will determines everything there are no canons of virtue beyond the purview of the court. As a result, the play literally deconstructs the binary oppositions it sets up between natural virtue and courtliness, insider and outsider, and this is why the play's ethical frameworks are so notoriously difficult to disentangle. We can see this worked out in the slippery characterization of the play's hero, who is constantly celebrated as

the embodiment of a natural virtue (he is “Man in his native noblesse” [3.2.91]), but whose actions in the play are neither conspicuously virtuous nor easy to differentiate from the characteristic corruption of the play’s courtiers.³⁷ Bussy, the play’s supposedly virtuous outsider, acts like a consummate courtier. He rises in the king’s favor (“The King and D’Ambois now are grown all one” [4.1.113]), and displays his prowess by engaging in a bloody duel and an adulterous liaison with the married Tamyra. Because everything beyond the will of the king is reduced to a cipher, there is no sustainable vocabulary for excellence beyond the world of court competition and favor. The only alternative in the play to being a courtier, as Jonathan Goldberg has argued, is to stand outside of the king’s jurisdiction by appropriating an absolutist style of self-assertion modeled on Henri’s sovereignty.³⁸ What pleases Bussy has (for Bussy) the force of law.

Though *Bussy D’Ambois* is ostensibly a play about a favorite elevated for his virtue, it lacks a discourse of virtuous service commensurate with this initial premise. It is not, finally, clear what Bussy’s oft asserted excellent consists of, nor is it clear what exactly he is wanted to do. When Monsieur decides, at the start of the play, to elevate Bussy to prominence he says something enigmatic about needing to have “resolved” followers, but the only tangible reason he offers is that the act will make his own “bounties shine” (1.1.44, 51). Just as there is no real language for virtue, so there is no real place for independent action in a world where all but the king are ciphers. This makes *Bussy D’Ambois* an extremely peculiar play, a kind of sustained thought experiment in the moral epistemology of absolutism. Chapman’s interest in this experiment, I think, stems in part from the felt impact of a Jacobean reconfiguration of the discourse of favoritism in which traditional languages of reciprocal service are replaced by assertions of prerogative. If the king’s bounty is all that matters in discussions of favoritism, if the traditional language of virtuous friendship is no longer used to justify the institution, then what is the purpose or characteristic excellence of a favorite?

The hollowness at the heart of *Bussy D’Ambois* reflects Chapman’s real uneasiness concerning the meaning of favoritism in a milieu that emphasizes prerogative and bounty instead of service stemming from reciprocal, virtuous friendship. This is in fact an ongoing preoccupation in Chapman’s early Jacobean tragedies, culminating in *The Tragedie of Chabot Admirall of France*, a play composed by George Chapman at some point after 1611 and then revised by James Shirley prior to its publication in 1639. This play hinges on the conflict between two fundamentally opposed conceptions of the role of the favorite. Chabot – “The great, and onely famous Favorite /

To *Francis* first of that Imperiall name”³⁹ – is a scrupulously honest political figure, a kind of paradigmatic virtuous friend to the king who sees his political role simultaneously as personal service and as the administration of justice. But his master and patron, King Francis I, becomes uneasy with the moral independence displayed by his virtuous friend, and so allows Chabot to be prosecuted by rivals in order to teach him a lesson about dependency. This conflict, in other words, examines tensions between the idea of favorite as virtuous friend (an idea that implies moral equality and reciprocity) and a more Jacobean conception of favoritism as the product of god-like bounty and prerogative (a more purely top-down conception of the position). In the end, Francis pardons Chabot and attempts to apologize, but the virtuous favorite dies of a broken heart. This has an almost allegorical feel to it, as if the point were to demonstrate the incompatibility of traditional conceptions of the friend as favorite with the Jacobean idea that kings make and unmake their subjects.⁴⁰

As animosity toward the king’s bedchamber favorites grew, the Elizabethan language of virtuous favoritism came to seem increasingly nostalgic, a marker of the distance between a corrupt present and an idealized past. We can see this by comparing Chapman’s invocation of Elizabeth with the more sustained and programmatically nostalgic invocation of Elizabethan favoritism that provides the subtext of *The Queen of Corinth* (1616–17), a remarkable mid-Jacobean play written by Fletcher, Massinger, and Nathan Field that is designed to hold up an Elizabethan idea of the royal friend as a mirror for the scandal-ridden Jacobean court. *The Queen of Corinth* revives key aspects of the Elizabethan notion of the good favorite in the person of Euphanes, a favorite of singular virtue raised from obscurity by the personal patronage of a noble queen. Euphanes acts as a counterweight to villains whose status derives from their lineage alone, and (as in *Cromwell*) the monarch’s willingness to raise such a deserving upstart to a position of unequalled prominence makes reformation possible. Since this idealization of favor is given in terms of the Elizabethan nostalgia that structures the play’s political ideology, though, it celebrates good favoritism as a thing of the past. The play is in this regard a perfect instantiation of the Jacobean erosion of the traditional idea of the good favorite.

The aristocratic villains, in this case, are Theanor, the queen’s wicked son, and Crates, the favorite’s older brother. The latter (like Oliver in Shakespeare’s *As You Like It*) has deprived his younger brother Euphanes of sufficient means, leaving him at the mercy of his patrons. The unholy alliance of Theanor and Crates forges an associative link between

unregulated princely tyranny and the haughtiness of inherited privilege and sets them against the countervailing virtues of Euphanes and his greatest patron, the Queen of Corinth herself. The deserving Euphanes, as I have suggested, hearkens back to Elizabethan ideas of the good favorite as virtuous upstart, and it is no coincidence that the Queen of Corinth likewise has about her more than a trace of Elizabethan nostalgia. Though not a virgin, she is a widow who actively and effectively rules Corinth by herself (at least until her surprise marriage at the end of the play). More tellingly, when rebels challenge Euphanes in Act 4, the queen comes “into the Field / And like a Leader, marches in the head / Of all her troopes.”⁴¹ This is reported, not staged, but its inclusion would unavoidably have evoked Elizabeth rallying the troops at Tilbury in anticipation of Spanish invasion in 1588. It is possible, too, that the otherwise unnamed Queen of Corinth would have conjured up Helen, the Queen of Corinth in Sidney’s *New Arcadia*, a character who likewise embodies a specifically Elizabethan set of virtues.

The Queen of Corinth, we might say, attempts to accommodate a structure of Elizabethan nostalgia involving monarch and favorite to mid-Jacobean politics. Thus, for all its Elizabethan nostalgia, it does away with the anti-Catholic sentiment that helped shape the Elizabethan notion of the good favorite. The religious conflict that shaped the idea of the virtuous upstart favorite under Elizabeth no longer makes sense once Tudor court families are displaced from positions of intimacy by the king’s Scottish friends. Similarly, the play opens by celebrating the achievement of a favorable peace treaty between Corinth and Argos, an accomplishment much more in keeping with the style of King James – *rex pacificus* – than of the memory of Elizabeth rallying her troops. The play also contains several scenes in which Euphanes attracts slander of the sort that typically attends political favoritism in early modern England and that, *circa* 1616–17, would have recalled the spectacular recent scandals surrounding the Earl of Somerset. In Act 1, Crates declares that Euphanes is “pointed at” and jeered all over town as “the fine Courtier, the womans man” as if his reliance upon the favor of patrons made him an effeminate plaything (1.2.192, 93). When Euphanes is introduced to the queen in Act 2, Neanthes, a corrupt courtier observing the encounter, remarks that “this fellow mounts / Apace, and will towre o’re us like a Falcon” (2.3.54–55).⁴² The word “mounts” here conveys more than a hint of salacious innuendo. Later, Crates and Theanor likewise worry that Euphanes will mount queen and throne alike. Crates warns Theanor accordingly:

Should young Euphanes claspe the Kingdome thus,
 And please the good old Lady some one night;
 What might not she be wrought to put on you
 Quite to supplant your birth? (3.1.42–45)

According to Theanor, the people gossip about the intimacy between Euphanes and the queen and call the favorite “King of Corinth” (3.1.339). Euphanes is also referred to as an “upstart Mushrum bred i’th night” (4.3.5).

These remarks create a backdrop of cynical commentary on the role of the favorite that would have resonated with the language of corruption circling around Somerset, especially in a play composed either during or immediately after the spectacular public trials of the earl and his co-conspirators. As has been amply documented elsewhere, these trials ensured that Somerset (and his wife, Frances Howard) became emblematic of a notion of the court as a place of both erotic and political intrigue, a place where suspicious intimacies allowed the unworthy to rise to positions of unwarranted prominence.⁴³ The genders of monarch and favorite in *The Queen of Corinth* make it easy for Euphanes’s enemies to conflate these concerns about the corruption of favor, treating him as an upwardly mobile gigolo whose attempts to “claspe the Kingdome” threaten to undo the orthodoxy of lineal descent.

The play also contains a comic subplot featuring an affected simpleton named Onos, a kind of parodic double for Euphanes: each of them, at the beginning of the play, returns to Corinth from a foreign tour that has been financed by a generous patroness named Beliza. Where Euphanes subsequently rises on the strength of his personal virtue, Onos (the son of a usurer, we are told) affects courtliness with comic ineptitude. The subplot, in other words, offers a satire of upward mobility reminiscent of Jacobean urban comedy, and this too directs our attention to an anxiety about class that contextualizes Euphanes’s ascension. As with the play’s constant reminders of the gossip attendant upon favorites like Leicester and Somerset, the satire of upward mobility in this subplot registers the play’s awareness that its depiction of Euphanes – the good favorite, the deserving aspirant – goes against the grain of Jacobean socio-political stereotyping. These additions serve as reminders of Jacobean social conditions – Somerset’s fall, the inflation of honors, the uncouth foreignness of the king’s chamber – that frame the play’s focus on the good, Elizabethan queen and her deserving favorite. As a result, they implicitly test the play’s nostalgic rendition of favor against the current political climate.

The Queen of Corinth is best known today for its appalling sexual politics and its treatment of rape.⁴⁴ At the beginning of the play, we learn that the virtuous Merione, who had been courted by Prince Theanor, is to be married to the Prince of Argos in order to cement peace between the realms. But Theanor, relying upon the assistance of Crates and a number of other courtiers, rapes Merione on the eve of her wedding. In order to keep their identities secret, Theanor and his cronies wear masks, and they drug the violated Merione and deposit her on her brother's doorstep. But Merione "is no *Lucrece*" (2.3.22): instead of committing suicide, she pines away in sorrow, wishing to erase the stain of rape by marrying her attacker. At the end of the play, when Euphanes is about to marry Beliza, Theanor decides to rape her too. Only this time Crates confesses and so Euphanes arranges a kind of grotesque version of the bed-trick plot in which Theanor instead assaults Merione a second time. As is predetermined, the prince is caught in the act and brought to trial for multiple rapes. In the ensuing trial, Merione requests mercy for her attacker while Beliza – who is also in on the scheme – pleads for the death penalty. The revelation that Merione has been the victim of both attacks clears the way for a neat solution, though one that seems horrendous to modern sensibilities: Theanor marries Merione, Euphanes marries Beliza, the queen offers herself to Agenor in Merione's place, and they all live happily ever after.

The strain of grafting this comic ending to the play's lurid and horrific excesses is manifested in the inconsistent characterization of Crates and Theanor. Crates, who urges the prince on to his first rape is horrified by the second. And Theanor, we are asked to believe, is both an honorable suitor to Merione and a monstrous "tyrant to virginity" (4.4.20). Within the symbolic economy of the play, though, realistic characterization is less important than the use of lust as a synecdoche for immoderate passion, and thus for the failure of self-government and government in general. Theanor is not only a "tyrant to virginity," in other words: he is made into a figure for tyranny as both erotic and political. Indeed, as is customary within the period's political drama, the unruly passions of Theanor and Crates lead to and are mirrored by the eruption of rebellion in the body politic. Theanor and Crates attempt to frame Euphanes by placing Merione's ring (taken during the assault) in a casket of jewels sent by the queen to her favorite. Euphanes gives the ring to Beliza, and Merione recognizes it. When Beliza says where she got it, Merione's brother Leonidas jumps to the conclusion that Euphanes must have been the rapist. When the queen will not surrender her favorite, Leonidas raises an army with the help of Agenor and the state seems ready to plunge into civil war. In order to understand the play's

intertwined interest in governance and self-governance, it is important to recognize the analogical connection between the unchecked lust of Theanor and the resulting political tumult.

The play's allusion to Lucrece, of course, frames rape as the representative crime of tyrannous monarchy eliciting republican reformation. But when Crates opines that Merione "is no *Lucrece*" he may also be announcing that *The Queen of Corinth* is no republican play. The reformation here is effected not by the dissolution of monarchy but by means of the virtue of the Queen of Corinth and her favorite Euphanes. In contrast to Crates and Theanor, the play's heroes are figures of conspicuous self-control. The favorite is made into a spokesman for the stoic virtue of "passive fortitude" (3.1.247), and when Theanor and Crates plot against him, even they are forced to comment upon his remarkable moral constancy:

how shall we provoke him to our snares?
 He has a temper malice cannot move
 To exceed the bounds of judgment; he is so wise,
 That we can pick no cause to affront him.

(3.1.63–66)

With Leonidas and Agenor raging against him, the favorite has the calm presence of mind to present himself, unarmed and unprotected, before his opponents. He is able to persuade them of his innocence and so averts full-scale civil war. Euphanes's example, moreover, reforms Crates, who sees his brother's excellence and is ashamed of his own haughty aggression. This shaping exemplarity stands as an act of reforming governance that derives ultimately from Euphanes's self-government.

The queen, for her part, is characterized by her ability to subjugate personal feeling for the good of the state. This is exemplified, for instance, by her willingness to punish the crimes of her own errant son:

As for my Son
 Let 'em no more dare then they'l answer, I
 An equall Mother to my Country am,
 And every virtuous Son of it is son
 Unto my bosome, tender as mine owne.

(4.2.18–22)

One thinks here of Philanax's advice to Basilius in Book 3 of the *New Arcadia*: "you are a Prince, & a father of people, who ought with the eye of wisdom, the hand of fortitude, and the hart of justice to set downe all private conceits, in comparison of what for the publike is profitable." This

queen, though, can follow such advice. And unlike Basilius, she can recognize and reward Euphanes as “a friend not only in affection but judgment.”

The relationship between Euphanes and the queen is set up in such a way as to illustrate the moral exemplarity of both parties. Once Euphanes has been raised to prominence as the recognized favorite of the queen, everybody assumes that he will ambitiously pursue her amorous attentions as well. Even Beliza, the good noble woman who loves Euphanes and whose patronage has given him his start, assumes that she has lost her beloved when the queen takes a fancy to him. But Euphanes, in a characteristic display of constancy and gratitude, reconfirms his love to Beliza and marries her at the end of the play. The queen is in fact attracted to Euphanes, but she never tries to take him from Beliza. She is at once flirty and respectful of Beliza’s prior claim:

If I should marry thee, what merry tales
Our neighbour Islands would make of us;
But let that passe, you have a mistris
That would forbid our Banes.

(3.1.263–66)

When Euphanes asks the queen for permission to marry Beliza she grants it, adding (in an aside) “I can subdue myself” (3.1.323). Her forbearance here is in marked contrast not only to the sexually predatory tyrants of plays like Massinger’s *The Roman Actor* (1626), but also to the rapacity of her own tyrannical son. The queen’s patronage of Euphanes is proven morally sound by her complete willingness to forgo whatever amatory claim to him her position and her bounty might entail.

More generally, the play is obsessed with good and bad models of the patron/client relationship. The brace of courtiers who assist in the prince’s rapes do so because they want the rewards that Theanor’s favor can bring them. Similarly, the ill will that prevails between Euphanes and his brother Crates seems to stem from the fact that the latter wants to think of himself as court patron to Euphanes rather than as kin, as Euphanes himself sarcastically explains:

May be you look’d I should petition to you
As you went to your Horse; flatter your servants,
To play the Brokers for my furtherance,
Sooth your worse humours, act the Parasite
On all occasions, write my name with theirs
That are but one degree remov’d from slaves,
Be drunk when you would have me, then wench with you,
Or play the Pander.

(1.2.168–75)

The younger brother is treated like a fawning hanger-on at court, an analogy that establishes a kind of moral equivalence between Theanor (who does have courtiers playing the parasite and soothing his worse humors) and Crates.

Contrasted to these negative examples we see not only the patronage of the queen, but also the patronage of Euphanes's beloved Beliza. Early in Act 1, when Euphanes returns from his travels and enters the play, Beliza is given a series of speeches in which she articulates something like an ethics of favor that frames Euphanes's subsequent rise to prominence. First, she distinguishes between her own patronage and the kind of selfish favor that both stems from and reinforces rigid class hierarchy:

Good *Euphanes*,
 Beleeve I am not one of these weak Ladies
 That (barren of all inward worth) are proud
 Of what they cannot truly call their owne,
 Their birth or fortune, which are things without them,
 Nor in this will I imitate the world,
 Whose greater part of men think when they give
 They purchase bondmen, not make worthy friends:
 By all that's good I sweare, I never thought
 My great estate was an addition to me,
 Or that your wants took from you. (1.2.82–92)

Then she insists upon the selflessness of favor, describing the promotion of intrinsic moral excellence as “the most faire advantage”:

when we do favours
 To such as make them grounds on which they build
 Their noble actions, there we improve our fortunes
 To the most faire advantage. (1.2.98–101)

This ethic underpins the play in a number of ways. For one thing, it distinguishes sharply between good favor and the kind of selfish patronage of men like Theanor and Crates who “think when they give / They purchase bondmen.” This is part of their literal and figurative rapaciousness, an inability to subdue selfish desire in favor of the demands of moral judgment. For another, Beliza's emphasis upon the need to distinguish virtue from rank or wealth makes it possible to apply the humanist conception of friendship (in which true friendship is based on a kind of moral equality) to the patronage situation. Asymmetries of power and wealth need not be an impediment to Beliza's brand of friendship and favor.

Euphanes's moral exemplarity is likewise manifested in his capacity for true, virtuous friendship as a basis for patronage. The play demonstrates this fairly explicitly by providing him with a needy friend named Conon who is protected only by the intercession of Euphanes when Crates and Theanor conspire to seize his estate. Conon is a friend of the favorite from before the latter's rise, and the play introduces him in Act 2 in order to manufacture some suspense about how Euphanes's social elevation will impact his friendship. Crates tries to persuade Conon that Euphanes will snub him, and in fact the two men enter into a wager about the favorite's loyalty to his friend. Conon, of course, wins the bet: Euphanes is too noble to allow his own change in social status to alter his personal relationships. The episode, though, establishes Euphanes's credentials within the canons of male friendship, establishing early on that he is more than a "womans man." His subsequent intercession in Conon's defense makes it clear that his capacity for virtuous friendship will make him a good patron too, a fit vehicle for the queen's authority, a good favorite. As with the queen or Beliza, each of whom bestow favor upon virtue without regard for considerations of wealth or rank, Euphanes's friendship and patronage are given on the basis of friendship unaffected by rank.

Between them, the queen, Beliza, Euphanes, and Conon represent an idealized network of virtuous and reciprocated affection in which government goes hand in hand with the moral demands of friendship. The play as a whole is designed specifically to illustrate and illuminate this central ethical point, going out of its way to create ancillary episodes – like Conon's wager or Beliza's discourses on favor – in order to reinforce its central interest in the politics of virtuous intimacy. This utopian vision of friendship and favor (with Euphanes, the good favorite, at its center) is set against the antithetical world of Theanor and Crates, who act as stereotypical figures for court corruption who pursue amoral desires by means of suborned and corrupted underlings. The agents of corruption are imagined as figures of inherited privilege – a prince and an aristocratic older brother – and an antidote to the corruption of the great is found in the politics of intimacy enabled by the selfless virtue of the Elizabethan queen.

Because its image of political harmony is so clearly nostalgic, and because it uses gossip about Euphanes to evoke contemporary fascination with Robert Carr and Frances Howard – unmistakable symbols of Jacobean court corruption in 1616–17 – I think the play's strenuously constructed model of virtuous favor would have registered for its original audience as a rebuke to the failings of the Jacobean court. The play goes out of its

way to make this oppositional reading available. Imagine for instance the mid-Jacobean impact of the following remarks, taken from Beliza's framing discourse on the ethics of favor:

Where benefits

Are ill conferr'd, as to unworthy men,
 That turne them to bad uses, the bestower
 For wanting judgement how, and on whom to place them,
 Is partly guilty. (1.2.94–98)

For all the controversy generated by Jacobean favoritism, it remains unusual to blame the king directly for the “unworthy men” elevated by royal favor. Beliza's speech points in a fairly radical direction, and perhaps the play's major theorization of benefits was given to Beliza instead of the queen in order to distance its potentially controversial message from the hot-button question of royal favoritism. Nevertheless, these remarks frame the laudatory depiction of favoritism in *The Queen of Corinth* in such a way as to invite condemnation of Jacobean favor by contrast. The play is thus a highly topical reminder of the failure of the Jacobean court to live up to the Elizabethan ideal of *amici principis* embodied in the play by the queen and her favorite Euphanes.

ARCANA AMICITIAE: CHARLES I AND THE RULE
 OF THE PERSONAL

At the beginning of Aurelian Townshend's *Tempe Restored* (1632), a curtain is raised to reveal the vale of Tempe, “a delicious place by nature and art.” From out of Tempe hastens “a young gentleman, looking often back, as if he feared pursuit.”⁴⁵ He delivers the masque's first speech – explaining that he is fleeing from Circe – and lies down “at the feet of the lords' seats,” putting his faith in the protection of Charles and his court (p. 157). The masque goes on to dramatize the defeat of Circe (and thus of the sensual, the bestial, the merely enchanting), who finally relinquishes Tempe to the promised reformation under the exemplary governance of that “matchless pair,” Charles and Henrietta Maria (p. 162). Like many other Caroline masques, *Tempe Restored* promotes and celebrates the Caroline reformation of the court: the defeat of Circe frees Tempe's opulence from desires “ruled by sense” and so allegorizes the Caroline court as both a “delicious place” and a haven from fleshy corruption (p. 157). If indeed the Caroline masque was used (as Martin Butler puts it) “to endorse the political and ideological priorities of Caroline monarchy” before an audience consisting of “the same

political elites on whom Charles was dependant to channel his authority into the nation as a whole,” it seems clear that that the idea of the moral reform of court was prominent on the agenda.⁴⁶

Presumably in deference to the tastes of Henrietta Maria, Townshend and Inigo Jones derived the conceit of *Tempe Restored* from a well-known French court entertainment entitled *Le Balet Comique De La Royne* (1581), performed before Henri III to celebrate the wedding of his sister-in-law to one of his favorites.⁴⁷ In *Le Balet Comique*, the opening speech is likewise spoken by a fugitive from Circe, a character identified in the printed text only as a fugitive gentleman (“gentil-homme fugitif”⁴⁸). In Townshend’s redaction, though, the gentleman is renamed “The Fugitive Favourite,” an emendation that registers the masque’s desire to include the language of favor in its general celebration of Caroline reform. The Fugitive Favourite describes his flight from Circe as a choice between corrupt and true service, thereby distinguishing between the true bonds of love that cement the Caroline court and the subjugation that characterizes relationships in Circe’s “palace rich”:

Her bower is pleasant and her palace rich,
 Her fare delicious, and her language fine;
 But shall the soul, the minion of the gods,
 Stoop to her vassals? Or stand by and starve
 While they sit swelling in her chair of state?
 ’Tis not her rod, her philters nor her herbs
 (Though strong in magic) that can bound men’s minds,
 And make them prisoners where there is no wall:
 It is consent that makes a perfect slave,
 And sloth that binds us to lust’s easy trades,
 Wherein we serve out our youth’s ’prenticeship,
 Thinking at last Love should enfranchise us,
 Whom we have never either served or known:
 ‘He finds no help, that uses not his own.’ (p. 157)

Circe’s court is here conceptualized as a political entity – witness her “chair of state” – but one in which service is slavery and power is divorced from true affection. Indeed, though the linkages are left purposefully vague in the Fugitive Favourite’s complaint, the intermingling of tyrannical power and bestial lust in this account of Circe’s court recalls the deep cultural anxiety over what Shannon has termed “mignonnerie”: “the political scandal of a monarch’s unsuppressed private self, with the individuated and self-centered body natural eclipsing the body politic.”⁴⁹ Instead of allowing himself to remain as the minion of Circe, the Fugitive Favourite chooses

to follow the ethical promptings of his soul, which leads him from the debased but opulent palace of the sorceress to the feet of King Charles. It is striking that the soul is conceived of as “the minion of the gods,” a phrase that re-appropriates and purifies the language of favor, pointing toward a model of devotion and reciprocal support based on the highest moral principles rather than upon the uneasy mix of lust and force that seems to prevail in the court of Circe. The implicit point here is that service at the Caroline court is analogous to the service of the soul to the gods, an equation that suggests in turn that the reformation of “mignonnerie” forms part of the restoration of *Tempe*. *Tempe Restored*, in other words, dramatizes the purification of the politics of favor as a prominent aspect of its general celebration of the Caroline reformation of court.

The symbolic emphasis placed upon the Caroline reformation of the politics of favor by Townshend’s *Fugitive Favourite* resonates with the language of reform in other Caroline masques. Thus, the Spring that symbolizes social harmony in Jonson’s *Chloridia* (1631) is “executed by the King’s favour, who assists with all bounties.”⁵⁰ Likewise, in Thomas Carew’s *Coelum Britannicum* (1634), Momus’s account of the reforms undertaken to bring the heavens in line with Caroline purity evokes the problem of past Jacobean “mingnonnerie” with an almost scandalous directness: “Ganymede is forbidden the bedchamber, and must only minister in public. The gods must keep no pages nor grooms of their chamber under the age of twenty-five, and those provided of a competent stock of beard.”⁵¹ Though Momus’s riotous and de-idealizing language in some ways disrupts the celebration of Caroline love that is the masque’s panegyric conceit, he also serves the masque’s purposes by providing a comic catalogue of social woes subject to reformation under the purifying influence of the royal couple.⁵² Each of these masques, we might say, links the characteristic Caroline language of purified and purifying love to the reformation of the practice of favoritism. Such celebrations seek among other things to assert, in the wake of Buckingham’s assassination and decades of controversy over favoritism, that the favor of King Charles can be personal without also being corrupt.

Given the prominence accorded to this reformation of favor in Caroline masques, it is perhaps unsurprising that writers seeking to entertain the Caroline court likewise produced several plays about idealized relationships between monarch and favorite despite the fact that Charles ruled without a favorite after the assassination of Buckingham. The earliest of the distinctly Caroline good favorite plays is Lodowick Carlell’s tragicomedy *The Deserving Favourite* (printed 1629), a play that features a morally upstanding royal favorite who is also a duke.⁵³ Though we cannot be certain that the play

postdates the assassination of Buckingham, there is little chance that a play whose exposition includes the assertion that “the King / So passionately doth love the Duke” would have escaped association with England’s most notorious royal favorite (sig. B2). The play pivots upon a love triangle, in which a virtuous young woman named Clarinda is beloved of both the duke and of a virtuous man named Lysander. Clarinda loves Lysander, though both of them are aware of the political danger inherent in opposing the king’s favorite. To make matters worse, we are told that Clarinda’s father has recently been let out of prison, where he has been kept as a result of some unspecified political conflict, so the lovers must be doubly careful not to antagonize the king. The king, for his part, has tyrannical leanings, and wants to use the threat of force to secure the marriage of the duke and Clarinda. But the favorite, whose role throughout the play is to moderate the king’s impulses, opposes the use of political pressure in matters of the heart: “Great Sir, let not your care of me / Bar faire Clarinda the freedom of her choice” (sig. B2v).

I am tempted to think of this play’s amatory conflict in terms of the ideological project undertaken by masques like *Tempe Restored* and *Coelum Britannicum*, which allude more or less delicately to the perception of scandal characteristic of Jacobean favoritism in order to celebrate the Caroline court for restoring pure and decorous affection as the basis for personal and political intimacy. Carlell’s love plot, with its threat of royal imposition, reads like an attempt to recast the notorious scandals associated with the love triangle of Frances Howard, Robert Carr, and Essex. It was suspected, certainly, that undue political pressure had been applied to break the bond between Howard and Essex in favor of the royal favorite’s amatory claim. Here, though, the deserving favorite himself prevents similar scandal, and his rectitude is in the end rewarded: a bed switch plot is revealed and Clarinda and Lysander turn out to be siblings, a revelation that paves the way for the favorite’s marriage to his beloved. As part of the play’s ideological work, favoritism is purified, purged of the residual taint of the Somerset scandals.

Walter Montagu’s notoriously lengthy and static court pastoral *The Shepherd’s Paradise* (1632) likewise depicts the adventures of an impossibly noble prince named Basilino and his impossibly noble friend and favorite Agenor. Because these two young men keep falling in love with the same women (this is one way to dramatize the likeness and sympathy of male friends), Agenor struggles throughout the play to reconcile the imperative of service with the demands of love, an ethical crisis that demonstrates that the bonds of service and friendship are forged with an emotional intensity and purity

that rivals even the most idealized amour. Thomas Nabbes's unacted play *The Unfortunate Mother* (1640) features a perfectly virtuous royal favorite named (of all things) Spurio, who turns out to be of royal blood.⁵⁴ This ennobling of the favorite seems also to be part of the ideological program operating in these plays. The favorite in *The Deserving Favourite* is kinsman to the king, and Montagu's Agenor turns out at the end of *The Shepherd's Paradise* to be the long-lost "Prince Palante, Son to the now blessed king of Navare," and brother of Basilino's love.⁵⁵ We might think of these plays as creating something like the family romance of favoritism, a shared ideological fantasy conceived to counteract the long-standing hostility to court favorites as upstarts and thus to justify and defend the king's personal affections as a basis for organizing the government.

The symbolic emphasis placed upon the reform of favor in these masques and plays runs parallel, of course, to more tangible Caroline efforts to reform the politics of access and to put the court on a more decorous and ceremonial footing.⁵⁶ But I think we can best understand the symbolic importance given to the reformation of favor within the language of Caroline kingship if we think of it in terms of Charles's dissatisfaction with parliament and his eventual decision to rule without it. Justifying personal rule, we might say, required a massive recuperation of the political legitimacy of the personal, and Caroline masques like *Tempe Restored* seek to provide ideological or symbolic support for this project. We can get a sense of the urgency of this symbolic intervention if we remember that parliament was conceived of as one avenue by which the king might receive much-needed counsel. Attempting to rule without parliament therefore put added pressure on reformed royal intimacy and what was often called cabinet counsel as the alternative avenue for advice. More generally, the Caroline emphasis upon the reformation of the politics of intimacy seeks to assert that the king's affection and favor are of sufficient moral probity to serve as the basis for government without the oversight and advice offered by parliament.

Perhaps the best, or at least the most overt, example of the Caroline recuperation of favoritism is William Davenant's *The Fair Favourite*, a play twice performed before Charles and Henrietta Maria at the Cockpit in 1638 though not printed until considerably later. Davenant's play features a virtuous female favorite named Eumena who enjoys the chaste love of the king and who is shown performing the court offices of the favorite – supervising patents, handling the payment of soldiers, managing a crush of suitors, and so on. One of the interesting things about the play is its concrete and specific sense of what it means to identify Eumena as a court favorite: the political duties of the role are here much more clearly present

than in the apolitical romance-world of other Caroline good favorite plays. The story's pre-history is that the king has been duped by his handlers into marrying a virtuous foreign queen for geo-political purposes against his heart's desires. While he remains true to his marriage vows, he loves only his fair favorite Eumena, who he had been told was dead when he agreed to marry his queen. The main characters all recognize and respect each other's virtues, but all are locked into a pattern of grief and loneliness by this unfortunate political marriage. By the end of the play, though, Eumena finds a husband in the virtuous and chivalric Amadore, and the king is reconciled to the queen's affection by a final "miracle of love."⁵⁷ This sentimental conclusion rewards the main characters for the purity and moral seriousness with which they have borne their respective lots, and the play suggests too that the king's miraculous change of heart is the result of a process of moral refinement and sublimation undergone while pining for Eumena.

The play's most innovative conceit – making the court favorite a woman – was presumably intended both to evoke and to appeal to Henrietta Maria. For she was herself maligned as a kind of favorite figure exerting a corrupting Catholic influence over her husband. Lucy Hutchinson, for instance, casts Henrietta Maria in this light in her memoirs, where recollection of Buckingham's near impeachment in the parliament of 1626 occasions a prolonged meditation upon subsequent royal intimates that encompasses Laud and Strafford and culminates with Henrietta Maria: "above all these the King had another instigator of his own violent purpose more powerful than all the rest, and that was the Queen." Hutchinson imagines Charles as a besotted pawn, "enslaved in his affection" for his Catholic mate.⁵⁸ We might say that *The Fair Favourite* responds to this animosity by featuring not one but two figurations of Henrietta Maria, the beloved favorite and the foreign queen, thereby simultaneously celebrating the operation of chaste love in the political sphere and the triumph of conjugal union in the denouement.

The play's miracle ending – in which the king belatedly falls in love with his foreign queen – also seems designed to allude to the late blossoming of Charles's own conjugal affections after the death of Buckingham. This allusive structure, though, aligns Eumena with Buckingham, an association strengthened by the play's interest in the specificity of the favorite's political offices. *The Fair Favourite*, like so many of the period's political fictions, is deeply topical without being slavishly or reductively allegorical. The play celebrates a politics based upon virtuous love in general enough terms to accommodate at once a tacit defense of the Catholic queen's influence and

an explicit defense of the institution of favoritism – an institution with an undeniable legacy of controversy associated with Buckingham – as a mechanism of good government. Of course, at the most general level, it is easy to see Davenant's play – with its assertion that “peculiar and distinct / Affections are but small derived parts / Of what we call the universal love” (p. 255) – as an exemplary expression of the neoplatic cult of love fostered around Henrietta Maria. What is more striking is how, by making Eumena into a practicing court favorite, it accommodates the language of political service to the Caroline language of amorous virtue.⁵⁹ In doing so, it both follows and elaborates upon the ideological program laid out in *Tempe Restored*.

The play's political commentary is perhaps most direct in its condemnation of the brand of malicious public gossip attracted by the intimacies of the great. Indeed, the play's crisis is generated by the jealous anger of Eumena's brother Oramont, who sees that his sister's influence over the king has provoked salacious public rumor (“she is become the people's secret scorn” [p. 216]) and so assumes the worst himself. He enlists the aid of his friend Amadore and sets out to eradicate what he sees as a fatal blot on his family honor:

Fair Favorite; my sister in thy name,
Not blood, take heed! Although
Intrench'd i'th' arms of the lascivious King,
The windy tempest doth begin to swell;
The taper of thy life, now I have join'd
The fury of another's breath to mine,
Must be blown out, unless it clearer shine.

(p. 225)

What little dramatic tension the play musters emerges only when Amadore persuades himself of Eumena's virtue. He fights with Oramont, who seems to kill him and faces execution for murdering his friend. Amadore, it turns out, is still alive, but he wants to fight again to refurbish his honor. Finally, Eumena intercedes, reconciling Amadore and Oramont and setting the stage for a festive conclusion in which Oramont repents of his brotherly suspicions, Amadore marries Eumena, and the king is transformed by his “miracle of love.”

One way to understand the political content of this sequence of events is to read the play as the triumph of a politics based on love and intimacy over unfounded popular dissent spread and fomented by malicious rumor

and gossip. As such, the play encapsulates the royalist response to the overheated public hostility aroused by the politics of intimacy since the 1620s. In fact, the play goes out of its way to demonstrate that gossip-mongering and factional infighting emerge unprompted from the periphery of the court rather than from the misbehavior of the figures at its center, who are scrupulously ethical in all regards. When told of malicious rumors about the queen, Eumena angrily dismisses them as “forged whispers” manufactured by courtiers who hope to gain the favorite’s support by slandering her rival (p. 213). Likewise, Davenant provides us with a brace of otherwise insignificant courtiers (Thorello, Saladine, and Aleran) who provide choric commentary on events and who represent the conventional perception of the court as a place of intrigue and duplicity. These men whisper secrets in order to seem wise (p. 215), describe the presence-chamber as a place of great treachery (p. 221), and decry the factionalism of the court (p. 236). The point, though, is that they are not privy to the ethical dilemmas of the king and his greatest intimates and so cannot understand the nature of their choices or the meaning of events as they unfold. The play takes a two-pronged approach to the politics of intimacy, simultaneously demonstrating the moral seriousness of the affections of the great and denouncing the response provoked by court intimacies among ignorant observers.

One striking thing about the nature of affection and favor, in *The Fair Favourite* as well as in other Caroline good favorite plays, is how sharply their conception of the relationship between public duty and personal passion differs from the ideas enshrined in earlier fictions. In particular, earlier positive conceptions of favoritism tend, with near universality, to put a premium on the ability (as Philanax put it) “to set downe all private conceits, in comparison of what for the publike is profitable.” Such stories conceive of government along conventional neo-stoic lines, as involving the complete subjugation of personal passion in favor of canons of moral reason conceptualized as transparent and public-minded. Inwardness and secrecy, consequently, are morally suspect.

This moral schema is present in *The Fair Favourite*, but it is treated in negative terms as part of the structure of assumptions that misleads the ignorant about the virtues of the great. Oramont, whose friendship with Amadore represents the kind of public, male virtue set against scheming courtliness in other favorite plays, is driven to mistrust his virtuous sister by his deeper and more abiding suspicion of the intimacies of the great, as is made clear when he denounces the king’s love for Eumena:

What strange divinity is that which guards
 These Kings – the lawful terrors of mankind –
 Keeps them as safe from punishment, when they
 Oppress the tame and good, as it secures
 Them from the treachery of the fierce and bad.
 Be safe, then, cruel monarch! since still hid
 Within thy dark prerogative, which is
 Divine indeed: for 'tis most fear'd because
 It least is understood. (p. 223)

Oramont's suspicion of the "dark prerogative" of kings – their prerogative pleasures and private affections – is fully conventional. But it is treated as misguided here, and actions based upon this skepticism bring Davenant's play to the brink of tragedy.

The Fair Favourite actually takes up the question of the king's private passions fairly overtly, beginning with his description of himself as a "monster" compounded of two bodies – "the natural and the politic" – that are "compounded of most different things" (p. 211). This rather general complaint frames Eumena's introduction to the play, and we soon learn that affection for his fair favorite is in fact what makes the king feel so monstrously divided:

Hail, virtuous maid! Why, my Eumena, did
 I strive for victories abroad, when all
 My conquests there could never recompense
 My absence from that beauty which I left
 At home. (p. 212)

In the system of binary oppositions set up during the play's exposition, the king's victories abroad are the stuff of the body politic, while his love of Eumena is the affection of the body natural. This means, of course, that the king has bestowed tremendous wealth, power, and administrative responsibility upon Eumena on the basis of the passionate affections of his body natural, exactly the configuration elsewhere conceived of as corrupt "mignonnerie." Only here it is a good thing. It is ethically important, obviously, that the king has demonstrated public virtue in the theater of war, but it is his struggle to reconcile private passion and public duty that really indicates his sentimentally rendered moral excellence. That is to say, the play's ethical code puts a premium not (as in earlier good favorite plays) upon transparent public virtue but upon intense personal passion well managed. And this is what is rewarded in *The Fair Favourite* as well. The play's "miracle of love" seems to be facilitated by the process of moral refinement undergone by the main characters as they cleave to but govern

their deep and abiding passions. And the play's major act of government – the reconciliation of Oramont and Amadore – is in fact performed by Eumena, who owes her office to the passions of the king's body natural.

This conception of virtue is profoundly royalist, for it transforms the monstrous quality of kings – the way they are called upon to balance the needs of the body politic with the demands of the body natural – into the precondition for moral greatness. Not only are criticisms of “dark prerogative” unwarranted, the personal passions that shape the king's secret intimacies form part of the raw material of exemplary government. In a sense, then, the play constructs a notion of *arcana amicitiae* (the mysteries of affection) as constitutive of *arcana imperii* (the mysteries of state). To put this another way, *The Fair Favourite* treats the modulated passions of its great king as a kind of moral instinct, thereby relocating the sacredness of monarchy into the realm of personal sentiment and inward feeling. This amounts, I think, to a significant Caroline revision of the ideology of governmental virtue, and one that uses the rarified language of love for which Caroline court culture is well known to defend the practice of personal rule and the prerogatives of royal favor.

We can see this ideological revision of the politics of affection at work in other Caroline good favorite plays as well. In Montagu's *Shepherd's Paradise*, for example, the Princess Bellesa (played by Henrietta Maria herself) praises the disguised prince for being “discreetly passionate” (p. 75), a quasi-oxymoronic moral characteristic on display throughout the play as all of its main characters attempt to reconcile selfish passions with their duties and responsibilities to one another. This is particularly true, as I have suggested, of Agenor, who comes to love Bellesa despite the burgeoning romance she enjoys with the favorite's prince and patron Basilino. At the end of the play, as the lovelorn Agenor is revealed to be the lost Palante, he is likewise reminded that he “can have no such personall afflictions as the blessing of a nation will not out weigh” (p. 163). The public is more important than the private, in other words, and so the restoration of a prince outweighs the demands of affection. And yet the play also suggests that the favorite's chaste and unreciprocated love for the woman later revealed to be a princess and his sister is a kind of intuitive recognition of kin leading toward the larger denouement. His great passion, though literally misguided, acts as a kind of homing device, leading toward the restoration of the royal family of Navarre and thus enabling a conclusion in which personal affection and political restoration are inextricably interconnected. The duke in Carlell's *The Deserving Favourite* is likewise seen as being discreetly passionate: he is able to sustain his passionate love of Clarinda

without resorting to tyrannous impulses fueled by selfish desire. And Carlell's play, like Montagu's and Davenant's features a kind of miracle ending, made possible by the will of passionate instinct, in which chaste but intensely felt love triangles resolve themselves simultaneously into matrimonial bliss and public political restoration. Though Carlell and Montagu for the most part avoid the kind of political realism we see in Davenant's depiction of court, it is not difficult to recognize within their romance plots something like the celebration of *arcana amicitiae* whose political implications are laid out so clearly in *The Fair Favourite*.

My description of the way Caroline fictions and entertainments attempt to recuperate favoritism and the politics of intimacy will no doubt recall some of the more general ways in which cultural historians have characterized the aesthetics and values promulgated within the court culture of Charles and Henrietta Maria (or the court of "CARLOMARIA," as Carew names it in *Coelum Britannicum* [p. 172]). Thus, for example, Kevin Sharpe's seminal *Criticism and Compliment* emphasized the ways in which Caroline writers used the language of love to express and explore a range of political topics, concluding that "in the polity of love . . . our authors advocated a middle course between unregulated passion and the suppression of man's natural appetite."⁶⁰ Likewise, Malcolm Smuts has described a "subtle tension between passion and discipline" as characteristic of Caroline courtly writing and has analyzed for us the court mythos of love that developed around Carlomaria: "In this peaceful reign the arts flourish, manners grow civilized, and the realm fills with innocent revelry . . . Over it all presides a royal couple who have tamed their own passions, purged the court of ill humours, shouldered the burdens of the realm's affairs, and established a polity based on love."⁶¹

My hope, though, is that by setting this Caroline language of affection within the context of the ongoing cultural debate about favoritism we can see at least one aspect of its political utility with much greater clarity. The celebration of discrete passion, at least in Caroline good favorite plays, is not, as Sharpe would have it, a rebuke to a bloodless cult of courtly Neoplatonism.⁶² It is instead the central enabling conceit of an innovative and novel reconception of the way the personal operates within the political sphere designed to justify favoritism and personal rule in terms of the dark prerogatives of royal affection or what I have called *arcana amicitiae*. Moreover, since hostility over favoritism continued to play a vital shaping role in the polarization of Caroline England up to and beyond the Long Parliament, it would be foolish to dismiss this justification of favoritism as a minor or secondary aspect of the Caroline "polity based on love." After all,

as Davenant's *Fair Favourite* makes abundantly clear, the line between love and friendship – and thus between the cult of Carlomaria and the defense of the politics of intimacy – is easily blurred in these plays. As a result, the defense of personal rule inherent in the Caroline celebration of the polity of love is necessarily entangled at the roots with the cultural conflict over favoritism.

It is also conventional, of course, to see the hyper-refined culture of Charles's court as hopelessly distant from the concerns of his people. I think is to some degree fair, and in fact, I think these texts provide something of a case study in this phenomenon. Smuts, who opines that “the innovative and cosmopolitan ambiance of Whitehall undoubtedly broadened the mental distance between Charles and the vast majority of his subjects” also argues that the accession of Charles in 1625 proved to be a cultural watershed, coinciding with the coming of age of a new group of writers and patrons who grew up under James and with the emergence of a cohesive court culture for the first time in England since the death of Elizabeth.⁶³ These things are related, of course, since novelty at court must generate what Smuts calls “mental distance” between insiders and outsiders. And the resulting mental distance must have been corrosive of political consensus, since old political habits of thought die hard. This is why, as Raymond Williams points out, the dominant culture typically tries to incorporate at least some version of residual cultural forms.⁶⁴

The really striking thing about the revisionary Caroline construction of the politics of intimacy is that it does no such thing. Instead, it departs from the ethical and representational conventions governing the depiction and defense of favoritism during the preceding half-century or so, thereby asking people to dispense all of a sudden with suspicion about royal passions and secret intimacies and to accept the political legitimacy of the king's private affections as an instrument of reform and a valuable component of his *arcana imperii*. I do not think this particular campaign can be thought of as a success. Continued suspicion of the king's prerogative pleasures is manifested in numerous plays composed during the personal rule featuring corrupting favorites and corrupt kings, and conflicts over the legitimacy of the king's personal affection as a mechanism for the ordering of government culminates in a parliamentary request to oversee royal appointments in the Grand Remonstrance of 1641. Nathanael Richards's crude but amusing *Tragedy of Messalina* (1635) goes so far as to stage a parody of the Caroline masque in which the language of idealized love is given to the title character, a Roman empress notorious for her sexual appetites and general moral incontinence.

In some measure, I suspect that this public relations failure has to do with the fact that the Caroline defense of *arcana amicitiae* goes so powerfully against received conceptions of good and bad political favoritism, conceptions – based in classical humanist notions of friendship that emphasize the need to suppress the merely personal – dating back at least to Elizabethan political discourse.

Despite the best efforts of writers like Townshend and Davenant and Carew and Carlell, in other words, the majority of politically minded Caroline subjects most likely continued to harbor something like Oramont's aggressive skepticism about the role of secret intimacies within the body politic. *The Fair Favourite* dramatizes Oramont's re-education, of course, laboring in the process to explain the importance of the king's passions as a vehicle for the instinctual operation of divine monarchy. But for all that there is little indication that "dark prerogative" was better understood or more readily welcomed outside of the charmed inner circle of the court of Carlomaria. Davenant's staging of Oramont's hostility turns out in retrospect to have been more prescient than the play's sentimental conclusion.

Poisoning favor

It is a curious truth about Tudor and early Stuart England that any royal favorite of sufficient longevity and influence to attract resentment tends to have been accused, in the most spectacularly public manner possible, of using poison.¹ Favorites, moreover, are accused of poisoning in a sizeable body of texts of different kinds: libels, legal records, topical dramatic fictions. One wants to know why this scandalous figuration should have proved so persistent: why, that is, this particular trope should have seemed as apt and plausible as it clearly did, and in what ways was it useful or clarifying to English subjects concerned about perceived political corruption? These are the questions that I aim to take up in the present chapter by pursuing the shared presuppositions, anxieties, and representational strategies of the body of texts that popularized the figure of the poisoning favorite.

Though the so-called historical cases are individually well known, it remains striking to consider them together. *Leicester's Commonwealth* (1584), the ur-text of early modern favoritism, accuses the Earl of Leicester of poisoning a remarkable number of sexual and political rivals. Indeed, poison is so prominent in that text's construction of the earl that his failure to use this method to kill his wife Amy Robsart occasions comment. "I muse," says the lawyer, "why he chose rather to make her away by open violence than by some Italian confortive." The gentleman responds with several explanations for the earl's departure from his normal *modus operandi*: perhaps he had not mastered poison just yet, or perhaps he did not specify the method of execution to his murderous henchman. "It is not unlikely," the gentleman adds, "that he prescribed unto Sir Richard Varney [the henchman] at his going hither that he should first attempt to kill her by poison, and that if that took not place, then by any other way to dispatch her howsoever."² Elsewhere the libel accuses Leicester of keeping "Julio the Italian and Lopez the Jew" on his payroll "for poisoning and for the art of destroying children in women's bellies."³ After the earl's death in 1588, the rumor persisted that he had himself been poisoned. Sir Robert Naunton opines that the earl

died “by that poison which he had prepared for others” and Ben Jonson likewise recalls that “the Earl of Licester Gave a botle of liquor to his Lady which he willed her to use in any faintness which she after his returne from court not knowing it was Poison gave him and so he died.”⁴ If nothing else, the persistence of these rumors demonstrates the central role played by poison in the earl’s black legend.

Leicester’s Commonwealth, as I have argued in chapter 2, had a long-standing impact on the way English subjects thought about royal favorites, and its treatment of Leicester as poisoner certainly helped cement the association between favoritism and poison that is the subject of this chapter. We can detect that text’s influence, for example, in the decontextualized circulation of the phrase “Italian sallets” – derived from the accusation that Leicester killed Sir Nicholas Throckmorton with “poison given him in a salad at supper”⁵ – as a shorthand for poison and court intrigue in Jacobean England. The popular libel known as “The Five Senses,” which circulated widely in manuscript in the 1620s and 1630s, criticizes Jacobean corruption by praying that the king’s senses be kept free of the dangers and temptations with which they are threatened in his decadent court. The stanza on tasting asks that the king be kept free from, among other things, “Italian sallets, & Romisse d[r]ogis / The milk of Babells proud houris [whore’s] duggis.”⁶ Italian salads continue to threaten the court because the court continues to be thought of as the habitat for intriguing favorites shaped in the mold of the villainous Leicester.

Essex, Leicester’s political heir in many regards, is an exception to the rule that favorites attract accusations of poison. This may have been by design. The Jewish Lopez accused in *Leicester’s Commonwealth* of assisting the earl with poison is in fact the notorious Dr. Roderigo Lopez persecuted by Essex in 1593–94 for plotting to poison Queen Elizabeth. Essex managed the pursuit of Lopez in order to make himself seem indispensable to Elizabeth, and it is likely that Lopez’s mention in *Leicester’s Commonwealth* helped prompt the earl’s campaign.⁷ It is likewise possible that Essex saw some ancillary political capital to be gained from persecuting this figure associated with the black legend of his mentor. Writing a letter of advice in 1596, Bacon characterized Essex as eager to “fly and avoid . . . the resemblance or imitation of my Lord of Licester,” and the public relations benefits garnered from the Lopez case would certainly have set Essex apart from the popular image of Leicester as a poisoning intriguer.⁸ The link between poison and the brand of court intrigue associated with Leicester’s memory is part of a grammar of associations that Essex attempted to manipulate.

This impressionistic association of favorites with poison received spectacular confirmation in 1615–16, when James's Scottish favorite Robert Carr, Viscount Rochester and then Earl of Somerset, was investigated, prosecuted, and convicted, along with his wife Frances Howard and several associates, of poisoning Sir Thomas Overbury in the Tower of London. Though much remains unclear both about Overbury's real fate and the favorite's involvement, the trials of Somerset and his co-conspirators were events of the highest imaginable public profile and they generated an enormous amount of gossip, libel, and news that helped both to spread and amplify details of the prosecutions.⁹

One of the conspirators, James Franklin, hinted to investigators that the murder of Overbury was part of a larger popish plot that had already included the poisoning of Prince Henry in 1612.¹⁰ At the arraignment of Sir Thomas Monson (the only one of the alleged co-conspirators who was never convicted), Lord Chief Justice Coke apparently could not resist making similar insinuations, hinting that Overbury had poisoned the prince and been in turn poisoned by his former patron Somerset. As the account in the *State Trials* has it, "the Lord Chief Justice . . . let drop some insinuations that Overbury's death had somewhat in it of retaliation, as if he had been guilty of the same crime against prince Henry."¹¹ Not surprisingly, wild rumors of massacres and regicide made the rounds, as did a fresh wave of rumors about the nature of the late prince's demise.¹² Somerset was subsequently rumored to have had a hand in the death of Robert Cecil in 1610, at least according to the anonymous author of the widely circulated pamphlet entitled *The Five Years of King James*:

My Lord Treasurer Cecil growing into years, having been a good statesman, the only supporter of the protestant faction, discloser of treasons, and the only Mercury of our time, having been well acquainted with the affairs of this commonwealth, falls into a dangerous sickness, and, in process of time, through the extremity of the malady, dies; not without suspicion of poison, according to the opinion of some; others say of a secret disease, some naturally, and many not without the privity of Sir Robert Carr.¹³

The alacrity with which such stories took hold and circulated must have partly do with the vivid, pre-existing figure of the favorite as poisoner: instead of being regarded as beyond the pale, such stories confirmed deep popular intuitions about the nature of corrupt favor.

The Duke of Buckingham was likewise subjected to spectacular public accusations of poison. In Buckingham's case, the accusation was popularized by George Eglisam, a former royal physician whose tract *The Forerunner*

of Revenge (1626) alleged that the duke had poisoned both the Marquis of Hamilton and King James himself. This tract, printed abroad (in Latin and English) but widely circulated in England both in printed and manuscript forms, confirmed popular suspicion of Buckingham's villainy. Concerns about Buckingham's behavior at James's deathbed had been voiced before the appearance of Eglissham's pamphlet and were investigated as part of parliament's attempts to impeach Buckingham in 1626.¹⁴ Though the articles of impeachment stopped short of accusing the duke of murder, they did pointedly raise the question of Buckingham's meddling with the late king's medical treatment and thus lent their weight to the kind of speculation voiced by Eglissham.¹⁵ The idea of Buckingham as poisoner retained its hold on the English imagination long after his assassination, alluded to in the many poisoning favorite plays of the 1630s and early 1640s and mobilized by parliamentary polemicists. Eglissham's pamphlet was reprinted in 1642, and Buckingham's alleged poisoning of James features prominently in William Prynne's *Romes Master-peece* (1643), a text whose wordy subtitle betrays its ideological appropriation of the legend of the duke's regicide: *The Grand Conspiracy of the Pope and his Jesuited Instruments, to extirpate the Protestant Religion, re-establish Popery, subvert Lawes, Liberties, Peace, Parliaments, by Kindling a Civill War in Scotland, and all his Majesties Realmes, and to Poyson the King himself in case hee comply not with them in these their execrable Designes*. Prynne cites Eglissham's tract as evidence of this conspiracy's proven effectiveness.¹⁶

Accounts of Buckingham's use of poison are shaped by the recollection of Somerset's conviction. Eglissham himself urges formal inquiries into Buckingham's treachery on the ground that in this case "more is discovered to beginne with all, then was layd open at the beginning of the discovery of the poisoning of sir *Thomas Overbury*."¹⁷ In 1628 a disgruntled Scotsman named Robert Melvin made news for a series of allegations, mostly about Buckingham, that included the following: "That King James's blood and Marquis of Hamilton's, *cum aliis*, cried out for vengeance to Heaven; that he could not but expect ruin upon this kingdom . . . That Prince Henry was poisoned by Sir Thomas Overbury, who for the same was served with the same sauce; and that the Earl of Somerset could say much to this".¹⁸ The juxtaposition of these two accusations in a document that is primarily about the alleged treacheries of Buckingham illustrates the degree to which prior experience shaped contemporary fears and suspicions.

The habits of thought that generate this sort of libel were fueled too by fictional depictions of court corruption and poison. In particular, the period saw a significant body of drama that explored and reflected the association of

favorites with poison. The anonymous chronicle play *Thomas of Woodstock* (1591–94) begins in tumult, on the heels of a plot by King Richard's minions to poison the peers of the realm. Philip Massinger's *The Duke of Milan* (1621–23) ends with the title character poisoned by his intimate favorite Francisco. Likewise, at the conclusion of S. Harding's *Sicily and Napals, Or, The Fatall Union* (1640), Ferrando, the King of Naples, is poisoned due to the scheming of Ursini, his favorite. In William Heminges's *The Fatal Contract* (1639), the queen and her upstart favorite conspire to poison the king and are both finally poisoned themselves. In the anonymous *Charlemagne* (1610–22), the conniving favorite Ganelon attempts to have the emperor's virtuous nephew Orlando poisoned.¹⁹ There is a similar configuration in John Denham's *The Sophy* (1641). In Fletcher's *The Bloody Brother* (first written before 1625, subsequently revised), the favorite Latorch urges his master Rollo, the Duke of Normandy, to poison his brother and rival.²⁰ Though we have only Robert Howard's Restoration rewrite of *The Spanish Duke of Lerma* (1620s) to go on, the revised play opens with Lerma inveigling himself into favor with King Philip III of Spain and poisoning the queen mother to cement his position.²¹ Wicked court favorites in John Ford's *Love's Sacrifice* (1632) and James Shirley's *The Politician* (1639) meet their death by poison, and in each case this is presented as an apt punishment for their corrupting wiles. Shirley's *The Royal Master* (1637) and *The Cardinal* (1641) both feature Machiavellian favorites who plot to dispose of their enemies by poison, as of course does Jonson's *Sejanus* (1603).

These plays allude in numerous instances to the controversies surrounding actual royal favorites from Leicester to Buckingham, and they also reinforce the stereotype of the poisoning favorite that predisposed people to believe the worst of early Stuart favorites. That is, plays and libels and rumors can be seen in this case as mutually reinforcing and inter-complicating aspects of an ongoing conversation about political corruption. Thinking about the utility and persistence of the poisoning favorite, therefore, is a way of getting at intuitive or imaginative architecture that structured the growing perception of corrupt favor so central to the period's developing concerns about court corruption generally.²²

I want to argue here that the appeal of the figure of the poisoning favorite boils down to two frequently intertwined associative intuitions. First, poison itself has a special place in the imagistic language of corruption because its secret, inner operation was felt to embody seditious inwardness and thus duplicity, hypocrisy, and deceit. This rather general and perhaps self-evident point helps explain the operation of poison in a wide range of texts from the period that do not have to do with favoritism per se: poison is omnipresent

and overdetermined in the period's fictions.²³ But the connection between poison and secret inwardness operates suggestively within the discourse of favoritism and can clarify some of the odd assumptions that these texts make about the favorite's criminality. Second, since the administration of poison into another person's body entails a violation of trusting intimacy, the poisoning favorite proves especially useful as a figuration of corrupt favor based on bodily intimacy. These imaginative associations operate in literary fictions, but they also structure highly visible and supposedly non-literary texts such as speeches at the Overbury murder trials or Eglisam's pamphlet. These texts that purport to describe the actual poisoning of actual favorites therefore should be thought of as participants in a cultural process of figuration that also includes traditional literary texts. And this figuration is in turn an important part of the culture's multifaceted language of corruption.

FAVORITES AND THE WORK OF DARKNESS

The well-known list of unforgivable crimes featured in King James's *Basilikon Doron* singles poison out and distinguishes it from other kinds of murder. A king, James opines, is "bound in conscience never to forgive" the following: "Witchcraft, wilfull murther, Incest, (especially within the degrees of consanguinitie) Sodomie, poisoning, and false coin."²⁴ Each of these crimes is felt to be an attack on natural (and thus political) order, and poison makes the list because it is undetectable and so poses a discomfiting challenge to the idea of providential public justice. Edward Coke, in his discussion of murder in *The Third Part of the Institutes*, observes that "of all murders, murder by poisoning is the most detestable" because it operates secretly and therefore "can be least prevented."²⁵ Coke here echoes his own remarks at the trial of Richard Weston, the man convicted of administering poison to Sir Thomas Overbury: "of all felonies, murder is the most horrible; of all murders, poisoning is the most detestable; and of all poisoning, the lingering poisoning" (*State Trials*, p. 911). Paranoia about poison was fueled by the sense that it could look like any disease and linger in the body for any amount of time, thus making any encounter potentially lethal and the agency of poison virtually impossible to detect. This is why, in Somerset's trial, the prosecution asked the jury explicitly to disregard the fuzziness of its specific details about which poison killed Overbury and how it was administered: Henry Montague, laying out the prosecution's case, requested of the Peers that they "not expect visible proofs in the work of darkness" (*State Trials*, p. 969).

Proverbial wisdom seconds juridical discrimination here. The image of poison in a painted or golden cup was a standard way of expressing the more general idea that glorious outsides could hide inward corruption.²⁶ In the language of proverb and commonplace, poison figures the treachery of hidden interiors, and given the all-pervasiveness of organic body metaphors in the period – of, that is, the analogy between entities like the church or state and natural bodies – it is perhaps inevitable that poison should have been felt as analogous to other forms of secret corrupting inwardness lurking within the body politic. As we see in the dumb show that begins Act 2 of *Gorboduc* (1561–62), the golden cup as an image of misleading opulence is particularly useful as a figure for the false facades of courtly life. The dumb show features two attendants to the king, one who gives him wine in a glass and one who offers him poison in a golden cup. The gloss in the printed edition of the play explains that “the delightful gold filled with poison betokeneth flattery, which under fair seeming of pleasant words beareth deadly poison, which destroyeth the prince that receiveth it.”²⁷ It is a short leap from using poison to figure flattery to using it to figure corrupt favor. The *Gorboduc* dumb show likewise draws upon the idea that poison is, as Bacon put it, “the say-cup itself of princes.”²⁸ Richard Corbett’s elegy on the death of Overbury makes amusing use of this idea, complimenting the deceased knight for dying in a manner that makes him seem princely: “For none heares poyson nam’d but makes repie, / ‘What Prince was that? what States-man so did die?’”²⁹

Poison’s easy metaphoric association with unseen interiors also made it a useful symbolic shorthand for a culture obsessed, as Katharine Eisaman Maus has argued, with a notion of “identity predicated upon . . . sinister interiority” which “competes with and undermines another kind of identity, founded upon the individual’s place in social hierarchies and kinship networks.”³⁰ The distinction is an ethical and political one, since the latter notion of identity was felt to involve a series of binding duties and loyalties themselves constitutive of the fabric of society. Ideally, the person without sinister interiority would be a kind of transparently virtuous participant in the life of family and commonwealth. That this is impossible – where’s that palace whereinto foul things sometimes intrude not? – does not diminish its ideological importance, and poison figures the hidden corruptions that undermine the ideal. This is why Shakespeare’s Othello – at first a great believer in the idea that men and women should be what they seem – first calls for poison to murder Desdemona after Iago has persuaded him of the anxious-making opacity of her character. Iago’s own skepticism likewise gnaws at his inwards like “a poisonous mineral.”³¹

When poison crops up in attacks on favorites, from Leicester to Buckingham, it tends to accompany and symbolize a cluster of related social ills that the Machiavellian favorite is also simultaneously being accused of. Most commonly these include uncertain religious affiliation, regicidal conspiracy, and sexual insatiability. These may seem somewhat disparate, as crimes go, but each is felt to stem from an inability to rein in hidden inner promptings of the sort felt to disrupt the imperatives of public morality. We have seen in chapter 2, for example, how the Catholic tract *Leicester's Commonwealth* creates an image of the Earl of Leicester who is completely cut off from the conventional bonds of church and state and who is therefore disaffiliated and driven only by a sinister private agenda. A similar logic – though with the religious stakes reversed – underpins the rumors treating Overbury's murder or Buckingham's murderous machinations as components of secret Catholic plots.³² The poisoner is the Machiavel, a figure whose secretive inner workings and disaffiliation make him capable of any apostasy, betrayal, or treason. We can see the slipperiness of these associations in the sort of pronouncements about poison's associated crimes of which Sir Edward Coke was fond: "Poison and popery go together"; "poison and adultery go together."³³

The association of both poison and poisoners with sinister and unregulated interiority likewise helps explain the sometimes odd-seeming links assumed in attacks on favorites between poison and other forms of moral incontinence. In *Leicester's Commonwealth*, for instance, a prolonged discussion of the earl's use of poison culminates, somewhat bizarrely, in a discussion of his use of a mysterious Italian precursor to viagra:

And albeit for himself, both age and nature spent do somewhat tame him from the act, yet wanteth he not will, as appeareth by the Italian ointment procured not many years past by his surgeon or mountebank of that country, whereby (as they say) he is able to move his flesh at all times, for keeping of his credit, howsoever his inability be otherwise for performance.³⁴

This Italian mountebank is the same "Doctor Julio" credited, just a few pages earlier, with mastery of poison, the "Italian art" by which he is able to "make a man die in what manner or show of sickness you will."³⁵ The connection between Italian art and Italian ointment instantiates the more general association, in *Leicester's Commonwealth* and related libels, between the earl's murderous political cunning and his sexual incontinence. We might parse the unspoken logic behind these shifts as follows: Leicester's unchecked sexual and political desires bespeak a general inability to curb the will, a dangerous willingness to privilege selfish inward promptings over

the public demands of rank and duty. The resulting gap between public and private in turn makes him a walking figure for duplicity and counterfeit that is powerfully associated with the secret workings of poison in the culture's imagination.

The same logic is spectacularly dramatized in the sequence of scandals that surrounded Somerset from 1613–1616. By the time of his murder trial, the scandal of poison was inextricably linked to the scandal of his marriage to Frances Howard and of the seemingly unsavory annulment (on the basis of non-consummation) of her marriage to the 3rd Earl of Essex. As David Lindley has shown, skepticism about the proceedings made Howard into the personification of misogynist fantasies of female sexual duplicity and voracity.³⁶ To make matters worse, prosecutors used the trial of Anne Turner – another convicted conspirator – to present, in vivid detail and with dramatic courtroom exhibits, salacious details about Frances Howard's affairs. Turner and Howard were said to have enlisted the sorcery of the late Simon Forman in order to render Essex impotent and to ensure Somerset's affection. Since poison and adultery were felt to go together, allegations of poison in Somerset's own trial must have been understood both to recall and to symbolize the inward moral depravity represented in the popular imagination by Frances Howard.

Thomas Tuke's *A Treatise Against Painting and Tincturing of Men and Women* (1616) is read today only because it makes an extraordinary imaginative leap from invective against cosmetics (at once the sign of moral incontinence and a provocation to lust in others) to "neighbour sinnes" like murder.³⁷ Tuke discusses the Overbury poisoning at length, treating it as a symptom of a culture too besotted with face painting and by extension overly likely to admire the golden cup and disregard the poison within. Of course the idea that cosmetics might lead to poison strikes the modern reader as decidedly perverse, but it echoes the association of poison with "Italian ointment" in *Leicester's Commonwealth* and with Somerset's effeminate corruption. In each case the association between murder and lust can be thought of as working in two ways: on the one hand, the failure to corral inward desires is the root cause of evil, linking crimes as seemingly disparate as face painting and murder; on the other, poison emblemizes corrupt inner workings and is thus felt to be specially symbolic of the inward failings that are also its cause.

This means that the connection between the scheming favorite and his poison is always simultaneously practical and symbolic. Poison's untraceable operation assists with his secret plans, while at the same time its sinister interior work symbolizes the pervasive anxiety over inwardness that animates

so much of the period's literature of intrigue. This overdetermined connection is explicitly invoked in a striking soliloquy by the favorite Lorenzo in James Shirley's *The Traitor* (licensed 1631). Lorenzo – as is typical of the villainous favorite figure on the early Stuart stage – aspires to the crown by any and all means, and even keeps a picture of the duke in his private chamber that he practices stabbing on a daily basis. He operates in the play with conspicuous cunning, though, outfacing accusers and manipulating passions in others for his own ends. He describes his operations within the body politic as the equivalent of poison within the body natural:

Wise men secure their fates and execute
Invisibly, like that most subtle flame
That burns the heart, yet leaves no path or touch
Upon the skin to follow or suspect it.³⁸

MURDER UNDER THE COLOR OF FRIENDSHIP

Tuke, in his discussion of the Overbury trials, is particularly incensed about the idea that poison violates friendship: “Yea here a man shall be made away under the pretext of friendship, yea, hee shall perhaps thank a man for that, that is made to destroy him, which hath death lapt up in it, which thinks it sent or given him as a token of love unto him.”³⁹ This is specially damning, not only because it involves personal betrayal but because friendship between men was understood to be constitutive of the social fabric itself: poison's ability to undermine the affective bonds that cement the body politic contributed to the sense that it was treasonous (as opposed to merely felonious) in nature.⁴⁰ In his remarks at Weston's trials and again in his discussion of murder in the *Institutes*, Coke notes approvingly that poison was treated as treason rather than just as a felony during the reign of Henry VIII. Francis Bacon's major speech as lead prosecutor at the trial of Somerset echoes Coke in this, likewise citing the Henrician statute whereby poison was accounted an act of treason. Poison is justly thought of as treasonous Bacon argues, “because it tends to the dissolving of human society” (*State Trials*, p. 971). This assertion is the thematic center of Bacon's prosecution, for he emphasizes particularly that poisoning requires proximity and a degree of intimacy and is therefore a kind of “murder under the color of friendship” (p. 970). Bacon, like other writers, sees the secrecy of poison as treasonous in that it violates the cultural fantasy of honorable transparency in relationships upon which the pre-bureaucratic political system rests.

Since Overbury had been Somerset's confidante, it is not surprising that the rhetoric at the trials of the various conspirators should invoke the betrayal of friendship and its potent association with poison. What is interesting, though, is how the different prosecutors cast the relationship between friendship and poison in very different ways. In the speeches at Weston's trial, the victim is imagined as a staunch and loyal friend betrayed by his great patron. Overbury, so the story goes, opposed Somerset's marriage to Howard out of "the ardency of his fervent affection unto the earl, and the great prescience of the future misery it would inevitably bring unto him" (*State Trials*, p. 915). In doing so, he was living up to the duty of a friend as proscribed within the classical tradition of friendship: not only looking out for his patron's well-being but also attempting to help him maintain his moral compass. Overbury's death thus becomes a betrayal of friendship itself. More specifically, Weston's prosecutors treated it as the violation of true friendship by court corruption. Speaking for the prosecution at the end of Weston's trial, one Mr. Warr summarized the unprecedented outrageousness of the conspiracy and lamented (as the account in the *State Trials* puts it) that "the place from whence the poison came, should be from the court, the place . . . from whence all men expect their safeties and protection" (p. 928). This version of events draws its persuasive power from anticourt sentiment, and treats Somerset as a stereotypical scheming favorite whose poisonous machinations disrupt the canons of friendship that should ideally structure the public world. Public fascination with the unfolding scandal was furthered by such glimpses into a secret world of court corruption – into the poison contents of the golden cup, as it were – and the memory of Overbury as a martyr of moral good fellowship began to take on a life of its own in London and beyond.

Francis Bacon, who took the lead in the prosecution of Somerset himself, framed the earl's trial with a dramatically different narrative of events. Where Coke and his associates had treated Overbury as an honest friend betrayed by his patron, Bacon insists that Overbury was "naught and corrupt," adding for good measure that popular ballads celebrating Overbury's memory "must be mended for that point" (*State Trials*, p. 974). More importantly, Bacon casts the friendship of Somerset and Overbury as already corrupt and indeed as verging on treason in and of itself:

Sir T. Overbury, for a time, was known to have great interest and strait friendship with my lord of Somerset . . . This friendship rested not only in conversation and business at court, but likewise in communication of secrets of state: for my lord of Somerset exercising at that time by his majesty's special favor and trust, the office of secretary, did not forbear to acquaint Overbury with the king's packets and

dispatches from all parts of Spain, France, and the Low-Countries; and this then not by glimpses, or now and then rounding in the ear for a favour, but in a settled manner; packets were sent, sometimes opened by my lord, sometimes unbroken unto Overbury, who perused them, copied them, registered them, made table-talk of them, as they thought good. So I will undertake the time was, when Overbury knew more of the secrets of state, than the council-table did. (p. 973)

Since Bacon implies that the favorite violated the king's trust by offering state secrets to Overbury, the audience is invited to feel that treachery and murder stem from a pre-existing condition within their corrupt, private relationship. In fact, Bacon speaks of the relationship between Carr and Overbury as itself almost poisonous: "as it is a principle in nature, that the best things are, in their corruption, the worst, and the sweetest wine maketh the sourest vinegar; so it fell out with them, that this excess, as I may say, of friendship ended in mortal hatred" (p. 973). The hatred that leads to poison is a kind of curdled version of amity.

Where Coke and his cohorts had cast poison as a treasonous betrayal of friendship, in other words, Bacon re-casts it as a symptomatic expression of a friendship already corrupted. This construction of Somerset's crime relies on an unspoken but conventional distinction between proper friendship – which is supposed to be based in part on the mutual apprehension of virtue and which both cements public order and reinforces the morality of its participants – and corrupted friendship based solely on unreliable inward promptings of affection. Accordingly, Bacon discusses the friendship of Somerset and Overbury as private and isolating for all its public consequence: "they were grown to such inwardness, as they made a play of all the world besides themselves" (p. 973). The system of associations that structures Bacon's narrative of events is based upon the intuition that friendship of this kind is built upon corrupt personal affection unchecked by moral reasoning. Poison thus goes with corrupt friendship for Bacon in precisely the same way it goes with adultery for Coke: in each case it symbolizes the operation of unchecked inwardness.

Bacon recasts the friendship of Overbury and Somerset in this way for a very specific rhetorical purpose: he wants to establish a sharp distinction between James's affection for Somerset and Somerset's for Overbury. The latter, as we have seen, is excessive, based on inward affection rather than sound moral judgment, and therefore irresponsible and corrupt. By contrast, the trial itself – James's demonstrated willingness to bring his former favorite to impartial justice – exonerates the king from the charge of indulging in a similarly corrupted friendship. This is implied in Bacon's instructions to the jury of peers:

I know your honours cannot behold this noble man [Somerset], but you must remember the great favours which the king hath conferred on him, and must be sensible, that he is yet a member of your body, and a peer, as you are; so that you cannot cut him off from your body, but with grief: and therefore you will expect from us that give in the king's evidence, sound and sufficient matter of proof to satisfy your honours consciences. – As for the manner of the evidence, the king our master, who, amongst other his virtues, excelleth in that virtue of the imperial throne, which is justice, hath us command, that we should not expatiate nor make invectives, but materially pursue the evidence, as it conduceth to the point in question. (pp. 969–70)

Bacon's rhetorical emphasis on the king's dispassionate pursuit of justice is designed to show that James has not been swayed by excessive affection. Moreover, the somatic metaphor ("you cannot cut him off from your body, but with grief") in which Bacon presents his advice is designed to remind the jury that they are part of a body with the king at its head. "It were an idle head," James had said in a speech before parliament a few years earlier, "that would in place of physicke so poyson or phlebotomize the body as might breede a dangerous distemper or destruction thereof."⁴¹ Bacon bends over backwards to imply that the king is in fact acting responsibly by eradicating the poison – Somerset and Overbury – from the body politic.⁴²

Though crafted in part to satisfy the king, Bacon's representation of the Overbury murder is rhetorically risky in the directness of its engagement with the question of James's "great favours." For the distinction between James's generous affections and the excessive and imbalanced relationship between his corrupt underlings would likely have seemed an exceedingly fragile one to the many contemporaries who resented Somerset. Where Bacon chastises the favorite for sharing state secrets inappropriately with a man whose only real qualification for such inside knowledge is personal intimacy, James (according to his English subjects) had raised a foreigner of indifferent pedigree to a position of incomparable influence over state secrets. Though Somerset's critics were much less likely than Buckingham's would later be to cast aspersions directly upon the king's favor, some certainly saw the king's affection as itself excessive and corrupt. One contemporary ballad describes Carr as "a jolly sire" who first "made our King's good grace a fire" then "leapt from the chimney to the chamber."⁴³ The implication is that James's affection is overheated and that the political patronage enjoyed by the favorite is the result. If this is so, Bacon's version of events collapses. James becomes the precedent for the corruption of intimacy: rather than eradicating the poison in the body politic he is instead its source.

Bacon's implied distinction between proper favor and corrupt intimacy highlights a key tension within the language of favoritism generally: since favorites are given extraordinary power and influence on the basis of personal affection it is always possible to see them as corrupt in precisely the way Bacon describes the Somerset/Overbury friendship. This in turn suggests a second reason for the widespread intuitive connection between poison and the figure of the favorite that is the subject of this chapter: in addition to being Machiavels themselves – figures for hidden inwardness figuratively associated with poison – they are the products of personal and therefore suspect royal affection. Insofar as this affection can always be seen as another kind of sinister or unregulated inwardness, the favorite who is its product becomes a kind of symptomatic and symbolically overdetermined poison in the blood of state. One thinks here of the famous political maxim articulated by Antonio at the beginning of Webster's *Duchess of Malfi* (1613–14):

A Princes Court

Is like a Common Fountaine, whence should flow
 Pure silver-droppes in generall: But ift chance
 Some curs'd example poyson't neere the head,
 Death, and disease through the whole land spread.⁴⁴

Webster may well have had resentment of Somerset in mind when he wrote these lines, but he could not have known the favorite would so soon come to embody the link between the domination of royal favor and poison that they encapsulate so nicely. The problem with Antonio's vision in practice is that royal favor and bounty cannot just flow "in generall": they flow to individuals who then tend to be seen, like Somerset, as a corrupting poison "neere the head."

POISON "NEERE THE HEAD"

The cluster of associations linking the moral incontinence of rulers to favoritism and thence to poison predates the Overbury scandal, persists long after it, and is worked out in a number of the period's political dramas. At some level this is probably why Bacon felt the need to deflect blame for corrupt friendship specifically onto Somerset and Overbury. The unfolding narrative of events dovetailed too nicely with pre-existing intuitions linking corrupt royal intimacy to poison in the blood of state. We can get a sense of the attitudes and habits of imagination that laid the groundwork for the popular perception of James and his favorite by looking back to something

like the late Elizabethan history play *Thomas of Woodstock*, which focuses on controversy surrounding the minions of King Richard II at the time of that king's coming of age. The play's highly schematic moral vision is built around the opposition between Woodstock, the lord protector during Richard's minority who governs wisely and refuses to dress in the extravagant manner expected of so elevated a person, and Richard's circle of minions, who are "all made of fashions" and whose spendthrift ways threaten to undo the monarchy and the realm.⁴⁵ The king's favorites – especially Sir Henry Greene, characterized as "Richard's dearest friend" (5.4.25), but also Bushy, Bagot, Scroop, and the lawyer Tresilian – are emblems of courtly duplicity, corrupt and base despite their costly outward apparel. They are also, and not coincidentally, poisoners. The play opens with the frantic entrance of several dukes and earls from a banquet at which they were to have been poisoned had the plot not been detected in time. This is the major framing device of the play, setting up its basic thematic concerns, and there is little doubt from the beginning who the villains are:

not King Richard but his flatterers,
 Sir Henry Greene, joined with Sir Edward Bagot,
 And that sly machiavel, Tresilian,
 Whom now the king elects for Lord Chief Justice,
 Had all great hands in this conspiracy. (1.1.61–65)

That the poison was to have been administered at a state banquet – in a toast to Richard's health, no less – makes the crime seem even worse. This is murder under the color of friendship indeed, a planned poisoning of an event supposed to emblemize and cement the cohesion of the body politic.

In the conversation that follows the peers' initial reactions to the poison plot, Woodstock makes the somatic metaphor explicit, treating the minions as a corruption in the body of the state:

Good brother, I have found out the disease:
 When the head aches, the body is not healthful.
 King Richard's wounded with a wanton humour,
 Lulled and secured by flattering sycophants;
 But 'tis not deadly yet, it may be cured:
 Some vein let blood where corruption lies
 And all shall heal again. (1.1.142–48)

York agrees, adding that the favorites "run naught but poison" and that to cure the kingdom Woodstock will have to "spill them all" (1.1.151). Later, in Act 3, a Schoolmaster is apprehended for repeating a libel structured

around punning use of the favorites' names whose first line declares that "A poison may be Greene" (3.3.196). Greene and the other favorites have poisoned, and indeed are poison within, the body politic.

Woodstock's somatic image treats the minions as a humoral imbalance, curable by letting blood. York's remark, following so near the minions' actual poison plot, implies that they are a poison external to the body politic rather than an imbalance with internal origins. These small shifts in the conception of the minions' malign influence may reflect a conceptual fuzziness about poison and disease on the part of whoever wrote the lines. But the shifts in conception of the favorites may also encode the play's own uneasiness about the relationship between favorite and king. If favoritism is figured as an imbalance to be cured by purgation, as in Woodstock's metaphor, then the implication is that royal favor can still work as an institution with some minor adjustments. Get rid of the flatterers, allow for a more judicious and balanced flow of the king's bounty "in general," and the body will be cured. But if the favorites are figured as a poison in the blood of state then the implication may instead be that Richard's personal favor has no place within the normal functioning of the state. What is at stake in this fuzziness are competing conceptions of the nature of the disease and of its cure. If corrupt favoritism is a poison – as opposed to an imbalance within an otherwise healthy state – does that mean that Richard's personal favoritism constitutes something aberrant, an attack on the normal functioning of the body politic? Has the head poisoned the body?

This ambiguity is suggestive because the play is clearly ambivalent about the culpability of the king. On the one hand it insists from the beginning on the orthodox distinction between the king and his favorites as agents of corruption. The king, as we have seen, is not held responsible for the poison banquet ("not King Richard but his flatterers"), and there is plenty of pious rhetoric in the play about how flatterers have misled him. On the other, Richard is more often shown egging his favorites on than the other way around. Because the very end of the play is missing in the sole manuscript in which it has survived, it is impossible to say with utter certainty how (or if) this tension was resolved. The peers finally "purge fair England's pleasant field" of the poison favorites (5.6.3), but there is no indication of how this will sit with Richard himself, who is last seen carrying off the body of the slain Greene. It is clear from the text we have, though, that Richard's plight is de-emphasized in the final acts of the play in favor of the conflict between his favorites and his peers. This is evasive, obviously, and so underscores for us the power of the logic whose conclusion the author of *Woodstock* desires

to avoid. Evil favorites poison good fellowship in that they operate on the basis of unregulated and therefore sinister personal agendas, but they are themselves poison in the body politic insofar as they are symptoms of the unregulated and therefore potentially sinister personal tastes of their great patrons.

The same imaginative circuitry – linking poison, the favorite, and the moral incontinence of the monarch – structures post-Buckingham Caroline plays like Harding's *Sicily and Naples* or Heminges's *The Fatal Contract*. But the richest and most illuminating evocation of these associations is Philip Massinger's Jacobean play *The Duke of Milan*, a fascinating political fiction that deserves a great deal more critical attention than it has hitherto received. The play, most likely written in 1621–22 and entered into the Stationers' Register in early 1623, is one of a number of Renaissance plays based loosely on the legend of Herod's obsessive jealousy over his wife Mariamne.⁴⁶ In this case, though, the action is transformed into a tragedy of Italian court intrigue; the Herod figure is Lodowick Sforza, Duke of Milan, an otherwise noble-seeming ruler who dotes obsessively upon his wife Marcelia. As the play opens, we learn that the security of Sforza's rule hinges on a battle being waged between "the Emperour *Charles* and *Francis* the French King" (1.1.67) in which Milan has allied itself with France. Sforza attempts to set his nervousness aside and to celebrate his queen's birthday with a becoming lavishness. But when news comes that the French have been defeated we see that the duke is secretly obsessed with the fear of losing his wife should he die or should Milan be overrun. While awaiting the outcome of the battle the agonized Sforza declares that "to doubt, / Is worse then to have lost" (1.1.95–96). Only gradually do we learn that he is thinking not of the loss of rule or of power but of the loss of the beautiful Marcelia.

This set-up allows Massinger to establish, through a carefully plotted series of contrasts, a basic difference between the duke's public self and his private, uxorious obsessions. Each side of the duke's character, for example, has its special friend and confidante. When news comes that the Emperor Charles has indeed won the war, Sforza turns for advice to the counsels of the noble Pescara, who he describes as "my best friend" (1.3.263). Pescara – the kind of morally good friend even Bacon could approve of – advises the duke to petition the victorious emperor directly and later accompanies Sforza as he does just that. After welcoming Pescara's counsel in matters of state, Sforza dismisses him and turns to Francisco, who is described as Sforza's "especiall favorite" in the list of characters. Sforza, to prevent his wife from falling into the hands of another man, orders Francisco to kill her in the event of the duke's death. He even goes so far as to give Francisco

a warrant for the murder in order to protect him from subsequent prosecution. The careful discrimination made between the counsel of Sforza's "best friend" and the secret consultation of his "especial favorite" adumbrates the conventional distinction between proper and improper amity. Where Pescara is the duke's friend and confidante for honorable matters of state, Francisco assists his more secret and dishonorable schemes. And, as the duke reminds his favorite, "a Prince's secrets / Are balme, conceal'd, but poyson, if discover'd" (1.3.375-76).

This basic dichotomy is carried through the play's first four acts. Pescara accompanies Sforza to a meeting with Charles in Act 3, where the duke saves both himself and Milan with a stirring appeal that has its basis in the demonstration of manly virtue. Sforza presents himself as a man of integrity and fortitude who supported the French on the basis of these virtues and will henceforth make a good ally for Charles as well. The emperor restores Milan to him, praising his "true constancy" and adding that he does so "neither wrought by tempting bribes, / Nor servile flattery; but forc'd unto it, / By a faire warre of vertue" (3.1.209-11). At the end of this episode the duke leaves with Pescara, declaring himself rich in the possession of "a constant friend" (3.1.269).

Meanwhile, back in Milan, the favorite Francisco reveals his true colors. He attempts to seduce Marcelia and shows her the warrant for her murder in an attempt to persuade her to be unfaithful. When this fails he throws himself at her mercy and pleads with her not to reveal his attempt. She agrees to let the matter drop, but remains understandably concerned about the death warrant and treats Sforza with unaccustomed coldness at his return. The doting duke, unaware of the reason for her chilliness, pleads with her in a manner that is so self-abasing as to invite scandalized comment:

That a wise man,
 And what is more, a Prince, that may command,
 Should sue thus poorely, and treat with his wife,
 As she were a victoriousemie,
 At whose proud feet, himselfe, his State, and Countrey,
 Basely begg'd for mercie. (4.3.72-77)

This is obviously supposed to contrast with Sforza's approach to Charles – a "victoriousemie" indeed – and Massinger's conception is once again that there are two sides of the duke: the honorable manly duke who attends to duty and takes counsel on foreign affairs from Pescara and the private uxorious duke who subjugates himself to his wife's beauty and consults with the scheming favorite Francisco.

I dwell on these matters at such length because it is essential for any reading of the play to see how Massinger uses this dichotomy to situate royal favoritism against true friendship and the canons of transparent public morality that it should constitute and uphold. Unfortunately for the duke and his subjects, though, Francisco seems to have considerably more influence in Milan than does his opposite number. Massinger in fact goes to great lengths during the first half of the play to characterize Milan itself as a political world characterized by favoritism and its discontents. He provides us, for instance, with Stephano and Tiberio, two gentlemen nominally of the duke's council who complain about being left out of important decisions:

those are Cabinet councils,
 And not to be communicated, but
 To such as are his owne, and sure; Alas,
 We fill up emptie places, and in publique,
 Are taught to give our suffrages to that,
 Which was before determin'd: And are safe so.
 Signiour *Francisco* (upon whom alone
 His absolute power is with al strength confer'd,
 During his absence) can with ease resolve you.
(2.1.7–15)

Likewise, Massinger emphasizes favoritism as a key thematic focus of his play by providing a second, more buffoonish favorite figure, named Graccho, who is the favorite of the duke's sister. Graccho is a "mushrome" (2.1.86) – an upstart product of unwarranted favor – but even he gets to mock Stephano and Tiberio:

I beare my fortunes patiently: Serve the Princesse,
 And have accesse at all times to her closet,
 Such is my impudence: when your grave Lordships
 Are masters of the modesty to attend
 Three houres, nay sometimes foure; and then bid waite
 Upon her the next morning.
(2.1.62–67)

During the 1620s, these gestures toward the political problems of favoritism and access would have invoked the seemingly all-powerful Buckingham. This kind of topical allusion is clearly part of Massinger's objective, both in telling a story about a cunning favorite and in larding it so carefully with episodes that keep questions of status and intimacy front and center. Moreover, Milan's precarious situation at the start of the play is carefully paralleled with England's anxious investment in the thirty years' war on

the continent: “though warre rages / In most parts of our western world, there is / No enimie neere us” (1.1.57–59). Widespread public anger about King James’s unwillingness to intervene in this war was directed in part at Buckingham, and we can perhaps see allusion to England’s position as part of the play’s general insistence upon the problem of favoritism made urgent by his ascendancy.

Francisco himself is a bit of an enigma throughout most of the play. He is clearly a conventional favorite figure – he describes himself as the duke’s “creature” and the duke describes him as “the building I have rays’d” (1.3.282, 272) – but the nature and origins of the duke’s favor are only hinted at in the first four acts of the play. Tiberio provides the following information early on, but nothing is made of it until Act 5:

He [Francisco] tooke the thriving course: He had a Sister,
 A faire one too; With whom (as it is rumor’d)
 The Duke was too familiar; But she cast off,
 (What promises soever past betweene them)
 Upon the sight of this, forsooke the Court,
 And since was never seene; To smother this,
 (As Honors never faile to purchase silence)
Francisco first was grac’d, and step by step,
 Is rais’d up to this height. (2.1.20–28)

Where Pescara seems to owe his friendship with Sforza to the mutual pursuit of manly virtue, the hint here is that Francisco owes his to the duke’s secret peccadilloes. This makes him not only the minister to Sforza’s corrupt impulses but the product of them as well. Hinting in this way at a literal connection between Francisco’s influence and the duke’s failings underscores and literalizes a general point that we might also intuit from Massinger’s many invocations of the conflicts surrounding favoritism in the play’s Milan: political failures must finally be laid at the feet of the ruler, and if Milan is fragmented by resentment over favoritism one might assume that the duke has contributed to the problem. Tiberio merely supplies what looks like a tighter connection than we might expect between Sforza’s moral incontinence and the favorite’s corrupting influence.

As it turns out, Tiberio is exactly right, and we finally meet the favorite’s all-but-forgotten sister Eugenia at the beginning of Act 5. Francisco has fled the court and joined her after tricking Sforza into killing Marcelia in a jealous rage. We learn at the start of Act 5 that the favorite’s schemes have all along been motivated by a desire to avenge his sister’s disgrace, and since the duke remains alive they agree that their revenge plot is not concluded. Sforza meanwhile, distraught over the death of his wife, is dissuaded from

suicide only by a physician who, to buy time, tells him that Marcellia is still alive. He grasps at the hope this seem to offer, but spends his time in the presence of Marcellia's body begging the doctors to revive her. This gives Francisco the opportunity he needs to complete his revenge. Disguised as a Jewish physician (like a Doctor Lopez, perhaps), he gains access to the duke and poisons him. By the time the plot is discovered, the deed has been done and Francisco is exultant:

What ere becomes of me (which I esteeme not)
Thou art mark'd for the grave, I have given thee poison
In this cup, now observe me, which thy lust
Carousing deeply of, made thee forget
Thy vow'd faith to Eugenia. (5.2.238–42)

Francisco's contorted image treats the poison as both literal and metaphorical, a literal murder weapon and a symbolically apt reward for the duke's lust and bad faith. As the poison takes effect he feels "an Aetna" burning inside, and this simultaneously punishes and represents the inward flame of desire. The honorable Pescara gets the last word: "ther's no trust / In a foundation that is built on lust" (5.2.268–69).

The introduction of Eugenia at the beginning of Act 5 is a remarkable theatrical moment, overturning everything one thought one knew about the relations among the play's major characters. Partly for this reason, and partly because its tone is so different, the final act – with its grotesque and outlandish conceits – feels almost like a separate playlet, impossibly far removed from the political drama of Sforza's encounter with Charles and quite unlike the realistic-seeming court intrigue surrounding Francisco's earlier manipulations. As a result, any account of the play has to ask why Massinger felt that this ending was suitable or appropriate: what kind of representational logic governs the decision to end this play in this manner? The answer, I think, is that the bizarre spectacles of Act 5 are felt to provide a kind of symbolic encapsulation of the political motifs running through the first four acts. The body of the play depicts a ruler struggling with his secret desires and fears, trusting the wrong people as a result, and presiding over a state shot through with the resentments attending on favoritism. Act 5, drawing on kinds of association that we have been tracing, uses the poisoning favorite as a kind of vivid shorthand to convey the same basic moral: the poison of the treacherous favorite is the symptomatic expression of (and apt punishment for) the moral incontinence of the ruler. This representational gambit depends upon and in turn concretizes intuitions

about the meaning of favoritism and poison hinted at in *Woodstock* and popularized I think by the Overbury trials.

THE POLITICS OF ACCESS AND THE POISONED BODY POLITIC

Henry Peacham's emblem book *Minerva Britannia* (1612) offers a pictorial representation of King James's list of unforgivable crimes from *Basiliikon Doron*. The emblem features Ganymede "the foule Sodomitan" riding on a cock (which Peacham tells us represents incest), and carrying Circe's wand (witchcraft), a cup of poison, and some counterfeit coins.⁴⁷ Though Peacham's emblem is based directly on James's text, the invocation of Ganymede invokes an underground figuration of James and his bed-chamber favorites as sodomitical.⁴⁸ For Ganymede, by virtue of his office in the household of Jove, is a figure specifically of court service, which means that Peacham's figuration transposes James's rather general list of crimes into a specifically courtly context. Whether or not Peacham intended it, this adds a critical or satirical dimension not present in James's writing; court corruption reflects poorly on the king.

The Ganymede of myth is a cupbearer, so the cup he is holding in Peacham's emblem is the normal tool of his trade. In this regard it is crucially unlike the other, more purely allegorical objects depicted in the illustration: we might plausibly read it as a figure for poison in general (as James meant it), for court corruption (if we understand the emblem as a recasting of the kind of imagery from the *Gorboduc* dumb show), or as a literal threat being delivered to Jove. What interests me about this aspect of the emblem is the way it links court corruption and poison to the kind of service position that ensured intimate contact with the king. For since poison – murder under the color of friendship – requires personal contact and intimacy, it stands to reason that fantasies of poison at court would become entangled with the protocols and restrictions governing personal contact in royal households.

This connection is necessarily both practical and symbolic. Practical, because imagining using poison to further Machiavellian schemes in a world where private access to important persons was rare and regulated means imagining mastery over the politics of access. Symbolic, because the regulation of access in royal households created tremendous advantages for those with regular personal contact with the monarch, and this in turn fueled general resentment among those less fortunate. Ganymede is a Francisco, not a Pescara. And corrupt personal favor – as in *Woodstock* – is readily imagined as poison in the blood of state. It is useful, therefore, not

only to read accounts and stories of court poison with an eye toward the way access is achieved by the poisoner but also to read them as symbolic representations of corruption within the politics of access as such. This is particularly true for libels and literature dealing with poisoning royal favorites, for access to the monarch is necessarily an important aspect of the favorite's ability to achieve and maintain influence.

The author of *Leicester's Commonwealth* complains of the earl's "so diligent besieging of the Princess' person" based upon "his taking up the ways and passages about her," and hints darkly about the threat this poses to Elizabeth's safety.⁴⁹ But concerns about the favorite's domination of physical access to the monarch were never as central to Elizabethan structures of resentment as they became under James and Charles. There is a strong material basis for the difference: Elizabeth's chamber service had to be performed by women, who could not monopolize administrative office and whose political power was thus circumscribed by their gender. These women could have significant informal influence of course – *Leicester's Commonwealth* describes the earl seducing them as a way of monopolizing access – but the absence of men in the queen's most private rooms meant that none of the great courtiers of the day could also dominate the queen's chamber.⁵⁰ Access to the privy chamber remained a matter of primary importance, but the separation between intimate body service and the politics of access meant that competition between men for access to the queen could be handled in a flexible and ad hoc manner.

At his accession, James I established the bedchamber as the innermost locus of his court and staffed it with Scottish favorites who combined tremendous political influence with regular and institutionalized personal intimacy.⁵¹ Though the Scottish monopoly eroded over time, English resentment of Scottish interlopers helped shape the initial jealousy created by bedchamber privilege. This institutional innovation helped to enable both the influence of favorites like Somerset and Buckingham and to shape the resentment that their power created. Increasingly, corrupt access became a major aspect of the criticism of favorites. Though the cupbearer is actually a privy chamber position, Peacham's Ganymede is in some sense an iconic shorthand for the discontents that accompanied this development.

Concern with the politics of access played a significant symbolic role in the scandal surrounding Sir Thomas Overbury's murder. Much was made, by Bacon, of the fact that Somerset "handled it so that he [Overbury] was close prisoner to all his friends, and open and exposed to all his enemies."⁵² Casting the corrupt favorite's power in terms of his mastery of illicit access simultaneously invokes and deflects the still larger scandal

of his privileged access to the body natural of the king. The associative chain linking corrupt access to the intimate treason of poison is made much more explicit, though, in George Eglisam's notorious pamphlet *The Forerunner of Revenge*. Indeed, this symbolic logic is the key structuring principle of Eglisam's remarkable libel. The text consists of two sections, the first addressed to Charles and the second addressed to both houses of parliament. Details of Eglisam's specific allegations are confined to the second section, which takes up – in sequence and under separate headings – the poisoning of the Scottish Marquis of Hamilton and the poisoning of King James. Each of these sub-sections has its own rhetorical agenda, insisting upon a different aspect of the duke's malevolence. Allegations about the poisoning of King James take up only a small fraction of the tract's total length, but their spectacular demonstration of the favorite's ingratitude toward the monarch provides a kind of crescendo to the pamphlet's multifaceted attack.

Eglisam begins by explaining his motives for writing. The author lays claim to a longstanding friendship with the Marquis of Hamilton, a friendship based on three generations of alliance and ratified by none other than King James himself:

when the *Marquis* his father with the right hand upon his head, and the left upon mine, did offer us young in yeares so joynd to kisse his Majesties hand, recommending me unto his Majesties favour, said, I take God to witnes that this young man his father was the best friend that ever I had or ever shall have in this world. Whereupon the young Lord resolved to put trust in me, and I fully to addict myselfe unto him, to deserve of him as much commendation as my father did of his father. (*The Forerunner of Revenge*, pp. 4–5)

This mini-tableau does more than just account for Eglisam's interest in the case. It establishes a system of values based on honorable friendship, filial duty, reciprocity in service, and fealty to the crown as a nostalgic starting point for a larger narrative of treachery and poison. By laying out this vision of social harmony at the start of his pamphlet, Eglisam can go on to demonstrate how Buckingham's actions are not only murderous but treasonous: they undo the very basis of community. The heinousness of Buckingham's uses of poison resides accordingly in their violation of the canons of friendship and loyalty: he is accused specifically of "poisoning under trust a[n]d profession of friendship" (p. 10).

The section of Eglisam's text dedicated to the murder of Hamilton presents Buckingham as a political upstart with aspirations "to match his blood with the blood Royall both of *England* and *Scotland*" (p. 11).

Recognizing that the Marquis's blood can be traced back to Stuart forbears, Buckingham forces a marriage between his own pre-pubescent niece and Hamilton's son. When Hamilton tries to keep the couple apart in the hopes of getting the marriage annulled, Buckingham poisons him. Buckingham's desire to elevate the status of his blood is seen as antithetical to the kind of long-standing family piety that contextualizes friendship in the first section of the pamphlet. In this section of the text we also see that Buckingham's wiles have undone the social conditions that enable the mini-utopia of the first section. James's sincere friendship toward Hamilton and his father is replaced by a corrupt relationship with Buckingham. This, Eglisam asserts, is based not on the duke's merit but upon the sorcery of his associate Doctor Lamb, whose nefarious spells have (in another of the recurring tropes of corrupt favoritism) "bewitched" the king (p. 12).⁵³ While describing the animosity between Hamilton and Buckingham, in other words, Eglisam manages to point toward a more general falling off, a corruption stemming from the duke's ability to monopolize royal favor. Moreover, Eglisam shows how this poison near the head of state spreads death and destruction through the whole realm. As is customary in accusations of poison, Eglisam hints at wider plots whereby "all the noblemen that were not of *Buckinghams* faction should be poisoned" (p. 19).

When Eglisam finally turns to the poisoning of King James, he tells the story largely in terms of the duke's frantic need to hold onto his monopoly of access. The narrative begins with Buckingham's ill-advised trip to Spain with Prince Charles in 1623. While abroad, Eglisam argues, Buckingham's hold upon the king began to weaken and his opponents (including Hamilton) were for once able to win the king's attention. Panicking, the duke "made hast home, where when he came he so caryed him selfe that what soever the King commanded in his bedchamber he controlled in the next chamber. Yea received packets to the King from forraine Princes and dispatched answers without acquainting the King therewith not in a great time thereafter" (p. 20). James grew disenchanted with his favorite and attempted to send him overseas again, whereupon the duke used his special access to his master's most private chambers to poison him.

The account is worth quoting in full:

The King being sicke of a tertian ague . . . which was of it selfe never found deadly, the Duke tooke his opportunitie when all the Kings Doctors of Physicke were at Dinner upon the munday before the King dyed, without there knowledge or consent, offered to the King a white powder to take, the which the King longtime refused, but overcome by his flattering importunitie at length tooke it, drunk it in wine, and immediately became worse and worse, falling into many soundings

and paynes, and violent fluxes of the belly so tormented, that his Majestie cryed out aloud, o this white powder! this white powder! wold to God I had never taken it, it wil cost me my liffe. In lyke maner the countesse of Buckingham my L. of Buckingham's mother upon the fryday therafter, the Physitians also being absent and at dinner, and not made acquainted with her doings, applied a plaster to the Kings harte and breast, wherupon his Majestie grew fainte, short breathed and in great agonie. Some of the Physitians after dinner retourning to see the King, by the offensive smell of the plaister perceived some thing to be about the King hurtfull to him, and searched what it could be, found it out and exclamed that the King was poysoned. Then Buckingham entering commanded the Physitians out of the roome, caused one to be committed prisoner to his owne chamber, and another to remove from court, quarrelled others of the Kings servants in the sick Kings own presence, so farre that he offered to draw his sword against them in the Kings sight. (p. 21)

Eglisam, one of James's former physicians, is well informed. Buckingham did in fact give James medicine without consulting the king's attendant medical staff, a forwardness that immediately aroused suspicion of poison. Parliamentary inquiries into Buckingham's role in James's death stopped just short of asserting that Buckingham poisoned his master, but did accuse the favorite of "transcendent presumption" in intervening in the course of the king's medical treatment.⁵⁴ The episode in Eglisam, though, is reported in such a way as to emphasize the practical connection between the duke's unlimited access to the king and his ability to administer poison and thwart medical intervention. Only a great favorite after all would have the freedom of movement to pick his spots and the authority to dismiss other concerned physicians. Buckingham (who like Ganymede got his start as cupbearer to the king) here embodies the practical threat to monarchy hinted at in Peacham's emblem.

The remarkable thing about Eglisam's account of the king's murder in the context of his whole narrative is the way the quarrels over James's medical treatment recapitulate and mirror the larger political controversies of James's last days. The duke's struggles with political opponents and his quarrels with the king's attendants both turn on his ability to maintain control over access to the king's body. It is possible, I think, to read Eglisam's account of the king's demise as structured by a submerged allegory linking the microcosm of the king's murder to the macrocosm of Buckingham's political corruption. The duke's enemies, attempting to reform the state during the favorite's absence in Spain, are by conventional metaphor physicians to the body politic. But Buckingham returns to seize command of the king's bedchamber. Instead of being cured, the body politic is fatally poisoned. The same thing happens in miniature during the king's last days:

the duke prevents medical attention by means of his special control of the king's chambers and kills the king.

The poisoning of King James in Eglisham's notorious account is thus a symbolic scene of corrupted access. Placed at the end of the text, it ties together and provides a vivid emblematic encapsulation of all the corruption blamed on Buckingham. It provides, we might say, a tableau to counterbalance the image of James blessing Eglisham and the Marquis of Hamilton at the beginning of the text. In place of friendship and loyalty we have the breathtaking ingratitude of the duke's act. In place of the bonds that link majesty and subject we have the duke's monopoly of the chamber and the resulting corruption of service. In place of the healthy body politic we have finally the poisoned body natural. Beyond simply accusing Buckingham of poison, the rhetoric of Eglisham's piece makes the duke's poison represent a host of political ills that have their origin or primal scene in the duke's command of the bedchamber. In crafting this attack on Buckingham, Eglisham activates the kind of symbolic meaning implicit in Peacham's emblem of Ganymede with a poison cup. Each text treats poisoning as an act that is symbolic of the corruption of the politics of access more generally, a crime inextricable from the improper intimacy that the favorite shares with his bewitched or besotted ruler. The duke's poison is at once the treacherous act of a bedchamber favorite and a symbol of corrupting favoritism within the body politic as a whole.

POISONED POLITICS AND THE SOMATIC IMAGINATION

The best-known instance of poisoning in early modern literature must be Claudius's assassination of his royal brother in Shakespeare's *Hamlet*. Since the image of pouring poison into the monarch's ear is a conventional way of figuring the influence of wicked counsel, we might think of this moment as being akin, symbolically, to the golden cup in *Gorboduc*. We are likely to forget, though, given the familiarity of the play and the other urgent claims that this scene makes upon our attention, that this murder also hinges upon Claudius's intrusion upon old Hamlet's solitude. There is nothing, it seems, to keep him out. In the pre-courtly imaginary of old Hamlet's orchard there seem to be no politics of access until Claudius's crime invents them. This moment is pivotal in the play's imagination, ushering in a scheming courtly world of spies and secrecy and poison to replace the apparent openness of old Hamlet's world of honor. The political repercussions of Claudius's transgression are mirrored in the microcosm of the old king's body. The poison, Claudius-like, takes advantage of the body's

“natural gates and alleys” but then blocks them up (“it doth posset / And curd”), introducing impediments that recapitulate in somatic terms the political transformation from a world of plain openness to a world where both access and secrecy are major concerns (1.5.67–69).

The nostalgic fantasy represented by old Hamlet’s garden – that there could be a court without a politics of access – seems hopelessly distant from the perspective of a late Caroline play like Shirley’s *The Cardinal* (1641). But Shirley’s semi-allegorical depiction of the somatic operation of poison in the body of its victim works in more or less the same way. *The Cardinal* is a typically overheated drama of Italian court intrigue, and its title character emerges as a stereotypical royal favorite whose “corruptions and abuse / Of the king’s ear” allow him to dominate the play’s political world.⁵⁵ Near the end of the play, this Cardinal-cum-favorite murders a virtuous duchess by tricking her into thinking that she has already been poisoned and offering her his poison as an anti-venom:

That powder mixt with wine by a most rare
And quick access to the heart will fortifie it
Against the rage of the most nimble poyson.
(p. 67)

The manner in which the Cardinal describes the operation of his powder underscores its quasi-allegorical nature. The poison, in his account, operates within the body like a corrupt chamber favorite with “quick access” to the heart of the state.⁵⁶ The half-submerged metaphoric association between the operation of the poison and a favorite’s domination of the politics of access to the king is there I think to remind us of the larger political questions raised throughout the play by the Cardinal’s unmerited political preeminence. That is, the duchess ingests the poison expecting its “quick access to the heart” to help provide a fortification against poison just as the well-meaning king expects the favorite with unmediated access to his person to help him govern the body politic. But the favorite, like his mysterious powder, does precisely the opposite. The Cardinal’s false description of his supposed antidote evokes (and then dismisses as a lie) the fantasy that intimate access and favor might be a cure for the woes of the body politic. Instead, we find that the favorite’s unregulated access to the affections of the king has itself operated like poison raging in the blood of state.

These episodes suggest that the associative chain linking poison to the favorite’s corrupt access can work in both directions. The favorite is conceptualized as a poisoner and at the same time poison itself is imagined as a corrupt favorite dominating the politics of access, as it were, within

the material body of its victim. This reversibility renders the metaphorical meaning of poison somewhat slippery and elusive – vehicle and tenor keep collapsing into one another and changing places – but the idea that poison dominates access within the body itself is unquestionably an important aspect of the overdetermined symbolic association between favorites and poison. We can get a sharper sense of the urgency and utility of this brand of somatic imagery by examining its central role in the political imagination of another highly suggestive late Caroline play about corrupt favoritism, John Denham's *The Sophy* (1641). Like Shirley, Denham is traditionally pigeonholed as a royalist, but I am inclined to agree in this case with Martin Butler's general account of the play as a piece of anxious criticism of Charles's isolation and the insularity of his court.⁵⁷ Because the reformation of the politics of intimacy was an important part of Caroline court propaganda, it is possible to imagine plays about corrupt favoritism like *The Cardinal* or *The Sophy* performed to applause before Charles's court, but at the same time both plays evoke the Caroline erosion of political consensus with discomfiting specificity. Exotic setting notwithstanding, a play like *The Sophy* illustrates once again how fraught favoritism remains as a topic despite Caroline efforts at reform.

The Sophy pivots around the machinations of an evil favorite named Haly. Since he is abetted in his schemes by a malleable Caliph who heads the state church, allusion to controversy over Strafford, Laud, and the supposed evil counselors of Charles I seems unavoidable. Denham, who has been seen as the mouthpiece for a brand of constitutional conservatism that coalesced around Charles in the years leading up to the first civil war, was a defender of Strafford and wrote of the earl being "crushed by Imaginary Treasons weight / Which too much Merit did accumulate."⁵⁸ Nevertheless, *The Sophy* seems to court controversial topicality of a kind that might have rankled Charles and his close supporters. Though Denham's story is loosely based upon an account of the cruelty of the Persian Shah printed in Thomas Herbert's *Some Yeares Travels Into Divers Parts of Asia and Afrique* (1638), the wicked favorite Haly is Denham's own invention. And the story Denham tells about Haly would have evoked many of the controversies surrounding Stuart favoritism, especially for an audience as accustomed as Denham's was to sniffing out such resemblances and parallels.

The play's crisis is precipitated by the triumph of the Persian prince Mirza over a much larger Turkish army. The youthful promise of this prince stands in marked contrast to the timorousness of his father King Abbas, and it would have been easy to respond to these characters (even in 1641) as echoes of James and the much-lamented Prince Henry. Certainly the antithesis

between the promising and militarily brilliant prince and the scheming court favorite would have reminded some of Henry and Somerset as well. For Haly, who as wicked court favorite is the natural enemy of military heroes, had secretly hoped that the prince would die in combat. Abbas is old, and the favorite knows full well that Mirza will not tolerate his brand of courtship should he succeed upon his father's death. To neutralize this threat, Haly persuades the old king that his great and popular son wants to seize power prematurely and hints that some courtiers might be all too willing to kill the king in exchange for the favor of his successor:

HALY. . . . he's as ill a Courtier, that when
His Master's old, desires not to comply
With him that must succeed.

KING. But if he will not be comply'd with?

HALY. Oh Sir,

There's one sure way, and I have known it practiz'd
In other States.

KING. What's that?

HALY. To make

The Fathers life the price of the sons favour
To walk upon the graves of our dead Masters
To our own security.

King starts and scratches his head.

HALY. ASIDE. 'Tis this must take: Does this plainness please you Sir?

KING. HALY: thou know'st my nature, too too apt

To these suspicions; but I hope the question
Was never mov'd to thee.

HALY. In other Kingdoms, Sir.⁵⁹

This rather insistent pointing toward "other Kingdoms" reads to me like a hint about topical application, a way of gesturing away from Persia and toward examples likely to be more familiar to the play's English audience. Consequently, the exchange as a whole seems to allude to gossip about Buckingham's role in the murder of King James, and in particular to suspicions that Charles himself may have been an accessory to the murder.⁶⁰ One of the effects of this sort of nod toward topical application is to insist on the relevance of the play's material to contemporary English controversies: the play may be set in exotic Persia, stereotypically a land of excess and tyranny, but it deals with cunning favorites and bewitched kings who represent exaggerated versions of recognizably domestic woes.

Haly manages to persuade the credulous king of Mirza's dangerous ambition, and uses letters to the prince from some honorable Turkish Bashaws as corroborating evidence. At the end of Act 3 the favorite seizes the prince,

has his eyes gouged out, and trundles him off to prison. Act 4 dramatizes the favorite's short-lived triumph and shows him simultaneously plotting to poison the prince and increasing his control over Abbas's chamber. Suggestively, the poisoning of the prince is actually imagined as an extension of Haly's domination of the politics of access in a manner reminiscent, I think, of the scandal of Somerset's control of Overbury's imprisonment. In quick succession we learn first that Haly has suborned the prince's guards to ensure that "there's none about him / But such as I have plac't" (4.289–90) and then that he has effectively imprisoned the king in his chambers:

I have so besieg'd him,
So blockt up all the passages, and plac'd
So many Centinels and Guards upon him,
That no intelligence can be convey'd
But by my instruments. (4.303–07)

The former allows him to ensure that the poison gets to the prince, the latter that nobody will bring unwanted information to the king. Beyond this, Haly's domination of the politics of access is seen here as a kind of usurpation that is made literal in Act 5. The Turkish Bashaws, eager to clear the prince's name and knowing that Haly controls all entrée to the king, manage to gain audience only by assuming disguises. They demonstrate the favorite's deceptions. But when the king sees the error of his ways, Haly and his associates simply seize power. Then, knowing that he lacks the popular appeal necessary to rule, Haly schemes to become protector over Mirza's young son Soffy. The realm is finally restored to order when Soffy, like Edward III in Marlowe's *Edward II*, proves precocious enough to seize the reins of power and punish the would-be usurpers who have killed his father.

Within the political world of *The Sophy*, with its emphasis on the problem of access, the actual poisoning of Mirza takes on an extraordinary representational complexity. The prince is killed in secret and with a moderately slow poison. Haly decides at 4.286 that the prince "must be poisoned." A few lines later, he calls for a conference with the keeper of the prison to set up the murder (4.308–110). In Act 5 he announces, rather casually, that "'Tis now about the hour the Poyson / Must take effect" (5.177–78). We do not see the administration of poison, but the play is very clear in demarcating the time during which Haly's poison is supposed to operate. What Denham gives us during this period, though, is an episode toward the end of Act 4 in which the imprisoned and blinded prince struggles

with a passionate desire to avenge himself upon his father by killing his daughter, the king's beloved granddaughter. At first reading, the prince's private psychodrama seems like an ill-fitting insert, since it disrupts the flow of the political story with a narrative whose stakes seem more personal and familial. But Denham is very careful to suggest that the unseemly passion of the prince is literally and/or metaphorically coterminous with the effects of the favorite's poison upon him.

In a modernized edition of the play, there would be a scene break in between the moment where Haly arranges to have Mirza poisoned and the episode that follows this bit of intrigue, which centers on Mirza's inward torments. There is no way to ascertain precisely the amount of time that is supposed to have elapsed, but we are invited certainly to wonder if the prince has been poisoned in the interim. The scene opens with Mirza in consultation with the Caliph, and when his visitor leaves the prince is suddenly seized up. Not by poison per se, as it turns out, but rather by a passionate desire to wreak havoc upon his family. As Denham imagines the scene, though, this passion manifests itself upon Mirza's heart in such a vividly physiological manner that one wonders if in fact it might not be a symptom of some amphetamine-like poison administered by the favorite's henchmen:

What is't
I feel within? Me thinks some vast design
Now takes possession of my heart, and swells
My labouring thoughts above the common bounds
Of humane actions, something full of horror
My soul hath now decreed, my heart does beat,
As if 'twere forging thunderbolts for *Jove*
To strike the Tyrant dead. (4.358–65)

Since we later learn only that the prince has been poisoned, not when, and since the whole question of the administration of poison has been raised so carefully, I think we are meant to recognize that this seizure of the heart represents the deleterious effects of the favorite's poison as a kind of allegorical substitution.

Denham goes on to depict the Prince's internal struggle – itself a stand-in for the favorite's poison – as a microcosmic reenactment of the political conflict that has hitherto dominated the play. Where the political plot hinges upon Haly's ability to keep unwanted people out of the king's chamber, the prince's psychomachia is given in terms of the ability of rage or passion (or "poysou") to keep love from having access to the soul:

Love that was banisht hence, would fain return
 And force and entrance, but revenge
 (That's now the Porter of my soul) is deaf,
 Deaf as the Adder, and as full of Poyson.
 Mighty revenge! That single canst o'erthrow
 All those joynt powers, which nature, vertue, honour,
 Can raise against thee. (4.542-48)

Following so closely upon the heels of Haly's boast about his domination of access to the king ("I have so besieg'd him, / So blockt up all the passages"), this image aligns the poisonous passion of revenge with the operations of the poisoning favorite himself. And like the favorite, who comes within a hair's breadth of overthrowing the orthodox political order of the state, the prince's vengeful impulses are almost able to use their domination of access to overthrow the "joynt powers" that should ensure the moral orthodoxy of the man.

When the prince finally defeats "mighty revenge" within himself, he describes the triumph in conventional stoic terms as a conquest of the little world within:

I have
 A world within myself, that world shall be
 My empire; there I'le raigne, commanding freely,
 And willingly obey'd, secure from fear
 Of forraign forces, or domestick treasons,
 And hold a Monarchy more free, more absolute
 Than in my Fathers seat. (5.24-30)

Since foreign forces and domestic treason threaten Abbas's seat, this completes the microcosmic logic of the episode. Though a victim of Haly's poison in the political world, Mirza is able to defeat it in the world within. He dies tranquilly in Act 5, in allegorical anticipation of Haly's final political defeat at the hands of King Soffy.

Had Mirza succumbed to the sinister prompting of mighty revenge, his crime would have resembled the king's. The father has been too willing to abandon the son, and the son in turn comes close to murdering his own offspring. This is part of the allegorical structure of the episode too, for it aligns the operation of Mirza's poisonous passion with the cunning manipulations of Abbas's intimate favorite, who sparks the king's unworthy fears at the beginning of the play. That is to say, the microcosmic representational logic of Mirza's temptation presents us with a stoic anatomy of crime that links Abbas's failings to the prince's weakness. Crime in each case is the result of passions (anger in Mirza's case, fear in Abbas's) unregulated by

reason and thus able to overthrow “nature, vertue, honour.” In the play’s largest conceptual framework, this is why Mirza’s vengeance is conceived of as parallel to Abbas’s failure as king. But Haly, as intimate favorite, also owes his influence to Abbas’s personal taste rather than to the virtues associated with Mirza from the beginning of the play. So within the play’s political story, the favorite’s intimate access is both a provocation to the king’s improper passions and a product of them.

The stoic allegory thus hinges upon the complex symbolic entanglement of a number of associated ideas: royal favoritism, improper access, sinister inwardness, and the inner workings of poison. In the political plot, poison is the tool of choice for the scheming favorite with too much control over chamber and prison alike. But the stoic allegory also shows that poison represents the unregulated passions that disrupt personal morality by seizing control of inward chambers and that lead individuals toward the choices that cause political instability. In other words, though Denham’s treatment of poison’s operation in the body is subject to symbolic transposition into passion within the play’s stoic symbolic vocabulary, his depiction of the prince “full of poyson” works rather like Shirley’s more literal focus on the operation of the mysterious powder in *The Cardinal*. In each case, the operation of poison within the envenomed body of the victim is depicted in a manner specifically designed to welcome association with the improperly personal favor of the king. As a result, each play depicts the operation of the poison administered by the favorite as a microcosmic reenactment of the political conditions within which the corrupt and poisoning favorite has been allowed to flourish in the first place.

“TOO MANY PRESIDENTS OF UNTHANKEFULL MEN / RAYS’D UP
TO GREATNESSE”

Coke, in his *Institutes*, devotes considerable time to the Overbury murders since, as he puts it, “we remember not any of the Nobility of this Realm to have been attained in former times for poisoning of any.”⁶¹ On stage, poison is Italian, Roman, Jewish, Persian, but rarely English. At the same time, the sheer persistence of the figure of the poisoning favorite suggests that the idea that English royal favorites used poison was in some sense unavoidable and thus that it must also have been a satisfying and plausible one, deeply congruent with people’s presuppositions. The last act of Massinger’s *Duke of Milan* might be said to dramatize this contradictory double conception of the poisoning favorite as simultaneously unprecedented and alien and business as usual. Francisco poisons Sforza in the outlandish costume of

a Jewish physician, but remains nonetheless a domestic figure, the stock favorite whose familiarity as a type strikes even those within the world of the play.⁶²

For *Francisco*

My wonder is the lesse because there are
 Too many Presidents of unthankfull men
 Rays'd up to greatnesse, which have after studied
 The ruine of their makers. (5.2.3–7)

Poisoning favorites are often presented as incomprehensibly evil interlopers, but there are always too many precedents to make them really unbelievable.

Having focused to this point primarily on the unspoken structures of associative logic governing representations of the poisoning favorite as a trope for corruption, we might now risk some more functional generalizations about the figure's appeal and utility. One key might reside in the fuzzy but insistent manner in which the iterations of the poisoning favorite from *Woodstock* to *Coke* to *The Sophy* associate the poison of the favorite with the failure of king. I am arguing that different figurations of favoritism's corruption – sodomy, for instance, or the idea of a monarch bewitched – cope differently with the difficult but inevitable question of the monarch's guilt and complicity, and indeed one of the purposes of the discourse of favoritism in general is to offer languages in which to handle such questions. The figure of the poisoning favorite, because of its powerful and persistent connection to ideas about the corruption of friendship and intimacy, does make possible some fairly direct and explicit criticism of the king's choices. At the same time, since the primary villain is the favorite, this criticism can be modulated and deflected as much as is deemed necessary or felt appropriate. A play like *The Duke of Milan* can trace the influence of the poisoning favorite directly to the ruler's moral failings and can punish him accordingly. A play like *The Sophy*, meanwhile, can use the figure of the poisoning favorite in order to criticize the king's "nice indulgence" and then punish and eradicate the favorite while gesturing toward a restored and reformed royalism. *Woodstock's* programmatic vagueness on the subject of the king's guilt may become increasingly useful as the subject becomes increasingly pressured with the trial of Somerset and the ascendance of Buckingham.

Alternatively, we might look for the figure's appeal in the way it criminalizes corrupt intimacy. Insofar as the public status of the king's personal affections is a gray area in the culture, the figure of the poisoning favorite may have been useful precisely because of this salutary oversimplification.

It offers, after all, a figure of corrupt inwardness as prosecutable that might have appealed to those who felt that the influence of a Leicester, Somerset, or Buckingham was inherently corrupt but felt too that kings must be allowed personal patronage. Unlike, say, Marlowe's *Edward II*, where the king's favorites are resisted by the peers as intolerable, we see in texts like *The Duke of Milan* or *The Forerunner of Revenge* alternative positive models of royal amity and favor against which we can read the phenomenon of the poisoning favorite. These texts use poison to criminalize intimacy, and I think they do this in the service of a larger ideological fantasy of clarity in which there is a sharp difference between proper and improper royal amity and in which the former is acceptable but the latter is a treasonous crime. I call this a fantasy in that it imposes moral clarity on issues that were evidently much more difficult to sort out in practice. There are simply too many precedents of the poison of favor for the distinction between legitimate and illegitimate royal intimacy to have really been all that clear.

*Erotic favoritism as a language of corruption
in early modern drama*

In Shakespeare's *Measure for Measure*, Lucio – a figure who embodies the volatility of informal public discourse – invents a series of sexual libels about the absent Duke Vincentio. As part of his distinctly carnivalesque string of slanders, Lucio refers to Vincentio as “the old fantastical Duke of dark corners.”¹ One knows, in a general way, what Lucio means: that for all his august public authority, Vincentio enjoys the pleasures of the flesh overmuch in private. What interests me about the joke, though, is the way it imagines the unseen as automatically sexually suspect. The point is not that Lucio knows anything or even insinuates anything specific, but rather that, in a culture that imagined a link between public authority and moral transparency, hiddenness as such is always available for scandalous interpretation. King James, in *Basilikon Doran*, opined that kings should be careful “not to harbor the secretest thought in their mind,” and the idea behind this extreme-sounding formulation is that the rule of a good king hinges upon his total self-government. Inner life should be so rigorously ordered that passions and affections, rather than being allowed to fester in secret, are subjugated to the orthodoxies of public canons of virtue.² Lucio's joke supplements the commonplace ideological fantasy implicit in James's remark, reminding us that this way of thinking about virtue generates, by a kind of structural imperative, the suspicion that unseen aspects of the lives of rulers might be outlets for their ungoverned passions.

The political intimacies of royal favoritism inhabit the dark corners of the state – the privy chamber or bedchamber and other sites of restricted access to the body of the monarch – and real Lucios in Elizabethan and early Stuart England frequently imagined the influence of royal favorites in eroticized terms. A few representative examples will suffice.³ Elizabeth was accused, in 1587, of granting stipends to Leicester, Sir Christopher Hatton, and Sir Walter Raleigh to reward their sexual prowess.⁴ James's generosity to Robert Carr and other members of his Scottish Bedchamber prompted grumblings, by 1610, that the public cisterns were being drained for the

use of “private cocks,” a remark with the same risqué double-meaning it might have today.⁵ Rumors and libels concerning James and the Duke of Buckingham were especially widespread. A Jacobean manuscript poem entitled “The Warrs of the Gods,” for instance, casts James and Buckingham as Jove and Ganymede and depicts their relationship as at once politically destructive and overtly sexual. The poem describes the rebellious stirrings of the other gods, who are incensed both by the upstart favorite’s control over access to the king and by the sodomitical nature of this politically crucial intimacy.⁶

Charles I consciously sought to distance himself from the perceived licentiousness of his father’s court, and his efforts at moral reform find expression in Thomas Carew’s great masque *Coelum Britannicum* (1634), where Momus announces a program of heavenly reform undertaken in emulation of the Caroline example that includes the proviso that “Ganymede is forbidden the bedchamber, and must only minister in public.”⁷ Nevertheless, there are even a few instances in which the relationship between Buckingham and Charles was imagined in sexual terms.⁸ Likewise, William Prynne’s volume *The Popish Royall Favourite* (1643) – a screed against Stuart concessions to Catholicism with a title designed to capitalize on residual interest in the scandal of Jacobean and Caroline minions – accommodates Henrietta Maria’s political influence to the tradition of corrupt erotic favoritism. Prynne accuses Charles of harboring Catholics among “his Majesties greatest Favourites,” a list that begins with Buckingham and ends with “Queen Mary her selfe in the Kings own bed and bosome.”⁹

We can see the logic of Lucio’s remark – in which the unseen nature of political intimacy authorizes erotic conjecture – replicated in a notorious passage describing James and his minions from Francis Osborne’s juicy memoir of Jacobean corruption composed in the 1650s:

Nor was [James’s] love, or what else posterity will please to call it (who must be the Judges of all that History shall inform) carried on with a discretion sufficient to cover a less scandalous behavior; for the Kings kissing them after so lascivious a mode in publick, and upon the Theater as it were of the World, prompted many to imagine some things done in the *Tyring-house*, that exceed my expressions no less then they do my experience: and therefore left floating upon the Waves of Conjecture, which hath in my hearing tossed them from one side to another.¹⁰

Though Osborne’s account probably owes more to received gossip and libel than to eyewitness observation, it captures the culture of conjecture surrounding favoritism with the urgency of a firsthand report.¹¹ Of course, public kisses shared by men could always be understood as the normal

expression of laudable male friendship, and this is presumably how James himself wanted his displays of affection to be understood by observers. James's *Basilikon Doran* includes sodomy in a very short list of crimes that a king is "bound in conscience never to forgive," and so he cannot have intended or welcomed the conjecture here described.¹² Osborne, however, sees the king's kisses as scandalous performances "upon the Theater . . . of the World," and his theatrical metaphor implies a distinction between the roles put on for public show and the presumably more authentic desires assumed to find expression behind the doors of the "tyring-house." The king's kisses, in Osborne's account, are scandalous not because kisses are inherently scandalous but rather because they fail to cloak a lasciviousness that is presumed to lie behind the facade of public life. Osborne may of course have been correct, but the fact remains that he is conjecturing, Lucio-like, about the king's "dark corners" by reading against the grain of a public spectacle designed to convey something else altogether. Though most of the rumors and libels concerning the sexual relations of monarchs and favorites lack Osborne's enticing air of eyewitness authenticity, I would argue they are all generated by the same basic structure of conjecture concerning the suspect forms of intimacy that lie behind the public performances of authority.

Imagining favoritism as political intimacy based on sexual contact has a built-in utility as an unofficial language of corruption, for it taps into the commonplace analogy between failed self-government and the inability to govern others, thereby rendering concerns about political corruption in terms of the personal intemperance of the monarch. We can see this analogy, and its relation to favoritism, laid out most explicitly in William Strode's allegorical play *The Floating Island*, performed before King Charles and Henrietta Maria at Oxford in 1636. The floating island of the title is both the mind in tumult and an island kingdom, and the play dramatizes the rebellion of the passions against their rightful king Prudentius in a manner that alludes rather pointedly to English political unrest.¹³ Prudentius is forced to flee by the passions, who set up Fancy to rule in his place, and where Prudentius has ruled in careful consultation with a trusted advisor named Intellectus Agens, Fancy peoples her court with upstart favorites. Predictably, the passions turn on each other – Fancy's principal favorite, Liveby Hope, is struck down in the street by Audax and Irato in a scene likely to recall the assassination of Buckingham in 1628 – and soon wish for Prudentius's return. His restoration at the end of the play is a rather obvious gesture toward Charles's own prudent government. The play is most interesting for the way its depiction of Fancy's court combines political

misrule – favoritism, status conflict – with a massive upheaval of sexual decorum. The nymphomaniac Concupiscence, for example, seeks to seduce her own brother, while the cowardly knight Sir Timorous dresses up as a woman to escape violence and winds up being the victim of a sodomitical rape. Within *The Floating Island's* allegory of passion, unrestrained libidinal energy parallels the establishment of affective favoritism as symptomatic of the larger triumph of passion over reason.

This analogical way of thinking about tyranny has been traced back to Plato, and by the Elizabethan period it constitutes a conventional mental habit even for academically unsophisticated subjects.¹⁴ Consider, for example, the remarks attributed to one Edward Baxter about Elizabeth's supposed dalliance with the Earl of Leicester: he is reported to have said that "Lord Robert kept her Majesty, and that she was a naughty woman, and could not rule her realm."¹⁵ The queen's alleged promiscuity registers as a kind of failure of self-control that in turn implies an inability to rule. This assumption is quite common in the sexual slander surrounding Elizabeth and her favorites and surely has to do, as Carole Levin suggests, with anxiety stemming from Elizabeth's gender.¹⁶ Women were conventionally felt to be more susceptible than men to the onslaughts of unruly passion, which is why, in *The Floating Island*, Fancy is a woman:

And 'tis most proper,
That since by Passion this revolt is made
From Reason unto Sense, the Rule should passe
From man to Woman.¹⁷

Of course, pleasure-loving men were also thought of as effeminate, and we can see the same kind of analogical thinking writ large in the sodomitical gossip surrounding James and his favorites. Hence the circulation, in Jacobean England, of a joke contrasting "King Elizabeth" and "Queen James."¹⁸ Here too Osborne's memoir can serve as a representative text, for it treats the intemperance of James I as a symbolic focus for a more general denunciation of the political damage done by his favoritism. In particular, Osborne treats James's lavish generosity toward the hated Scots as the root cause of civil war and the execution of Charles I:

His too palpable partiality toward his County-men rendered him no higher place than of a King-in-law, not a Prince of any Natural affections to the people of this Nation. So as his more wise and innocent Successour was cast upon this unhappy choice: either to hazard the fidelity of his Scotch Subjects, by Obstructing this bounty; or that of the English, at whose cost alone it could be continued. (*Works*, p. 469)

In a sense, this provides a gloss for Osborne's entire memoir: scandalous and unnatural relations between James and his minions replace the "Natural affections" that a monarch should have for his people. Osborne's James is in all things intent upon "ease and Pleasure" (p. 470), easily provoked to "fall into a passion" (p. 514). His Scottish associates, who hang upon him like "Horse-leeches" (p. 532) are likewise addicted to unsavory pleasures, gourmandizing so disgustingly that Osborne finds himself "cloyed with the repetition of this excess, no less than scandalized at the continuance of it" (p. 533). James's Scottish favorites are likewise depicted as prodigious adulterers, whose success with English court ladies is "a consequence of the favour of the Prince" (p. 504). In fact, Osborne's account of the king's indiscrete kisses is appended to an equally scandalized account of the Scottish Earl of Carlisle's banqueting in which he is referred to as a "Monster in excess" (p. 533). Both anecdotes serve Osborne's larger rhetorical purpose of depicting James's regime as a time of widespread moral incontinence during which the nation, not coincidentally, "grew feeble" (p. 495). As with Elizabeth, and despite the gender difference, imagining Jacobean favoritism as erotic in nature forges a crucial link between the failed self-government of the monarch and the larger governmental breakdowns occurring on his watch.¹⁹

The constant murmur of erotic gossip accompanying royal favoritism thus tells us relatively little about the actual practice of the politics of intimacy or about the nature of the relationship between various monarchs and their favorites. The significance of erotic favoritism as a trope has to do, instead, with its remarkable prevalence as an unofficial language of corruption: no other scandalous conception of favoritism from the period is as ubiquitous. If we want to know how politically minded English subjects outside of the charmed inner circles of court thought of favoritism, then we need to ask why erotic constructions of favor were plausible enough and/or satisfyingly explanatory enough to be so readily generated and exchanged. Lucio offers some help here, of course. But beyond the culture's skeptical fascination with dark corners, I think the popularity of erotic constructions of favoritism has to do with the fact that they offer an alternative to the long-standing rhetorical tradition of blaming evil counselors for misgovernment while exonerating their royal patrons.

It is sometimes asserted that hostility toward royal favorites flourished in early Stuart England primarily as a way to formulate political criticism without being directly critical of the monarch himself. Direct criticism of the king, the argument goes, would have been somehow unthinkable for subjects raised within the tradition of sacred monarchy. I think it is pretty

clear, though, that attacks on favorites, at least from the 1620s on, were frequently understood by all parties to imply criticism of the monarch. Thus, when Henry Yelverton denounced Buckingham in the parliament of 1621 by comparing him to Hugh Spencer, one of the favorites of Edward II, King James responded “if he Spenser, I Edward 2.”²⁰ And where the evil counselor tradition has self-evident utility for public political debate, shielding the monarch from blame and thus making it possible to claim to be at once critical of government and loyal to the crown, imagining favor in erotic terms works in precisely the opposite direction. It attributes the favorite’s power to the erotic incontinence of the monarch, thereby blurring the distinction between the king’s own sins and the wickedness of his intimate servants. This redistribution of blame helps explain the appeal of erotic constructions of favoritism: thinking of favoritism as the result of unregulated erotic passion provided observers of the political scene with a useful vocabulary of corruption in which the king’s personal moral weakness could be held directly responsible for the improper distribution of his personal favor and thus for the corruption of his associates.

We can get a better grasp both of the prevalence of this way of thinking about the culpability of rulers and of its uses if we expand the horizons of our inquiry beyond the kinds of documents – memoirs, verse libels, memoranda of slander investigations – assembled by historians like Levin and Robert Shephard and look too at the sizeable corpus of plays in which the politically important affection felt by the monarch for his favorite is associated with the challenge posed to self-government by erotic passion.²¹ For theatrical explorations of the link between favoritism and erotic passion participate in (and capitalize upon) interest in the “dark corners” of political intimacy and so stem from the same structures of feeling that also help produce the erotic innuendo characteristic of the period’s gossip and libel. More importantly, since plays (unlike libels or fragments of gossip) typically set ruler and favorite within complex political allegories, they can allow us to see how erotic favoritism, as an idea in political philosophy, works. That is to say, attending to plays that reproduce the culturally prevalent notion of erotic favoritism allows us to see how it is deployed – in support of some ideas and in opposition to others – within elaborately constructed political milieus.

What we see in these plays, in fact, is an ongoing tension between the decidedly radical implications of blaming the king’s flawed passions for political misrule and an essentially conservative impulse to recuperate the ideology of sacred monarchy. This is obviously a tension built into the

period's political imagination more generally, one stemming ultimately from the failure of traditional notions of majesty and the body politic – in which the mysteries of kingship should minimize the imperfections of the mortal officeholder – to square with the growing sense of political corruption in late Elizabethan and early Stuart England.²² Erotic favoritism is used in drama as a kind of shorthand that pins blame for political corruption on the passions of the ruler, but this in turn is clearly felt to raise problematic ideological questions about prerogative. If a king cannot be trusted to choose favorites on a sound moral basis then perhaps the personal patronage of kings is institutionally suspect? But what is a king without personal patronage? In many cases, the same plays that use erotic favoritism as a way of figuring royal corruption are also demonstrably uncomfortable with the kind of constitutional questions that this symbolic shorthand entails.

This discomfort is an important aspect of the intellectual architecture surrounding the notion of erotic favoritism, and one that is hard to pick up in other kinds of sources. It underscores the high stakes involved in exploring the crucial but touchy question of the political culpability of the monarch's personal affections. The present chapter is a study, consequently, both of the way erotic favoritism is used to blame the personal affection of the monarch for political corruption and also, more broadly, of the negotiations that take place in Elizabethan and early Stuart drama between this radical thematization of favor and the narrative impulses of a conservative and conventionally royalist mindset.

“WE SHALL, LYKE SODOM, FEELE THAT FIERIE DOOME”:
PASSIONATE MISRULE IN *A KNACK TO KNOW A KNAVE*

Representations of erotic royal favoritism in Elizabethan drama tend to be given in terms of sodomitical relations between men despite the gender of the sitting monarch.²³ This re-gendering of favor has to do, presumably, with the fact that homosocial relationships constituted the normative model of political relations even under Elizabeth, so that when thinking about sexually corrupt favoritism in the abstract it was easiest to think of it in masculine terms as sodomy. As Mario DiGangi points out, this means that concerns about sodomitical favoritism predate controversy about the minions of King James I.²⁴ To some degree, and regardless of actual erotic practices, these pre-existing figurations must in fact have helped shape perceptions of favoritism at James's court.

Sodomy, of course, is a complex and sometimes contradictory discursive category in early modern England.²⁵ In practice, as Jonathan Goldberg explains, “sodomy named sexual acts only in particularly stigmatizing contexts,” so that accusations of sodomy crop up only when the accused “can be called traitors, heretics, or the like . . . disturbers of the social order that alliance – marriage arrangements – maintained.”²⁶ The fluidity of sodomy – its free-floating association with treason and social disorder – stems from its special symbolic relation to Renaissance ideas of the unruliness of passion that are likewise used to explain criminal or heretical deviations from public orthodoxy. Thus sodomy, as the legal historian Cynthia Herrup argues, serves as a master trope for the brand of intemperance that leads a person to disregard moral reason in the name of passion: “Sodomy, in the words used to prosecute it, was ‘against the order of nature.’ Yet the order concerned here was not heterosexuality; it was organization born of moderation. Sodomy represented desire unfettered, appetite ruling the mind rather than ruled by it. Sodomy was less about desiring men than about desiring everything.”²⁷

Herrup’s formulation has tremendous explanatory power for the way sodomy is invoked in favoritism plays, for it clarifies the intuitive connection between sodomy as a stigmatizing discourse and the kinds of tyrannizing passion involved more generally in disorderly erotic favoritism. If proper favoritism (as discussed in the [previous chapter](#)) was understood in terms of classical models of friendship that emphasized public virtue and moderation, improper or politically destructive favoritism was frequently felt to derive from immoderation in the monarch’s affections. Though there are plays (as we shall see) that link corrupt favoritism to unruly heterosexual desire even within marriage, sodomy is the predominant figuration for corrupt erotic favoritism on the early modern stage.

We can begin to unpack the overdetermined association between corrupt favoritism, sodomy, and the monarch’s unruly passion by examining the anonymous Elizabethan play *A Knack To Know A Knave*, which uses the chronicle legend of King Edgar as the template for a morality-like treatment of royal and national reform. The play is a useful starting point because its semi-allegorical nature renders the organizing principles of its political imagination more or less transparent. It is literally held together as a coherent dramatic fiction by a central analogy between government and self-government, which is alluded to throughout, and which structures the juxtaposition of play’s two basic plot lines.

A Knack To Know A Knave opens with an exchange in which King Edgar, his counselor Bishop Dunston, and a courtier named Perin praise

the effectiveness of the laws that govern England and celebrate what they see as the corresponding moral virtue of the king. Here Edgar offers a theory of the nature and purpose of royal authority that the play as a whole questions:

as I am Gods Vicegerent here on earth,
 By Gods appointment heere to raigne and rule,
 So must I seeke to cut abuses downe,
 That lyke to Hydras heades, daylie growes up one in anothers place,
 And therein makes the land infectious.
 Which if with good regard we look not to,
 We shall, lyke Sodom, feele that fierie doome,
 That God in Justice did inflict on them.²⁸

Dunston, for his part, praises the king for carrying out his brief:

Your Graces care herein I much cummend,
 And England hath just cause to praise the Lorde,
 That sent so good a King to governe them,
 Your lyfe may be a Lanterne to the state,
 By perfect signe of humilitie.
 Howe blest had Sodome bene in sight of God,
 If they had had so kinde a Governour,
 They had then undoubtedlie escapt that doome,
 That God in justice did inflict on them.

(lines 21–29)

The assumption here, and it is a conventional one, is that the good king governs both by rooting out injustice and as a kind of moral exemplar from whom the nation will take its ethical cues. There is an ironic undercurrent to this though, evident in the juxtaposition of Dunston's talk of humility with the king's evident self-regard. And the complacency of the king and his associates is decisively exposed when they are interrupted by an allegorical figure named Honesty who has somehow sneaked into the conference: "And yet thou art not happy Edgar, / Because that sinnes, lyke swarmes, remain in thee" (lines 54–55).

Honesty's presence is itself a rebuke – a reminder that Edgar's courtiers and counselors have not themselves been honest – and he goes on to argue that England is riddled with sin. What interests me about his role in the opening scene, though, is the way his remark about Edgar's sins acts as a rebuttal both to the king's vanity and to his assessment of the orderliness of the realm in general. Because "sinnes, lyke swarmes" remain in Edgar's breast, England as a whole must be corrupt. The striking word here is "swarmes," and I think it is meant to evoke the language of Biblical

plague – like the swarms of flies visited upon the Egyptians in Exodus 8:21 – and thus to resonate with the allusions to Sodom in the exchange between Edgar and Dunston that Honesty interrupts. If the king can purge his sins, he may indeed be a lantern to his people. If not – if his breast continues to swarm with sin – then England may, “lyke Sodom, feele that fierie doome.” The play thus opens with the suggestion that the King’s sins, like the realm’s, are sodomitical.

The relation between Sodom and sodomy in Renaissance parlance is not as straightforward as it might seem. The term “sodomy” is derived of course from the sins of the men of Sodom who, in Genesis 19, threaten to rape two angels who are the guests of Lot. For this, Sodom is destroyed, and as Alan Bray has argued, invective against sodomy in early modern England tends to draw upon this narrative of catastrophic sin and punishment.²⁹ The sins of the men of Sodom, however, are simultaneously expressions of unregulated sexual appetite and crimes against hospitality, and Sodom, as Robert Alter argues, “is the biblical version of anti-civilization, rather like Homer’s islands of the Cyclops monsters where the inhabitants eat strangers instead of welcoming them.”³⁰ This in turn helps shape the unique discursive fluidity of the term “sodomy” in early modern discourse, where it names the overdetermined intersection between non-reproductive sex acts and the violations of social order felt to go along with them. If accusations of sodomy most frequently stigmatize improper relations between men, they do so both because of the contours of the story in Genesis and also because relations between men were felt to be most deeply constitutive of the threatened social order. At the same time, however, it was certainly possible, in Elizabethan England, to allude to the story of Sodom without intending to name sexual acts. Sodom can be a touchstone for lust destroyed or, more generally, for the punishment of moral intemperance.

The evocation of Sodom in *A Knack’s* opening exchange frames the play for us as a study of interlinked erotic and social intemperance, and the remainder of the play elaborates upon these interlinked themes. Loosely speaking, we might say that the realm’s misrule is taken up in one plotline, while the king’s own erotic intemperance is the focus of the other. In the former, Honesty exposes the knavery of a veritable rogues gallery of “such Catterpillers as corrupt the common welth” (line 118). These include a conicatcher, a greedy farmer who oppresses the poor, a hypocritical priest, and the corrupt courtier Perin, who embodies conventional anticourt stereotypes:

I live as Aristipus [an epicurean] did, & use my wits to flatter with the king.
 If any in private conference name the king,
 I straight informe his Grace they envie him:
 Did Sinon live with all his subtiltie,
 He could not tell a flattering tale more cunninglie:
 Some tyme I move the King to be effeminate,
 And spend his tyme with some coy Curtizan:
 Thus with the King I currie favour still,
 Though with my heart I wish him any ill:
 And sometime I can counterfeit his hand and seale,
 And borrow money of the communalty.
 And thus I live and flaunt it with the best,
 And dice and carde inferiour unto none:
 And none dares speake against me in the court,
 Because they know the King doth favour me.

(lines 320–34)

Though the social ills exposed by Honesty extend beyond court corruption, the play is fairly savvy about linking them, where possible, to the court culture fostered by King Edgar. In one sustained episode (lines 928–1105), for example, we see the greedy Farmer mocking a worthy Knight who has overspent himself by providing hospitality for the needy. The Knight is a nostalgic figure for traditional “housekeeping” (lines 929) juxtaposed with the Farmer’s newfangled selfishness. On the heels of this scene, Perin comes around trying to raise funds for the impoverished crown, and the poor Knight can only muster a loan of twenty pounds. The Farmer, though, who recognizes the benefits to be reaped from dealing with the court, offers to lend the king £200 provided Perin will assist him in procuring a royal license to sell his corn overseas. This episode links the decay of hospitality and the erosion of the gentry to a court-centered selfishness facilitated by corrupt courtiers and the crown’s poverty. The crown’s need for loans would presumably have been understood as the result both of Perin’s criminal borrowing from “the communalty” and of a wastefulness stemming from the king’s “effeminate” tendencies. Of course, both the king’s effeminate desires and the larger decay of hospitality resonate, too, with the language of Sodom that frames the play.

The other plot is adapted from chronicle history accounts of King Edgar’s erotic passions. The king desires to have a great beauty named Alfrida as his “Concubine” (line 185), so he sends an earl named Ethanwald to woo on his behalf. This is clearly the act of a tyrant: “If she say no,” Edgar instructs Ethanwald, “tell her I can enforce her Love” (line 205). The earl, however, finds himself smitten by Alfrida’s beauty and arranges to marry

her himself. Returning to court, he tells King Edgar that while Alfrida may be a suitable wife for an earl, she is too unrefined for the bed of a king. Edgar discovers Ethanwald's deceit and vows revenge, and the play makes it clear that the king's vengeful fury is of a piece with his adulterous desires: both are unregulated passions, evidence of Edgar's effeminacy. This is a king who is susceptible to lust, flattery, complacent vanity, and rage, and the play treats his swarming personal sinfulness as the key enabling factor in the Sodom-like misrule of England.

Corrupt favoritism looms large in *A Knack's* imagination: from the intimations of failed counsel at the beginning to Perin's account of currying favor, to the play's rehashing of proverbial wisdom concerning "the favors of Kings" (line 1182). Though one has only scraps of evidence to deal with, it seems likely that the play's anticourt sentiments owe something to the powerful brand of nostalgic, late Elizabethan, Catholic resentment of Protestant court favorites discussed in previous chapters. Its title apparently derives from a lost recusant book of the same name from the 1570s, and its depiction of the corrupt priest (one of the sort "tearmed pure Precisians" [line 344]) contains elements of anti-Puritan hostility.³¹ Beyond the play's atmospheric interest in the failure of royal patronage, though, there is one highly suggestive episode that seems specifically designed to accommodate the affection of the king for his favorites to the play's more general interest in the effeminate passions that threaten England. In this episode (lines 380–574), Edgar hears the complaint of an old man, fallen into poverty, whose son, Philarchus, has been so disobedient as to strike him. Philarchus, it seems, scorns his father because he is "puft with a pride, that upstart Courtiers use" (line 407) as a result of the king's favor. Unlike Perin, whose favor is rendered in fairly generic terms, Philarchus apparently owes his rise to an intensely affectionate and intimate relationship with Edgar. We learn, for instance, that Philarchus "was once bedfellow to the king," who loved him as a "second self" (lines 549–50).

Personal affection puts Edgar in a quandary. On the one hand, he is eager to forgive his beloved favorite – "it grieves me much, / To heare what piteous moane Philarchus makes (lines 507–08) – and urges the father to pardon Philarchus. On the other, all parties involved recognize the gravity of Philarchus's filial impiety, which is described as a crime against both nature and the king (line 441). The father urges strict and impartial justice against his son ("Thou art no sonne of mine, but Tygers whelp" [line 451]), a position that may seem harsh to us but that seems nevertheless to be in keeping with the play's general insistence upon rooting out sin. As the scene

unfolds, the king's impulse toward mercy is treated as weakness. Dunston, for instance, urges the king to apply strict canons of justice to Philarchus's case:

He that disdaines his Father in his want,
 And wilfullie will disobey his Syre,
 Deserves (my Lord) by Gods and Natures lawes
 To be rewarded with extreamest illes.

(lines 468–71)

Edgar, for his part, grants Philarchus's father the right to sentence his son. But then, just as Philarchus's father is passing strict sentence – “I doe banish thee from Englands bounds, / And never to” – the king interrupts him: “There stay, now let me speake the rest” (lines 544–46). The king's punishment is considerably softer than the father's was to be. Philarchus is doomed to live abroad, with a pension, until being “recalled by the King” (line 554). The play's original audiences at the Rose may have detected shades of Gaveston here, whose banishment and return is depicted in the opening scenes of Marlowe's roughly contemporary *Edward II*. But Philarchus departs gratefully, and the king promises to repair the fortunes of his father. Dunston proclaims the whole affair evidence of Edgar's “vertuous government” (line 572).

This is in many ways an enigmatic episode. For one thing, it is the only thematically significant scene that stands outside of the two-plot structure that otherwise organizes the play.³² This means that we never get the chance to hear what the morally reliable Honesty might have to say about Philarchus or Edgar's sentence. For another, though the scene ends with all parties seemingly satisfied, there is ample reason to resist Dunston's cheery assessment. The bishop is elsewhere depicted as an overly complacent observer of Edgar's sins, and the king throughout the scene seems more concerned with Philarchus's suffering than with assessing the justice of the situation. Certainly there is something suspect about the way the king intercedes in the father's sentencing after granting him authority. And Philarchus's punishment – a temporary banishment with pension – does not seem to square with the “extreamest illes” proscribed by Dunston and the father alike. Finally, it seems important that the episode takes place early in the play, before the eventual reformation of Edgar and his realm has taken hold. Though the scene as a whole presents something of an interpretive puzzle, I am inclined for these reasons to read it as an instance of Edgar's moral weakness. Philarchus, puffed up with the king's favor, has become the enemy to hierarchy and distinction and so strikes his father.

The king, presented with the chance to defend “Gods and Natures lawes” by punishing the upstart favorite, fails to differentiate between affection and justice.³³

When Edgar describes Philarchus as a “second selfe,” he is of course using very conventional language derived from classical friendship theory. And there is nothing inherently erotic about being bedfellows.³⁴ We cannot even ask meaningful questions about the erotic content of a relationship that is so slenderly represented. In context, though, the episode seems designed to raise the specter of sodomitical favoritism with all of its symbolic political resonance. It closely follows the scene in which Perin tells us that he has thrived by moving “the King to be effeminate” in his desires, for instance, and resonates with the play’s larger interest in the king’s immoderate sexual appetites. There is no contradiction between the notion that the king’s favoritism is sodomitical and his unchecked adulterous desire for Alfrida, since sexual preference was not yet conceived of as a definitive characteristic of a distinct sexual identity. Instead, the play’s emphasis upon Edgar’s effeminate sexual desires increases the likelihood that its audience would have understood the relationship between Edgar and Philarchus as sodomitical since (to return to Herrup’s nice phrase) “sodomy was less about desiring men than about desiring everything.” Moreover, the crime of the upstart Philarchus clearly represents the violation of social hierarchy, and sodomy, as we have seen, fuses sexual intemperance to just this kind of social transgressiveness. Of course, the notion that England can become a second Sodom still hovers over the play from the opening scene’s exposition as well.

Because it belongs to neither of the play’s two main plotlines, we might ask what this depiction of sodomitical favoritism is doing in the play. One thing the Philarchus episode does, of course, is crystallize concerns about favoritism that are present in treatments of related issues like flattering counsel, royal misjudgment, and court corruption. Beyond that, though, this scene – uniquely within the play – draws a direct and concrete connection between the king’s effeminated passions (the focus of one plot) and the political misrule that trickles down from court to country (the focus of the other). This is a crucial function, one that clarifies the king’s moral responsibility for the misrule occurring in his realm. In other words, the Philarchus episode serves to assign the blame for political misrule directly to Edgar’s own misrule. Of course, the fact that Philarchus has spurned and attacked his father likewise generalizes the impact of Edgar’s improper favoritism, recasting the upstart’s violation of political hierarchy as an active hostility to a natural social order predicated upon the central importance

of paternity. Sodomitical favoritism is thus inserted, in the form of the Philarchus episode, in order to stigmatize the whole range of specifically political disorders caused by the affections of the king. This offers a neat encapsulation of the way sodomitical favoritism operates within the English political imagination in general, as a symbolic or imaginary vehicle for assigning blame to royal intemperance for perceived political corruption.

A Knack To Know A Knave imagines political reform as simultaneous with the moral reform of the king. In the end (and in a major revision of chronicle history), the king overcomes his vengeful and lustful passions, forgiving Ethanwald and graciously accepting the earl's marriage to Alfrida. For, as Edgar himself puts it, "he deserves not other to commaund, / That hath no power to maister his desire" (lines 1731–32). This personal reform is accompanied by an analogous political reform in which Honesty exposes the realm's knaves, is given leave to sentence them, and is himself made welcome at the court. Perin here becomes the scapegoat for corrupt favoritism in general, as is made clear by the taunting way in which Honesty sentences him: "because I will use thee *favourable*, / Yfaith thy judgment is to be but hanged" (lines 1867–68, emphasis mine). This time, Edgar is willing to allow sentence to pass upon a favorite without interruption. Philarchus is absent from this rousing conclusion, which means that the play never tries to envision what the politics of intimacy will look like after Edgar's moral transformation. All we know about the life of the reformed court is that Honesty is in and Perin out.

Philarchus's absence at the end of the play feels like a significant loose end, especially since Edgar has spoken of his recall; it reads like an evasion, a way to avoid having to deal with the question of political intimacy within the newly reformed court. Is the king to have no more beloved favorites? Is Philarchus himself reformed? Is their friendship now to be understood as politically acceptable because based on transparent virtue? In effect, the end of the play separates Edgar's passion from the realm's misrule, laying them side-by-side while allowing each to be solved separately. That is to say, just as the insertion of Philarchus early on draws these two thematic cruxes together in an especially concrete manner, leaving him out at the end allows them to be kept apart. This in turn makes it possible to wrap the play up without having to resolve or address the deep ambivalence involved in late Elizabethan thinking about intimate favoritism. For it is one thing to imagine a king who rules without murderous and adulterous passions – as the play finally does – and another altogether to imagine the eradication of affectionate intimacy within the royal household. The play, in other words, imagines reform but stops short of the more radical interrogation

of favor that might be required by revisiting Philarchus. Can intimate favoritism survive Honesty's purge? Perin, the generic wicked courtier, is useful at the end of the play because he can be punished for favoritism without really occasioning any inquiry into the legitimacy of the king's intimate love as a primary means of organizing power. Perin is a useful scapegoat precisely because punishing him does not imply any specific or programmatic criticism of personal favoritism, something the play seems to want to avoid despite its author's self-evident fascination with the king's own moral weakness.

CHARLEMAGNE AND THE USES OF ENCHANTMENT

Like *A Knack To Know A Knave*, the anonymous Jacobean play *Charlemagne* (c. 1610–22³⁵) is at once centrally concerned with the sodomitical favoritism of a besotted monarch and somewhat ambivalent about the way this figuration of favor pins blame on the ruler for political corruption. The story pivots around the effects of a magic ring that renders its bearer irresistible to the emperor. It works, we learn, “in weomen, Men & monsters,” and in fact over the course of the play we see Charlemagne doting upon a string of increasingly inappropriate love objects.³⁶ First the aged emperor loves his young wife Theodora to distraction. When she dies, Charlemagne dotes grotesquely upon her dead body. A wise bishop named Turpin takes the ring from her body, and the emperor falls madly in love with him.³⁷ Finally, the ring is handed to a buffoonish servingman named La Fue who becomes for an instant the object of Charlemagne's all-consuming erotic desires. This story is derived from a brief tale in one of Petrarch's familiar letters, and though Petrarch treads rather carefully around the nature of Charlemagne's love for the bishop, he waxes eloquent upon the subject of the emperor's grotesque, necrophiliac passion for the body of his deceased wife. In fact, he treats this aspect of Charlemagne's demented affection as the epitome of a brand of “horrible lust” that is the very opposite of governance: “How far is the condition of a lover from that of a king! Such contraries cannot be united without discord. What is a government if not a just and glorious domination? What is love but a foul, unjust servitude?”³⁸

This commentary could gloss much of *Charlemagne* as well, for the play insists throughout that Charlemagne's lust renders him incapable of ruling others. The play, however, recasts Petrarch's emphasis to fit Jacobean anxieties by focusing specifically upon the kinds of potentially disastrous political favoritism that accompany each of the emperor's serial infatuations. The ring (as we learn at the end of the play) has been created by a sorcerer

for Ganelon, the play's chief Machiavellian villain, who uses it to further his own political ambitions. Charlemagne's wife Theodora is Ganelon's obedient sister, and so Ganelon himself enjoys unmatched political influence as a result of the emperor's extreme uxoriousness. He is referred to, during the first part of the play, as "the mynion" (line 460), a term that names him as the emperor's special favorite. Didier, a follower of Ganelon's at the beginning of the play, remarks that his master will now be "like a river that so longe retaynes / the oceans bountye, that at last it seems / to be itselfe a sea" (lines 97–99). Ganelon's objective is indeed nothing short of complete usurpation of the crown. First off, he seeks to ensure that his own blood commingles with the emperor's, and since Charlemagne is considered too old to conceive a son, Ganelon arranges for Theodora to become pregnant by an adulterous liaison. Further plans are thwarted when Theodora dies in childbirth and Bishop Turpin discovers the ring. At the end of the play, Ganelon regretfully observes that "at her deathe had I recompast it, / I had bene kynge of ffrance" (lines 2771–72).

Had Ganelon regained the ring, he presumably would himself have become the object of Charlemagne's obsessive erotic desire, the all-powerful sodomitical favorite. This, at any rate, is what nearly happens with both Bishop Turpin and La Fue: when the ring changes hands, sodomitical desire – explicitly homoerotic desire that is seen as politically transgressive – replaces uxorious passion. The first of these scenes, in fact, is a rather brilliant comic coup, in which the emperor's "wanton passion" for the old bishop is played for maximum surprise. We only learn about the ring when Turpin finds it on Theodora's person, and this occurs just before the midpoint of the play. Up until this discovery, *Charlemagne* looks like a fairly conventional if somewhat crude drama of court intrigue. Turpin removes the ring and departs, leaving Charlemagne free for an instant from its power. The emperor, like himself, banishes Ganelon from the court. And then in comes Turpin and the scene is abruptly transformed from political drama to a kind of erotic farce in which the great emperor lavishes a wildly inappropriate lover's blazon upon the aged bishop:

thou arte all butye, spyces & perfume
 a verye myne of imortallytie
 these hayres are oth complexion of the skye
 not like the earthe, blacke browne & sullyed
 thou hast no wrinckles these are carracters
 in which are wrytt loves happiest hystorie
 Indeed I needes must kyse them, faythe I will.
 (lines 1254–60)

To observers within the play, the erotic nature of the emperor's affection is quite clear. Charlemagne's virtuous nephew Orlando wonders if "the ould men will not ravysh one another" (line 1264). But while the scene is comic, the play is quite clear too about the political fallout of the emperor's amorousness. Charlemagne turns to Turpin and declares "ffraunce is thyne" (line 1270), while Orlando observes that "when charles growes thus / the whole worlde shakes" (lines 1272–73).

Political disaster is here averted only because Turpin is too virtuous to take full advantage of the authority conferred upon him by the emperor's love; the bishop steers Charlemagne's government for a portion of the play, but his objectives are always seen as admirable. The play's author, though, is clearly fascinated by the spectacle of the bishop's political sway over his master. In one episode, Turpin whispers his requests into Charlemagne's ears while other characters watch with rapt attention and comment upon the unstable nature of political favoritism ("what thynke yow lorde / has anye favorytt all he can desyer" [lines 1414–16]). Later, when Turpin decides to test the power of the ring by lending it briefly to La Fue, the smitten emperor at once promises to make his newfound love "greater then all ffrance, above the peres" (1874), adding:

my bountye shall exceede
the power of thyne askynge, thou shalt treade
vpon the heades of prynces, Bow you lordes
& fall before thys saynte I reverence. (lines 1884–87)

This time, catastrophe is averted only because La Fue – a kind of Malvolio figure who thinks his newfound eminence suits him – scorns Turpin's ring and returns it to him.

Whoever wrote this play must have been drawn to Petrarch's story by its resonance with contemporary gossip about bewitching royal favorites. The trope is implicit, I think, in *Leicester's Commonwealth* – which accuses the earl of procuring love "by conjuring, sorcery, and other such means."³⁹ Readers could have extrapolated from such remarks that sorcery formed the basis of Leicester's appeal to the queen even though the author of the libel is himself careful not to make that claim. Soon after James took the throne, the Venetian ambassador Giovanni Carlo Scaramelli observed that "English statesmen have, so to speak, bewitched the King; he is lost in bliss and so entirely in their hands that, whereas the late Queen knew them and put up with them as a necessity but always kept her eye on their actions, the new King, on the contrary, seems to have almost forgotten that he is a King."⁴⁰ This metaphor seems thereafter to have taken on a life of its

own; both Somerset and Buckingham were rumored to have used sorcery to bewitch the king. A newsletter written by Sir John Throckmorton on the eve of Somerset's murder trial in 1616 predicts (incorrectly) that the favorite will be charged with "procuring by sorcerye to invegle the Kings hart, soe as he shoulde have noe power to denye him anything."⁴¹ Likewise, the rumor made the rounds, in 1625–26, that an Irish sorcerer named Piers Butler had provided Buckingham with a magical token guaranteeing King Charles's continued favor.⁴² Though uncertainty about the date of composition or performance makes it impossible to venture a more specific topical reading, it clearly makes sense to think of *Charlemagne's* ring plot in terms of this ongoing figuration of favor.

Because the ring remains constant in its effects, *Charlemagne* imagines a literal and exact continuity between the emperor's uxorious passion – which results in the predominance of the minion Ganelon – and his subsequent attraction to Turpin and La Fue. The nature and origin of the emperor's fungible erotic desire is obviously the same in each case, and each episode is accompanied by concerns about the rise of a new all-powerful favorite. What this means, of course, is that the gender of the object of the emperor's desire is not the crucial factor in the play's attitude toward Charlemagne's passions. What matters in each case is that the emperor is unable to assert rational control over himself and that this in turn threatens the political order of France. In fact, since it is Ganelon who poses the real threat to the play's political world, I would argue that one purpose of the farcical episodes of homoerotic desire that follow Turpin's discovery of the ring is to replay the threat posed by Ganelon in such a way as to invoke the stigmatizing language of sodomy. That is to say, the invocation of politically unruly homoerotic desire in the second half of the play is used to suggest by analogy that Ganelon owes his ascendancy to a brand of favoritism that is metaphorically sodomitical even though the emperor's love object is his own wife. Because it is Ganelon who creates the ring and Ganelon too who threatens most seriously to capitalize upon the kind of immoderate political influence that it makes possible, the play theorizes his prominence as a kind of sodomitical political disorder.

The emperor's unregulated erotic passions are echoed in the play by the passion that Ganelon feels for a young courtier named Richard, who is described as his "Ganimede" (line 2006). The parallel between Charlemagne's passions and Ganelon's is drawn by the "mynion" himself, during an early exchange with Richard. Ganelon raises the subject of the emperor's uxoriousness, to which Richard, rather primly, responds "I darre not taxe the actyion of a kynge" (line 264). Seizing the opportunity, Ganelon

responds with a come-on that compares his affection to the emperor's while encouraging political disloyalty in Richard:

y'are modest Sir; nor I; but yet if I
 felte not a straunger love within my selfe
 in thys my strenthe of memorye & yeares
 abyllitie of bodye & of brayne
 more doating on a man then he on her
 a coulde not scape my censure

(lines 266–71)

The parallel here hinted at between the emperor's besotted attachment to Theodora and Ganelon's "straunger love" of course anticipates the progress of Charlemagne's own affections. And the displacement of sodomy from the emperor to his minion here at the start of the play suggests that Charlemagne's failure of self-government has given rise to what Goldberg has called, in another context, a "sodomitical regime."⁴³

Because the play's handling of the relationship between Richard and Ganelon explores the close proximity between sodomy and friendship, it helps theorize the nature of sodomitical desire as a violation of normative public forms of affiliation. In their first exchange, Ganelon keeps expressing his affection in terms that subtly overreach the canons of virtuous amity – describing himself, for instance, as "admyratyions slave" (line 290). Richard, for his part, attempts to contain Ganelon's effusions within the conventions of friendship derived from classical humanism:

if suche an affection manadge yow
 tys not the man or sexe that causes it
 but the styll groweing virtues that inhabytt
 the object of your love. (lines 275–78)

Richard is clearly aware, though, that his friend's love fits uneasily within this conventional notion of friendship based upon approved virtue, and so the exchange is punctuated by his awkward attempts to rebuke Ganelon's forwardness:

good sweete lorde
 forbear thys courtshypp, our accquayntance is
 toe ould, & as I hope frendshyppe toe fyrme
 to be nowe semented. (lines 292–95)

Asking Ganelon to "forbear . . . courtshypp" underscores Richard's discomfort with the uneasy mixture of courtliness and erotic wooing that he senses in Ganelon's remarks, and though "semented" is a common way

of spelling “cemented,” I think it may here involve a pun on the word “semen.” Richard is finally forced to ask Ganelon to change the subject: “I beseeche yow talke of somethynge ells / or I shall growe unmannerlye & leave yow” (lines 306–07).

Richard’s notion of friendship cemented by virtue underpins an equally conventional notion of male friendship as the major constitutive bond of public life. By contrast, one of the signature ways in which *Charlemagne* signals the sodomitical nature of Ganelon’s desire for Richard is its avowed priority over all publicly agreed upon values:

though I wante arythmatycke to counte
my treasure in thee, pray thee give me leave
to joy in my posessyon of such blysse
to which all honors in our ffraunce compared
were as a rushe mongst manye myllions shared.
(lines 297–301)

The same profoundly anti-social language characterizes Charlemagne’s ring-induced affections, as for example in the following address to the dead body of Theodora:

deare give me leave to touche thee & imprinte
my soule upon theise rubyes, all the fame
& garlandes I have woone throughe chrystendome
the conquests I have made of ffraunce, of Spayne,
Of Ittalie, Hungaria, Germanie
even to the utmost east point, placd with thee
are toyes of worthlesse valewe. (lines 1060–66)

In the sodomitical regime presided over by the bewitched Charlemagne and dominated by the nefarious Ganelon, political corruption and the dissolution of social bonds stem from a basic willingness to privilege personal erotic impulse over the responsibilities and rewards of public life. Sodomy thus acts as a kind of synecdoche in *Charlemagne* for the triumph of selfish desire as such. The congruence established between Charlemagne’s ring-induced desires and Ganelon’s sodomitical wickedness treats the emperor’s bewitched desires as the cause of political corruption while displacing much of the blame onto his “mynion,” who is both a sodomite and the source of the magic ring.

Much of the blame, but not all of it. If we think of the ensorcelled king – in *Charlemagne* and in gossip about the influence of Somerset and Buckingham – as a trope used to conceptualize intimate favoritism, then part of its appeal has to do with its richly ambivalent way of handing the

question of the king's own guilt. On the one hand, the notion that the king's affections are swayed by sorcery makes it possible to imagine blaming the favorite and thus exonerating the king himself. *Charlemagne*, accordingly, comes to a happy conclusion in which the ring is discovered, its creator punished, and the emperor's powers of self-government happily reinstated. On the other hand, Charlemagne's vulnerability to witchcraft might in itself have been felt as a kind of de facto failure of royal self-possession. For kings, as God's agents, should not be so completely vulnerable to witches, who are the devil's. This rather schematic understanding of the relationship between royal power and sorcery underpinned King James's own interest in witchcraft and plays an important role in Jacobean assumptions about divine kingship.⁴⁴ And James himself argues, in his *Daemonologie*, that witches should be powerless against lawful magistrates: "where God begins justly to strike by his lawfull Lieutenentes, it is not in the devils power to defraude or bereave him of the office, or effect of his powerfull and revenging Scepter."⁴⁵ Given this assumption, there is something massively indecorous about the spectacle of a ruler – who should be the lieutenant of God – succumbing to a ring made by a "Sorcerer" (*Charlemagne*, line 2769). Even more tellingly, James also writes that witches "can make men or women to love or hate other, which may be very possible to the divel to effectuate, seeing he being a subtile spirit, knowes well enough how to perswade the corrupted affection of them whom God wil permit him so to deale with."⁴⁶ According to the logic of this formulation, Charlemagne's vulnerability to the ring is evidence of what we might today call a pre-existing condition. Thus, while the conceit of the ring makes it possible for the play to find others to blame for the emperor's errant desires, the ring's effectiveness would also have been understood as proof of Charlemagne's enabling moral weakness.

This ambivalence lies at the heart of *Charlemagne*. Because the play reflects a characteristic Jacobean fascination with overly passionate (and therefore sodomitical) royal favoritism, it toys with radical ideas concerning the failure or inversion of sacred monarchy and the illegitimacy of royal patronage and bounty. But the play also hedges its bets in a number of ways, as if attempting to downplay or avoid dealing with the most radical implications raised by its representation of corrupt favor. We can see this in the way the ring plot moves from scandal (in which the king dotes on a corpse and bestows his bounty on a corrupt Machiavel) to farce (in which erotic affection for Turpin is played for laughs and shown to have no deleterious political impact). The brief episode in which the laughable La Fue gets the ring completes this trajectory. In one of the play's final scenes

La Fue, persuaded that he still possesses the emperor's love, enters dressed in foppish "gallantrye" (s.d. line 2681) and offers his body to Charlemagne: "come sweete love, I will love thee without more intreatye, / let us withdrawe & in pryvate rumynat our sellves together" (lines 2695–96). Since the ring is in other hands, the joke is on the would-be favorite, whose overreaching is rendered ridiculous and who is sentenced to a whipping for his pains. Where much of the play shows us the emperor blinded by passion, this final episode treats as farce the elsewhere quite plausible notion that Charlemagne might make an inappropriate choice of love object. The encounter thus seems designed to undercut whatever political urgency the play's larger figuration of erotic favor may have accumulated. Where the play wants to capitalize on popular interest in the "dark corners" of favoritism, it also wants to reach a happy ending – the reform of king and court – in such a way as to avoid having to grapple with complex questions concerning the political validity of royal affection.

We can see the same ambivalence writ large in the way the narrative as a whole is structured. Though this is not, strictly speaking, a multi-plot play, the problem of intemperate passion is worked out successively in two arenas that are only tangentially related to each other. The first of these is the court, where the central questions have to do with the distribution of favor and power. The second arena, really the focus of the second half of the play, is Ganelon's rural estate, where the erstwhile minion, now banished from the court, competes with his mother Eldegrad and his sister Gabriella over the affections of Richard. Gabriella and Eldegrad, who see Ganelon's love for his friend as an obstacle to their own erotic objectives, set out to drive a wedge between Ganelon and Richard using forged letters and allegations of unfaithfulness. Ganelon, driven to distraction by the thought of Richard's treachery, murders his erstwhile friend. Then, having discovered the truth too late, he kills his own sister and mother to avenge their deceit. Gabriella and Eldegrad are obviously kin to Ganelon in their basic inability to control inward impulses, but any reader of *Charlemagne* will recognize that the perfidious scheming of Gabriella and Eldegrad looms disproportionately large in the final section of the play's narrative. The drama of political intrigue is, to a considerable degree, displaced by the conventional misogyny of domestic tragedy; Gabriella, a character who is not even introduced until almost halfway through the play, becomes for a time its chief villain and scapegoat. This shift in emphasis can most usefully be understood as the formal manifestation of the play's desire simultaneously to raise a host of political questions concerning favoritism and to avoid facing up to them. The play uses the deaths of Ganelon's

family members as a way of achieving closure on the problem of incontinent passion, but its shift from national to domestic politics suggests that it can only achieve this closure by sidestepping the questions of political intimacy that are self-evidently its original *raison d'être*.

The conclusion of the ring plot, by contrast, is perfunctory. Turpin gives the magic ring to Charlemagne, saying “good deare Sir keepe it, / & hencefourthe onlye love your royall selfe” (lines 2765–66).⁴⁷ This concluding gesture might be read as a kind of admonition suggesting, once and for all, that proper kingly self-regard requires the eradication of passionate affection. The play’s final lines celebrate the bond between Charlemagne and his nephew Orlando, and perhaps this revived love of kin is to be understood as the proper manifestation of royal self-love. Though hastily constructed and sketchily conceptualized, we might then see in this conclusion a critique of personal favoritism: Charlemagne, apparently, is celebrated for shifting the basis of his love and bounty away from the whims of personal affection and toward objective social networks structured by rank and blood. If so, then we might say that the play takes an uncompromising position on the increasingly controversial question of the legitimacy of royal favoritism. But because so much of the play’s final portion centers around the domestic conflict between Ganelon and Gabriella, there is more emphasis placed upon the eradication of women than upon the reform of favor.

This seems at least semi-deliberate. Like *A Knack To Know A Knave*, *Charlemagne* uses sodomitical favoritism as a symbolic shorthand with which to explore the political culpability of the king’s corrupt affections. But both plays finally recuperate regal authority not by salvaging or justifying the politics of affection but rather by means of narrative maneuvers designed to evade the question of corrupt favoritism altogether. I think this characteristic mixture of critique and avoidance gives expression to a real cultural ambivalence about the politics of personal intimacy in which a familiar brand of old-fashioned royalism that seeks to blame ministers and exculpate princes grapples with the perception that corrupt favorites – Philarchus, Ganelon, Leicester, Somerset, Buckingham – are merely the symptoms of the basic unreliability of the personal favor of kings.

“A PRINCES LOVE EXTENDS TO ALL HIS SUBJECTS”:
FAVORITISM AND DESIRE IN *THE LOYAL SUBJECT*

John Fletcher’s *The Loyal Subject* (1618) is one of a number of Elizabethan and early Stuart plays in which the key structuring analogy between the ruler’s sodomitical passions and his politically corrupt favoritism is

established associatively rather than literally. We might think here once again of Strode's *Floating Island*, where the overthrow of Prudentius occasions both a reorganization of the court in which the favorite replaces the counselor and a series of disruptions of the sex–gender system including a sodomitical rape. Fletcher's mid-Jacobean political fable actually has a great deal in common with Strode's royalist allegory, though in the place of Fancy and Prudentius it has a youthful Muscovite duke who at first makes the passionate errors of youth (errors, that is, of both the erotic and political variety) before becoming prudent. Plays such as these are useful precisely because they draw the connection between the ruler's erotic incontinence and his reliance upon corrupt favorites along alternative circuitry, structuring the association analogically rather than imagining direct erotic contact between monarch and minion. By doing so, they clarify what is at stake in more literal depictions of erotic favoritism such as Osborne's account of King James's scandalous kisses.

The central plot of *The Loyal Subject* traces the movement from misrule to reform in explicitly political terms, borrowing the skeleton of its story as well as its title from Thomas Heywood's *The Royall King and Loyall Subject* (c. 1600). Both plays deal with the rivalry that arises between a ruler and an exceptionally virtuous subject whose excellence threatens the monarch's sense of supremacy. In Fletcher's play, the virtuous subject is Archas, a gifted general beloved by a recently deceased duke but resented by his successor for a minor conflict in the play's pre-history. Over the course of the play, the young duke mistreats Archas, is forced to call upon his services to stave off invasion, fails to reward his victory, humiliates him, forces him to send his young daughters to court, imprisons him, and then finally acknowledges his merits as part of the play's final emphasis upon reconciliation and reform. Archas, the title character, remains stubbornly loyal throughout, even as his son Theodor becomes increasingly agitated by the duke's tyranny and finally takes up rebellious arms against it. Archas, whose loyalty is such that he flies into a rage when Theodor so much as criticizes the duke, is ready to execute his rebellious son as a prisoner of war until the duke intervenes at the end of the play.

In this regard, Archas's loyalty seems grotesque, for Theodor's criticism of the duke is clearly warranted. At the beginning of the play, in fact, Theodor represents a healthy compromise between dutiful loyalty to the crown and independent moral judgment. His first encounter with the duke is instructive in this regard. When asked if he plans to rebel in response to mistreatment of his father, Theodor responds: "No Sir, I dare not, / You are my Prince: but I dare speake to yee / And dare speak truth."⁴⁸ That Theodor

does eventually resort to violence has as much to do with Archas's stubborn unwillingness to protect himself as with the duke's cruelty. I am persuaded, consequently, by Philip Finkelpearl's argument that the conflict between Archas and Theodor is designed to test the doctrine of passive obedience, subjecting it to tremendous pressure and exposing its limitations.⁴⁹ We might say, in fact, that the conflict between Archas and Theodor over the culpability of the duke renders explicit the tension between royalism and critique characteristic of plays like *A Knack To Know A Knave* and *Charlemagne*. It is in the context of this larger tension that we should approach the play's handling of corrupt favoritism and sodomitical desire.

There are two court favorites in *The Loyal Subject*, a wicked older one named Boroskie, and a nobler young man on the rise named Burris. For most of the play, Boroskie monopolizes the duke's "bosome" (2.1.32) and "eare" (2.1.145), while Burris is shown to be distanced from his most intimate thoughts and counsels (see 2.1.15–20, 2.2.1–5). Boroskie is in many ways the stereotypical wicked favorite. He is a coward who accepts the post of general but then feigns illness to avoid war, for example, and his political power hinges on his control of the politics of intimacy. When Theodor and Archas return from battle after having rescued the state, Boroskie denies them access to the duke's person (2.1.68–135). Boroskie is most frequently characterized as a parasite, such as when Archas tells the duke that his favorite is a "worme that crept into ye" (2.6.67). By the end of the play, though, Burris is honored for his true service and Boroskie is revealed for the villain he is. The rise of Burris is part of the play's narrative of reform, which means that *The Loyal Subject* provides both positive and negative models of intimate royal favor. Boroskie's hold on the affections of the duke apparently stems from his role as surrogate father during the duke's minority ("from my childhood / Thou broght'st me up" [2.1.34–35]) – and so the reformation of favoritism is seen as part of the duke's coming of age.

The play's emphasis on favoritism has to do, presumably, with Fletcher's desire to adapt his story to mid-Jacobean political concerns. For in 1618, shortly after the fall of Somerset and rise of Buckingham, the emphasis placed upon the two favorites would have invited topical application despite the exoticism of the play's Muscovite setting.⁵⁰ Likewise, the play clearly evokes Jacobean financial difficulties by linking the duke's favoritism to a propensity for lavish bounty and the resulting impoverishment of the crown. This is introduced as an important concern early on, when Burris mentions that he has often heard the duke "complaine for money" (2.1.18). It is later revealed that the old duke, knowing his son to be "as bounteous

as the aire” (2.6.50), entrusted a secret cache of treasure to Archas for safekeeping. The greedy Boroskie engineers the discovery and seizure of this wealth, presumably hoping thereby to increase his own take from the duke’s lavishness. Shortly thereafter we see the duke rather casually give twenty thousand crowns to the virtuous Burris, who in turn sends the money to Archas. The example of Burris ensures that *The Loyal Subject* is not programmatically hostile to favoritism as an institution in the way many other early Stuart dramas are, but the figure of Boroskie is surely designed at least to evoke contemporary grumbling about the damage to royal finances done by King James’s favorites.

The political story’s basic trajectory of error and reform is mirrored by a love plot centered around a cross-dressed young man who turns out to be Archas’s eldest son. Young Archas, who has been shipped off to a brother for safekeeping before the time of the play, returns to the court disguised as a woman named Alinda and enters the service of the duke’s sister Olimpia. Since boy actors played women’s parts, and since the play does not formally reveal the nature of Alinda’s disguise until very near its conclusion, Fletcher’s audience may have had some difficulty sorting out the layers of illusion: it would presumably have been impossible at first to tell whether Alinda was a particularly mannish boy playing a female role or a boy playing a young man in disguise as a woman.⁵¹ Much is made, though, of Alinda’s masculine qualities – she has a “manly body” (1.2.14) – and since a great deal of the play’s comic business requires the audience to be in on the joke, I presume that the nature of Alinda’s cross-dressing would have been clarified in performance. Olimpia falls in love with Alinda, but she is consistently shown responding to Alinda’s more masculine qualities (see 1.4.9–32) and seems at least half-consciously aware of the charade; at the end of the play, when Alinda is replaced by young Archas, Olimpia admits that she has wished for such a transformation “a thousand times” (5.6.87). Cross-dressing notwithstanding, the play does its best to treat Olimpia’s love for Alinda as an essentially heteroerotic attraction.

The duke too dotes “strangely” on Alinda, and attempts to coax her to bed with gifts of rings and jewels (5.6.6). The scenes in which the duke pursues Alinda are filled with comic business hinging upon Alinda’s disguise – duke: “Dost think I love not truly?” Alinda: “No, ye cannot / You never travell’d that way yet” (3.3.35–36) – but they also establish a link between the duke’s erotic misjudgment and his mistreatment of Archas. Alinda tells the duke, for instance, that she cannot love him because he has proven himself unworthy by his treatment of a mistress named “Lord Archas service” (3.3.60):

Do you remember her? there was a Mistris
 Fairer then women, far fonder to you sir,
 Then Mothers to their first-borne joyes: Can you love?
 Dare you professe that truth to me a stranger,
 A thing of no regard, no name, no lustre,
 When your most noble love you have neglected,
 A beautie all the world would wooe and honor?

(3.3.61–67)

This kind of language picks up on a distinction between royal love and lust that is actually introduced when Alinda first receives the duke's attentions in Act I:

OLIMPIA. It was the Duke that kist yee.
 ALINDA. 'Twas your brother,
 And therefore nothing can be meant but honour.
 OLIMPIA. But say he love ye?
 ALINDA. That he may with safety:
 A Princes love extends to all his subjects.

(1.2.113–16)

The logic of Alinda's rebukes hinges on the key distinction between two very different understandings of the word "love". On the one hand, the prince's love for "all his subjects" names a dedication to the general good that is fully and transparently public. When Alinda conceptualizes this princely love in terms of maternal concern, she evokes a commonplace Jacobean rhetoric in which the bountiful king is a kind of quasi-maternal "nourish father" to his people.⁵² The duke's unseemly lust, by contrast, typifies for Alinda his willingness to privilege private desire over the canons of public morality he is supposed to represent and uphold.

Alinda consequently sees the duke's sexual trespasses as cognate with his political errors: lust for Alinda is like the hatred of Archas in that both are instances in which the duke's youthful passions overrule the more impersonal demands of public duty. The duke's lust here is seen as symptomatic at once of personal erotic incontinence and of the failure of public stewardship. That the duke desires Alinda's "manly body" further underscores the transgressiveness of his youthful passions, associating these interlocking failures with the sexual/political scandal of sodomy. The analysis of princely love developed in the Alinda plot likewise helps contextualize the play's hostility to Boroskie, for favoritism is literally what happens when a prince's love does not extend equally to all his subjects. Thus, when Theodor first confronts Boroskie, he asks him "why do you dam the Duke up? / And choke that course of love, that like a River / Should fill our empty veines

again with comforts" (2.2.131–33)? The inclusion of the Alinda plot makes it possible to see the duke's favoritism as sodomitical – not because the duke keeps Boroskie in his bosom, but because the personal affection the duke feels toward his favorite is given precedence over the kind of public princely love described by both Alinda and Theodor.

Once we see that the young duke's sodomitical attraction for Alinda participates in this broader thematization of the politics of love, we can also recognize the rather witty ways in which Fletcher's play juxtaposes scenes of love and politics. The duke's attempt to buy his way into Alinda's bed ("Here, take this Jewell" [3.3.92]) is preceded by a brief exchange in which he lavishes the state's wealth upon Burris (3.3.1–9). Similarly, the duke first sends a ring to Alinda and later gives Burris a signet to secure his gift. These juxtapositions remind us that the duke's favor is rather like his erotic attraction – undisciplined, passionate, wasteful – though neither Burris nor Alinda takes personal advantage of the duke's profligacy. As Olimpia remarks when she sees the ring that has been sent to Alinda, "such tokens / Rather appeare as baits, then royall bounties" (2.2.13–14). The venality of the duke's unsubtle approach to Alinda is likewise staged in such a way as to resonate with other scenes. "I would lye with yee" the duke announces, and then offers her a jewel (3.3.90). Alinda, of course, refuses the duke's money, saying "if we doe, sure we'll doe for good fellowship, / For pure love, or nothing" (3.3.93–94). Though an odd remark in the context of the duke's immediate suit, Alinda's response again evokes an ethic of pure love and reciprocal service that we have seen elsewhere in the play. When Archas and his army return victorious in Act 2, Boroskie disgraces the general but attempts to buy the loyalty of the soldiers by paying them double wages. The soldiers angrily refuse to be paid off, declaring that they too serve out of a pure love of country and glory that cannot be paid off with mere "gilded stuffe" (2.1.276). Boroskie, by contrast, is "that thing that sels his faith for favor" (2.6.35). We can see in these echoes the elaboration of what the play conceives of as sodomitical politics: a politics based not on reciprocal good fellowship and pure love but rather on the intemperate passions of a duke and the greediness of his parasitical associates.

The duke's affections, at the end of the play, are transferred from Alinda to Archas's eldest daughter Honora. This kind of substitution is familiar – think of *Twelfth Night* – but Fletcher here seems especially interested in the rather heavy-handed allegorical meaning suggested by the name of the duke's beloved: in coming to love Honora the duke also becomes honorable. The play is willfully schematic in this regard, as we can see early on when Alinda remarks that a duke's kisses should signal nothing but "honour"

(1.2.114). Where Alinda is young Archas in disguise, Honora is praised as yet “another *Archas*” (4.92), this time a female embodiment of “his spirit” (4.3.93) inserted into the play as a non-sodomitical substitute for Alinda. Toward the end of their first exchange, the duke tells Honora that she has “done a cure upon me, counsell could not” (4.2.126), and though the timing of the duke’s eventual reformation is more than a bit vague (a point I shall return to in a moment), I think we are supposed to understand that his interest in Honora is at least the first step. The play’s eventual happy ending thus involves a series of substitutions in which Burris replaces Boroskie as the duke’s favorite and Honora replaces Alinda as the object of his erotic desires. Similarly, Archas is celebrated at the end of the play as a surrogate father (“my good father, you dwell in my bosome” [5.6.118]), a role in which he too replaces Boroskie. The final eradication of the duke’s sodomitical desire is thus accompanied both by the restoration of the politics of pure love and reciprocal service and by a thorough re-inscription of what politicians today refer to as family values.

It is not at all difficult to see why *The Loyal Subject* – with its royalist conclusion and its careful deployment of the parallel between love and politics – should have been a success at its Caroline court revival in 1633.⁵³ The civilizing force accorded to Honora’s chaste love, one imagines, would have been particularly congenial to the Caroline court. To a considerable degree, though, the play’s happy, royalist ending is made possible by the scapegoating of Boroskie, whom the duke dismisses as a “lump of mischief” and “the enemy to honour” (5.6.98–99). The duke’s crimes, after all, are actually quite serious. He has squandered the crown’s wealth with his irresponsible bounty, he has appointed an unfit general and so nearly allowed the invasion and destruction of Muscovy, he has dishonored a manifestly worthy man, seized goods from his home, and attempted to deflower his daughters. It is only because the play labors to blame Boroskie that the duke himself can be so readily exonerated in the play’s final orgy of social piety. That is to say, the play finally seems to adopt the moral perspective of Archas himself, who is unwilling to countenance criticism of the duke but all too willing to denounce his corrupt minister as a worm or a “Judas” (2.6.36).⁵⁴ By adopting Archas’s point of view – in which rulers are inherently worthy of complete obedience – the play is able to conclude with a depiction of social harmony built on proper princely love. Once Boroskie is exposed and rendered politically impotent, he is magnanimously pardoned as evidence of the mercy of the state.

Here too, though, Finkelppearl’s account of the play’s tonal dissonance is useful. For just as Fletcher opens up Archas’s loyalism to criticism,

reminding us that the general's brand of passive obedience is too exaggerated to be healthy, so I think the play's neat and semi-allegorical conclusion is designed to feel a bit too pat to be fully satisfying. *The Loyal Subject* seems particularly skeptical and savvy about the way the scapegoat mechanism operates, as if it were designed to make available to its audience a cynical recognition of the kinds of evasions involved in displacing blame from the ruler onto Boroskie. We can see this in action in the way the discourse of political parasitism is handled. Theodor, for example, assents to the notion that the duke is "noble in his owne thoughts" (2.5.11) but adds:

If those might only sway him: but 'tis most certaine,
 So many new borne flies, his light gave life too,
 Buzze in his beames, flesh flies, and Butterflies,
 Hornets, and humming Scarrabs, that not one honey Bee
 That's loden with true labour, and brings home
 Encrease, and credit, can scape rifling,
 And what she sucks for sweet, they turne to bitterness.

(2.5.12–18)

This is the loyalist position – blaming the favorites instead of the ruler – but it is evidently ready to collapse. Even as he blames the parasites, Theodor's image implies that the duke himself has given life to them. Later, Archas – in an angry denunciation of Boroskie – describes the duke's mistreatment as something "crowded into his nature" by "bold bad men," a formulation that nicely captures the play's interest in the ambiguous borderline between the culpability of the duke's own nature and the pernicious influence of the parasites who crowd around him and dam up his princely love (4.5.90).

Fletcher finally has to resort to a deeply bizarre bit of plotting in order to manufacture the kind of moral clarity needed to resolve this tension and settle blame on Boroskie. It is important to be very clear about the sequence of events here. In 4.2, Theodor learns of a banquet thrown by the duke for "all his old counsellors, / And all his favourites" to which Archas has been invited (4.2.58–59). This raises suspicions, for the rumor is that the general will be betrayed. In the next scene, the duke and Boroskie allude to their plans to take care of Archas at the banquet without specifying what they are. Then we see the duke's interplay with Honora complete with his admission that she has "done a cure" upon him. Does this mean that the duke is reformed? He still pursues Alinda at the end of 4.3, and Honora suggests that her love-cure is not yet complete: "you are crooked yet, deare Master" (4.3.156). Archas and Theodor argue in 4.4 when the son warns the father to avoid the banquet. Archas is enraged by the implicit accusation

against the duke. This is one of the moments where Archas's loyalism seems most stupidly stubborn, and Theodor feels the need to raise the soldiers and storm the duke's palace in order to safeguard his father's life. Since the play has given us plenty of hints that treachery is afoot, we may find Theodor's care prudent. At the same time, there have also been hints that Honora's love may have subdued the duke's tyrannous passions.

At the much-anticipated banquet, Archas is seized by guards and the duke allows Boroskie to lead the old general away with rather enigmatic instructions: "exceed not my command" (4.4.86). As it turns out, the duke had intended only "to trye his goodnesse" with "a few feares" (4.6.3), but Boroskie, acting on his own, has Archas tortured. Theodor bursts in with his soldiers only to find his father covered in blood and weak from the rack, but Archas, in a gesture of heroic fortitude, pacifies the enraged soldiers who have come to save him. The duke is shocked (shocked!) at his favorite's initiative, and this episode serves to distinguish once and for all between the murderous cruelty of Boroskie and the reformed, merciful nature of the duke his erstwhile master. "Forget in me these wrongs," the duke says, and Archas complies: "I do beleve you innocent, a good man, / And heaven forgive that naughty thing that wrong'd me" (4.6.59, 62–63). From this point on the play likewise labors to forget the duke's share in the favorite's treachery while treating Boroskie as a subhuman monster, a lump of treachery, a naughty thing.

And yet there is considerable ambiguity built into the way the banquet scene unfolds. For one thing, it is possible that the duke's intentions may have been worse – as rumored – had Honora's love not intervened. The duke after all seems to have been under Boroskie's sway so long as sodomitical passion possessed him. For another, the hackneyed romance convention of the love trial is insufficient to explain the duke's motives. Is it really acceptable, after all, for the duke to frighten and humiliate such a manifestly worthy subject even if he meant no physical harm? Lingering questions such as these suffuse the scene with a kind of uneasiness that persists, I think, right through to the putatively happy ending. One feels that the banquet scene is inserted in order to finalize the scapegoating of the favorite, but also that the maneuver is executed in such a slap-dash manner as to call attention to the artificial nature of the scene's dramatic manipulations. If so, then it becomes possible, within the play's too-neat conclusion, to detect a rather cynical interrogation of the time-honored royalist impulse to salvage the king by blaming wicked ministers.

This provides a context, too, for Fletcher's otherwise odd decision to use the duke's sodomitical desire for Alinda as a subplot. As the main plot

works to displace blame onto Boroskie, the subplot becomes the vehicle for assessing the duke's own culpability. For, as I have argued, the Alinda plot traces a link between the duke's political failings and his own immoderate, erotic passions. Indeed, I think it is largely due to the analysis of princely love and its corruption worked out in the sodomy subplot that we are able so readily to see through the scapegoat logic of the play's royalist conclusion. We might say, in fact, that Fletcher inserts the Alinda plot precisely in order to cultivate within *The Loyal Subject* the kind of unease occasioned by the ideological fractures within favorite plays like *A Knack To Know A Knave* or *Charlemagne*. But where each of these earlier plays seems genuinely torn between the desire to blame the king's passions for corrupt favoritism and the desire to recuperate monarchy in the end, Fletcher self-consciously uses the rich thematics of sodomy to help undercut and deflate what might otherwise be a triumphal royalist whitewash. What most interests me, finally, about *The Loyal Subject* is thus the way Fletcher deploys the Alinda plot specifically to counteract the familiar conservative impulse – championed within the play by the arch loyalist Archas – to blame wicked ministers for the realm's woes. In so doing, the play nicely encapsulates for us the broader ideological contest surrounding erotic gossip concerning the dark corners of rulers. In *The Loyal Subject*, as in the culture at large, the discourse of sodomitical passion is deployed to counter royalist pieties, as a means to redistribute blame for political corruption from the avaricious favorite to the monarch whose ungoverned affections are seen as favoritism's enabling precondition.

“THE CORRUPTED USE OF ROYAL LOVE” IN DAVENANT’S
THE CRUEL BROTHER

In William Davenant's *The Cruel Brother* (1627), the erotically tinged affection of a duke for his favorite is treated as a harbinger of outright tyranny and political catastrophe. The play, in other words, eschews the kind of ambivalence characteristic of earlier plays featuring erotic favoritism, offering up a vision of court politics in which the monarch's passions are unequivocally given as the root cause of corruption. The play thus activates some of the radical potential evaded in plays like *The Loyal Subject*, which are more demonstrably ambivalent about ascribing blame for corrupt favoritism to the ruler's own passions. This may be something of a surprise to scholars accustomed to thinking of Davenant only as Shakespeare's godson or as a mouthpiece for royalist orthodoxies, but his earliest plays are in fact shaped, at least in part, by the influence of the less politically programmatic literary

culture of the Inns of Court. Indeed, commendatory verses included in the 1629 edition of his *Tragedy of Albovine* have been a key source for the reconstruction of a dramatic circle centered in the Inns, where Davenant seems to have lodged for a time with Edward Hyde, later the Earl of Clarendon.⁵⁵ *The Cruel Brother*, in keeping with this group's taste for allusive stories of court intrigue, is an Italianate tragedy, intentionally reminiscent of lurid Jacobean plays like *The Revenger's Tragedy* (1607) or *The White Devil* (1612), though its conception of court corruption has everything to do with Buckingham, or at least with the kinds of animosity that his career provoked.

Strikingly, the favorite in Davenant's play is treated as a laudable, public-minded figure while the king's sodomitical affection for him is blamed for the tragic destruction that eventually overtakes them both. This is not to say that the play is programmatically anti-royalist or written without political calculation, however. In 1627, when the play was licensed, Buckingham was still very much alive, and the play's depiction of the favorite's virtue in the face of popular animosity seems expressly designed to appeal to him. We can deduce something of Davenant's purpose from the fact that the play's printed quarto of 1630 was dedicated to Richard Weston, the Lord Treasurer, who – as the following account of parliamentary controversy after Buckingham's death suggests – was regarded by some as the duke's natural successor in King Charles's favor:

though they had no Duke of Buckingham to impeach yet they prepared a charge against the L. Treasurer Sir Richard Weston, whome Sir John Eliot (in a speech of his) affirmed to be a man in whose person all evill was contracted, acting and building on those groundes layd by the Duke his maister: whos spirit (he sayd) was yet moving for interruption of the Kingdome's redresse.⁵⁶

The same assumption about Weston presumably explains Davenant's decision to dedicate *The Cruel Brother* to him after Buckingham's assassination. Moreover, Davenant's besotted duke alludes to scandalous gossip concerning the affections of the late King James, and it is not at all clear that veiled parody of Jacobean corruption was unwelcome at Charles's court. In *Coelum Britannicum*, as we have seen, allusion to Jacobean sexual scandals actually bolsters the Caroline rhetoric of reform. So long as readers looking for topical parallels in *The Cruel Brother* recognized a parallel between the duke and James – a comparison invited by the duke's effusive affection for his favorite and by his displeasure with the public, ceremonial duties of rule – then perhaps Davenant's depiction of corruption could likewise be read as implicit praise for the higher standards of political decorum at the court of King Charles.

Nevertheless, the play offers an anatomy of favoritism that seems, finally, to raise searching questions about the legitimacy of personal affection within the political sphere. Though set in Sienna, *The Cruel Brother* courts topical comparison fairly transparently. It features, for example, a satirist named Castruchio who is obviously modeled upon George Wither and whose propensity for political calumny represents the burgeoning culture of libel that grew up surrounding Jacobean favorites.⁵⁷ Castruchio's main targets are the "royal dotard" (*The Cruel Brother*, p. 122), the favorite Lucio who "rules the ruler" (p. 121), and members of Lucio's faction "that now engross / All offices" (p. 124). Lucio, for his part, is given as the very epitome of the good favorite figure. He is loyal at once to the duke and to his own virtuous underling Foreste, and is therefore a figure for the reciprocal bonds of public male friendship. He and Foreste are carefully constructed as polar opposites to Buckingham's popular reputation: they are too scrupulous to take untoward advantage of the duke's favor, and they manage their master's patronage with an eye toward propriety and the commonwealth. In one scene, for example, Foreste angrily denounces precisely the kind of monopoly patents that Buckingham was accused of bestowing upon his clients (p. 124). The first two acts of the play are particularly interested in the disjunction between the laudable practice of Lucio and Foreste and the kind of invective and envy that favoritism nevertheless occasions. The absurdity of public perceptions of favoritism is likewise personified in the comic figure of Lothario "who persuades himself, / Out of a new kind of madness, to be / The Duke's favourite" (p. 132). Lothario hopes to gain royal favor by mastering a courtly vocabulary of manner and affectation, and the laughter at his expense mocks the common notion that men like Buckingham gain prominence for their ornamental qualities alone.⁵⁸

Lucio's exemplarity and the misguidedness of Castruchio's libels seem to add up to a rather straightforward, royalist defense of favoritism, and thus to support Foreste's description of the duke's favor in his opening exchange with Lucio:

You are the Duke's Creature! Who dotes by art,
 Who in his love and kindness, method keeps:
 He holdeth thus his arms, in fearful care
 Not to bruise you with his dear embracements.

(pp. 119–20)

Despite the harmoniousness of the political world depicted in these opening acts, though, Davenant takes care to raise questions about this characterization of the duke's love. We see this, for instance, in Act 1, when a private

meeting between Lucio and the duke is disturbed by the clamor of suitors from an adjacent presence chamber:

Death encounter 'em! Lucio shut the door!
 'Tis the plague of greatness, the curse
 Of pomp, that in our darkest privacy we must
 Ever public be to every man's affairs. (p. 128)

The duke's sentiment would most likely have reminded Davenant's audience of King James's notorious dislike of public clamor, but it also seems designed to raise suspicions about the duke's affection, not only because of the violence of his reaction – which smacks somewhat of passion – but also because his desire to cordon off “darkest privacy” from public scrutiny is (as another Lucio has shown us) always suspect. In the exchange that follows, the duke wishes that he could free Lucio from the responsibilities of brokering patronage in order “to make me yet more capable of still / Enjoying thee” (p. 129), a sentiment that contradicts arguments about the essential political utility of favoritism and that is instead reminiscent of Marlowe's Edward II, who fantasizes about a “nook or corner” removed from politics in which to “frolic” with Gaveston.⁵⁹

To the astonishment of Lucio, the duke then offers up a long and politically damning disquisition upon on the extremity of his affections:

A Prince's hate doth ruin where it falls:
 But his affection warmeth where it shines,
 Until it kindle fire to scorch himself.
 If we are subject to the sin of Heaven,
 Too much charity, extremity of love;
 Let there be no mercy shown in punishment.
 Why is the corrupted use of Royal love
 Imputed to our charge, and to our audit laid?
 We that with all those organs furnish'd are,
 All those faculties natural in men:
 Yet limited in use of each; prescrib'd
 Our conversation by a saucy form
 Of State. How can we chuse, by this restraint,
 But struggle more for liberty? Make choice
 Of some one ear, wherein to empty out our souls,
 When they are full of busy thoughts, of plots
 Abortive, crude, and thin. 'Tis cheap and base
 For Majesty not to be singular
 In all effects. O then if I must give my heart
 To the command of one, send him, sweet Heaven!
 A modest appetite, teach him to know

The stomach sooner surfeits with too much,
 Than starves for lack of that supply
 Which covetous ambition calleth want.
 For what my Friend begs, my bounty then
 Concludes to make me poor before that he
 Shall so unthrifty be of breath to ask in vain.
 Distraction! tameness! O my Lucio!
 How canst thou conster this? (pp. 129–30)

At the very least, this remarkable harangue demonstrates that the duke's love keeps no method whatsoever. Where Foreste uses the word "method" to connote a kind of mental/rhetorical orderliness, the duke's outburst is characterized by errant changes of focus that mirror the workings of disruptive passion and render the passage difficult indeed to "conster." It is indecorous, too, for the duke to relegate his bounty to the realm of the stomach, for it suggests that it is driven not by honor or merit but by the basest appetites. More troubling still is the duke's admission that he has given his heart over "to the command" of another and his reliance upon his favorite's "modest appetite" to preserve the crown's finances. For Davenant's audience would have recognized the selfishness inherent in the duke's willingness to be bankrupted by bounty. Or, more precisely, they would have recognized that the poverty of the ruler impoverishes the commonwealth. King James's own bounty, offered to friends of less modest appetite than Lucio, had been widely perceived as doing just that.

The boastful quality of the speech is also remarkable, since the duke claims freedom from the "saucy" forms of state on the basis of his majesty. To be restrained in affection – to be forced to love by method, as it were – is to be "limited," and that, the duke suggests, would be "cheap and base" in a ruler. This is a step beyond the more conventional argument that monarchs must be granted the same liberty to love as their subjects; the duke seems to be claiming freedom from political restraint as the privilege of absolute authority. More generally, this characterization of the duke's love returns us to the kinds of questions about the nature of royal love explored in *The Loyal Subject*, pitting the overly intense affection of the duke for Lucio against the kind of love that the duke might extend "to all his subjects." Davenant's point here is not only that the duke operates on the basis of the wrong kind of love, but more strikingly that this incorrect choice is authorized by an exaggerated sense of prerogative. Thus, when the duke asks why "the corrupted use of Royal love" is laid to his audit, he is asking not why people consider his favoritism corrupt and excessive but

rather why he is criticized for the corrupt love that absolute rulers typically fall into.

The unruly, sodomitical nature of the duke's excessive affection for his favorite becomes central to *The Cruel Brother* when that love comes into conflict with the social orthodoxy of heterosexual marriage. The conflict is precipitated by Lucio's marriage to Corsa, Foreste's sister. Anticipating opposition from his great patron, Lucio hides the marriage until "all is past prevention" (p. 140), and when the topic of the marriage is finally broached, the duke can barely contain his hostility toward Corsa:

I still aver you are that greedy nymph,
That hath devour'd the rich complexion of my boy.
See how his features shrunk, his beauty stain'd.

(p. 150)

The symbolic resonance of the duke's jealous love is overdetermined here, since heterosexual marriage as an institution was as much about the maintenance of social networks as about erotic desire per se. In this case, the marriage of Lucio and Corsa cements the friendship of the favorite and Foreste, an alliance that stands in the play as a synecdoche for public virtue. We can thus see, in the duke's resentment of Corsa, a parallel with his earlier fantasy of distancing Lucio from the demands of public life. The duke's objection to his favorite's heterosexual marriage is symptomatic of his more general desire to engross Lucio's attentions by shielding him from the competing demands of public adulthood. This kind of complex intersection of homoerotic desire and political transgressiveness is characteristic of the Renaissance discourse of sodomy, and indeed Davenant's treatment of the duke's "embracements" in *The Cruel Brother* seem like a perfect instantiation of the way sodomy operates within the culture's political imagination.

In what is perhaps the play's most interesting and enigmatic scene, the duke's initial hostility toward Corsa gives way to another emotion altogether as he is smitten by lust for his erstwhile favorite's new wife. The suddenness of the transformation is supposed to be remarkable – Foreste comments upon it (151) – and from this moment on Corsa takes Lucio's place in the duke's erotic affections:

No matter lady.

My accusation shall withdraw itself.
Pretty innocence! Lucio, prepare.
'Tis our will to make thy wife a courtier;
She shall be high in favour, if she'll leave
Her modesty; that's out of fashion now.

In neighbor courts the ladies so prevail
With masculine behavior: they grow
In factions able to depose their husbands
From the charter of their sex.

(pp. 150–51)

The duke's newfound affection for Corsa seems to be a compensatory reaction to Lucio's divided loyalties. For the duke, as we have seen, rails at the idea that his love might be "limited in use." We might imagine that the transfer of affection from Lucio to Corsa is doubly satisfying for the duke, for it allows him simultaneously to replace Lucio as the object of desire and to punish his disloyalty by pursuing the wife who has come between them. That the duke's transformation is an act of substitution is rendered nearly transparent in the barely submerged fantasy that animates his speech: the wife will depose the husband, become a courtier "high in favour," and relinquish the public virtue that has hitherto limited the duke's desires.

This transfer of affection, which takes place at the very end of Act 2, precipitates the duke's plunge into outright tyranny. Thus, while the first portion of the play depicts an orderly society governed, for all intents and purposes, by Lucio and Foreste, the second half of the play becomes a lurid tragedy of sexual and political intrigue. After a cursory attempt to seduce Corsa with the gift of a jewel, the duke rapes her. This is of course the paradigmatic act of tyrannous passion – Corsa formalizes its symbolic meaning when she compares the duke to Tarquin (p. 170) – and it is treated here as the ultimate manifestation of sodomitical passions formerly kept in check by the moderating virtue of Lucio. The substitution of Corsa for Lucio is also a transformation on the duke's part from a kind of mopy amorous passivity to a more aggressive, predatory hunger, and we are supposed to see these two psychological states as different versions of the same basic moral weakness: such passions can always be conceptualized, in neo-stoic terms, either as the product of the weak passivity of moral reason or as the spur to tyrannical aggression. We see the seeds of both postures in the duke's long speech on "the corrupted use of Royal love," where he simultaneously describes himself as given over to another's command and as struggling actively for liberty against the restraints of decorum and custom.

Substituting Corsa for Lucio also severs erotic desire from politically significant personal affections, thereby effecting a formal division between the two important aspects of Lucio's bifurcated role as the duke's beloved and his leading public servant. As Corsa replaces Lucio as the object of the duke's desires, the wicked Castruchio replaces him as political favorite. Castruchio helps orchestrate the rape of Corsa and becomes the political intimate of

the duke in his tyranny: "Myself and my Exchequer are thine own," the duke declares (p. 164). This latter substitution frees the play's polity from the constraints of Lucio's public virtue, helping to create a paranoid vision of court politics that mirrors the duke's own moral deterioration. We can see this most clearly in the play's bloody denouement, which takes place within the labyrinthine interiors of the duke's private chambers. Foreste finds out about the duke's rape and kills his tainted sister (hence the play's title) before confessing to his friend Lucio. The two of them set out to take revenge upon the duke, who, fearing as much, hides in his chamber, leaving Castruchio in ambush outside. But Lucio, who has been the duke's favorite after all, enters the bedchamber "with the help of private keys" (p. 195) only to find that he cannot bring himself to strike his anointed sovereign. When Lucio and Foreste leave, the guilt-ridden duke tries to prevent Castruchio's ambush only to be killed by it himself. A scuffle ensues in which Lucio and Forste are likewise slain. Castruchio is quickly captured, and the play ends, hastily, with the promise of his exemplary torture and execution.

This finale takes place in what we might think of as a proto-gothic symbolic space, one in which confusing secret passages stand in a quasi-allegorical relation to the secrets and unpredictable turns of the duke's own inner life. It is also, of course, a setting designed to appeal to the most paranoid understanding of the court politics of intimacy, dramatizing a political world in which access to the ruler is itself the stuff of cloak and dagger intrigue. This constitutes a remarkable transformation in the way Davenant conceptualizes the physical layout of the court. In Act 1, the duke complains because "in our darkest privacy we must / Ever public be to every man's affairs." The duke cannot find time to be alone with his beloved Lucio because the latter is always thronged with suitors. By Act 5 that inconveniently public milieu is long gone, replaced by a world of back doors, secret keys, and intrigue that takes place entirely within the darkest privacy. This re-conceptualization of the play's physical space expresses the political consequences of the duke's personal transformation: as the duke becomes a Tarquin, answerable only to the promptings of lust, the court is transformed from a site of orderly patronage to one of suspect secret intimacies.

The Cruel Brother ends with a couplet providing a final moral summary for the action that has taken place: "So intricate is Heaven's revenge 'gainst lust / The righteous suffer here with the unjust" (p. 197). Members of Davenant's original Blackfriars audience may well have taken this to refer to the duke's rape of Corsa, in which case they might have understood the final punishment of lust as a gesture of reform anticipated by Corsa's allusion

to the story of Tarquin's rape of Lucrece. In that ubiquitous tale, of course, rape signifies royal tyranny that is expelled at the founding moment of the Roman republic. Davenant's version preserves the language of reform while subtly removing the legend's more radical possibilities. Lucio and Foreste, this play's loyal subjects, decide upon a course even Archas could admire, choosing to endure all tyranny rather than punish the duke. The duke's death, instead of being an act of republican fervor or the revenge of his wronged subjects, is staged as a kind of providential justice. We can see in Davenant's plotting a carefully manipulated royalist orthodoxy: heaven's revenge may be messy, but it will come. Subjects are enjoined to practice the brand of passive obedience represented by Lucio and to leave the punishment of tyrants to heaven.

If, however, we recall that the play's analysis of the king's "lust" extends beyond the rape of Corsa and back to the duke's sodomitical favoritism in the play's first two acts, then I think the moral of the story becomes somewhat more troubling and complex. For where the duke's rape, like Tarquin's, involves an obvious violation of natural law and is thus a clear-cut violation of whatever social contract binds ruler and subject, his affection for Lucio is given as a conspicuously normal aspect of the politics of intimacy reminiscent, in fact, of the recently deceased King James. Since the duke's love is expressed as the desire to overrule or evade the restrictions imposed by the "saucy form / Of State," we might say that it represents the absolutist potential built into personal monarchy as such. And since the play establishes a continuity between the affections that underpin normal favoritism at the outset and the "traitor lust" (p. 167) for which the duke is punished by heaven, it is possible to read *The Cruel Brother* as a carefully circumscribed denunciation of the prerogative that allows the duke to assert at the outset that his own affections are above constraint.

I think there is something quite subversive about the way Davenant's play traces the nightmare scenario of its denouement back to the unregulated affections of the duke for Lucio in the play's first two acts. Unlike earlier plays that raise the specter of erotic favoritism, *The Cruel Brother* does not shy away from locating blame for corruption squarely upon the immoderate affections of the ruler. The play lacks the ambivalence on this count characteristic of plays like *Charlemagne* or *The Loyal Subject*, which balance their radical examinations of guilty royal passion with conservative gestures designed to salvage the notion of prerogative. Both *Charlemagne* and Fletcher's Muscovite duke are given the chance to set aside their doting affections and to rule like themselves, but Lucio's master is given no such opportunity. His "corrupted love" simply metastasizes, spreading outward

and leading to the destruction of innocent and guilty alike. This means that *The Cruel Brother* comes closer than these other, earlier plays to offering a structural critique of favoritism in which the ruler's prerogative in the bestowal of affection and reward is conceptualized as an inherently unstable and corrupt aspect of personal monarchy. Because the political world of these opening acts seems so unremarkable, the play expresses a radical suspiciousness about the personal affections of rulers: it treats intimate favoritism as inherently sodomitical, as an aspect of the political world in which the ruler's unruly personal affection is allowed to flourish and is protected by the mysteries of prerogative.

It is likewise significant, in this regard, that there is no heir waiting in the wings at the end of *The Cruel Brother*. Instead, it falls to Dorido, once Castruchio's companion, to punish the malefactors and "call up the Councillors of State" (p. 197). It is not clear who these unnamed counselors might be – does their absence from the play proper signify that this has been a political world in which the Privy Council has been superseded by the Bedchamber? Nor is it clear that they will have any viable plan to restore the gored state. Once we are alive to the radical implications of the play's anatomy of personal rule then we can see how strikingly bleak the finale is, envisioning as it does no solutions whatsoever to the problems it imagines. This suggests to me that *The Cruel Brother* is not a play written primarily to appeal to the rhetoric of Caroline reform. Instead, it is a play designed to explore anxieties associated with the structural vulnerability of monarchy to the absolutism of personal passion, and in so doing it offers a remarkable anatomy of personal favoritism as the key venue – at once a crucial political arena and a dark corner removed from public scrutiny – from which the unregulated affections of the monarch can infest the state.

The question remains: where does the play's subversive political sensibility come from, what is its relation to the political imagination of its social place and historical moment? My guess is that Davenant, when he began to write *The Cruel Brother*, simply set out to write an Italianate tragedy of court intrigue following the model of well-known Jacobean Inns of Court writers like Webster or Marston, writers whose plays likewise cultivate a tone of semi-topical political unease. This form of drama has a clear set of generic expectations, and these include the pleasurable frisson of exploring real political anxieties as much as exaggerated violence or the staging of murky psychological transformations. But in meeting this set of expectations, Davenant draws upon debates about favoritism that were very much in the air in 1627, arriving in the process at a sense of political corruption as something emanating exclusively from the immoderate affections of the

ruler, the same affections whose political expression is favoritism. If we look at the topical content of *The Cruel Brother* in this way – as a kind of distillation of a current notion of court corruption rather than as a deeply personal political critique – then we can also perhaps see the play's departure from the ambivalence of earlier plays like *The Loyal Subject* as a sign of a larger transformation within the unofficial languages of political corruption. Put simply, Davenant's play reflects the strain put upon the tradition of blaming ministers for perceived corruption by the controversial career of Buckingham. It suggests that blaming the ruler for his favorites, for from being "unthinkable," was in fact becoming increasingly unavoidable.

THE CRISIS OF DEGREE IN LOVE'S SACRIFICE

John Ford's *Love's Sacrifice* (c. 1631–32) is one of a number of Caroline plays that locate the relationship between king and favorite within a court world of overlapping erotic entanglements.⁶⁰ James Shirley, a close associate of Ford's who produced a commendatory poem for the 1633 quarto of *Love's Sacrifice*, seems to have been particularly fond of conflating the politics of personal influence with complex networks of erotic desire. His play *The Duke's Mistress* (1636), for instance, features a favorite named Leontio who loves Euphemia, spurned wife of the play's ruler. In the still messier erotic landscape of Shirley's *The Politician* (1639), the king marries a common woman named Marpisa who is also erotically involved with the royal favorite Gotharus.⁶¹ Ford's play, likewise, hinges upon a love triangle featuring Phillippo Caraffa, the Duke of Pavia, his wife Bianca, and his favorite Fernando. Though critical attempts to link Ford's play to the Caroline vogue for Neoplatonic love have been too reductive, I do think this reconfiguration of erotic favoritism from dyad to triangle must have to do with the emergence of Henrietta Maria as a kind of conjugal royal favorite after the death of Buckingham.⁶² Depicting the court as a milieu structured by lust and erotic competition derives considerable parodic appeal as an inversion of the language of love used to praise Charles and Henrietta Maria. Shirley and Ford were both associated with the Inns of Court circles in which Davenant also moved in the late 1620s, and here too we can imagine that the taste for edgy political parody has to do in part with the culture of this group.

As *Love's Sacrifice* opens, the favorite Fernando has just returned from some unspecified travels to discover that a great deal has occurred in his absence. Ford is not clear about the chronology of the play's pre-history, but the nature of the questions Fernando asks his associates in the opening

scene suggests that Caraffa's accession to the dukedom and his marriage to Bianca are both fairly recent developments. Much is made here of the duke's amorous impetuosity. We learn (along with the inquisitive Fernando) that Caraffa chose Bianca from the ranks of the mere gentry on the basis of her "enchanted face," and that "no counsel could divert him" from his choice (1.1.108, 120). Though the connection is not made explicitly, I think we are supposed to understand Caraffa's headstrong approach to love as typical of the way he has behaved since coming into power. Petruccio, an old counselor and Fernando's uncle, advises the favorite that Caraffa has been "much altered" since he "held the reigns of state in his own hand" and complains that the duke has become overly fond of associates who will "sooth him in his pleasures" (1.1.92–93). The text of Petruccio's speech seems to be missing some lines in the 1633 quarto, so it is possible that the emphasis on the moral decline of Caraffa's court may originally have been more pointed.⁶³

Though *Love's Sacrifice* lacks the kind of administrative scenes we see in the opening acts of *The Cruel Brother*, it makes similar use of the language of erotic freedom to represent unchecked absolute prerogative. Thus, the duke defends his decision to marry Bianca in terms of his unfettered power to override both laws and counsel:

Though my gray-headed senate in the laws
 Of strict opinion and severe dispute
 Would tie the limits of our free affects,
 Like superstitious Jews, to match with none
 But in a tribe of princes like ourselves.
 Gross-nurtured slaves, who force their wretched souls
 To crouch to profit, nay, for trash and wealth,
 Dote on some crooked or misshapen form,
 Hugging wise nature's lame deformity,
 Begetting creatures ugly as themselves.
 But why should princes doe so, that command
 The store-house of the earths hid minerals?
 No, my Bianca, thou art to me as dear
 As if thy portion had been Europe's riches,
 Since in thine eyes lies more than these are worth.
 Set on. They shall be strangers to my heart
 That envy thee thy Fortunes. Come, Fernando,
 My but divided self, what we have done
 We are only debtor to heaven for. (1.1.179–97)

The question of Bianca's dowry is something of a red herring here, though the basic question of crown finances has its correlative in English political

conflict. What is striking about this speech is the way Caraffa describes his decision to marry Bianca in terms of a conflict between the prerogative of a god-like king (“what we have done / We are only debtor to heaven for”) and the senate’s insistence upon “the laws / Of strict opinion and severe dispute.” This characterization of Caraffa’s controversial marriage choice is designed specifically to remind audiences of tensions between the language of absolute prerogative and the claims of the common law that threatened constitutional consensus during Charles’s reign.⁶⁴

As far as more specific topical resonance is concerned, we might think of Caraffa’s marriage to Bianca as a less than covert recollection of the heated animosities provoked by the marriage negotiations of Charles himself, fusing the memory of the Spanish Match crisis and anti-Catholic animosity concerning Henrietta Maria to the more basic conflict between the duke’s claims of god-like absolutism and the senate’s desire to follow the course of law and custom. I think, though, that the play’s emphasis upon Bianca’s blood status – instead of, say, her religious affiliation – works simultaneously to invoke the rich history of resentment against upstart favorites and, inevitably, the complaints of those who felt that James had elevated Buckingham from obscurity only for his physical beauty. The rise of Buckingham had of course been opposed by many in England’s own “gray-headed senate,” to whom the favorite’s preeminence seemed (among other things) fiscally disastrous.

We can think of Bianca as an upstart favorite, a figure who has achieved prominence by being taken into the king’s bedchamber and bosom despite undistinguished lineage. She is in this sense made parallel with Fernando, who is designated as the duke’s favorite in the list of characters at the start of the text. Ford’s interest in this parallel is suggested, for instance, by the manner in which the duke’s conniving sister Fiormonda describes her brother’s volatile affection, in this case, for his wife:

A Prince, whose eye is chooser to his heart,
Is seldom steady in the lists of love,
Unless the party he affects doe match
His rank in equal portion, or in friends.

(4.I.226–29)

Fiormonda’s gender-neutral phrase “the party he affects” helps confuse the issue, as does the fact that her remarks seem to evoke the emphasis upon social and moral equality in the classical friendship rhetoric that is so frequently deployed to discuss favoritism. It is only later in the exchange, in fact, that the reader can be sure Fiormonda is speaking about Bianca

instead of Fernando. This ambiguity suggests that the play is interested in exploring the problematic rule of “a Prince, whose eye is chooser to his heart” – a perspective from which the duke’s dotting upon Bianca and his love of his favorite Fernando are in fact symmetrical symptoms of his unregulated will.

If Bianca is this play’s upstart, Fernando is in some ways the embodiment of the usurping favorite, another conventional figure from the discourse of favoritism. The stereotype is actually invoked by the scheming D’Avolos, a courtier in service to Fiormonda, who discovers Fernando’s love for Bianca and assumes the worst. He spies on the favorite and presumes that his interest in Bianca means that “the youth aims to be Duke, for he is gotten into the Duke’s seat” (2.3.119–21). Though Fernando’s ambitions are strictly amorous, his seduction is consistently described in the language of political conflict. When first approached, Bianca repels Fernando’s affection as “treason” (2.2.142). A short while later, though, she appears in the favorite’s chamber and declares “Since first mine eyes beheld you, in my heart / You have been only King” (2.4.18–19). This sort of politicized love language is of course quite typical of early modern drama, but it seems to me that *Love’s Sacrifice* is more than usually suffused with rhetoric conflating amorous relations and political service, and I take this to reflect the fact that the play’s central love triangle is actually used to explore a number of interlocking political questions about the prerogative pleasures of rulers and the loyalty of subjects.

Fernando’s seduction of Bianca is set up – in a manner reminiscent of Heywood’s *A Woman Killed With Kindness* (1603) – as the inevitable product of Caraffa’s intense friendship with him.⁶⁵ When Fernando, at the beginning of the play, declares that his highest ambition is “the style of servant” (1.1.140), Caraffa responds as follows:

– Of partner in my Dukedom, in my heart,
 As freely as the privilege of blood
 Hath made them mine. Phillippo and Fernando
 Shall be without distinction. Look, Bianca,
 On this good man. In all respects to him
 Be as to me. Only the name of husband,
 And reverent observance of our bed
 Shall differ us in persons; else in soul
 We are all one. (1.1.141–49)

This love triangle is more interesting than the one in Heywood, though, for it is possible to see the extremity of Caraffa’s love for Fernando as symptomatic of the same brand of amorous absolutism that underwrites his decision to marry Bianca. We see this, for instance, in the way he speaks

about the freedom ensured by the privilege of his blood, a formulation that sounds suspiciously like his rather boastful claim to be above law and senatorial dispute in matters matrimonial. It is a fine thing to give one's heart to a friend, but Caraffa gives half a dukedom with it. That Caraffa is so free with the dukedom over which he is supposed to preside implies a disregard for the public responsibilities that is fully cognate with both his disregard for custom and counsel and with the dangerous tendency toward libertinism that seems to have followed in the wake of his accession. For this reason, though there is no intimation that Caraffa and Fernando are to be understood as erotically linked, I think we can see *Love's Sacrifice* as a Caroline recasting of earlier sodomitical favorite plays in which the erotic passions of the monarch undermine the order of the state. That is to say, we can think of Caraffa's affection for Fernando as sodomitical, but only in the most extended and triangulated sense of that elusive term: it is associated with his unregulated uxorious passions and shown to be politically suspect by analogy.

In order to understand the ideological resonance of Ford's play, I think we need to recognize that the freedom of the duke's affections from law, counsel, or custom is used as a dramatic shorthand to explore the fear – urgent during Charles's personal rule – that dispensing with parliament reduced government to the actions of the king and his favorites. Moreover, I think we can see Ford's hostility to favoritism in terms of his lifelong association with men like William Cavendish, Earl of Newcastle, to whom Ford dedicated *Perkin Warbeck* in 1634, or Cavendish's associate the Earl of Arundel, to whom Ford dedicated his *Honor Triumphant* in 1606.⁶⁶ Newcastle and Arundel shared a nostalgic, aristocratic worldview hostile to court upstarts like Buckingham and inherently suspicious of favoritism as a mechanism for distributing influence.⁶⁷ *Love's Sacrifice* shares this set of values. In fact, the best way to describe the socio-political meaning of the erotic triangle at the center of *Love's Sacrifice* would be to say that the duke's passionate affection, unconstrained by law, counsel, or senate, creates in the world of the play what René Girard would call a crisis of degree: Caraffa's love, in other words, precipitates an erosion of the hierarchies constitutive of public order that threatens to plunge society into a cycle of mimetic rivalry and violence.⁶⁸ This is to say not only that Fernando's seduction of Bianca enacts the logic of mimetic rivalry implicit in the notion that the favorite is the duke's "divided self," but more broadly that Caraffa's love, in elevating both Bianca and Fernando beyond their respective stations, is felt to authorize a complete disregard of the institutions and hierarchies constitutive of traditional and clearly differentiated social order.

This is suggested at the beginning of Act 5, when Bianca – sounding rather like Caraffa’s speech on the laws of strict opinion – asks Fernando “why should the laws / The iron laws of Ceremony, bar / Mutual embraces” (5.I.5–7). Since Bianca is already married, this is a question that Ford’s audience would have had no difficulty answering. We are not supposed to agree with Bianca here so much as to be surprised by the radical tenor of her rationalizations. The mimetic logic of Bianca’s shocking self-justification is made explicit a few moments later, when she is finally confronted by her angry husband. Accused of adultery, Bianca defends her scandalous behavior by comparison with Caraffa’s own “free affects”:

I know what you would say now.
 You would fain tell me how exceeding much
 I am beholding to you, that vouchsafed
 Me, from a simple gentlewoman’s place,
 The honour of your bed. ’Tis true, you did;
 But why? ’Twas but because you thought I had
 A spark of beauty more then you had seen.
 To answer this, my reason is the like.
 The selfsame appetite which led you on
 To marry me, led me to love your friend.

(5.I.87–96)

We can see the political implications of this remarkable claim when Bianca, in the same scene, asks her husband “Can you imagine, sir, the name of Duke / Could make . . . / . . . such an untrimmed beard / As yours, fit for a Ladies pleasure” (5.I.72–76)? The point here is not only that Bianca dispenses with wedlock – an institution that is obviously crucial to the maintenance of a social order built on blood lineage – but that she simultaneously reduces “the name of Duke” to a curt “sir.” This massive disregard for degree is precipitated in the play by Caraffa’s personal rule, but its ultimate result is to desacralize dukedom.

Though Fernando never makes the case as explicitly, he too mimics his royal master in placing the demands of love before custom and the law. This is clearest in the play’s outrageously melodramatic and campy finale, after Caraffa has killed Bianca. Fernando haunts her funeral dressed in his own winding sheet and rebukes Caraffa when the duke approaches his dead wife’s tomb:

Forbear! What art thou that dost rudely press
 Into the confines of forsaken graves?
 Has death no privilege? Com’st thou, Caraffa,
 To practise yet a rape upon the dead?

(5.3.57–60)

Fernando, authorized by love, claims possession of Bianca's body and castigates her husband as an interloper. This inverts charges that should more conventionally be leveled at Fernando himself, the original traitor to friendship who seduced Bianca and in so doing pressed into the confines of his friend's marriage bed. Insofar as rape could still be understood as a property crime committed by one man against another, it is Fernando who is the original rapist here. The point, I think, is that the absoluteness of the erstwhile favorite's love claim, its disregard for pre-existing institutions, mirrors the absolutist style of Caraffa's uxoriousness.

I think we can see the crisis of degree inaugurated by Caraffa as both the play's main concern and its impasse. For after Bianca's spirited self-defense – the emotional high-water mark of the play – *Love's Sacrifice* becomes increasingly farcical. Caraffa stabs Bianca, declaring “here's blood for lust and sacrifice for wrong” (5.1.173), and we might conceptualize this gesture, in Girardian terms, as the duke's attempt to alleviate the play's mimetic crisis by scapegoating Bianca. But this is only the first of love's sacrifices, and as they pile up it becomes increasingly clear that none of them is adequate to resolve the play's larger crisis of degree. Fernando persuades Caraffa of Bianca's innocence – an argument given in powerfully sentimental terms but one with which the audience cannot fully agree – and there follows the melodramatic denouement at Bianca's tomb. There, Caraffa attempts to offer up “the sacrifice / Of bleeding tears” (5.3.42–43) for slaughtering an innocent, only to be interrupted by Fernando, who excoriates him, takes poison, and dies. Undeterred, the duke prepares to kill himself, leaving instructions that seem to miss the whole point of what has taken place: “Lodge me, my wife, and this unequalled friend / All in one monument” (5.3.104–05). This too is a sacrificial gesture, though a grotesque one in the context of the moral uncertainty surrounding all parties involved: “Caraffa, in revenge of wrongs to her, / Thus on her Altar sacrificed his life” (5.3.115016). With this, he stabs himself.

In the plot's final twist, Fiormonda, who has been wooed throughout by a disguised nobleman named Roseilli, accepts him and so elevates him to the dukedom. Roseilli orders a monument made for the three deceased lovers, orders the punishment of the Machiavellian D'Avolos, and then, turning to his new bride, declares:

I here dismiss

The mutual comforts of our marriage bed.
 Learn to new-live; my vows unmoved shall stand;
 And since your life hath been so much uneven,
 Bethink, in time, to make your peace with heaven.

(5.3.156–60)

This is the play's final sacrifice – the sacrifice of conjugal love – and it makes dramatic sense primarily as a reversal of Caraffa's uxoriousness. It seems to promise that Roseilli will not be the same sort of besotted, pleasure-seeking duke as his predecessor. As a series of concluding gestures, though, these actions remain problematic. The difficulty, as some of the play's bewildered critics have pointed out, is that none of these final moral attributions really square with the story that has unfolded.⁶⁹ For the monumental innocence attributed to Bianca and Fernando is an awkward fit at best, and D'Avolos and Fiormonda, though they have been schemers, can hardly be made into suitable scapegoats for the conflicting desires of the main protagonists. Moreover, the rapidity with which love's sacrifices accumulate at the end has the rhythm of farce, and this helps to undermine the kind of closure Roseilli's prim final gestures might suggest.

The most interesting discussions of *Love's Sacrifice*, in fact, have called attention to the play's massive allusiveness and to the way in which it creates dissonant or ironic effects by telescoping together incompatible dramatic conventions drawn from different genres.⁷⁰ Though the ironic reversal of convention is a regular feature of Jacobean and Caroline drama, I think we can understand Ford's rather extreme use of this artistic strategy as the formal correlative to the crisis of undifferentiation that takes over the world of the play, both because it is literally true that the play is constructed by collapsing together conventions normally differentiated, but also because the problems of moral judgment created by this experimental approach to representation correspond with the moral uncertainty that attends Caraffa's disregard of custom and law within the world of the play. Caraffa provides Fernando and Bianca with a language of untrammelled liberty in love that enables them to dispense with customary morality. This generates a crisis of judgment that is recreated as an experience for the audience in the dissonant ironies of the play's quasi-farcical conclusion.

We can see the odd conclusion of *Love's Sacrifice* as an intentional exaggeration of the kind of unease created by the pat conclusion of *The Loyal Subject*. This would instantiate Kathleen McLuskie's general observation that Ford's plays "depend upon and rework the Fletcherian mode . . . into an infinite regression of act and counteract, convention and reversed convention."⁷¹ On the one hand, the play trots out several of the conventional concluding gestures that we have seen used to salvage monarchy in earlier plays. Blaming D'Avolos for court corruption is not unlike the punishment of Perin (instead of Philarchus) at the end of *A Knack To Know A Knave*, for instance. And Roseilli's rejection of Fiormonda is reminiscent of the scene in *Charlemagne* where Turpin hands the ring to the emperor

and tells him “hencfourthe onlye love your royall selfe.” But these gestures, in the context of the farcical and dissonant conclusion of *Love’s Sacrifice*, seem like parodies too. And so instead of providing closure, they underscore the moral and political instability opened up by the “free effects” of Caraffa’s affection for his bosom partners. With these intentionally awkward concluding gestures stripped away, the play’s basic ideological contention seems to be that a ruler who dispenses with custom and counsel and chooses instead to follow affection is (a) a tyrant and (b) undermining the very traditions and institutions necessary to underpin his authority. The tonal dissonance of the play’s conclusion reflects a degree of discomfort with what is finally a fairly radical dismantling of Caraffa’s claim to absolute political freedom. Instead of backing away from its analysis of the dangers of personal rule by attempting earnestly to recuperate royal (or ducal) authority, *Love’s Sacrifice* attempts to retreat by dissolving itself into a pastiche of tragedy.

Love’s Sacrifice shares with *The Cruel Brother* an anatomy of court corruption that begins with the ruler’s overly passionate personal affections and moves outward. This willingness to blame the ruler for the corrupting effects of favoritism elaborates and clarifies the radical potential of earlier plays, in which blame is placed upon the sovereign’s unruly desires and then uneasily shifted back to his evil ministers and courtiers. It is not simply coincidence, I think, that this trajectory roughly parallels the larger breakdown of constitutional consensus described by Glenn Burgess and others.⁷² Figurations of erotic favoritism imagine the ruler imposing the will of his desires upon the political sphere to the detriment of customary institutions, and so they are useful for encoding anxieties about the expansion of absolute prerogative. We might think of these plays and others like them as participating in this larger trajectory both in that they take their cues from current concerns and also because they render these concerns in terms of a symbolic vocabulary – the language of tyrannizing passion – accessible on an emotional level without reference to constitutional niceties.

The Elizabethan and early Jacobean plays we have looked at here betray a self-evidently anxious ambivalence about favoritism as an institution for the expression of the king’s political will, but they tend to find resolution in the expulsion of corrupt favorites, the reconciliation of rulers with loyal subjects, and the celebration of what Fletcher conceives of as proper princely love extended to all subjects. Perin, Ganelon and Boroskie are out, Honesty, Orlando, Turpin, Archas, and Burris are in. But the anxiety about royal will expressed by figurations of erotic favoritism in these plays is also real. The

more radical use of the trope of erotic favoritism in plays like *The Cruel Brother* and *Love's Sacrifice* has to do with the Caroline exacerbation of long-standing anxieties about the expansion of prerogative and the resulting encroachment upon liberties secured by the ancient constitution.

In *A Knack To Know A Knave*, Edgar is committed from the play's opening exchange to enforcing the laws of the realm. His swarming sinfulness leads him astray, but it is clear that his own notions of royal authority, like those of the play as a whole, are predicated upon the idea that a king rules in accordance with the law. In *Love's Sacrifice*, by contrast, Caraffa boasts of his freedom from the law, and seems (like Davenant's duke) to conceive of the authority of his position largely in terms of his freedom from constraint. That is to say, the free rein given to potentially tyrannical passion is built into the conception of authority expressed in these Caroline plays rather than being conceived of, as in earlier examples, as a disruption of it. The more radical tenor of these Caroline plays has to do, certainly, with the example of Buckingham, whose controversial career ensured the centrality of favoritism to English thinking about tyranny and corruption even after his assassination. But as *Love's Sacrifice* itself makes abundantly clear, this change also relates to anxieties stemming first from the rhetorical emphasis that Charles placed upon absolute prerogative and then from his troubling decision to rule without parliament.

The specter of the all-powerful favorite necessarily involves anxiety about the minimization of other competing institutions like the privy counsel or the parliament, and so it is useful to recall John Guy's observation that the tension between the idea that kings take counsel from intimate friends and the idea that they should receive guidance from some representative body is built into the English political imagination and predates the period under discussion here.⁷³ As is so often the case in early modern discourse, the tension between the two notions of counsel is a workable one, creating a balance between the king's freedom to distribute office and influence and the parliament's freedom to object to the resulting grievances. Honesty's counsel replaces Perin's and supplements the kind of cabinet counsel with which *A Knack To Know A Knave* opens. Dorido's call for "Councillors of State" at the end of *The Cruel Brother* reminds us (though only as an afterthought) that the bedchamber should not be the only venue for consultation. Concern with institutional balance is made more explicit in Ford's play, when Caraffa complains that the "gray-headed senate in the laws / Of strict opinion and severe dispute, / Would tie the limits of our free affects."

Transferring blame from evil counselor to monarch, though, dismantles the ad hoc balance achieved between these competing ideas of counsel and service. If the king is to blame for corrupt favoritism, then it is no longer possible to imagine reform in terms of the elimination of grievances within a system structured by the king's fountain-like generosity. Asserting the countervailing importance of the "gray-headed senate" in this case means pruning the prerogatives that allow the corrupt king to select and empower his ministers. The pace at which blame for corruption was shifted from ministers to king accelerated under Charles for a number of reasons, among them both his staunch defense of Buckingham and the fact that Buckingham's eventual death solved so little.⁷⁴ Since erotic figurations of favor foster this transfer of blame from minister to monarch, I think we can see all of these plays – and the popular habits of thought they reflect and explore – as participants in this larger erosion of balance.

Love's Sacrifice, taking its critique of Caraffa's affections a step further, seems to anticipate the logic of the Grand Remonstrance by suggesting that these affections require oversight by the gray-headed senate. Of course, this idea was not plucked out of thin air by disgruntled parliamentarians in 1641 either. In Strode's *The Floating Island*, performed in 1636, the rebellious passions decide not to expel the recorder Memor from the court of Fancy, for they know that his mastery of precedent can help legitimate their rebellious plans. Memor, to earn his keep, dredges up the precedent of the Provisions of Oxford established by Simon de Montfort during the reign of Henry III:

Twelve Peers

Under Pretense of evil Officers
 And grand abuses, were selected out,
 Strengthen'd with Lawes to prune Prerogatives,
 To tutour and reform the State; to seize
 The kings expense, and to appoint him Servants,
 Both menial and forinsecal.⁷⁵

Since Strode's play parodies contemporary rebelliousness, it would seem that the idea of pruning prerogatives by overseeing the king's service was very much in the air during Charles's personal rule. Ford's play, of course, takes exactly the opposite position to Strode's, treating the prerogatives of the duke's heart, rather than the desire to prune them, as the product of unruly and ultimately destructive passions.

I think we can see these two plays – *Love's Sacrifice* and *The Floating Island* – as markers of opposing sides in an ongoing argument about the

legitimacy of personal favoritism that came to a head during the period of Charles's personal rule. This argument, crucially, is carried out in unofficial discourses as well as in sites of more overt political debate. Moreover, the fascination manifested in all of these plays with the dark corners of authority and, more specifically, with the connection between the unregulated passions of the ruler and the corruption fostered by his intimates, makes it possible to recognize meaningful continuities between this Caroline argument and longstanding tensions concerning the politics of intimacy. The appeal of plays like *A Knack To Know A Knave*, *Charlemagne*, and *The Loyal Subject* – plays that strike an uneasy balance between blaming the ruler for the corruption of his intimates and displacing blame onto corrupt ministers – lies in the fact that they ask an important question about the nature of personal monarchy. The appeal of plays like *The Cruel Brother* and *Love's Sacrifice*, by contrast, lies in the rather radical answers they supply.

*“What pleased the prince”: Edward II and the
imbalanced constitution*

The plays discussed in chapter 5 use the trope of erotic incontinence to figure favoritism as the representative symptom of tyranny, a perspective that re-imagines the favorite as the vehicle by which the king’s unruly will asserts itself. This is why so many of the early modern English fictions dealing with corrupt favoritism as erotic desire are set in what to the English were the symbolic locations of absolutist excess: France, Muscovy, imperial Rome, Catholic Italian dukedoms, the Muslim east. Such stories can of course be intensely topical for English audiences interested in favoritism or absolutism, but they deal with imagined states that are understood to be crucially unlike England, with its native liberties and balanced constitution. The central native exemplum of passionate and corrupting favoritism, for late Elizabethan and early Stuart writers, is clearly the tale of the reign, deposition, and murder of King Edward II.

The story is utterly ubiquitous in the period’s controversial political writing, where it serves as a highly contested precedent for arguments about the nature and limitations of English monarchy, and it is perhaps the most frequently retold political fable of the era as well. The best-known version is of course Christopher Marlowe’s (c. 1591–92) but we also have significant recastings of the story by Michael Drayton (who produced several long poems about Edward’s reign in different modes), Richard Niccols (who added a narrative of the life of Edward II to the *Mirror For Magistrates* collection in 1610), Francis Hubert (whose long verse history of Edward’s life and death underwent a number of significant revisions between its original composition in the 1590s and its eventual printing in 1628 and 1629), and Elizabeth Cary (who composed a Tacitean history of the Edward II story as a way to comment upon political controversy c. 1627).¹

We can begin to understand the native significance of the Edward II story – and hence its fascination for English writers and readers – by noting that it activates a fundamental anxiety about absolutism that is built into the way English men and women thought about personal monarchy

within the balanced constitution. Thomas Smith's mid-Elizabethan treatise *De Republica Anglorum* (printed posthumously in 1583) is instructive in this regard, for its account of England's polity is implicitly contrasted with absolutist regimes presided over by "kinges of Fraunce, and certaine Princes of Italie and other places." These monarchs have attracted domestic opposition, Smith suggests, because they "make & abrogate lawes and edictes, lay on tributs and impositions of their own will, or by their private Counsell and advise of their friends and favorites only, without consent of the people."² By contrast, Smith's England is something like a monarchical republic (in Patrick Collinson's useful phrase), a state in which the absolute powers accorded to the king in many areas coexist with and are balanced by parliament and customary law.³ This balance is supposed to safeguard England against absolutist excess. And yet, as Thomas May argued in his *Discourse Concerning the Successe of Former Parliaments* (1642), even the balanced English constitution cannot guard against the potential abuses of corrupted royal will: "For," he notes, "in everie Monarchy, how limited soever, the Prince his person is invested with so much Majestie, that it would seeme a mockerie in State, if there were no considerable power entrusted into his hands; yea, so much as that, if he be bad or weak, he may endanger the ruine of the Kingdome."⁴

The story of Edward II, as told and retold throughout the late Elizabethan and early Stuart period, anticipates May's concerns. For King Edward's overpassionate affection for his favorites is typically represented as a personal weakness that manifests itself in the over-extension of royal prerogative, the overriding of the customary limits placed upon personal monarchy within the English tradition. The idea of favoritism run amok always holds out the threat that the king's will might be extended to the point where it alone determines the composition of the public sphere. As a precedent, therefore, the Edward II story invokes a profound ambivalence about the nature of personal monarchy that is part of the legacy of mixed government as (in Sir John Fortescue's famous phrase) "*dominium politicum et regale*."⁵ This ambivalence, as Fortescue helps us see, is the product of a real tension between traditional monarchical habits of thought and notions about the limits of personal rule that stem, ultimately, from book three of Aristotle's *Politics*. On the one hand, Fortescue celebrates the English monarchy in personal terms. Especially in *De Laudibus Legum Angliae*, which is framed as a dialogue between an aged chancellor and an English prince of conspicuously "noble disposition," his writing about kingship features a rhetoric of sentimental royalism that is conventional enough.⁶ On the other hand, his justifications for the limits placed on monarchy are derived from that

portion of the *Politics* (1286a–1288b) that discusses the relative virtues of absolute monarchy (“under which the king governs all men according to his own will”) and an impersonal rule of law.⁷ The latter is superior, for Aristotle, because it makes it possible to sidestep the human frailties and passions that inevitably undermine personal rule: “He therefore that recommends that the law shall govern seems to recommend that God and reason alone shall govern, but he that would have man govern adds a wild animal also; for appetite is like a wild animal, and also passion warps the rule even of the best men. Therefore the law is wisdom without desire.”⁸

Aristotle’s formulation underscores a hostility toward desire that is more muted in Fortescue, though clearly present in the latter’s suspicion of the tyrannous potential of continental absolutism in which “what pleased the prince has the force of law.”⁹ Eroticized fictions of favor, we might say, render explicit the relationship between “what pleased the prince” and Aristotle’s “wild animal” passion. Insofar as the English tradition described by Fortescue is supposed to provide a stay against the personal tyranny of the king’s unruly will, political power vested in the favorite as passionate love object should be the very antithesis of the well-regulated monarchy proscribed by native custom. But the story of Edward II is also a story about the native tradition, of course: seen in these terms, it begins to look like a fable about the over-extension of royal prerogative and the resulting precariousness of the monarchical republic.

Because it always weighs the king’s misrule against the rebellion of his peers, the story is also a particularly rich template with which to explore all the consequences of political imbalance. In this regard, the tale is a deeply ambiguous one: it can always be told either as a story about the tyrannical or absolutist potential of unbridled royal will or as a story of treason and rebellion. Edward, as most commentators agreed, was intemperate in his affection for Gaveston and Hugh Spencer and overextended his prerogative dangerously by concentrating too much state power in the hands of his own minions. And yet the rebellion of the peers is frequently treated as an exemplum of political intemperance too, a story not only of rebellion but of secret political assassination. This dark symmetry is one key reason for the story’s centrality to so many of the period’s political debates: it can be used to bolster contradictory, competing constitutional positions since it is at once illustrative of the crying need for limits on kings and of the unruliness of those who would impose them. Those writers, from Marlowe on, who take up this historical material tend to be interested not only in the overextension of prerogative, therefore, but in the over-reaching of subjects as well. The reversibility of the story’s moral makes it the period’s

preeminent literary vehicle for thinking about the contested and shifting balance between prerogative and its limitations within the English tradition.

Not coincidentally, interest in the Edward II story peaks during the periods when English observers were most likely to be concerned with the expansion of royal prerogative and with related shifts in constitutional balance: the 1590s and the 1620s. The former period, as historians like John Guy and J. P. Somerville have argued, saw a marked shift of emphasis in the language of state away from monarchical republicanism and toward more extreme formulations of divine right and imperial prerogative.¹⁰ The latter decade, of course, saw the complete breakdown of relations between the crown and parliament and a climate of political paranoia within which it was easy to fear that continental absolutism had indeed come to England. It is the central argument of this chapter that versions of the Edward II story produced during these periods are designed to capitalize on interest in questions of prerogative and imbalance, and that ambitious retellings of this story by Marlowe, Hubert, and Cary in particular capture contemporary ways of responding to the resulting ideological dissonance.

It needs to be said at the outset that the versions of the Edward II story produced in the 1620s – Cary’s history and the final version of Hubert’s poem – have everything to do with the controversy surrounding the Duke of Buckingham, James’s last and Charles’s only great favorite. To many, Buckingham seemed the second coming of Edward’s favorites, and so there is a kind of immediate urgency of application to late Jacobean or early Caroline versions of the Edward II story that is unlike versions of the Edward II story produced earlier. By contrast, the end of Elizabeth’s reign is not a period dominated by a figure like a Leicester (who died in 1588) or a Buckingham: there is no single figure commonly imagined as an all-powerful favorite holding the queen in thrall. There is considerable factionalism and dissatisfaction, of course, and there is some smattering of gossip about Elizabeth and Essex, but paranoia about the political domination of a corrupt court focused predominantly, in this period, on the idea of a *regnum Cecilianum* and on the image of Lord Burghley and his son Robert Cecil as upstart traitors hostile to tradition and degree. In fact, the Catholic libel entitled *A declaration of the true causes of the great troubles, presupposed to be intended against the realme of England*, circulated in England in 1592, briefly rehearses the Leicester legend but then dismisses the earl as a tool of the more cunning Burghley.¹¹ And, as a stirring culmination to a catalogue of Burghley’s crimes against the state, the author of this piece compares him unfavorably to “the Spencers, Peeter of Gaverstone [*sic*], or any other that ever abused either Prince or people.”¹² Though paranoia about the Cecil faction could

be accommodated to these precedents in a pinch, the fit seems awkward at best. Nobody really thought of either Burghley or Cecil as intimate affective favorites of the queen along the lines of Gaveston.

This means that the Edward II story could circulate in the 1590s without being read as a *roman-à-clef*: it touches on constitutional concerns that are relevant to Elizabeth, but it does so in a coded manner that distances the material from direct application to the virgin queen. We might say, as a way of clarifying this distinction, that the story relates to the late Elizabethan moment as precedent rather than as topical analog. In the 1620s, though, the story is inevitably about Buckingham, so the tale is then legible as both precedent and analog. One result of this is that we can use the literary history of the story of Edward II in order to interrogate the figural inheritance with which English observers perceived and constructed the Buckingham phenomenon: it seems to me that the duke is conceptualized in relation to the favorites of Edward II in part *because* his controversial career gives rise to the same cluster of constitutional concerns associated with the legend of Edward II in Elizabethan writing. This would mean that a careful reading of the ideological concerns encoded in versions of the Edward II story penned at these two conflicted moments in English political history might help us recognize and describe a real thread of continuity between the dissonance of the late Elizabethan period and the more dramatic breakdown of consensus on display in the 1620s.

MARLOWE'S *EDWARD II* AND THE POLITICS OF PASSION IN THE SECOND REIGN OF ELIZABETH I

Christopher Marlowe's *Edward II* is of course only one of numerous chronicle history plays produced and consumed in the period – from roughly the late 1580s until 1603 – that John Guy has named “the second reign of Elizabeth I.”¹³ It does not seem like too much a stretch to suggest that the popularity of such stories had something to do with the shifts of emphasis within the official language of monarchy and prerogative recently described (once again) by Guy: “whereas in the 1560s and 1570s the doctrine of ‘mixed polity’ was the prevailing orthodoxy in political discourse, by the 1590s careerists were advancing the thesis that Elizabeth possessed an ‘imperial’ sovereignty, that she alone enacted the laws, and that she herself was above the law by the prerogative of her *imperium*.”¹⁴ After all, chronicle plays revisit the contested and ambiguous precedents in the native tradition of rule, and Marlowe's, in particular, seems to offer up a condensed and exaggerated version of the tension between these competing conceptions of

royal authority as embodied in the ideological conflict between the king and his peers.¹⁵

If we want to be precise about how the shifting language of prerogative resonates in popular literature, however, it will be important to recognize that there is more going on than simply a reaction to stringent notions of royal prerogative imposed from the top down. Indeed, the forceful-sounding articulations of prerogative that Guy points toward are in many cases responding to strains of Catholic or Calvinist resistance theory, and these are kept alive regardless of orthodoxy by the very real dissatisfactions of the period. We might then think of expanded notions of prerogative in the 1590s as one key aspect of a much larger dissonance concerning the nature and extent of royal authority at the end of Elizabeth's reign. We can see how Marlowe's play dovetails with contemporary constitutional unease by considering the play in tandem with the notorious treatise *A Conference About the Next Succession to the Crown of England*, which was composed by the Jesuit Robert Parsons in late 1593, printed in Antwerp, and then circulated (under the *nom de plume* Doleman) in England in 1595.¹⁶ This piece, which appeared in England a few years after the composition of Marlowe's *Edward II*, was aggressively suppressed and probably helped to discredit the theories of limited monarchy upon which its argument rests. But since the theories of imperial prerogative described by Guy were intended to rebut the sorts of assertions about kingship articulated by Parsons, we can think of this tract as a representative text within the larger ideological dissonance surrounding conceptions of royal authority at the start of the 1590s.¹⁷ I make this connection therefore not because I want to read *Edward II* as a succession tract, but rather because the argument presented in *A Conference* encapsulates the manner in which anxieties about succession open onto larger constitutional questions about prerogative that are interrogated in the figure of Marlowe's besotted king.

Though it is not especially prominent, the Edward II story crops up in Parsons's book, as in a number of other succession tracts, in the context of a sustained discussion of deposed English kings.¹⁸ The larger purpose of these rehearsals of precedent is to prove that the English people can in fact elect and depose kings. In Parsons, therefore, the specific purpose is to suggest that they might elect a Catholic successor upon Elizabeth's death, and we might here recall Mortimer Junior's eagerness, in Marlowe's play, to depose Edward "and elect another king."¹⁹ Parsons couches his arguments about election, though, within a general discussion of the relationship between king and law that actually sounds a great deal like Fortescue or other theorists of mixed government. Glossing

Aristotle (who is named in the text and cited in the margin), Parsons writes:

a Prince ruling by law is more then a man, or a man deified, and a Prince ruling by affections, is lesse then a man, or a man brutified. In an other place also the same philosopher sayeth that a Prince that leaveth law and ruleth himselfe & others by his own appetite and affections, *of al creatures is the worst and of al beasts is the most furious and dangerous*, for that nothing is so outrageous, as injustice armed, and no armor is so strong, as witt and authority, wherof the first he hath in that he is a man, and the other in that he is a Prince.²⁰

Because the law is dispassionate, it is a necessary check against the bestial affections of a king. It follows that the law must be above the king. This in turn implies that there are national imperatives that supercede blood legitimacy and so authorizes the text's subsequent investigation into the legitimacy of election as a means of securing a successor. As outraged responses to *A Conference* make clear, part of the subversive power of Parsons's argument stems from its resemblance to the familiar, orthodox language of the balanced constitution, a resemblance which makes it seem as if the tract's radical conclusion emerges out of consensual, conservative principles. It treats England as a monarchical republic but pursues the implications of this constitutional model much further than was generally acceptable.²¹

These kinds of constitutional issues seem to have been very much in the air *circa* 1591–93, and they are central to Marlowe's play as well. For *Edward II* not only stages a well-known instance of deposition, but it explores conflicts surrounding prerogative by dramatizing (in Parsons's terms) a Prince who "ruleth himselfe & others by his own appetite and affections." Reading *Edward II* alongside *A Conference*, in other words, illustrates the play's contemporary ideological investments by laying bare the associative link between the problem of royal affection and theoretical questions concerning prerogative, tyranny, and resistance. Hence the importance of favoritism to Marlowe's play. Unlike Shakespeare's *Richard II*, where opposition to Bushy, Bagot, and Green seems tacked on, a retroactive justification for a conflict being waged for other reasons, controversy over affective favoritism is itself the very essence of debate about the nature and limits of monarchy in *Edward II*.

Marlowe's interest in the meaning of erotic favoritism undoubtedly has a great deal to do with the sodomitical libel surrounding the minions of Henri III of France in the 1580s, material with which the author of *The Massacre at Paris* was demonstrably familiar.²² At the same time, the way Marlowe uses favoritism to think about prerogative owes something

to *Leicester's Commonwealth*, a text that lies behind the vivid characterization of Gaveston in the first half of the play. We can see Marlowe's frame of reference in the opening scene of *Edward II*, when Gaveston describes the entertainments he plans to sponsor for his "pliant king" (I.I.52):

in the day, when he shall walk abroad
 Like sylvan nymphs my pages shall be clad,
 My men, like satyrs grazing on the lawns,
 Shall with their goat-feet dance an antic hay.
 Sometime a lovely boy in Dian's shape,
 With hair that gilds the water as it glides,
 Crownets of pearl about his naked arms,
 And in his sportful hands an olive tree
 To hide those parts which men delight to see,
 Shall bathe him in a spring; and there, hard by,
 One like Actaeon, peeping through the grove,
 Shall by the angry goddess be transformed,
 And, running in the likeness of an hart,
 By yelping hounds pulled down, and seem to die.
 Such things as these best please his majesty.

(I.I.56–70)

The comparatively sober-sounding opening lines, as Bruce Smith has argued, would likely have evoked for Marlowe's audience the genre and style of the lavish entertainments staged for Queen Elizabeth by the Earl of Leicester at Kenilworth in 1575, a famous extravaganza featuring characters drawn from the same basic register of mythological romance figures. But, as Smith likewise suggests, the insistently erotic tone of this account, and in particular the teasingly nebulous sexual appeal of the boy-as-Diana, would also have invoked Suetonius's account of the emperor Tiberius's pastimes on the island of Capri: the emperor "devised in the woods . . . and groves here and there, certaine places for lecherie and venereous Acts: wherein he had within caves and holow rockes youthes of both sexes standing at receipt readie prostitute, in habit of *Paniskes* [Pans] and *Nymphes*."²³

This doubly allusive opening introduces the relationship between Gaveston and Edward II by placing it within a complex, comparative framework. We are invited to think of Gaveston simultaneously in terms of the Earl of Leicester – Elizabeth's controversial favorite who had died in 1588 – and in terms of Sejanus – Tiberius's favorite, the man responsible for arranging his retreat to Capri. The effect of this is to hint at a kind of continuum between Sejanus, Gaveston, and Leicester, and thus to evoke a comparison

between the staged Gaveston and the well-known image of Leicester as a Sejanus-like figure of corrupt favoritism. Marlowe's Gaveston thus emerges, as it were, from the pages of *Leicester's Commonwealth*, the widely read and hugely influential libel responsible for consolidating the black legend of Leicester, which in fact compared the earl to both Gaveston and Sejanus.²⁴ That is to say, the charismatic favorite who commands the stage in Act 1, Scene 1 of Marlowe's *Edward II* would likely have stirred memories not so much of Leicester himself as of the idea of Leicester as a figure comparable to Sejanus: the image of Leicester conjured up in libels produced on behalf of blue-blooded Catholic aristocrats resentful of the power and influence garnered by prominent Protestant courtiers.

In Marlowe's play, too, vehement opposition to the royal favorite is specifically represented as the product of a disgruntled Catholic aristocracy. It is no coincidence that the initial conflict between Edward and his peers in Act 1 of *Edward II* should so prominently involve the favorite's mistreatment of the Bishop of Coventry. This, as catalyst, frames the play's conflict over favoritism in terms of a larger clash between the crown's authority and that of the Catholic church. Canterbury, as legate to the Pope, threatens in Act 1 to dissolve the bonds of loyalty that tie the peers to their king unless Gaveston is banished. Edward is forced to capitulate, though he complains bitterly about the reach of the Pope's authority in a speech that seems calculated to appeal to an audience's Protestant nationalism ("Why should a king be subject to a priest" [1.4.96]). What we see, then, as the play's basic quarrel takes shape around the question of Gaveston's status, is a structuring conflict between an upstart royal favorite representing the king's personal desires and an outraged Catholic peerage eager to see their king adhere to more traditional hierarchies of blood and status. For Marlowe's audience this basic conflict would have had a familiar ring to it. The play effectively recasts its fourteenth-century story in such a way as to make it resonate, especially in the opening scenes, with attacks on court favoritism forged in recent Catholic libels.

But the anonymous author of *Leicester's Commonwealth* is committed to maintaining at least a superficial rhetoric of loyalty to the crown. That libel praises the queen even as it treats her catastrophic affection for Leicester as destructive of the traditional bonds that should knit the social fabric and cement the connection between the monarch and her realm. In other words, *Leicester's Commonwealth* purports to attack the favorite out of loyalty to the crown even though it contains a radical critique of the queen's own personal affection. Marlowe, though, lampoons this evasiveness by having his peers harbor violent intentions while professing to be the defenders of

a traditional political consensus. “My lord,” asks Lancaster in the opening scene, “why do you . . . incense your peers, / That naturally would love and honour you” (1.1.98–99)? Mortimer Junior, equally conventionally, speaks of his “burning zeal / To mend the king” (1.4.256–57) as if he was motivated to oppose Gaveston not by ambition but by selfless duty to the person of the king.

These rhetorical gestures and the values that they rest on are very much part of the political orthodoxy of the day, so I think we are supposed to be shocked by the rapidity with which hostility toward Gaveston gives way to threats of overt violence against the king himself. In the play’s very first scene Mortimer Junior hints that he will take up arms against the “brainsick king” (1.1.124), and in the following one he seems to startle Canterbury with his suggestion that “the king shall lose his crown”: the archbishop responds with a hasty, nervous-sounding reminder not to take up “swords against the king” (1.2.59, 61). Later, when Canterbury threatens papal action against the king, Mortimer Junior jumps at the suggestion as a pretext for deposition: “Curse him if he refuse, and then may we / Depose him and elect another king” (1.4.54–55). The pattern is repeated at the end of Act 1, when Gaveston is recalled from exile by consent of Isabella and the peers. The language of reciprocated political affection is re-invoked – “courageous Lancaster, embrace thy king” (1.4.339) – only to be undercut when Mortimer and Lancaster brashly invite the king’s wrath by designing emblems openly hostile to Gaveston for the revels celebrating the favorite’s return (2.2.15–35).

The nearly instantaneous collapse of consensus in Marlowe’s play is attributed, I think, to a fundamental semantic confusion in the world of the play over the political meaning of the word “love.” The whole play turns on the ambiguities built into the language of political affection, for love names both the political reciprocity that the peers point to as natural and the affection of the king for his favorites that they so violently reject. In a sense, the play’s entire conflict is encapsulated in Mortimer Senior’s request to the king in Act 1: “If you love us, my lord, hate Gaveston” (1.1.79). This remark of course conflates two very different models of affection. The king’s love for Gaveston, whatever else it may be, is resolutely specific and personal. That is, it has everything to do with the way the two specific people feel about each other and it is manifested politically in terms of a special intimacy that entails access and reward not made available to others regardless of social position. Mortimer Senior, though, asks Edward instead to distribute wealth and influence on the basis of love for a class of people – the peers – in which specific personalities are subordinated

to group identity.²⁵ Indeed, since Mortimer Senior's idea of love describes the unchanging duty of a king toward his most important subjects, he is here proposing in effect the total subordination of the idiosyncrasies of personal affection in favor of a resolutely public relationship predetermined by pedigree and tradition. Ambiguity surrounding the significance of the king's love thus adumbrates the constitutional questions that lie at the heart of the play's inquiry into personal monarchy, for though Mortimer Senior uses the language of personal affection he is in effect asking the king to suppress inwardness, to rule instead transparently and in full accordance with the canons of public justice and duty prescribed from without by blood and custom.

Framing the play's antagonisms in this way brings out the radical implications finessed in *Leicester's Commonwealth*, extrapolating and generalizing from that text's attack on a specific favorite to a deeper interrogation of the problematic nature of personal affection as an aspect of government. The play is fascinated by the way that the uncertain, contested meaning of the king's "love" opens onto a set of incompatible ideas about the nature of the polity. Violent conflict erupts largely because the ideologies that depend upon these competing ideas of royal love are in fact incompatible. The peers want their king to be without personal will, a vision that owes something to Fortescue's account of kingship but that is here taken to an impossible extreme: a king who rules only according to the kind of impersonal love recommended by Mortimer Senior is at best a kind of puppet or cipher and so Edward is quite right to be outraged by the implications of the attacks on Gaveston in Act 1. As numerous critics have suggested, the king's love for Gaveston is seen by the peers as sodomitical because it is socially disorderly, disruptive of the traditional hierarchies of blood which they understand as fundamental to the social order of the realm.²⁶

Edward thinks of kingship as inherently personal and thus sees no reason why the politics of intimacy should be banished from the public sphere. When Gaveston's rank is publicly challenged by the resentful peers in Act 1, Scene 2, Edward responds fiercely: "Were he a peasant, being my minion, / I'll make the proudest of you stoop to him" (1.4.30–31). Though perhaps foolhardy in practice, this stance asserts an important and constitutionally valid claim about the nature of kingship: that the king's patronage is to be understood as in some degree constitutive of public rank and that, as a result, royal favor must play a key role in the dispensing of honors. Later, the extremity of the king's commitment to a conception of rule that is indistinguishable from personal presence is made clear when he

conflates the paper upon which Mortimer's decree is written with the body of Mortimer himself:

Well may I rend his name that rends my heart!
 This poor revenge hath something eased my mind.
 So may his limbs be torn, as is this paper.

(5.2.140–42)

The political, for Edward, is necessarily embodied. This is of a piece with his refusal to acknowledge complaints about Gaveston: if the political is conceptualized so resolutely in terms of physical presence, then royal patronage based on personal intimacy must be legitimate.

At the same time, there is something decidedly quixotic about a king who conflates decrees with bodies, and one feels that Edward's political ineffectiveness has to do with this: he attempts to rule by asserting the authority of his own regal nature rather than by kingcraft. And the play elsewhere presents moments in which the king himself seems unable to conceptualize the public significance of his own royal affections. When first faced with open rebellion, Edward exclaims:

Make several kingdoms of this monarchy,
 And share it equally amongst you all,
 So I may have some nook or corner left
 To frolic with my dearest Gaveston.

(1.4.70–73)

This conflicts with the king's own staunch defense of the legitimacy of royal favor, in which the personal must be indistinguishably part of public governmental order. If intimates with access to the king in his chambers are legitimately to be granted public status, then there can be for Edward no "nook or corner" so withdrawn as to constitute a private sphere beyond the demands of his regal office.²⁷

The peers, despite Mortimer Senior's acknowledgment that favoritism is a normal aspect of monarchy ("The mightiest kings have had their minions" [1.4.390]), are resolutely hostile not only to the king's favorites but to modes of rule based on intimacy and presence. In Act 2, for instance, Mortimer Junior and Lancaster ignore the guard whose job it is to protect the king's privacy: when the guard announces that "his highness is disposed to be alone," Lancaster haughtily replies "Why, so he may, but we will speak to him" (2.2.134–35). This is more than just rudeness, it is a willful violation of the protocols governing access that give shape and meaning to the politics of intimacy. This episode, then, is a spatial reenactment of the peers' basic unwillingness to accept the king's personal rule. Not coincidentally,

Mortimer Junior and his comrades show a flair for impersonal modes of government that is the reverse of Edward's belief in pure presence: the peers constantly bolster their authority with the language of council and "general consent" (1.2.70), and Mortimer typically operates by means of impersonal public documents like contracts, letters, and decrees. This is part of a strategic rhetorical posture, a way to legitimate rebellion by contrast with the "wanton humour" of the king (1.4.401). The peers see Edward's regime as characteristically wanton, and present themselves as representatives of the rule of dispassionate law.

To Mortimer Junior, the fact that the king's generosity is based on intimacy rather than public hierarchy means that it is uncontrollable, irresponsible, and unkingly. He expresses this quite precisely in his description of Gaveston as "a night-grown mushrump" (1.4.284), or mushroom. This analogy is proverbial, a comment on the favorite's ability to grow overnight.²⁸ But it also resonates with the commonplace association between kingship, bounty, and the sun. This is one of the recurring images in the play, from Gaveston's initial description of himself as one upon "whom the sun shines both by day and night" (1.1.16) to the deposed Edward's familiar question in Act 5: "what are kings when regiment is gone / But perfect shadows in a sunshine day" (5.1.26–27). Royal power, and in particular royal patronage, is given as sunshine:

Spencer, I here create thee Earl of Wiltshire,
And daily will enrich thee with our favour,
That, as the sunshine, shall reflect o'er thee.

(3.1.49–51)

Given the currency of this rhetoric within the play, Mortimer's epithet – "night-grown mushrump" – seems to imply that the favorite's sudden flourishing has taken place without the benefit of the king's sun-like powers and bounty. Since Gaveston's rise is self-evidently predicated on direct royal access and patronage, however, Mortimer's epithet can only mean that Edward's gifts to his minion are somehow unlike the normal and appropriate distribution of kingly favor. Implicit in Mortimer Junior's sneer, in other words, is a careful distinction between kinds of royal patronage. If sunlight names the public and orderly dispersal of patronage – the patronage flowing from the kind of impersonal love that the king might feel for the peers as a class – Mortimer here implies that the favor given by Edward to Gaveston is its opposite. Where the one is public and kingly, the other is private and disorderly. Since Gaveston is a "night-grown mushrump," his newly elevated social position, rather than being part of a royally sanctioned

public hierarchy, is seen by Mortimer as evidence of a transgressive and sodomitical inversion both of natural order and kingship itself.

This begs the question: if bounty based on intimacy is not kingly, what is? Marlowe supplies an answer by juxtaposing the peers' complaints about the king's corrupt favoritism with their request for money to ransom Mortimer Senior, who is captured by the Scots in Act 2. Edward balks at their request, and the peers immediately blame his hesitation on generosity to the minion: "prodigal gifts bestowed on Gaveston / Have drawn thy treasure dry" (2.2.157–58). Though Edward does not in fact plead poverty, the peers assume that the wealth of the realm – which should be earmarked for the reward and support of public service – has been used up on gifts for the "night-grown mushrump" earned only by personal intimacy. Mortimer Senior's capture and ransom is an invention of Marlowe's usually explained by critics as atmospheric, a way of gesturing toward ongoing wars with Scotland.²⁹ But it also serves a contrapuntal function in the play, opposed to the king's intimate patronage as an example of royal expenditure fully consistent with the peers' ideas of rule. A king ruling according to the kind of impersonal love prescribed by Mortimer Senior would limit his expenditure to impersonally national matters such as this. But that vision is in a sense a negation of kingship itself, for it excludes entirely modes of personal patronage that are essential to monarchy. Marlowe, once again, focuses upon the inability of all parties to find any middle ground between Edward's resolutely personal vision of kingship and notions espoused by the peers that tend toward the complete eradication of royal agency.

Though the vividly characterized Gaveston we see in Act 1 evokes Leicester and Sejanus – a nascent literary tradition of all-powerful evil favorites – the automatic way in which Spencer replaces Gaveston in the affections of the king and the enmity of the peers suggests that the personality of the favorite himself is unimportant. The King learns of Gaveston's death, grieves, and turns to Spencer:

in this place of honour and of trust,
Spencer, sweet Spencer, I adopt thee here;
And merely of our love we do create thee
Earl of Gloucester and Lord Chamberlain,
Despite of times, despite of enemies.

(3.1.143–47)

No sooner has the king transferred his favor to the new favorite than a herald enters from the peers and makes the following request: "That from your princely person you remove / This Spencer as a putrifying branch"

(3.1.161–62). This is so sudden as to be comical, and the implication is that the problem is structural rather than personal, stemming ultimately from an unwillingness on the part of the peers to accept *anybody* elevated “merely” on the basis of the king’s personal love. What we are left with, at this point, is a kind of inverted version of *Leicester’s Commonwealth* in which the emphasis on the favorite’s personal failings is stripped away and what remains is a conflict over the political meaning of royal affection. The easy substitution of Spencer for Gaveston suggests that the favorite himself is little more than a marker over which this larger conflict can be waged.

This is designed to come as something of a shock, dramatically speaking, since the play’s conflicts have to this point seemed to have so much to do with the favorite’s wanton humor. The suddenness with which the violent opposition engendered by Gaveston reemerges in response to Spencer has the rhythm of farce. But it is farce of a characteristically Marlovian kind that exposes the political pieties articulated by the peers to a deeply corrosive cynicism: consensual languages based on ideas about the reciprocal bonds between king and subjects, sentimental rhetorics of love, duty, and reconciliation, are evacuated of meaning once and for all. This means, more generally, that the political ideologies for which the peers seem to be fighting in the opening acts are themselves undermined and discredited. And though I think Marlowe wants us to see the passionate affection of Edward and Gaveston as intemperate and thus at odds with good government, it is not clear that there is in the world of the play any countervailing theory of state that would exclude such favoritism and that has anything more to recommend it. The peers’ automatic resistance to Spencer brings the play to a moment of aporia, for it is revealed that they want to reduce the king to a puppet or a cipher. As a result, what may have looked like a familiar brand of resistance theory based on a notion of mixed and limited monarchy is revealed as essentially regicidal, itself imbalanced.

As if to corroborate this, the play constructs a careful symmetry between the eroticized intemperance of Edward and Gaveston and the adulterous alliance of Mortimer and Isabella.³⁰ Where the peers claim to be acting on the behalf of a society knit together by a collective spirit of impersonal “love” – the antithesis of favoritism and tyranny – the play keeps hinting that Mortimer and Isabella are driven by erotic passions of a much less idealized variety. And just as questions concerning the ambiguous relationship between politics and affection are raised in relation to Edward and his minions (is this affection public? Or does it provide a retreat from the public sphere?), so the play only hints at the erotic entanglement of Mortimer and Isabella until Kent announces, in Act 4, that “Mortimer / And Isabel

do kiss while they conspire” (4.6.12–13).³¹ This matters because kissing and conspiring go together in this play: erotic desire is persistently associated with other kinds of unruly passion such as the impulse to tyranny or rebellious ambition. When Mortimer and Isabella seize the throne, the former declares, “Fair Isabel, now have we our desire” (5.2.1), leaving us to wonder what kinds of desires have in fact been fuelling their coup.

The stakes of this question are made clear in Mortimer Junior’s unsettling soliloquy in Act 5:

The prince I rule, the queen do I command,
 And with a lowly congé to the ground
 The proudest lords salute me as I pass;
 I seal, I cancel, I do what I will.
 Feared am I more than loved; let me be feared,
 And when I frown, make all the court look pale.
 I view the prince with Aristarchus’ eyes,
 Whose looks were as a breeching to a boy.
 They thrust upon me the protectorship
 And sue to me for that that I desire. (5.4.46–55)

Hitherto the spokesman for public zeal, Mortimer is here suddenly metamorphosed into the familiar Marlovian overreacher, a figure driven by a seemingly insatiable desire for autonomous power. The irony of this is very carefully constructed. Mortimer is poised to become a tyrant (the echo of Machiavelli signals this), and he plans to rule by favoritism like the hated Edward II: “Mine enemies will I plague, my friends advance” (5.4.65). Moreover, the shift in motivation – from ideology to desire – seems to confirm suspicions planted earlier in his private conference with Isabella.

What are the implications of this complex representational strategy for the play’s handling of favoritism as a flashpoint for constitutional concerns? Mortimer Junior and his colleagues supposedly oppose the king’s minions out of zealous devotion to rank, tradition, law, and custom. They seem at first glance to espouse a strain of resistance theory of a type derived ultimately from Aristotle’s account of the superiority of dispassionate law, one that links absolutism to tyranny by opposing the excesses of capricious royal will. The play seems at times to endorse this position. When Edward declares that he would rather see England destroyed than lose Gaveston (1.1.151–52), we are invited to see his appetite for the favorite as something profoundly disruptive of the social fabric rather than as something normatively constitutive of it. But it is the play’s final irony that resistance founded upon these very principles should itself be warped by passion.

On the one hand, corrupt favoritism is conceptualized as the representative expression of the way personal passion warps monarchy. On the other, resistance to legitimate monarchy is treated by Marlowe as an expression of unruly passion that shares a striking symmetry with the royal excesses it sought originally to curtail. This impasse, in essence, poses a query about the nature of England's supposedly balanced constitution, for it implies that both royal will and subjects' opposition tend ultimately toward the chaos of passion.

It could be argued, I suppose, that the Edward III who emerges as king at the end of the play represents a way out of the problems that beset his affectionate father. We might therefore think of Edward III as analogous to figures like Shakespeare's Henry V or Sidney's Euarchus, literary kings who rule for the general good while avoiding the kinds of personal entanglements that raise uneasy questions about personal wantonness or the tyrannical will for which it stands. The young king who seizes power at the end of *Edward II* signals his fitness to rule in a number of interlocking ways. He makes conspicuous display of the kind of filial piety lacking in Edward II. He displays a commitment to the public good by refusing to protect his own mother Isabella, and thus exerts command symbolically over his own potential for effeminate frailty. And he acts decisively, but in consultation with a group of conveniently unspecific "peers" who are too generalized to challenge his personal initiative and too corporate to look like worrisome favorites themselves (5.6.21). Marlowe's Edward III is imbued, in short, with precisely the characteristics required to patch up conflicts stemming from the ambiguous signification of Edward II's "love." But the very vagueness of this solution – who are these new peers? – is a conspicuously evasive gesture, a way of arriving at the kind of formal closure required by dramatic narrative without actually resolving the problem of inherent imbalance proposed by the symmetry established between the king and his opponents.

Alternatively, we might see this symmetry between unruly king and unruly peers as an instance of the protective indeterminacy that Paul Yachnin has found to be the defining characteristic of public theater dealing with political topics up until the 1620s.³² But where Yachnin treats such symmetry as essentially apolitical – the avoidance of risk as an institutional strategy – it seems to me that the balance built into the Edward II story between blame for the king's tyrannous passions and blame for the peers' rebelliousness actually mirrors a deeper cultural ambivalence about the nature of personal monarchy and the nature, respectively, of tyranny and treason. I want to insist here that airing this awkward ambivalence – removing it from the realm of unexamined constitutional gray area and bringing

it to the fore *as a real ambivalence* – is neither apolitical nor evasive. Indeed, as I suggested at the outset of this chapter, it is this basic symmetry, the way the story can always be cast either as an examination of tyrannical passion or of unruly rebellion, that makes the Edward II story such a central political fable for a variety of English writers. This is Marlowe's innovation, and it transforms the Edward II story into the preeminent literary vehicle for weighing the shifting native languages of prerogative and dissent.

EDWARD II AS POLITICAL PALIMPSEST

Francis Hubert's verse history of *The Life and Death of Edward The Second* was initially composed during the late 1590s. This version of the poem – which survives in a single fragmentary manuscript copy in the British Library (Harleian MS 2393[a]) – is inspired by a series of roughly contemporary poems on the Edward II story by Michael Drayton; like Drayton (himself an admirer of “Neat *Marlow* bathed in the *Thespian* springs”), Hubert was interested primarily in the story's potential to speak to hot-button issues concerning prerogative and personal monarchy.³³ That is, Hubert's poem was originally intended to participate in a late Elizabethan cultural conversation concerning Edward II inaugurated by Marlowe. What makes the poem extraordinary as an artifact, though, is what happened to it after its original composition: Hubert revised his poem substantially between its original composition and its first printing in 1628, and then again between this edition and the publication of an authorized version in 1629. As a result, we can actually compare three distinct states of the poem from three different historical moments, which gives us a unique opportunity to see how application of the story to contemporary events shifted during the period under consideration here.

Strikingly, Hubert's poem seems to have been read as a potentially scandalous topical allegory during the 1620s even though the majority of what was being read then had actually been composed during the last years of Elizabeth. I think we can understand the poem's ongoing relevance as evidence of real intellectual continuity between late Elizabethan ideological dissonance attending upon concerns about questions of constitutional imbalance and the controversies concerning corrupt favoritism that engulfed Buckingham and his early Stuart royal patrons. At the same time, Hubert's emendations and additions allows us to track changes in the way these constitutional questions were posed in changing circumstances. That is, the evolution of Hubert's representation of the Edward II story allows us to see, precisely and concretely, how late Elizabethan anxiety about the threat

of incipient absolutism re-materializes under the pressures of Jacobean and Caroline controversy.

According to the stationer Lawrence Chapman, who printed *The Life and Death of Edward The Second* in 1629, Hubert originally wished to have his poem printed nearer to its moment of composition but was prevented by “supreamest Authoritie”:

Many yeeres sithence he writ a Worke intituled The Historie and Raigne of Edward the second, with his miserable and cruell death: But the same being by supreamest Authoritie forbidden to bee printed, was for a long time charily kept as a Jewell in his secret Cabinet, or rather (amongst divers other Workes of his excellently well composed) as a chiefe ornament of his owne private Librarie, till at length some Sacrilegious hand . . . stole his Wedge of Gold for gaine.³⁴

It is difficult to know what to make of this, since there is no record of any official censorship. But it is entirely possible that the controversy attending John Heyward’s *The first part of the life and raigne of king Henrie the IIII* in 1599 made publication of Hubert’s poem seem inadvisable either to the poet or a prospective printer.³⁵ Hubert’s own epistle to the edition of 1629 says that the poem was “conceived and borne in Queene Elizabeths time, but grew to more maturitie in King JAMES’s.”³⁶ This describes a process of revision that took place at some point between the accession of James I and the edition of 1628 in which Hubert made numerous minor emendations (such as transforming declarations of loyalty toward Elizabeth into analogous protestations to King James) and added approximately fifty new stanzas.³⁷ Hubert seems also to have made his secret jewel available for scribal circulation after revising it. I know of twelve manuscript copies of Hubert’s poem and ten of them feature essentially the version of the poem printed in 1628.³⁸ Manuscript circulation can of course be a kind of publication, and there is some reason to believe that Hubert expected his poem to circulate beyond a narrow circle of associates. Some of the minute changes he makes to his material seem to reflect an assumption that the material will be read closely and by potentially uncharitable eyes. In deference to James, for instance, Hubert carefully changes his description of Robert Bruce from “the fearse but faitheles Scot” to “that noble English-Scot” in the Jacobean version (st. 187 and note).

It is impossible to date this round of revisions and additions precisely. A letter of 1620 from Hubert to Sir Stephan Powle alludes to a manuscript that is most likely his revised Edward II poem, so the updated version may perhaps have been completed at about this time.³⁹ There is considerable circumstantial evidence, though, suggesting that the Jacobean version of

the poem owed its readership to avid interest in the controversial career of the Duke of Buckingham toward the end of James's reign and during the early years of Charles's. Since Hubert and Chapman both describe the 1628 edition of the poem as unauthorized, it seems likely that this edition was printed from a manuscript copy in order to capitalize upon early Caroline interest in the poem. One manuscript copy – Folger MS V.a.234 – is dated 1626, and the author's name is scratched out and rendered illegible on the title page as if somebody considered the poem's application to contemporary politics too close for comfort.⁴⁰ This is, of course, the year in which parliament attempted to impeach Buckingham and it is indeed difficult to imagine any reader of Hubert's poem not making that connection. Buckingham, after all, had been publicly compared to Hugh Spencer, Edward's favorite, in an explosive session in the parliament of 1621. King James himself felt honor bound to respond to this, declaring "if he Spenser, I Edward 2" and suggesting darkly that a failure to censure the speaker (Sir Henry Yelverton) might tend toward the threat of deposition.⁴¹

Surviving newsletters and libels make it clear that this episode was much spoken about, and helped make the parallel between Buckingham and Edward's favorites something of a commonplace.⁴² Marlowe's *Edward II* was reissued in 1622 by the stationer Henry Bell, presumably to capitalize upon renewed interest in the story. And tensions in the early Caroline parliaments of 1625 and 1626 brought back memories of the failure of the parliament of 1621. Once again the urgent need to grant subsidies to support foreign conflict ran afoul of the desire to redress grievances blamed on the all-powerful duke. Of particular interest in this regard is a speech prepared toward the end of the parliament of 1625 by Robert Cotton and Sir Robert Phelps concerning precedents for parliamentary attacks on the king's ministers. Though the dissolution apparently forestalled the speech's delivery, it still offers a window into the attitudes of several of the duke's opponents.⁴³ After noting a dangerous increase in corruption since Buckingham's ascendancy, the speech proceeds by taking up several of the complaints swirling around Buckingham and demonstrating how similar grievances had been handled in the past. The punishments bestowed upon King Edward's favorites figure prominently, and Gaveston and Spencer are each discussed in a section of the speech on ministers who have been banished for engrossing "the person of the Kinge from his other Lords." This section ends with the hope that "wee shall not complaine in Parliament again of such," a pleasant-sounding sentiment that in context carries more than a whiff of threat.⁴⁴

The reverberations of this controversy created a renewed interest in the story of Edward II and so promoted interest in Hubert's poem. It is difficult to trace manuscript circulation, but one copy of the poem appears in a commonplace book (Bodleian MS. eng. poet E. 112) owned by John Newdigate, a man best known today for the journal he kept as a member of the House of Commons in 1628. Newdigate was an amateur poet and he may even have composed *The Emperor's Favorite*, an unprinted play found in his papers that comments fairly transparently upon Buckingham under the figure of Crispinus, corrupt favorite to the emperor Nero.⁴⁵ Even if Newdigate did not write this play, his papers demonstrate "a taste for covert criticism" of contemporary figures.⁴⁶ If Newdigate is in any way representative of the kind of reader who sought out Hubert's poem in advance of its first printing, then topical application must certainly have been the motive behind its circulation in manuscript and its initial printing in 1628.

Hubert then decided to issue an updated and authorized version of the poem in 1629.⁴⁷ Again, there are a few cuts and emendations but the largest change by far is the addition of about one hundred new stanzas. Though I suspect that he welcomed manuscript publication of his poem, Hubert apparently considered risky the wider and more indiscriminate circulation made possible by the print publication of his poem in 1628. The major addition to the authorized version is a strand of conspicuous piety that seeks to recast the story in terms of sin and redemption. The largest single block of added material, accordingly, is a set of stanzas (580–95) added after Edward's deposition in which the imprisoned king recognizes the error of his ways and undergoes spiritual regeneration. In the version of 1628, the king's meditations on his fall are described as "complaints"; in 1629 they become "good thoughts" (1628 edn., st. 512; st. 596). These additions strike me as defensive in that they reframe the political story, presenting it as a cautionary tale not for kings but for all Christians.

But interest in the poem still had everything to do with contemporary politics, and Hubert knew it. We see him playing a complex game with the risks of topicality, for instance, in a block of stanzas dealing with the fragility of favoritism that is added to the final version to comment on the execution of the Spencers (sts. 521–30). Hubert knows that his readers will understand this passage as commentary on contemporary politics. Hence his disclaimer: "I write not Idly, doe not read mee so" (st. 526). The occasion of this injunction is the next stanza's apparent allusion to the assassination of Buckingham by John Felton in the summer of 1628:

who will observe the Course of things
 From Conquering *Williams* Raigne til this our age
 Shall find how those great Favorites of Kings
 Have by themselves bin brought to tragicke stage
 Or prov'd unprosperous by the vulgar rage
 Or weeded up by him that next succeeds,
 Such dangerous humours swelling greatness breeds.

(st. 527)

This stanza, oddly enough, was originally composed in the 1590s, where Hubert had used it to comment on the death of Gaveston. But it was replaced with something more general in the Jacobean version of the poem (sts. 270–71n) and so does not appear in the version printed in 1628. In no other instance does Hubert rearrange material in this way, but in this case he seems to have looked back at his Elizabethan text during the process of his final revision and decided to re-insert this stanza as a comment upon the fall of Spencer. He did so, presumably, because the idea of a favorite victimized by “vulgar rage” seemed freshly urgent after the death of Buckingham, whose murder in 1628 capped a career that had in fact provoked mob violence on more than one occasion. Hubert indicates his intentions in this regard, by pointing readers toward recent history with unusual directness:

Thou shalt not need to travail very farre
 To fetch in matter to informe thy mind
 Of which our Stories true relates are.
 Studie but them, Thou shalt not faile to find
 Particular Examples in each kind.
 I am but as an index to a Booke
 To point thee to't: Turne thou the leaves and looke.

(st. 528)

This is a good example of the way that Hubert's poem accrues topical meaning in changing circumstances, and its continued circulation has everything to do with the ongoing topical resonance of the political themes that the Edward II story allows Hubert to explore. Specifically, the poem exists in three distinct states: an Elizabethan manuscript version, the Jacobean revision as printed in 1628, and the final version printed by Chapman in 1629. Because each revision consisted primarily of adding new complementary stanzas, each successive version incorporates the majority of all the earlier material. The 1629 version of the poem is therefore a kind of palimpsest, an Elizabethan treatment of the story of Edward II layered and interspersed with two sets of early Stuart additions to the story. The

fact that readers like Newdigate understood Hubert's poem as commentary upon political questions concerning Buckingham and the politics of favoritism is a remarkably literal demonstration of the continuity between late Elizabethan ideological dissonances and the more heatedly oppositional political climate surrounding Buckingham in the 1620s. This is not to say that the circumstances or conflicts were the same in the two decades, but rather that fundamental constitutional questions dredged up in the so-called "nasty nineties" continued to help frame responses to controversy generated by Buckingham in different circumstances several decades later.⁴⁸

The nature of the changes Hubert makes, particularly between the earliest version and the 1628 version, are also instructive. Hubert's modern editor, Bernard Mellor, suggests that the earliest version of the poem must have been composed at some point between 1597 and 1600, and argues that "the purpose of the poem" was to warn the Essex faction against sedition.⁴⁹ There are, to be sure, numerous passages in this version that comment on the earl's predicament, but its approach to topical allusion seems more scattershot to me than Mellor's pronouncement would suggest. *The Life and Death of Edward The Second* is long poem, and Hubert seems to have approached topical application as a process of accumulation rather than discrimination. The poem uses the Edward II story as a kind of carryall to be stuffed full of various contemporary applications, an approach that results in a kind of bagginess, the congenital weakness of the long poem. Interested in both court corruption and rebellion, Hubert's poem would likely have been understood as commenting upon the *regnum Cecilianum* as well as upon Essex's ambition, and it can do so without attempting to reconcile the seemingly opposing positions implied in these perspectives. Unlike Marlowe, who telescopes and shapes the action so as to force the audience into an uneasy recognition of the essential symmetry between the king and the rebels, Hubert makes little effort to think past the conventional moralizing that allows him simply to denounce passionate excesses on both sides. As a result, the poem lacks the kind of strong-minded theoretical point of view that might lend gravity to its political commentary. But its conceptual looseness allows it to accommodate a range of interesting topical commentary: it reads more like an anthology than like a purposeful political intervention, and so it offers a useful guide to the range of ways that the Edward II story could be applied in the late 1590s.

This is not to say that Hubert lacks a point of view. At the heart of the story – as with other treatments of the same material – lies a structuring interest in the nature and limits of prerogative. Hubert's

idea of political orthodoxy is nicely summarized in the following passage, written in the 1590s but present in each subsequent version of the poem:

therefore, though we have Prerogatives,
 Yet there are certaine limits to the same
 Which keepes not Kings from being Superlatives
 To sway (as Gods Lieve-tenants) this faire frame,
 And those Aspirers merit death and shame
 That doe repine against those supream powers,
 Whom God hath made his underlings, not ours.
(st. 25)

This pronouncement – which supports Glenn Burgess’s observation about the compatibility of the divine right theory of kingship and the idea that royal prerogative is limited – is offered in defense of a balanced constitution.⁵⁰ And Hubert’s story, like Marlowe’s, is at once about a king who oversteps his limits and about “Aspirers” whose rebelliousness stems from underestimating the significance of sacred monarchy. Interest in such stories – in the 1590s and 1620s alike – has to do with a profound uneasiness about how this balance might be struck in practice, though, and there is a kind of awkwardness to this stanza which seems to signal this: the way it lurches unsteadily from the limits of prerogative to the limits that divine right places upon subjects, makes it difficult at first to be certain that the Aspirers in question are rebels rather than kings overstepping their bounds.

Hubert’s poem is fairly explicit about the erotic aspects of Edward’s misgovernment. In one of the few stanzas to be cut before the printing of the authorized version of 1629, Hubert describes the king as “sunke in synn and dround in lust” (sts. 176–77n). As I have suggested, in fact, there is every reason to believe that interest in the story during the 1590s stems from Edward’s status as an exemplum of prerogative gone mad, a cautionary tale about what happens when “the Prince . . . leaveth law and ruleth himselfe & others by his own appetite and affections.” Though the version of Hubert’s poem composed in the 1590s explores the question of unlimited prerogative, however, it also labors to deflect blame for the realm’s political imbalance from the king onto Gaveston at every opportunity. It is Gaveston, for example, who pushes the king toward a brand of unfettered absolutism that involves overstepping the limits on royal prerogative. “Princes are not borne so to observe / The strict preciseness of th’incombring Law,” he argues, adding “Kings made those lawes, and Kings may break them now” (st. 56). And, still more ominously: “There is no law / Can bind a King but

only his desire” (st. 57). Gaveston, in Hubert’s version of the story is thus both the spokesman for the idea of unlimited prerogative – in which “what pleased the prince has the force of law” – and the primary beneficiary of the corrupted favoritism that is the central symptom of the resulting tyranny. There is something incongruous about this dual perspective – on the king’s sin but the favorite’s guilt – and I think it has to do with the way the story was felt to apply to the Elizabethan political scene. That is, this is a poem about Elizabethan dissonance concerning prerogative that encodes hostility toward the court and the Cecils, but it is not necessarily a poem about Elizabeth herself. It is, therefore, primarily concerned with constitutional imbalance rather than with the personal misrule of the king, even if it recognizes that the former depends upon the latter.

The same basic incongruity structures the relationship in Hubert’s Elizabethan poem between the narrative history and the sententious political commentary (ostensibly offered by Edward II’s ghost) that surrounds the story and that interprets its significance for contemporary readers. For though the poem features a sodomite king, a figure who in the conventional terms of the day should be seen as a monster of personal misrule, the running commentary keeps treating the problem as a garden variety case of bad counsel or flattery:

Besides, Kings needs must see with others Eyes,
 From whence mistakings cannot choose but spring,
 And when the offence from Error doth arise
 Why should men cast the Envie on the King?
 And not on those that mis-informe the thing?
 it is the gall most banes the Kingly throne,
 that of his faults the least part is his owne.

(st. 13. See also stanzas 92, 150, 184)

Weirdly, Hubert seems to want to graft conventional language about flattery and bad counsel onto a story that is centrally about the errant will of the king. The moral of the story, as Hubert seems to have conceived it in the 1590s, is summed up in the following piece of advice:

Princes attend (for I doe speake in Zeale)
 ’Tis not enough that you your selves bee just,
 But you must Looke into the Common-weale
 And see that those whom you doe put in trust
 Doe governe by the Law not by their lust.

(st. 293)

Apparently it is the wicked favorite rather than the “just” king “who leaveth law and ruleth himselfe & others by his own appetite and affections”!

Whether it is the result of caginess or genuine ambivalence, this deflection of blame evidently has to do with the rhetorical pressure of topical application in the 1590s. It is particularly difficult, I think, to reconcile a critique of monarchy that focuses on the symbolics of intemperance with the rhetoric of purity and constancy so fundamental to the so-called cult of Elizabeth. On the one hand, Hubert pursues questions about political imbalance and absolutism that do in fact contain implicit criticism of Elizabeth; on the other hand, the 1590s version of the poem addresses the queen in stock panegyric language that treats her as the antithesis of Edward II:

Thou sacred goddes that now weildest our state
 With such respects as most successfull are
 O let it not be thought to derogate
 From thy perfections (admirably rare)
 If I some errors of these Times declare.
 Since all afford thy regiment this prayse
 That England never had such *Halcion* dayes.
(sts. 10 and 10n)

How does one make the Edward II story relevant to the reign of a “sacred goddes”? Apparently, one does so by evoking genuine late Elizabethan anxieties while deflecting attention away from awkward questions about the monarch’s contributing role.

We can see the strains of this when Hubert compares Gaveston – instead of Edward – to Sardanapalus, a paradigmatically debauched king. In Thomas Beard’s roughly contemporary book *The Theatre of Gods Judgments* (1597), for instance, Sardanapalus is the first example in a chapter dedicated to showing what happens to “effeminate persons, Sodomites, and other such like monsters”:

Sardanapalus king of Assyria, was so lascivious and effeminate, that to the end to set forth his beauty, hee shamed not to paint his face with ointments, and to attire his body with the habites and ornaments of women, and on that manner to sit and lie continually amongst whores, & with them to commit all manner of filthinesse and villany: wherefore being thought unworthy to beare rule over men, first *Arbaces* his lieutenant rebelled, then thee Medes and Babylonians revolted, and joyntly made warre vpon him.⁵¹

Hubert describes Gaveston as an incarnation of this monstrous figure:

If ever any Metempsychosis was
 I thinke the last Assyrian Monarchs soule
 By due descent to *Gaveston* did passe,
 For he a right *Sardanapalus* was. (st. 51)

By the logic of this conceit it is Gaveston rather than Edward who is the lustful tyrant provoking rebellion. So we can see this as part of the poem's exculpatory logic in which kings are guilty only of being misled. But invoking the tyrant Sardanapalus inevitably references precisely the set of questions about royal intemperance, misgovernment, and resistance that the deflection of blame onto Gaveston seems designed to finesse. Here, then, as in the awkwardness of his stanza on prerogative, we see the uncertainty with which Hubert takes up questions concerning monarchy that nevertheless lie at the heart of his story.

It is suggestive that this parallel between Gaveston and Sardanapalus mirrors a similarly evasive passage in *Leicester's Commonwealth*, where Elizabeth's great favorite is likewise described as a monster whose lust "surpaseth not only Sardanapalus and Nero, but even Heliogabalus himself."⁵² Perhaps Hubert lifted the idea from this notorious libel? More to the point, the comparison works the same way in both texts, to displace criticism of monarchy onto the favorite while simultaneously referencing anxieties about tyrannical and incontinent royal passions that texts such as these are otherwise eager to suppress. Both texts, in other words, are profoundly ambivalent about the radical questions about personal rule and prerogative dredged up within their fictions of favoritism. Each seems to have, simultaneously, a fascination with such questions and a need to avoid them. And both of these contradictory impulses are ultimately served by telling stories of all-powerful intimate favorites, figures who are alternatively seen as manifestations of the king's unruly passions or as scapegoats for them. Marlowe's play brilliantly deconstructs this double game, but Hubert's original Elizabethan version *The Life and Death of Edward The Second* is perhaps even more illuminating in that it shows us in such fine detail how the game was played and (in the process) why fictions of favoritism were so useful and compelling.

It would be misleading to offer a reading of a Jacobean or Caroline version of Hubert's poem as a discrete unit, since so much of what is finally printed in both 1628 and 1629 is held over from the earliest Elizabethan conception of the story. But one can nevertheless see patterns in the nature of Hubert's revisions and additions. The most striking of these is a sharp alteration in the way Hubert handles the problem of royal guilt in the

commentary that surrounds the basic narrative. Where the Elizabethan version of the poem tends to gloss the story by blaming flattery or wicked counsel for the problems that beset monarchy, Jacobean additions tend to shift the focus more directly onto the problematics of royal character. To clarify this, let me return to the stanza on divine right and limited prerogative that I have quoted above. This stanza, in the Elizabethan version of the poem, is followed by another that extends its basic exploration of the relationship between royal limitation and divine right. Together, they read as follows:

And therefore, though we have Prerogatives,
 Yet there are certaine limits to the same
 Which keeps not Kings from being Superlatives
 To sway (as Gods Lieve-tenants) this faire frame,
 And those Aspirers merit death and shame
 That doe repine against those supream powers,
 Whom God hath made his underlings, not ours.

Nor doth it derogate from gods renowne
 That we our kings should his vicegerents call
 Since we confesse he doth dispose the crowne
 And but for him there is no power at all
 He prospers houses rise he frownes they fall
 'Tis not discent nor pedigrees nor blood
 'Tis only god that gives and guides all good.
(sts. 25, 27n)

The emphasis on the disposal of the crown here probably has to do with the pressures of succession in the 1590s, but the passage as a whole offers a cogent defense of the idea that kings, despite limitations, can and should be considered God's lieutenants. The argument seems on the whole conservative, a rebuttal of the kind of resistance theory that might justify opposition on the grounds that kings, because limited, are merely elected representatives and can thus be replaced.

The Jacobean version of the poem retains stanza 25, adds a new stanza in between these two (26) and offers a heavily revised version of the second. So after stanza 25 the 1628 and 1629 versions of the poem both have the following:

Yet grant their State free from coercive force,
 That gives not lawlesse libertie in all;
 Kings must observe a just and rightfull course.
 God is their King, by whom they stand or fall,
 Who all their acts to strickt account will call.

Besides, their Oath, their vertue, their Renowne,
Are Diamantine chaines to tye a Crowne.

And such as are not mov'd with these respects
But make their power to serve their will in all,
Leave them to God, who ruines and erects,
Sets up a David and puls downe a Saul.
Hee prospers: Houses rise: he frownes: they fall,
'Tis not discents, nor fortune, force, nor fate,
But God supports and God supplants a State.

(sts. 26–27)

This is perfectly orthodox too, in its way: it elaborates on the argument against resistance by advising would-be “Aspirers” to leave even tyrants to God’s justice. But the rhetorical effect is very different because the poem now seems eager to take up the question of royal guilt explicitly – to treat the king’s variable character as the cause of good and bad government.

This is not an isolated development. Where the Elizabethan poem offers advice about the perils of flattery (sts. 92–94), Hubert injects a Jacobean stanza in which the ghost of Edward II remarks on his own personal failings: “But why should I give rules when I kept none? / Why should I teach and never could obey” (st. 95)? Where Edward I, in the earliest version of the poem, blames Gaveston for his son’s failure (st. 110), the Jacobean version adds a stanza in which the old king offers the following advice to his wayward son: “if thou still be with thy Passions led / Thou wilt not keepe the crowne upon thy head” (st. 137). Following an Elizabethan section on the importance of wise counsel (sts. 178–180), the Jacobean version has Edward’s ghost return forcefully to the subject of his own vice: “But to my Selfe: Who did neglect my Peeres / And only did divote my selfe to pleasure” (st. 182). And there is a corresponding emphasis, in the Jacobean additions, on the importance of royal virtue (see, for example, stanza 259) – a rhetoric that sounds conservative enough but that differs from the tenor of the Elizabethan *sententiae* in its basic willingness to treat virtue as something that a king might also lack. Where the commentary in the Elizabethan version of the poem had treated monarchy as an essentially benevolent institution bedeviled on occasion with flattery and poor counsel, the Jacobean additions tend to see the personal weakness of the king as the trigger for misrule. When stanzas added to the Jacobean version speak of counsel, they tend in fact to see the ability to judge advisors as a symptom of the king’s character rather than as the determining factor in the healthy operation of the state: the king should seek advice, but should do so out of his own essential “vertue” (st. 201).

So if the moral of the Elizabethan version seems to be something along the lines of stanza 293 quoted above (“’Tis not enough that you your selves bee just”), the Jacobean additions have a different story to tell:

’Tis certaine: Hee rules all that governs well.

And none doth so but the selfe-governor
That his owne private passions can Command,
Which makes a slave ev’n of an Emperor
If once they grow to get the upper hand.
And soone deepe searching Spirits will understand
And find a Prince that’s weake: and ride him so
That he must pace as they will have him goe.

(sts. 202–03)

This is in sharp contrast to the advice to princes that underpins the Elizabethan version: “see that those whom you doe put in trust / Doe governe by the Law not by their lust.” Here the lust in question is the failing of the prince himself, one that makes him prey for Machiavellian courtiers (“deepe searching Spirits”) who stand poised to exploit any weakness at the top.

Though all versions of the poem feature fulsome praise of the sitting monarch, it is tempting to chalk this change in emphasis up to perceived differences between Elizabeth and James. Or, more precisely, to the degree that Hubert actually thought each monarch capable of virtuous self-government. Certainly the praise of James sounds somewhat more ambivalent and muted than the Elizabethan panegyric it replaces. Where the original poem had praised Elizabeth as a “goddes” and her reign as a halcyon age, the Jacobean version of the same stanza notes cautiously that “never State was so precisely good / But faults have scap’d which could not be withstood” (st. 10). This thought continues in the following stanza, added to the poem by 1628:

For men are not like God, compleat, divine,
Whom neither passions move nor errors blind,
Who is not limited with any time,
Nor tyde to meanes, nor into place confin’d;
But free in all, no counter-checke doth find
To contradict the least part of his will,
But worketh all in all and nothing Ill.

(st. 11)

The difference between these two formulations is underscored if we imagine Hubert crossing out praise for Elizabeth as a “sacred Goddes” and then

recasting the same passage in such a way as to suggest that no king (and thus not James) is really god-like. Obviously, too, the change in the nature of royal panegyric mirrors the change in conception of the king's role in the story that follows. The Elizabethan version casts the queen as a goddess and strenuously avoids examining awkward political questions about the king's own human frailty, while the Jacobean emendations and additions emphasize the moral vulnerability of the king and treat regal self-government as the central political question.

To some degree, at least, this change can be attributed to larger shifts in the public style of authority under Elizabeth and James and to corresponding changes in the decorum of panegyric. There is no real Jacobean equivalent for the cult of Elizabeth, and certainly part of the function of Elizabeth's famous virginity was to publicize (at least during the later years of her reign) an image of self-government to counter misogynistic stereotyping of the sort that associated the effeminate with incontinence. The decorum governing Elizabethan political literature is likewise protective of the queen. Though there was clearly plenty of political dissatisfaction under Elizabeth, especially toward the end of her reign, overt criticism of Elizabeth is comparatively rare outside of Catholic libels. Hubert's Elizabethan poem – which raises questions about prerogative and law while strenuously deflecting attention away from Elizabeth and from the story's inherent critique of the problem of royal affection – seems typical of the comparatively delicate way in which even politically edgy writing treated the queen. King James, who cut his teeth in the relatively informal Scottish court and cared less than Elizabeth for certain kinds of decorum, was less concerned than the queen to police his own public image. And though he often spoke of the mysteries of state, James's published writings may actually have served to demystify the operation of sovereignty, replacing the aura of the cult of Elizabeth with an emphasis on the mechanics of kingcraft. The increased focus on the importance of sound royal government in Hubert's Jacobean revision of *The Life and Death of Edward The Second* may have something to do with the tendency of James himself to treat kingship as a skill to be practiced rather than as something emanating from the moral purity of the ruler.

Nevertheless, I do think the shifts in emphasis between the earliest version of Hubert's poem and the version printed in 1628 reflect a new stridency about the problem of favoritism in the wake of the period's noted scandals. Hubert originally took up the Edward II story as a way of responding to tensions emerging within the idea of balanced government during the 1590s. It treats the conflict over favoritism as a symptom of misguided subjects on both sides who throw the constitution out of whack. On the one

side, Gaveston misleads the king into extending prerogative. On the other, Mortimer's rebellion is an unwarranted extension beyond his legitimate political sphere. But the poem labors to avoid a Marlovian deconstruction of personal monarchy by blaming evil counselors for the overextension of royal will. That is to say, if Marlowe shows that it was possible to see through this conservative rhetoric in the 1590s, Hubert shows how powerful its appeal remained.

By the time Hubert revised his poem, the debate about favoritism had been polarized by experience, with the result that what had been a coded way to explore simmering questions of prerogative becomes a rather overt commentary upon urgent public controversy concerning scandalous Jacobean favorites. This provides a wonderfully literal and concrete example of the way that late Elizabethan political thinking helped shape the nature of response to James's favorites and the dissatisfaction they caused in England. As Jacobean concerns come to inhabit Hubert's Elizabethan thought experiment, other changes have to be made to it: the story inevitably becomes more overtly topical, and its evasiveness about royal guilt loses its point. This shift reflects the poem's growing willingness to apply the Edward II story to James directly, with the result that by the 1620s it treats favoritism as a problem of royal self-government. I think this change of emphasis suggests, moreover, that the safe ruse of blaming the favorite while exonerating the king, though very much on display in the parliaments of the 1620s, could no longer be an entirely viable or satisfying understanding of the problems confronting the state. As James himself said in 1621, when Yelverton attacked Buckingham by comparing him to Spencer: "if he Spencer, I Edward 2."

"THE SOVERAIGNS VICE BEGETS THE SUBJECTS ERROR":

ELIZABETH CARY'S ANATOMY OF MISRULE

Considering its historical significance as the earliest political history written by a woman, Elizabeth Cary's *History of the Life, Reign and Death of Edward II* (1627, printed 1680) has received surprisingly little critical attention. This has had partly to do with the piece's genre – literary critics are less comfortable with narrative history than with plays or poems – and partly with residual uncertainty about the attribution, though Cary's authorship is now widely accepted.⁵³ What attention the piece has received has been primarily biographical in nature. For the most part, this has meant that critics have been interested in Edward's queen Isabel, focusing on Cary's interest in her major female character and also upon places in the middle of

the *History* where Isabel's estrangement from Edward seems to reflect Cary's own estrangement from her own husband, Viscount Falkland, especially after her conversion to Catholicism in 1626.⁵⁴ Other scholars, alive to the *History's* connection with Buckingham's controversial career, have focused on Cary's complex and ambiguous personal relationship with the duke and his family in 1626–27.⁵⁵ There is indeed plenty of reason to assume that her relationship to the duke was that of a deeply ambivalent insider. She relied heavily on the friendship and support of Buckingham's crypto-Catholic female relatives (his wife, sister, and mother), but her husband (and persecutor) was also a client and close associate of the duke himself.⁵⁶

But Cary's *History*, by virtue both of its genre and of the way it handles the Edward II story, demands a less solitary frame of reference too. It is a story with urgent national implications taken up by a writer well versed in the contested political meanings of her material. Cary had been a dedicatee of Michael Drayton's, and so had likely read with interest his versions of the Edward II story, and her filial biographer reports that she had read "all Chroniclers what soever, of her own County."⁵⁷ She also apparently read "Historie very universally, especially all ancient Greeke, and Roman Historians" and so was certainly aware of the kind of meticulous, poker-faced, topical commentary associated with the Tacitean mode.⁵⁸ In keeping with the conventions of Tacitean history, the folio text of Cary's *History* is studded with maxims and observations about favoritism, rule, and the machinations of courtiers that invite application by their aphoristic nature. F. J. Levy, unaware of the attribution to Cary, treats the text as an example of the development of political history in England and opines that "the reader must often have asked himself whether the true setting was 1307–1327 or 1627."⁵⁹ There is, in short, every reason to read Cary's historical narrative as a sophisticated piece of political commentary written in response to the tempestuous conflicts surrounding Buckingham in 1625–27 and to assume, moreover, that she was fully aware of the historiographical and ideological stakes of the material at her disposal.

One thing is clear: Buckingham's career was a matter of urgent national concern in 1625–27, and anyone with an interest in England's future had to be concerned about his influence upon the body politic. Buckingham's modern biographer remarks upon the "acute, almost paranoiac, suspicion which every move and gesture of Buckingham generated" by 1627, and the political climate must have felt dangerous indeed when, for instance, a mob of unpaid soldiers smashed the duke's carriage in October of 1626.⁶⁰ And though there are indeed aspects of Cary's *History* that seem to reflect domestic circumstances particular to Cary herself, the text also gives every

indication of being acutely interested in the larger public resonance of the Edward II story. To give just one example of this, we can see Cary's strong engagement with very recent and very public events in her extended account of Spencer's censure in the so-called parliament of white bands.⁶¹ This episode is very clearly designed to evoke comparison with the attempt to impeach Buckingham in the tempestuous parliament of 1626, for Spencer – like Buckingham – is accused of selling titles, making corrupt appointments, monopolizing office, and the unhealthy domination of the “Royal ear” (*History*, p. 62). It would have been impossible for a politically informed readership to miss the point of this account.

The Edward II story, as we have seen, is always about the threat to constitutional balance posed by favoritism (the sign and symptom of tyranny) on one side and opposition to it (the mark of regicidal aspiration) on the other. Both aspects of the story feature prominently in the debate over the contemporary meaning of the Edward II story stemming from Yelverton's comparison of Buckingham to Spencer in the parliament of 1621. Yelverton had presented himself as a loyal reformer motivated only by loyalty to the state, and had insisted that he meant to cast no aspersions upon the honor of the crown. James, as we have seen, was not persuaded by this, and actually implied that failure to censure Yelverton would be akin to deposing the king. This basic argument is elaborated in one royalist account of this controversy, preserved in a seventeenth-century manuscript, where Yelverton's claim is denounced as a “devilish Amphibologie” and compared to the famous unpointed letter with which the murder of Edward II was ordered.⁶² If Buckingham seemed to some like the second coming of Spencer or Gaveston, it was apparently also plausible to see the duke's opponents as intemperate rebels in the mold of Edward's killers. The paranoia on display in this argument is startling – deposition and regicide? In 1621? – and reminds us how much is at stake in this debate over the meaning of this particular precedent. This suggests that the story's topical meaning might have been equally polyvalent in 1626: certainly there were those who interpreted parliamentary attempts to impeach Buckingham in 1626 as part of a conspiracy “stirred up and maintained by such, who . . . seek the debasing of this free Monarchy; which because they find not yet ripe to attempt against the King himself, they endeavor it through the Dukes side.”⁶³ Taking up the Edward II story in this climate means asking topical questions about both tyranny and resistance at a moment when parallels with the violence and turbulence of Edward's reign might have seemed much too close for comfort.

Cary's *History* sets out to make sense of contemporary political unease by offering a sophisticated, neo-stoic analysis of the excessive political passions exemplified by Edward, his favorites, and his regicidal subjects. The text is vividly alive to the horrors of passionate rebellion, but its basic premise nonetheless is that "the Sovereigns Vice begets the Subjects Error" (p. 6). That is, the text condemns all parties but provides an analysis of the breakdown of consensus that lays ultimate responsibility at the feet of the king: "you may object, He fell by Infidelity and Treason, as have many other that went before and followed him. 'Tis true; but yet withal observe . . . had he not indeed been a Traytor to himself, they could not have wronged him" (p. 160). One of the things that is most remarkable about Cary's *History*, moreover, is the meticulousness with which she traces the mechanisms by which personal royal misrule spreads outward into the realm. Near the beginning of the narrative, when the newly crowned Edward II is debating what to do about the exiled Gaveston, he is advised at some length to pursue his own pleasure by an unnamed "Page of his Chamber" (p. 9). This figure is surprisingly important as the catalyst of Edward's misrule and serves early on as a representative figure for court corruption as engendered by the king's moral weakness before the return of Gaveston or the rise of Spencer. Cary pauses in the narrative here to point out that such "Caterpillers" are the fault of "their Masters, who do countenance and advance such Sycophants" (p. 9). This bad habit, Cary points out,

has begotten so many desperate Convulsions, that have (as we may finde in our own Stories) deposed divers glorious Kings from their proper Dignity, and lawful Inheritance. There are too many frequent Examples what mischief such *Parasitical Minions* have wrought to those several States they liv'd in; and certainly such Revolutions succeed by a necessary and inevitable Justice: for where the Royal Ear is so guided, there ensues a general Subversion of all Law and Goodness. (pp. 9–10)

The gesture toward "our own Stories" is unmistakable, and it is characteristic of Cary's fundamental concerns here that she so carefully anatomizes the growth of corruption from the seed of royal weakness. The king surrounds himself with yes-men who encourage his worst impulses and this leads eventually to "a general Subversion of all Law and Goodness."

The same movement is charted in the narrative as a whole, and in fact I want to suggest here that attending to how this is done can help explain some of the dramatic shifts in perspective that make Cary's characterizations so baffling. Isabel seems quite sympathetic when she is struggling to free herself from Spencer's hostility and her husband's neglect, but she

morphs into a tyrant once the shoe is on the other foot. The same thing might be said of the barons, who for the most part come off positively early in the text, but who are represented by the murderous Mortimer toward the end.⁶⁴ In fact, though, the text's shiftiness extends beyond the question of conflicted sympathy: dramatic changes in focus are a crucial part of the *History's* design, allowing Cary to emphasize different aspects of contemporary political controversies in successive sections of her text. It is helpful, I think, to see the *History* as having three different sections, each focusing on a different aspect of contemporary conflict over favoritism. The first section, which deals with the relationship between Edward and Gaveston, centers on the king's character and so theorizes his responsibility for the corruption that blossoms during his reign. Though Gaveston is understood as a pernicious influence, he remains for the most part a cipher. Instead, the text anatomizes what it calls Edward's "Royal Fever" (p. 16) or "the fury of his Passions" (p. 13).

This emphasis on the king's unruly passions provides the leitmotif of the first portion of the *History*. While Gaveston remains banished, Edward is subjected to "restless passions" (p. 8). As a young man he "was constant in nothing but his Passions" (p. 24); he is possessed by a "passionate Humour" that makes affection for Gaveston blot out other concerns (p. 28). When the king hears of Gaveston's execution, "his Passion transports him beyond the height of sorrow" (p. 32). His tears "make him seem to melt with height of Passion" (p. 32), and his supporters are "amazed to see his Passion" (p. 33). He vows to avenge Gaveston's death in the language of a stage revenger:

They, if I live, shall taste my just displeasure, and dearly pay for this their cruel error. Till now I kept my hand from blood and fatal actions; but henceforth I will act my Passions freely, and make them know I am too much provoked. Blood must have blood, and I will spend it fully, till they have paid his wandering Ghost their forfeit. (p. 32)

Though Edward is apparently capable of thinking himself "just," the Senecan rhetoric he deploys here suggests that he is the throes of an inward passion of sufficient power to obliterate the public constraints of justice.

Since this part of the text deals most closely with Edward's administrative and personal flaws, it also alludes most pointedly to the memory of King James, whose over-passionate attachment to favorites was of course much commented upon. Cary's text is not coy about describing the relationship between Edward and Gaveston in erotic terms – both Gaveston and Spencer are described as Edward's Ganymedes (pp. 4, 54) – and this in turn is given as a sign of the king's "effeminate disposition" (p. 13). I understand

this association to be based on the period's misogynistic assumption that women are less able to govern their passions and take the implication of sodomy as a kind of stigmatizing shorthand for a more general failure of self-government. This moral weakness, in turn, is associated with other failures of purposeful leadership:

the Condition of this man was truely miserable; all things at home, under his Government, were out of rule and order; and nothing successful that he undertook by forraign Employment; but where the Ground is false, the Building cannot stand; He planted the foundation of his Monarchy on Sycophants and Favorites, whose disorderly Proceedings dried up all that sap that should have fostered up the springing Goodness of the Kingdome, and made him a meer stranger to those Abilities that are proper to Rule and Government. (p. 39)

Edward's failures stem from his reliance on favorites, which in turn stems from his basic inability to govern his own passions. Sodomitical innuendo ("dried up all that sap") confirms the connection between ungoverned passions and favoritism. In the period's conventional language, royal fever – the inability to govern tyrannous and sodomitical passion – is a kind of effeminacy that manifests itself in the breakdown of government, the weakening of the realm, and the inversion of both reason and order. This set of associations – inherited from libels concerning King James that linked effeminacy to sodomy and to the king's reluctance to go to war – lies at the heart of Cary's conception of Edward's failings during the first portion of her *History*.⁶⁵

With the death of Gaveston and the ascendancy of Spencer, the focus of the text shifts dramatically. Edward becomes an almost incidental player and the agency of corruption is instead located in the Machiavellian policy of the favorite. This change allows Cary to shift her focus from the culpability of monarchy to the corruption of patronage. Much of this section alludes directly to the cunning and corrupting stratagems attributed to Buckingham by his enemies during the 1620s. Spencer controls the king's chamber, engrosses the royal ear, dominates patronage networks, makes himself indispensable to the king by feeding his paranoia about the disaffection of the realm, squanders the treasury, and so forth. Opposition now comes not only from the barons but also from the honest "*Commons*, whose home-bread looks are the true Index of all that dwells within" (p. 76). This portion of the text – with its vivid account of corrupting favoritism and its elaborately topical version of the parliament of white bands – would likely have seemed most directly parallel to early Caroline events. Here Cary even draws upon what must have been first-hand knowledge of Buckingham's

efforts to place his kinswomen in the entourage of Henrietta Maria in 1626, for her Spencer likewise labors to surround Isabel with his “kindred” (p. 52).⁶⁶ Given the ongoing controversy over Buckingham’s influence on the system of grants and patents, the following description of Spencer’s policy might have seemed uncomfortably close to contemporary concerns: “The first request he makes his Sovereign (who ne’er denied him) was, that he would not pass a *Grant*, till he survey’d it; for this he makes zealous care the cover, lest by such Gift the Subject might be grieved, the king abused” (p. 51).

Though Edward is still in power, the motivating force in this section of the text is Spencer’s cunning greediness. In the text’s structuring vocabulary of stoic ethics, this is understood as analogous to Edward’s sodomitical desire – both demonstrate an inability to keep desires within the compass of reason. When he and the king manage to overthrow the barons at last, victory allows Spencer’s true nature the opportunity to find open expression in deed:

The Prey thus seiz’d, the *Spencers* long to taste it; and like to furious Tygers, act their Passions: They give not their incensed *Master* time to deliberate on that Work which was so weighty, which had lives of such great *Peers* in balance. They whet on, and exasperate the *Kings Revenge*, that needs no instigation. Soon is the Work resolv’d, where deep Revenge hath master’d human Judgment, and Reason doth subscribe to private Malice. (p. 71)

Here the king’s earlier passionate desire for revenge is literally subsumed by the bestial aggression of Spencer. But as with Edward’s own passions, the result of personal passion is the overthrow of public reason and restraint more generally.

It is toward the end of this section that Isabel first becomes a prominent player in the narrative’s events. Though she begins plotting her adulterous alliance with Mortimer, the text at this point makes allowances for her wandering eye. For one thing, Edward was a “stranger to her bed”; for another, though Mortimer is already a figure of unruly ambition, he apparently looks better than he really is: “had those his inward Gifts been like his outside, he had not been behinde-hand in reception” (p. 89). Isabel and Mortimer plan to escape together into France, but the taint of disobedience is minimized by the perfidiousness of their enemy Spencer and the text’s rhetoric, which at this point makes Isabel out to be the antithesis of the ungoverned (effeminate) passions presently undermining good government. Where Spencer’s cunning serves his passionate greed, Isabel’s is seen as a moment of self-government that makes her his opposite: “*Edward*

would not give consent she should be a gadding . . . Her heart so strongly fix'd upon this Journey, was torn as much with anger as with sorrow: Reason at length o'ercame her Sexes weakness, and bids her rather cure, than vent, her Passion" (p. 90). I think we are supposed to admire the calmly observant manner in which Isabel carries herself in France, and to find at least somewhat stirring the gallantry of Sir John of Hainault, who finally offers to assist her in her return to England (pp. 112–13). So long as the text is focused on the evils of Spencer, Isabel is more or less exonerated.

Once Isabel sets out for England, however, the text's attitude toward her and her endeavor changes. This change is first expressed symbolically, as Isabel's party is tossed about by a portentous storm at sea: "The Queen, that knew no Floods, no Tempests, but those which sprang from Sighs and Tears of Passion, grew deeply frightened, and amazed with danger" (p. 116). Isabel from this point on is one minded like the weather: this third portion of the text emphasizes the tempestuous nature of Isabel's rebellion and castigates the queen for her cruelty and the disorderliness of her rebellious actions. Criticism of Isabel in this portion of the text runs parallel to criticism of Edward and Spencer earlier: she now becomes the vehicle for destructive passions that transgress against rational order and loose tempests of destruction upon England. The "savage, tyrannical disposition" (p. 129) that Isabel displays in taunting and summarily executing Spencer smacks of the favorite's own animalistic cruelty. Cary, moreover, describes Isabel's execution of Arundel as essentially effeminate in its ungoverned irrationality: "we may not properly expect Reason in Women's actions: It is enough the incensed Queen would have it so, against which was no disputing" (p. 130). As a sustained depiction of political turbulence, *The History of the Life, Reign, and Death of Edward II* warns against the dangers of unregulated passion and traces a centrifugal movement from the failure of royal self-government ("Royal Fever") to the complete breakdown of public order. Though Cary's depiction of character – Edward's, Mortimer's, and especially Isabel's – may be at some level incoherent, the text's emphasis upon destructive passion remains remarkably constant. It uses the Edward II story to fictionalize an outward movement of passion from the king to the favorite to the realm as a whole. Thus, the text moves from Edward's effeminated passion to the "savage" tyranny of Isabel, and from the "unnatural Civil War" (p. 8) within Edward's breast to civil war indeed.

This is why the text focuses so much upon the scary unruliness of the "giddy Commons, who like Land-floods, rise and fall in an instant" (p. 123). When Bishop Stapleton crosses the will of Isabel's allies in London, they

deliver him to the “enraged multitude” who kill him on the spot (p. 121). This mob is treated by Cary as a kind of embodiment of the violence of passion: “the actions of this same heady monster Multitude never examine the Justice, or the dependance, but are led by Passion and Opinion: which in fury leaves no Disorder unacted, and no Villainy unattempted” (p. 122). When the queen’s armies take prisoners, “the confused clamour of the Multitude, serves for Judge, Jury, and Verdict” (p. 125). The unlawfully speedy executions that follow are made to echo the Senecan revenge rhetoric used earlier in the text by Edward: “Revenge brooks no delay, no leisure Malice” (p. 126). When Isabel leads the captured Spencer before the populace, “a world of people do strain their wider throats to bid her welcome, with yelping cries that echoed with confusion” (p. 128). The real subject of this part of the narrative is the terrifyingly chaotic and destructive nature of the rebellious passions let loose by the narrative’s chain of events. Isabel, and to a lesser degree the ambitious Mortimer, serve as identifiable figureheads for this culminating aspect of the narrative’s exploration of tyrannous passion, but they are not necessarily conceived of as real, consistent characters who can be separated from the symbolic logic of the text as a whole.

This neo-stoic anatomy of royal fever as the seed of political disorder seems most pointedly to skewer the memory of James I and his favorites. The foreign Gaveston seems to hearken back to the Scottish Earl of Somerset and the more dangerous native favorite Spencer is clearly paralleled to Buckingham. King Charles of course took pains to comport himself more decorously than had his father, and one strand of Caroline panegyric (best exemplified by the masque *Coelum Britannicum* [1634]) emphasizes precisely this difference. Cary, though, specifically disallows this interpretation of her text:

If the Masters actions be never so pure and innocent, yet if out of affection he become the Patron of the Servants misdemeanours and insolencies, by protecting or not punishing, he makes himself guilty, and shares both in the grievance and hatred of the poor distressed Subject . . . He that will read the History of our own, or those of Forreign Nations, shall finde a number of memorable Examples, which have produced Deposition of Kings, Ruine of Kingdoms, the Effusion of Christian Blood, and the general Distemper of that part of the world, all grounded on this occasion. (p. 141)

Cary’s phrase “he makes himself guilty” marks the distance between this and Hubert’s Elizabethan version of the same sentiment, which stops short of blaming the king for his errors in judgment. Charles’s affection is corrupted, and this suffices. It is impossible to miss the point of this injunction, and it

is crucial to read it in terms of the parliament of 1626, where Charles had in fact protected Buckingham from his accusers.

Cary's commentary upon the deposition of Edward II clarifies her constitutional assumptions. Edward's subjects had "just cause to restrain" the king "from his Errours, but no ground or colour to deprive him of his Kingdom" (p. 131). Elsewhere, too, she ascribes to parliament "an over-ruling Power to limit the King" (p. 36). Cary, in short, seems to assume that monarchy is inalienable but that a mixed and balanced constitution is both traditional and proper. And yet at the same time Cary is clearly fascinated and horrified by the seemingly unstoppable manner in which corrupt royal will can devolve into tyranny and destabilize the hitherto healthy state. She emphasizes on several occasions the remarkable way in which the realm's problems come out of nowhere, with no precedent to speak of and no competing claimant to the throne. Instead, political turmoil arises out of a "royal fever" that is essentially unrestrainable:

it is the general Disease of Greatness, and a kinde of Royal Fever, when they fall upon an indulgent Dotage, to patronize and advance the corrupt ends of their Minions, though the whole Society of State and Body of the Kingdom run in a direct opposition; neither is Reason, Law, Religion, or the imminency of succeeding danger, weight enough to divert the stream of such inordinate Affections, until a miserable Conclusion give it a fatal and just Repentance. (p. 16)

Kingdoms founder on the inordinate affections of their rulers, which lead them to override law and reason. It is one thing to recognize that the king should be restrained and another altogether to restrain him.

The only sure protection against the tyrannical absolutism of "royal fever" resides, ultimately, in the king himself. And this is at best a provisional solution since "true perfection" is impossible on this earth:

I must confess, and do believe, that King worthy of an Angelical Title, that could master these rebellious Monsters, which rob him of his Peace and Happiness: But this in a true perfection, is to Flesh and Blood most impossible; yet both in Divinity and Moral Wisdome, [I]t is the most excellent Master-piece of this our pergrination, so to dispose them, that they wait upon the Operation of the Soul rather as obedient Servants, than loose and uncontrould Vagabonds. Where the Royal Passions are rebellious and masterless, having so unlimited a Power, his Will becomes the Law; his hand the executioner of actions unjust and disorderly, which end sometimes in Blood, commonly in Oppression, and evermore in a confused perturbation of the Kingdome. (pp. 139–40)

Cary's analogy between microcosmic government and the political macrocosm is conventional enough, but it is a remarkable trope to use in the

context of a history that so meticulously anatomizes the macrocosmic realm's imbalance and misrule. After all the careful attention paid in the text to the mechanisms by which corruption spreads, we see here that the *History's* crisis is actually played out in the breast of a king who must govern himself. This is the crux upon which the law and the balanced constitution finally depend.

This brings us full circle, back to the native ambivalence about personal monarchy that, I argued at the outset, the story of Edward II is always used to explore. That is, we could paraphrase Cary's remarks in the jargon of Fortescue and Aristotle as follows: if the king cannot subdue the wild animal within himself, then what pleases the prince has the force of law regardless of law and custom. Where Fortescue insists that institutional limits ensure royal self-regulation, Cary implies that the reverse is the case: royal misrule leads inevitably to absolutist tyranny even in a state that has safeguards against absolutism built in. Cary agrees, in effect, with Thomas May's *Discourse* that "in everie Monarchy, how limited soever, the Prince his person is invested with so much Majestie, that it would seeme a mockerie in State, if there were no considerable power entrusted into his hands; yea, so much as that, if he be bad or weak, he may endanger the ruine of the Kingdome." It is no coincidence that this rather pessimistic analysis of the fate of the balanced constitution crops up in Caroline texts: Cary's deep ambivalence about the destabilizing effect of monarchy anticipates the emergent republican or neo-Roman opposition to monarchy for which May more obviously speaks.

Cary's *History* offers an analysis of the problem of personal rule that is considerably more hostile to monarchy than Marlowe's *Edward II* (which dismantles the public sphere in general), and that solidifies and extends the most radical implications of Hubert's interest in the problem of royal self-government in the later versions of his oft-revised poem. This difference – the radical critique of monarchy implicit in Cary's early Caroline text – reflects what Burgess calls the Caroline "dissolution of consensus": the gradual erosion after 1625 of the discursive conventions which sustained acceptance of the balanced constitution despite its inherent tensions and ambiguities.⁶⁷ And yet to consider Cary's *History* in relation to these other versions of the Edward II story is to see how her radical analysis of monarchy emerges out of a pre-history of constitutional interrogation undertaken under different circumstances. The genuinely radical and proto-republican aspects of Cary's history are, as it were, arrived at in the terms handed down from the 1590s. Using the Edward II story as the lens through which to understand the unprecedented conflict that erupted between king and

parliament over Buckingham in 1626 shows that this singular episode *could be and was* understood as a struggle over prerogative framed by a conceptual vocabulary whose fissures and frictions had been rendered urgent decades earlier. This does not mean, of course, that there is any inevitable or direct path from the nasty nineties to Caroline radicalism, but it does suggest a way to think about how a strand of Caroline radicalism that is in some ways revolutionary nevertheless draws on and is influenced by habits of thought forged in very different political contexts.

The Second Part of Crafty Crumwell (1648), a pamphlet in the form of a miniature play written by Marchamont Nedham in his royalist mode, features an over-zealous parliamentarian named Ismeno who argues in favor of the continued prosecution of King Charles I. Ismeno is a dangerous rebel profiteering from the anarchy of civil discord, and his vituperative hostility to Charles and his court parodies the reductive rhetoric of parliamentarian opposition:

The King did trust to much unto himselfe, which made him fal into so many snares. Of all men else, great Monnarks have most need to square their actions and to weigh their words. Just as the Inferior spheres of force do move as the first framer doth their course allot, so doth the peoples manners still attend on what their Prince most usually doth do. Kings for the use of many are ordaind, not for to feed themselves luxuriously, keepe Rioters and Roisters to attend them, whose pride for to maintaine how oftentimes, have we oth Communalty been rackt and torne? How many Gavestons K. *Charles* once kept, whose words were orders, and whose wills were Lawes. Then Shipmoney, and Polemoney together. Subsities, six at once were not enough for to maintain those Epicures at Court.⁶⁸

The joke here resides in the inappropriateness of Ismeno's accusations. Whatever else it may have been, Charles's court was never a haven for "Rioters and Roisters" in the way that his father's sometimes was. And after the assassination of the Duke of Buckingham in 1628 there were no great court favorites worthy of being called "Gavestons." What is being spoofed here is a tendency to use attacks on favoritism formulaically, as a generic or merely reflexive stand-in for political anger generally. More specifically, Nedham implies that the king's opponents have failed to take the measure of the man because they can only see him in terms of Edward II. The basic tenor of this jibe – the demonstration that one's opponent is blinded by the foolishness of received public discourse (and the implication that the writer is more discriminatory and self-possessed) – is a stock in trade of the cavalier style and is derived ultimately from Jonson. Ismeno is credulous

like Dapper or Drugger in *The Alchemist*, guilty of accepting inherited cliché and of using it to interpret the world.

Lying behind Ismeno's speech, though, are genuine grievances stemming from Charles's constitutional innovations: his decision to rule without parliament ("the King did trust to much unto himself") and to seek out extra-parliamentary sources of revenue. In Nedham's parody, these concerns are flattened out, reduced to a vocabulary of royal incontinence and corrupt favoritism that is implicitly mocked as both cliché and inapposite. What interests me about this passage, though, is the associative logic linking royal incontinence to corrupt favoritism and thence to tyranny and constitutional innovation. Ismeno's Charles is a figure of intemperate appetites who keeps Gavestons and who therefore extends prerogatives in a tyrannical fashion. In order to understand Nedham's deft parody of the king's opponents it is necessary to see that this kind of associative logic is in fact characteristic of the discourse of favoritism in general and of the deployment of the Edward II story in particular. That is, the link between accusing the king of keeping Gavestons and accusing him of unwarranted constitutional innovation need not be seen as ignorant or reductive, since in fact this same associative logic in the texts we have examined here actually enables writers to explore constitutional issues. What is ultimately at stake in Nedham's joke is the relationship between ideological figuration and historical fact: Ismeno is lampooned for producing an image of the Caroline court that is at odds with its actual history. But it is at the same time reductive of Nedham to assert that the purpose of such figuration is primarily descriptive. As we have seen, thinking about Gavestons means thinking about the limits of personal rule even, in the 1590s or 1640s, when there is no actual court favorite to serve as the focus for political opposition.

*Instrumental favoritism and the uses of
Roman history*

Like the Leicester legend or the story of Edward II, histories of the early Roman empire by Suetonius, Cassius Dio, and especially Tacitus provided politically minded English subjects with a repertoire of representative anecdotes and precedents with which to take the measure of the problem of contemporary favoritism. The best-known and most important figure here is of course Sejanus, the great and loathsome favorite of the emperor Tiberius, though other imperial minions also figure prominently in topical retellings of Roman history. Particularly after the rise of Buckingham, the figure of Sejanus becomes an omnipresent touchstone for the corrupting influence of royal favorites. As early as 1621, a popular verse libel aimed at Buckingham complained that “Sejanus Doth bestowe / what ever offices Doe fall,” and the parallel became notorious as of May of 1626, when Sir John Eliot – summarizing the charges brought against Buckingham by the House of Commons – compared him at length and in detail to Tacitus’s Sejanus.¹ “If the Duke is Sejanus,” Charles is supposed to have said upon hearing of Eliot’s parallel, “I must be Tiberius.”²

Because the terms of opprobrium leveled at Buckingham lingered in the political imagination long after the duke’s death, comparisons with Sejanus were rehearsed in the controversy surrounding the attainder and execution of the Earl of Strafford. The latter is treated as a “second Sejanus” in a number of poems and pamphlets from the 1640s and 1650s.³ One anonymous pamphlet written in defense of the earl’s prosecutors described Strafford as being “mischievous as Sejanus” and expressed the hope that he might arrive “at the same end.”⁴ This accommodation of Strafford to a catalogue of favorites featuring Sejanus and Buckingham is exemplified in a poem by an R. Fletcher on the transitory nature of worldly riches, printed in 1656: “Awake *Sejanus, Strafford, Buckingham,* / Charge the fond favourites of greatest name / What faith is in a Prince’s smile.”⁵ The conceit is a sloppy one, since Buckingham was never abandoned by his royal patron. That Fletcher unthinkingly names him anyway demonstrates the degree to

which Buckingham and Strafford had come to be connected in the popular imagination.

Caroline interest in the story of Sejanus was served, too, by the translation and publication of several continental treatments of the favorite's life and career. These include an anonymous translation of Pierre Matthieu's life of Sejanus entitled *The Powerful Favorite* (1628), a second translation of the same French original by Thomas Hawkins in a volume entitled *Unhappy Prosperity* (1632, 1639), a translation, also by Hawkins, of Giovanni Battista Manzini's *Political Observations Upon the Fall of Sejanus* (1634, 1638, 1639), and Thomas Nash's *Gymnasiarchon* (1648, 1650), a study of the court favoritism adapted from a treatise on Sejanus first printed in Strasburg in 1620.⁶ Translations were presumably attractive because they fed an avid English interest in the charged topical story of Sejanus and Tiberius while providing their producers with useful protection against charges that they were commenting directly on English politics. What could be safer than a foreign account of ancient history? Nevertheless, each of these books is clearly aimed at an English audience whose interest in the Roman story is based on its application to seventeenth-century England.

Looked at from a more general perspective, interest in the figure of Sejanus is part of a late Elizabethan and early Stuart interest in the period of Roman history comprising the fall of the republic and the beginning of imperial rule. This period offered a narrative of institutional change that fascinated English readers used to thinking of their own state in terms of immemorial custom. Mined for insight in times of native constitutional uneasiness, this period in Roman history provided a bracing cautionary tale of political degeneration featuring the rise of tyranny and the loss of liberties.⁷ The story of Sejanus in particular appealed to early modern readers and writers because it epitomized this narrative of constitutional degeneration. The imperial minion's corrupt influence stems from unchecked imperial power, and so the rise of the minion and the decline of the senate represent something like a structural transformation of the Roman public sphere – a fundamental change in the way Romans were enfranchised. For this reason, Sejanus becomes a representative figure, standing for concerns about incipient tyranny and forging a key link between corrupt favoritism and the over-extension of royal power. Paranoia about the subversion of constitutional forms is therefore implicit in Eliot's comparison of Sejanus and Buckingham, especially in the context of parliamentary action against a royal favorite. This subtext likewise justifies Charles's indignant response.

This same paranoia – about the rise of Buckingham, the over-extension of royal authority, and the threat to native liberty – finds expression during the overheated 1620s in a number of plays set in early imperial Rome: *The Tragedy of Nero* (printed 1624, reprinted 1633), Philip Massinger's *The Roman Actor* (1626, printed 1629), Thomas May's *Julia Agrippina* (1628, printed 1639).⁸ Each of these plays sets imperial tyranny against the memory of republican virtue, and so each tells a Roman story as the story of institutional degeneration and the loss of liberty. Though none of them deals with Sejanus directly, each is profoundly indebted to Ben Jonson's depiction of imperial despotism in *Sejanus His Fall* (1603, first printed 1605), returning to Jonson's influential late Elizabethan play in order to respond imaginatively to the unique political pressures of the turbulent 1620s.⁹ In particular, I want to argue that these late Jacobean and early Caroline writers return to Jonson because his *Sejanus* provided an analysis of the link between corrupt favoritism and absolute imperial will that was particularly useful as a vehicle for political paranoia in the era of Buckingham. That is, what interests me about these plays – including Jonson's – is how they set contemporary concerns about royal favoritism against the backdrop of institutional transformation in early imperial Rome. In so doing, as I will argue below, they give symbolic elaboration to a radical theory about the nature of royal favoritism, one that takes on increasing ideological importance in the paranoid political world of the 1620s. I call this the theory of instrumental favoritism because it depicts imperial favorites as instrumental extensions of absolute power rather than, say, as bewitching lovers or corrupting counselors. The word 'instrument' is in fact using a keyword in these plays, and treating favorites as imperial instruments means that tyrannical emperors are wholly to blame for their corrupt favorites rather than the other way around.

As another kind of shorthand, we might also call this a republican theory of favoritism because it blossoms in England with the emergence of widespread interest in Tacitus and epitomizes the Roman historian's cynical attitude toward the absolute power of the emperors.¹⁰ To say that these plays raise republican questions about the politics of royal favoritism is not necessarily to imply that they advocate republicanism as a mode of government superior to monarchy. Only the anonymous *Tragedy of Nero*, which features highly sympathetic portraits of the poet Lucan and his fellow conspirators against Nero, can really be read as a republican text in that strong sense. But these plays persistently raise questions within their Roman worlds about the nature of authority and public duty that are inspired by dissatisfaction with imperial absolutism and animated by nostalgic recollection of

the republic, and these questions are intended to be understood as relevant to contemporary England. Consequently, the Sejanus story and other narratives of corrupt favor set in the early Roman Empire offer important imaginative resources not as readily available in native precedents like the Edward II story. That is, where the Edward II story tends to frame royal favoritism as a problematic gray area built into personal monarchy, stories of early imperial Rome cast it as the telltale symptom of an extreme brand of absolutism in which all political agency is monopolized at the top.

Setting the contemporary problem of favoritism against a Roman history of institutional transformation focuses attention upon a key ideological conflict between patronage and citizenship as alternative modes of organizing participation in the public sphere. The treatments of royal favoritism in seventeenth-century Roman plays are therefore framed by larger questions about the ultimate sources of political authority in the state: is participation in the life of the commonwealth a privilege conferred from above or a duty of citizenship? The corrupt operation of favorites in these plays is used to explore the ethical and political failure of a top-down system of patronage as the sole mechanism for the distribution of political authority. This has a number of implications. For one thing, the absolutism of the emperors in these plays, their aggrandizement of all political agency, is felt to come at the cost of republican liberties and the independent agency of the senate. These plays are therefore specially alive to the institutional implications of the power of the favorite, lavishing attention upon the changing power nexus represented by the autocratic emperor, the all-powerful favorite, the merely ceremonial senate, and the disenfranchised citizen. For another, Roman favorites in these plays are understood as symptomatic expressions of a patronage system that is an extension of imperial absolutism: they are the necessary and inevitable instruments of imperial power. As a result, these plays explicitly dismantle the rhetorical dodge of claiming loyalty to the king while opposing his counselors.

In his important study of seventeenth-century political radicalism, James Holstun describes the opposition to Buckingham in the 1620s as an “emergent republican structure of feeling.”¹¹ Holstun is alluding here to two key concepts from Raymond Williams’s *Marxism and Literature*. The first of these is Williams’s notion of culture formation as a diachronic process in which the dominant consensus is always and inevitably challenged by the excluded residuum of previous social formations and by the ungovernable emergence of new values and institutions.¹² The second is the concept of structures of feeling, which Williams defines as “meanings and values as they

are actively lived and felt,” adding that “the relations between these and formal or systematic beliefs are in practice variable (including historically variable) over a range from formal assent with private dissent to the more nuanced interaction between selected and interpreted beliefs and acted and justified experiences.”¹³ Williams’s emphasis on the sheer multiplicity and variability of structures of feeling offers a useful theoretical rejoinder to the vulgar revisionist idea that seventeenth-century England can be characterized in terms exclusively of a broad ideological consensus.¹⁴ The searching and often radical questions about monarchy and favor enabled in these Roman fictions, whatever else one says about their representative nature or their impact, self-evidently existed within the mentality of seventeenth-century England. And these plays allow us to examine how problems of favoritism brought to the fore by recent English controversies, participated in their articulation.

Because Jonson’s *Sejanus* predates the tempests surrounding Somerset and Buckingham – it was apparently composed in time for a 1603 production and then heavily revised for print in 1605 – that play in particular can let us think about the nature of emergent aspects of political habits of thought. Here again, as in the configurations discussed in previous chapters, Elizabethan thinking about favoritism anticipates and helps shape aspects of the more intense battles surrounding Jacobean and Caroline favorites. In fact, the anonymous author of *Leicester’s Commonwealth* (1584) anticipates both Jonson and Eliot, comparing his monstrous Leicester to Sejanus. The Scholar, describing a parliamentary debate about a subsidy grant, reports that he heard another member of Commons grumbling as follows about the queen’s request for money:

For her Majesty’s need, I could make answer as one answered once the Emperor Tiberius in the like case and cause: *Abunde ei pecuniam fore, si a liberto suo in societatem reciperetur* – that her Majesty should have money enough if one of her servants would vouchsafe to make her highness partaker with him, meaning thereby my Lord of Leicester, whose treasure must needs in one respect be greater than that of her Majesty, for he layeth up whatsoever he getteth and his expenses he casteth upon the purse of his Princess.¹⁵

The Latin here is a slightly altered quotation from the anonymous fourth century *Epitome de Caesaribus*, where it is said not of Tiberius and Sejanus but of the emperor Claudius and his minions Pallas and Narcissus.¹⁶ Such errors notwithstanding, the intended parallel with Sejanus anticipates later evocations of the figure right down to its characteristic invocation of a parliamentary setting. Comparing favorites to imperial Roman exempla

focuses attention on the conflict between royal favor and other institutions of authority and advice.

The present chapter takes up these Roman plays and traces the evolution of the notion of instrumental favoritism that they present and explore. The later plays, as I will argue, all accommodate lessons learned from Jonson's core Roman story to the more heated controversies surrounding Jacobean and Caroline favoritism. These later plays are interesting in their own right because they bring out the radical potential of Jonson's conception of favoritism, taking his vision of imperial Roman absolutism and favor in politically oppositional directions that might have appalled Jonson himself. Nevertheless, because Jonson's play anticipates and influences later Jacobean and Caroline dramatizations of instrumental favor, looking at the radicalism of these late plays in terms of their Jonsonian inheritance can allow us to see, in unusually concrete terms, how conflicts over favoritism from the 1620s emerge by means of and in the terms of residual Elizabethan structures of feeling.

"SLAVES TO ONE MAN'S LUSTS/AND NOW TO MANY":
ABSOLUTISM AND FAVOR IN JONSON'S *SEJANUS*

Sejanus His Fall makes meticulous use of Roman sources and so reproduces with surprising fidelity the Roman institutional frameworks against which the actions of Tiberius and Sejanus unfold. Nevertheless, Philip J. Ayres is surely correct to assert that the play's primary concern is not with Roman history itself but with its relation to the political milieu of Jonson and his contemporaries.¹⁷ For any other contemporary dramatist this point would be self-evident. That the case needs to be made at all for *Sejanus* attests to the degree of care with which the printed play reproduces what Ayres calls "the 'accidentals' of Roman history – the minutiae of topography, customs, religion, the formulae of senatorial procedure."¹⁸ This carefully developed Roman milieu is more than merely atmospheric, however: alienating specific political concerns from English contexts allows them to be reconsidered from new and revelatory angles. For Jonson, the Rome of Tiberius provides a forum within which aspects of royal authority that form a part of the English tradition can be severed from the ancient constitution, exaggerated, and imagined by the play's virtuous but disenfranchised party as problematic innovations. To put it another way, the Tiberian setting of Jonson's play allows him to put pressure on an exaggerated version of absolutism by locating it against a powerful strain of republican nostalgia.¹⁹

The moral center of *Sejanus* is provided for us by the disenfranchised followers of the late Germanicus, who struggle throughout to balance increasing hostility to the state with a conservative brand of nostalgic patriotism. Germanicus himself is remembered as a prince who treated his followers as “friends” (1.123), and his devotees are likewise associated with a brand of honest and non-instrumental social bonds that are crucially unlike the relationships that make up the political world under Tiberius. The Germanicans, in Jonson’s play, stand for an ideal of patrician virtue epitomized in the following pronouncement by Agrippina, Germanicus’s widow:

Were all Tiberius’ body stuck with eyes,
 And every wall and hanging in my house
 Transparent, as this lawn I wear, or air;
 Yea, had Sejanus both his ears as long
 As to my inmost closet, I would hate
 To whisper any thought, or change an act,
 To be made Juno’s rival. Virtue’s forces
 Show ever noblest in conspicuous courses.

(2.450–57)

This noble ethic of transparency, constancy, and honest good fellowship is clearly out of step with the Rome of Tiberius and Sejanus, a milieu dominated (as Agrippina acknowledges) by secrets and spies.²⁰ Noble Germanicans cannot flourish in Rome because (as the Germanican Sabinus puts it):

We want the fine arts, and their thriving use
 Should make us graced, or favoured of the times.
 We have no shift of faces, no cleft tongues,
 No soft and glutinous bodies, that can stick,
 Like snails, on painted walls; or, on our breasts,
 Creep up, to fall from that proud height to which
 We did by slavery, not by service, climb. (1.5–11)

Sabinus’s distinction between service and slavery involves a larger distinction between two ways of imagining the state. Political relationships in the world of Tiberius are all slavery because power in Tiberius’s Rome is imagined as coming entirely from the top down. Instead of providing “service” – an ideal that involves a free and reciprocal exchange of loyalty and care – Roman aspirants must now struggle simply to adhere, snail-like, to the great.²¹ This distinction is likewise used to make sense of Rome’s institutional transformation, as in Silius’s thumbnail sketch of recent Roman history:

Well, all is worthy of us, were it more,
 Who with our riots, pride, and civil hate,
 Have so provoked the justice of the gods –
 We that (within these fourscore years) were born
 Free, equal lords of the triumphèd world,
 And knew no masters but affections,
 To which betraying first our liberties,
 We since became the slaves to one man's lusts,
 And now to many. (1.56–64)

This narrative relies on a structuring analogy between governance and self-governance: the failure of republican Romans to master their own affections led to civil turmoil and forced them finally to hand all power over to an emperor. People who have been unable to govern themselves, who have become slaves to affection, bring political tyranny upon themselves. This, though, inaugurates the basic disproportion in power that then renders all service slavery. And in a state where political authority is monopolized by the emperor, the enslavement of citizens to his favorites is likewise inevitable. Hence Silius's epigrammatically rendered summary of the decline of Roman liberties: "slaves to one man's lusts / And now to many."

The Germanicans imagine a city peopled with an enfranchised citizenry while Sejanus exists in a world of imperial subjects. The distinction is a crucial one for the play, and marks a key conceptual difference between the realities of Tiberius's empire and the nostalgic ideals associated with the memory of the "old liberty" of the republic (1.404). As is suggested by the depiction of the mob in Act 5, however, Jonson's nostalgic evocation of "Rome's general suffrage" is not drawn along populist lines. The emphasis is placed squarely upon the disenfranchisement of "the gentry's chief," including the Germanicans, who are of course a patrician group (1.44). Part of their outrage at Sejanus stems from the fact that he is an upstart who has presided over the wholesale destruction of aristocratic status in the state: "'Tis place, / Not blood, discerns the noble and the base" (5.11–12). Sejanus thrives in and represents a world in which traditional bases of honor have been replaced by hierarchies constituted from above by the whims of imperial favor. Of course, similar status tensions are expressed in controversies surrounding Leicester, Somerset, and Buckingham, each of whom is characterized by foes as an unworthy upstart whose ascendancy displaces a more traditional and deserving aristocracy.

In the bleak political landscape of Jonson's play, the shift from patrician citizens to imperial subjects results in the evisceration of the institutions of republican government. Offices are still dispersed – thus preserving the

illusion of meaningful political service – but only to clients of the imperial favorite. The result is a kind of political echo chamber, in which all public agency reflects imperial favor and so recapitulates the will of Tiberius and “minion Sejanus” (3.243). Jonson lavishes special satirical scorn upon the obsequious impotence of Tiberius’s senators, who are reduced to being “good-dull-noble lookers on” who are “only called to keep the marble warm” (3.16–17). Though he styles himself “the servant of the Senate,” Tiberius freely uses their vestigial authority as a screen for his own contrivances (1.393). What is more striking, though, as an index to the powerlessness of the senate, is the transparent flimsiness of this particular ruse. In one instance Tiberius first praises the senate for honoring Sejanus as if the impetus had come from them and then – in the same speech – warns them not to inquire into the favorite’s virtues on the grounds that praise bestowed by princes is beyond the understanding of “common men” (1.538). In the tumult that accompanies Sejanus’s fall in Act 5, Jonson shows the senators celebrating liberty – elsewhere in the play a buzzword of nostalgic republicanism – while displaying a characteristic willingness to be herded by Macro: “Liberty, liberty, liberty! Lead on” (5.758). The bitter joke parodies senatorial impotence by displaying the meaninglessness of republican values in the Rome of Tiberius and his minions.

The nature of favoritism and its relation to imperial absolutism is explored extensively in the depiction of Sejanus, and Jonson’s attention to detail results in a meticulously precise representation of the mechanisms by which the favorite accrues and deploys his power. When Sejanus first appears onstage, a third of the way through Act 1, we see him deal rather distractedly with the business of selling “a tribune’s place” while simultaneously inquiring with far greater interest into the circumstances and character of Eudemus, Livia’s physician and cosmetician (1.182). We are later told that the sale of offices is commonplace, a lucrative perquisite of Sejanus’s unique position. The minion

Commands, disposes every dignity;
Centurions, tribunes, heads of provinces,
Praetors, and consuls, all that heretofore
Rome’s general suffrage gave, is now his sale.
(1.220–23)

The Germanican Arruntius, who watches Sejanus arrange to sell the tribuneship, is predictably outraged at the venal manner in which public office is dispensed: “So, yet! Another? Yet? O deperate state / Of grov’ling honour” (1.196–97). But the real point of this scene, its real outrage, lies

in the juxtaposition of the different orders of business undertaken by the great favorite. In the Rome of Sejanus, power resides not in offices like the tribuneship but in the kind of physical intimacy that Eudemus enjoys with several ladies of the court by virtue of his vocation.

Later in Act 1, when Sejanus and Eudemus meet face to face, much is made of the physician's intimate knowledge of the excretory and cosmetic routines of his patients. After making a few inquiries about Livia and others, Sejanus exclaims

You're a subtle nation, you physicians!
And grown the only cabinets, in court,
To ladies' privacies. (1.299–301)

To Sejanus – himself the only cabinet, in court, to Tiberius's privacies – this kind of physical intimacy is the raw material of power. He uses Eudemus to gain “a private meeting” with Livia and also to help plan and execute the poisoning of her erstwhile husband Drusus (1.352). For this latter plan he also seeks out the assistance of the eunuch Lydgos, cupbearer to Drusus, in order to capitalize upon his “free access” (2.17) to the intended victim's body. Sejanus makes plans to seduce the “delicate youth,” a plan that resonates with the general emphasis upon sodomitical parasitism that emblemizes the grotesque court politics of intimacy in this milieu (2.23).²² Of course, Sejanus's own career started, according to Arruntius's bitter recollection, with homosexual prostitution:

I knew him at Caius' trencher, when for hire
He prostituted his abused body
To that great gourmand, fat Apicius,
And was the noted pathic of the time.
(1.213–16)

Like the play's discussion of the excretory habits of court ladies, the connection here between Apicius's corpulence and Sejanus's prostitution belongs to the symbolic canons of the grotesque open body. And here too the grotesque is used to characterize the brand of physical intimacy that has always been Sejanus's stock in trade, his means of accruing and asserting influence behind the scenes.

Jonson characteristically uses the language of grotesque bodily openness to satirize a corrupt political system in which physical intimacy outweighs all other sources of authority. It is hard to miss the disgust that Jonson lavishes upon Sejanus's cohorts in the play: their snail-like glutinousness, Apicius's fat, the urine and stool of Eudemus's clients. At the same time, though, the

Germanicans tend to imagine Sejanus and his clients as closed, opaque bodies harboring shameful secrets. Thus, for example, Silius describes Satrius and Natta as a pair of corrupt courtiers

whose close breasts,
Were they ripped up to light, it would be found
A poor and idle sin to which their trunks
Had not been made fit organs. (1.24–27)

Likewise, Sabinus and Arruntius imagine Sejanus's Machiavellian ambition in terms of a secret bodily interior, and they also fantasize about ripping it from his closed breast:

SABINUS. I do not know
The heart of his designs; but, sure, their face
Looks farther than the present.

ARRUNTIUS. By the gods,
If I could guess he had but such a thought,
My sword should cleave him down from head to heart,
But I would find it out; and, with my hand
I'd hurl his panting brain about the air,
In mites as small as atomi . . . (1.250–57)

Imagining the bodies of Sejanus and his cohort as opaque and closed may seem on the face of it to contradict the images of excretory and erotic openness with which the play characterizes court intimacy, but in fact the two go hand in hand. The bodies of the corrupt courtiers are imagined, by both Jonson and the Germanicans, as opaque but semi-permeable, enclosing their secret sins from public view but grotesquely open to intimate associates. Imagining courtly bodies in this way allows Jonson to imagine the politics of access in purely somatic terms: advancement involves access to bodily privacies that are imagined as promiscuously and grotesquely open but that nevertheless remain closed to the followers of Germanicus.

Sitting atop this network of corrupt intimacies is of course Tiberius himself: “our monster” as Arruntius calls him (4.373). Tiberius is above all a figure of dissimulation, and we might think of him as the representative authority behind both the play's culture of secrecy and the politics of access that derive from it. He is increasingly removed from the political world of Rome as the play progresses, particularly after his physical removal to Capri between Acts 3 and 4. While his public appearances and letters seek to maintain a facade of moral probity, we know from Arruntius that the emperor pursues private lusts with increasing abandon during his retreat.

It is not clear how exactly Arruntius is supposed to know of this behavior, but since his account (4.373–409) is drawn from Jonson’s Roman sources, I think we are to assume that it is in some sense an accurate portrayal of Tiberius’s actions. The emperor’s island hideaway is a kind of laboratory in which he dedicates his attention to torture, murder, and “new-commented lusts, / For which wise nature hath not left a name” (4.400–01). Within the context of the play, Arruntius’s account of the emperor’s lusts establishes at least a symbolic association between Tiberius’s horrifying pursuits and the grotesque bodily “privacies” that structure political influence in Sejanus’s Rome. But the connection is more than just symbolic. The emperor’s careful maintenance of the distinction between public decorum and a monstrous private life – he is the antithesis of Germanican transparency – provides the model that authorizes his followers. The Roman political world, conceptualized as top-down slavery instead of as reciprocal service, necessarily reflects the style of its emperor.

Jonson’s sources are mixed about the nature of the relationship between Tiberius and Sejanus. Suetonius suggests that Tiberius “felt no affection for Sejanus” at all and only gave him power to capitalize upon his talent for political intrigue, while Tacitus says that Sejanus has “a complete ascendancy over Tiberius” and attributes this to “heaven’s anger against Rome.”²³ Uncertainty on this key point is instructive, for it signals an interesting ambiguity built into the way classical sources treat imperial tyranny. On the one hand, these texts want to emphasize the intemperance of unchecked imperial desires. Tiberius’s unaccountable but powerful affection for Sejanus in Tacitus’s version fits this agenda nicely because it emphasizes the irrationality of imperial will. On the other hand, these histories chart (and implicitly deplore) the increasing domination of the Roman political world by tyrannical emperors, and so Suetonius treats the powerful favorite as a pawn of Tiberius’s all-determining political will. I think Jonson’s conception of the relationship more closely resembles Suetonius than Tacitus. While Arruntius’s account of Tiberius’s island retreat establishes the emperor as a figure of legendary intemperance, the emperor’s handling of Sejanus himself is surprisingly impersonal and devoid of affection.

That is, I do not think Jonson wants us to see the relationship between Tiberius and Sejanus as a strong emotional or erotic bond despite Arruntius’s remark that Tiberius has “become the ward / To his own vassal – a stale catamite” (4.403–04). As Mario DiGangi points out, the passage’s syntactical ambiguity makes its sodomitical innuendo difficult to parse.²⁴ Is Arruntius saying that Tiberius has become catamite to Sejanus – a piece of invective that would be aimed at the emperor’s putative willingness to

subordinate himself to his favorite – or is he characterizing Sejanus as a catamite? To my ear, the latter seems more likely. But if so, is Arruntius asserting that Sejanus is Tiberius's catamite or merely casting aspersions upon the favorite's past? Part of the difficulty has to do with the symbolic complexity in Jonson's England of accusatory terms like "catamite," which (as we have seen elsewhere in the present study) can appear sexually specific while invoking a more nebulous, metaphorical sense of social or political disorder. This means that when (and if) Arruntius calls Sejanus "catamite," he could literally be referring to the favorite's scandalous early career while simultaneously evoking metaphorically the preposterous inversion of rank occasioned by his unwarranted elevation in the emperor's favor.

The larger question here has to do with the way Jonson conceptualizes favoritism, and *Sejanus His Fall* simply does not seem to be a play about the problem of the ruler's affection. As John Michael Archer has argued, the emperor as a character is strangely absent from the world he dominates, a cipher: "Tiberius is something of a political and . . . psychological impossibility, a controlling personality without a personality."²⁵ As I read the play, Sejanus is elevated not because of Tiberius's bamboozled love or intemperate lust but rather because someone unscrupulous has to become the agent of the emperor's will. It is a structural rather than a characterological necessity. This is why the favorite is so readily replaced as soon as Tiberius suspects him of treachery; the emperor is able to outfox and undermine Sejanus, replacing him at once with Macro, a new favorite whom Jonson presents as Sejanus's double. The ease with which this switch is made surprises Sejanus, but it too is a symptom of the basic disproportion in power that structures the play's imperial world: Roman courtiers may be slaves to Sejanus, but the favorite is finally nothing more than the slave of Tiberius. Even the senators – who are "almost all" supposed to be Sejanus's "creatures" – recognize this basic imbalance and flee the favorite's side the moment Tiberius's favor is withdrawn (4.457).

Tiberius does have criteria for selecting favorites, but they are more pragmatic than affectionate. Most importantly, candidates must be willing, as Macro puts it, to become the emperor's "dumb instruments / To do, but not enquire" (3.718–19). At the same time, though, they have to be cunning enough to inquire into the emperor's secret nefarious purposes and act accordingly. The play actually gives us two scenes containing private conferences between Tiberius and his would-be instruments, and in each the emperor tests his interlocutor with banal pieties while aiming at more sinister intrigues. In Act 2, when Tiberius and Sejanus concoct their plan to murder the family of Germanicus, the emperor pretends to be politically

timid and allows his favorite to lead him on toward ruthlessness for over one hundred lines before confessing to the ruse (2.165–78). And when Tiberius first instructs Macro to spy on Sejanus at the end of Act 3, he does so with the same kind of reticent duplicity:

We have thought of thee
 Amongst a field of Romans, worthiest Macro,
 To be our eye and ear; to keep strict watch
 On Agrippina, Nero, Drusus – ay,
 And on Sejanus. Not that we distrust
 His loyalty, or do repent one grace
 Of all that heap we have conferred on him –
 For that were to disparage our election,
 And call that judgment now in doubt, which then
 Seemed as unquestioned as an oracle. (3.679–88)

Not that we distrust him, but we distrust him. Macro gets the message loud and clear:

If then it be the lust of Cesar's power
 T'have raised Sejanus up, and in an hour
 O'erturn him, tumbling down from height of all,
 We are his ready engine. (3.744–47)

Since these men are not bound by any Germanican code of social piety, it is small wonder that the passivity expected of the emperor's favorites eventually comes into conflict with the ambitious cunning for which they are selected. Tiberius sniffs out Sejanus's treachery at once because it confirms one of his own maxims: "Those are dreadful enemies we raise / With favours, and make dangerous with praise" (3.637–38) – and the cycle of betrayal seems to be repeating itself when Macro cultivates Caligula (4.514–22). Since imperial favor is the sole basis for political agency in Jonson's Rome, this is the only power struggle really possible within the imaginative world of the play: a struggle between absolute authority and its alienated manifestation.

The great Sejanus turns out to be an interchangeable part of the machinery of Tiberius's Rome rather than a "partner of the Empire" (1.218) in any meaningful sense. For the play teaches us that it is the nature of empire not to admit of partnership. If there is suspense in the play concerning the fate of Sejanus and the craftiness of Tiberius, it is manufactured by our investment in the perspective of the Germanicans, who debate these very questions extensively in Acts 4 and 5. Arruntius, in particular, asserts that

“our night-eyed Tiberius doth not see / His minions drifts” (4.363–64), and laments that the emperor has

become the ward
 To his own vassal, a stale catamite –
 Whom he, upon our low and suffering necks,
 Hath raised, from excrement, to side the gods
 And have his proper sacrifice in Rome.

(4.403–07)

His erroneous reading of the situation is based upon the recognition that the favorite governs access to the emperor (see 3.619–20), serves as the conduit for Tiberius’s influence during much of the play, and garners his near-absolute authority in Rome on the basis of his intimacy with the emperor. But there is also something willful about Arruntius’s misunderstanding of the situation, since he clearly feels duty-bound to defend the idea of legitimate imperial power despite Tiberius’s tyranny. In Act 1, when Silius speculates that Sejanus aspires to become emperor, Arruntius responds with a conventional loyalism that will become increasingly strained as the play goes on: “The name [of Emperor] Tiberius, / I hope, will keep, howe’er he hath forgone / The dignity and power” (1.244–46). Believing that Tiberius has forgone the power of empire makes it easier for Arruntius to countenance the loss of imperial dignity. Blaming the favorite instead of the emperor makes it just barely possible to sustain the minimal level of loyalty to the ruler required within Arruntius’s conservative brand of social piety.

This distinction is clearly more and more difficult for Arruntius to sustain as the play progresses. In Act 1, Arruntius advocates providing the emperor with sound counsel as a cure for the corruption precipitated by Sejanus, as if the emperor were essentially innocent and could be made to see clearly (1.425–30). By Act 5, though, Arruntius recognizes that Rome’s problems are structural and thus that the removal of corrupt individuals will not accomplish anything: he sees that Macro will replace Sejanus (5.760–63), and that even if Tiberius were killed a new tyrant would replace him (5.810–14). The progressive radicalization of Arruntius’s perspective registers the erosion of his optimistic assumption that favoritism might be separated from absolutism and his dawning recognition that the problems represented in Act 1 by Sejanus are in fact built into the political structure of empire. It makes no sense, consequently, to attack the favorite while asserting loyalty to the emperor or even to the idea of empire: the former is an inevitable manifestation of political conditions that accompany the latter.

Though Jonson uses his Germanican commentators to explore this rather bleak political model, he has them stop short of advocating any kind of open rebellion. Ayres argues, in fact, that Sabinus's defense of quietism provides the play's dominant political theory and replicates an "orthodox Elizabethan attitude" toward tyranny:²⁶

No ill should force the subject undertake
 Against the sovereign, more than hell should make
 The gods do wrong. A good man should and must
 Sit rather down with loss, than rise unjust.

(4.163–66)

Elsewhere too, Jonson seems concerned to accommodate his story to the political pieties of his age. After hearing Tiberius's carefully crafted self-presentation in Act 1, Silius remarks as follows:

If this man
 Had but a mind allied unto his words,
 How blest a fate were it to us, and Rome!
 We could not think that state for which to change,
 Although the aim were our old liberty:
 The ghosts of those that fell for that would grieve
 Their bodies lived not now, again to serve.
 Men are deceived who think there can be thrall
 Beneath a virtuous prince. Wished liberty
 Ne'er lovelier looks than under such a crown.

(1.399–409)

This is an odd thing for the otherwise republican Silius to be saying, but it makes a great deal of sense if we imagine the speech as another nod to Elizabethan orthodoxy: imperial Roman corruption notwithstanding, Jonson seems to be saying here, by way of Silius, a well-run monarchy is the best political system.

For all that, I think that *Sejanus* is much less comfortable with the orthodoxies it invokes than Ayres suggests. Surely the experience of the play seems specifically designed to put pressure on the brand of quietism that Sabinus intones. That is, if a writer set out to promulgate this orthodoxy, he or she could presumably tell a different kind of story. Both Sabinus and Arruntius find themselves grudgingly wishing Tiberius dead, and though this is not the same thing as advocating tyrannicide, such moments are likely to garner some sympathy from anyone experiencing the play (4.216–17, 369–70). The gathering pessimism of Arruntius, who begins the play attempting to reconcile criticism of corruption with loyalty to Tiberius, serves as a model

for the sheer difficulty of trying to “sit rather down with loss, than rise unjust” in such a state. Moreover, unlike the treatment of the same story in the anonymous *Tragedy of Claudius Tiberius Nero* (1607), there is no hint in here that things might improve. That play, in order to impose a satisfactory moral closure upon the story, treats Macro and Caligula as Germanicans who save Rome from Tiberius and Sejanus. Jonson’s play, by contrast, ends with a flurry of unspeakable horrors – the rage of the mob, the dismemberment of Sejanus’s corpse, the reported rape of Sejanus’s prepubescent daughter – and an intentionally small and hollow-sounding attempt to moralize. Arruntius sums things up as follows: “forebear, you things / That stand upon the pinnacles of state, / to boast your slippery height” (5.903–05); Terentius chimes in with “Let this example move th’insolent man / Not to grow proud, and careless of the gods” (5.908–09). These highly conventional moral maxims obviously do not come close to addressing the ethical or political complexity of the story. They leave Tiberius out altogether and fail to engage in any meaningful way with Jonson’s remarkably detailed depiction of the mechanism of absolutist tyranny. They seem designed more to demonstrate the failure of conventional wisdom in the face of Tiberius’s Rome than to provide any sense of closure.²⁷ And if Jonson’s conclusion is that the horrors of Tiberian Rome outstrip the intellectual resources of conventional morality then we should not be too hasty to ascribe a comfortable orthodoxy to the play as a whole.

Sabinus’s quietism and Lepidus’s “plain and passive fortitude” (4.294) finally feel unsatisfying, but there is no real alternative here. The mob, whose “rage of power” proves capable of sweeping away the state, is too terrifyingly unguided to be a viable political resource (5.771). In fact, in the neo-stoic schema that underpins Jonson’s conception of Roman politics, this anarchic rage is itself felt as analogous to the tyranny of Tiberius. Returning to Silius’s mini-history of the fall of the Republic, we might map out Jonson’s system of analogies as follows. The failure of Romans to govern their affections leads to civil war. Civil war gives way to empire, replacing the ungoverned chaos of war with the un-self-governed will of the tyrannical emperor. Tiberius’s tyranny finds expression in the ungoverned ambition of his instrument, who “like a whirlwind” has scattered and crushed rivals and enemies (4.353). Resentment caused by Sejanus leads to uncontrolled violence against him. Lepidus, seeing the tables turn upon Sejanus in the senate, remarks “O violent change, / And whirl of men’s affections” (5.711–12), and I think we are supposed to hear the analogy between the ungoverned passions of the senate here and whirling aggression of Sejanus himself earlier in the play. The dismembering rage of the mob is thus the final link in a

series of manifestations of the ungoverned passions that doom the play's Rome as the legacy of this decline from its glorious republican past.

Sejanus His Fall was written as a collaborative effort near the end of Queen Elizabeth's long reign. It was apparently first performed – maybe at court – soon after the accession of King James in 1603. The play's original political resonance has been obscured by the fact that Jonson subjected the play to a major revision (and excised the work of his collaborator) in preparation for its printing in 1605: there is no way to know what in the text we have was added in an early Jacobean revision and what reflects the late Elizabethan interests of Jonson and his public. To make matters more complicated, we know that Jonson was summoned before the Privy Council at the instigation of the Earl of Northampton on charges related to the play, but it remains impossible to do more than speculate as to the nature of the charges.²⁸ It has often been assumed that Jonson's revisions must have been a defensive response to Northampton's charges, but it is also possible that these charges arose in response to the revised version of the text as printed. As Ayres has persuasively argued, the trial of Silius in Jonson's play is modeled on the trial of Walter Raleigh in November of 1603. If Northampton's complaint (as Ayres and Richard Dutton have argued) had to do with the Raleigh parallel, and if we imagine that this resemblance was present in the play's original performance, then we must imagine that this portion of the play was composed between the date of the trial and the end of 1603 (that is, sometime before 24 March 1604).²⁹ But the parallels with Raleigh may well have been added during Jonson's early Jacobean revision as well.

Because Tacitean commentary is associated so strongly in the 1590s with the Essex circle, and because the earl's high-profile flame-out focused national attention on the volatility of political intimacy and on the career paths of favorites, Jonson's late Elizabethan play has often been read as an expression of this faction's growing sense of disenfranchisement. Blair Worden, for example, has argued that the Germanicans in Jonson's play embody the kind of chivalric patrician virtue readily associated with Essex, and that their disillusionment in the play resonates with the frustrations of Essex and his faction, who felt themselves increasingly excluded from crucial decisions at court by the Cecils and their followers throughout the 1590s.³⁰ This reading seems to be contradicted to some degree by the notion that Silius is supposed to stand for Raleigh, a bitter rival of Essex and his faction. But if the allusion to Raleigh was added in revision after 1603 then it remains possible that what looks like ideological incoherence is in reality a manifestation of evolving topical purposes. A common thread of animosity

toward the *regnum Cecilianum* might explain how a play originally expressive of the Essex faction's frustrations could be revised to accommodate Raleigh's fall after 1603.

In a highly suggestive recent paper, Peter Lake and Nigel Smith have proposed that (since Jonson was himself a recently converted Catholic) we read the play as a kind of dramatization of the concerns evoked by the Catholic libel *Leicester's Commonwealth*. In this reading, the Germanicans are the disenfranchised Elizabethan Catholics struggling under the Protestant tyranny of the Elizabethan regime.³¹ But Essex of course garnered considerable support among English Catholics, and Jonson himself may have had connections with the earl's circle.³² It seems plausible to me that the play as originally conceived may have reflected a fusion of Catholic libel with the politics of Tacitean complaint developed in the Essex circle. More generally, I think we can see Jonson's play as an attempt to explore ideological fissures connected to but not coterminous with dissatisfaction of the Essex party and the rise of factionalism in the late Elizabethan court.³³ The play responds to a heightened concern about the modes of distribution of power at court, which in turn contributed to status conflict between the queen's appointees and more traditional aristocratic ideas of social distinction. Partly because of the influence of *Leicester's Commonwealth*, the same basic set of problems gets invoked in other late Elizabethan dramatizations of corrupt favoritism like *Edward II*, *Richard II*, and *Woodstock* (1591–94). Favoritism, as *Sejanus* and these other plays suggest, is an important part of the Elizabethan language of corruption, particularly useful as a way to think about conflicts between courtly influence and other real or imagined modes of prestige such as personal merit or lineage.

What sets *Sejanus* apart is its admonitory focus upon tyrannical absolutism. Some late Elizabethan treatments of favoritism seek to finesse the question of the monarch's responsibility for corrupt ministers (*Woodstock*; *Leicester's Commonwealth*). Others, like *Richard II* and *Edward II*, explore the idea that a subject might rebel against favorites while retaining loyalty to the crown. Though the position gives way in each case – reminding audiences that restricting royal prerogatives of favor is tantamount to deposing the king – each play presents monarchy as a laudable institution temporarily marred by the corrupt favorites of a weak king and subsequently rescued. Jonson's play, by contrast, treats corrupt favoritism as a symptom of absolute power, which means that in the Roman world he conjures the problem of favor is inextricable from the basic nature of imperial power. Like many of his contemporaries, Jonson seems to advocate a balanced

constitution. It is Tiberius's claim to profess himself "the servant of the Senate" (1.393) that evokes Silius's remark that such a king in deed would be a blessing to Rome. Jonson's play focuses, though, on the more pessimistic premise that this kind of balance is unobtainable once absolute authority has been ceded to the emperor. From that point on, instrumental favoritism replaces virtue, honor, and lineage as the sole mechanism for political agency.

The difference between *Sejanus* and other Elizabethan favorite texts has partly to do with the choice of Roman material: emperors are not English monarchs, and Jonson's audience presumably knew that subsequent emperors were likewise tyrannical. There is no Henry V on the horizon to banish Falstaff and salvage the institution of central power from corrupt intimacy. But it was also becoming commonplace to see imperial Rome as an admonitory exaggeration of what English monarchy could become. When the wicked King Richard II retreats into a world of private luxuries with his minions in *Woodstock*, he exults that he is able to reign "thus like an emperor."³⁴ Jonson's play reverses this equation, using Tiberius as an admonitory fictionalization of what England could become.³⁵ In the process, the play demonstrates that several of the radical ideas about favoritism that become commonplace during the ascendancy of Buckingham are already thinkable – or emergent – in late Elizabethan England. Setting Jonson's play against other Elizabethan favorite texts, we might say that its major ideological innovation lies in its strong correlation of favoritism as a corrupt political system with a strand of paranoia about expanding absolutism already present in the late Elizabethan political imagination. This strand is famously expressed, for example, in the roughly contemporary "Form of Apology and Satisfaction" compiled by members of the House of Commons in 1604:

What cause we your poor Commons have to watch over our privileges is manifest in itself to all men. The prerogatives of princes may easily and do daily grow; the privileges of the subject are for the most part at an everlasting stand. They may be by good providence and care preserved, but being once lost are not recovered but with much disquiet.³⁶

In *Sejanus*, favoritism is both the instrument by which the prerogative of the prince engrosses the privileges of the subject and the sign that the old liberties have already been lost. Since similar assumptions structure opposition to Buckingham, it is small wonder that playwrights in the 1620s and 1630s should answer Jonson's play as they did, pursuing the problems of favoritism through the material of Roman history.

“HATED INSTRUMENTS”: ABSOLUTISM AND FAVOR IN LATER
ROMAN PLAYS

In *James I and the Politics of Literature*, Jonathan Goldberg reads Jonson's Tiberius as an echo of King James's style of rule despite the fact that the earliest version of the play (as Goldberg recognizes) predates James's reign: questions of historical causality can be brushed aside because politics and literature share the same “epistemic limits,” which means that “political reality, ordinary events, and staged ones are all matters of representation.”³⁷ I agree with Goldberg to a point, but would like to make the case more concretely: it is because the history of Tiberius as told by Tacitus and others helps script both Jonson's *Sejanus* and later accounts of James that the former seems so prescient. We can see this kind of prescriptive historical reconstruction at work, for example, in the way Anthony Weldon describes the final meeting between King James and his erstwhile favorite Robert Carr, Earl of Somerset on the eve of the latter's conviction for the poisoning of Sir Thomas Overbury:

Nor must I forget to let you know how perfect the king was in the art of dissimulation, or, to give it his own phrase, king-craft. The Earle of Somerset never parted from him with more seeming affection than at this time, when he knew Somerset should never see him more; and had you seen that seeming affection, (as the author himself did,) you would rather have believed he was in his rising than setting. The earle, when he kissed his hand, the king hung about his neck, slabbering his cheeks, saying, ‘For Gods sake, when shall I see thee againe? On my soul, I shall neither eat nor sleep until you come again’ . . . The earl was not in his coach when the king used these very words, (in the hearing of four servants, of whom one was Somersets great creature, and of the Bed-Chamber, who reported it instantly to the author of this history.) ‘I shall never see his face more.’ I appeale to the reader, whether his motto of, *Qui nescit dissimulare nescit regnare*, was not . . . well performed in this passage.³⁸

This famous account of James's duplicitous handling of his favorite evokes Tiberius's treacherous and cunning manipulation of Sejanus. The emperor, too, so the well-known story goes, lulled Sejanus with promises of increased favor and then left him fatally exposed to the judgment of senators. Weldon names neither Tiberius nor Sejanus here, but I believe they provide the imaginative template upon which his representative anecdote is constructed. This is, moreover, precisely the kind of thing Arthur Wilson had in mind when he remarked that some contemporaries “parallel'd” James to Tiberius “for Dissimulation,” in a remark that serves as epigraph to the chapter in which Goldberg discusses Jonson's *Sejanus*.³⁹ In other words, the

account of James constructed by writers like Weldon and Wilson resemble Jonson's depiction of Tiberius and Sejanus because they all share the same classical sources. This kind of specific causality is worth revisiting in detail because it can help us understand the way received habits of thought fed into and shaped the "epistemic limits" governing later Jacobean conflicts as well.

There is a remarkable example both of increased tensions surrounding Jacobean favoritism in the Buckingham era and also of the tendency to see such tensions in terms of Roman history toward the end of *Tom Tell-Troath* (1622), a witty pamphlet attacking Jacobean pacifism. The speaker, who purports to intervene in Jacobean policy by offering good, plain counsel and reporting the sentiments of English subjects, goes so far as to lament that the godly obedience of English Protestants makes them unlikely to challenge or resist even egregious royal corruption. Catholics gloat over this Protestant social piety:

Let a Protestant King, (I mean one that rules over a people of that profession) be never so notoriously wicked in his person . . . In short, let him so excel in mischief, ruine, and oppression, as Nero, compared with him, may be held a very father of the people: when hee hath donne all that can be imagined to procure hate and contempt, hee shall not, for all that, have any occasion to feare; but may bouldly goe in and out to his sports, without a publique guard or a privy coate. And, though every day of his raigne bring forth a new prodigie to grieve all that are honest, and astonish all that are wise, yet shall he not neede to take either the lesse drink, when he goes to bedd, or the more thought, when he riseth. Hee may solace himselfe as securely in his bed-chamber as the Grand Signor in his seraglio; have lords spirituall for his mates, lords temporall for his eunuchs, and whom he will for his incubus. There he may kisse his minions without shame, and make his grooms his companions without danger: who, because they are acquainted with his secret sins, assume to themselves as much power and respect as Catholick Princes use to give their confessors: a pack of ravenous currs, that know no difference betweene the commonwealth, and one of their master's forests; but think all other subjects beasts, and only made for them to prey upon, that lick their masters soares not whole, but smooth; and bark at every man that dares be found circled with these sweete beagles. Wee [Catholics] may revell and laugh, when all the kingdome mournes: and upon every foote of ground his prerogative get, and cry with Tiberius, 'O people prepared for servitude!' His poore Protestant subjects will only think hee is given them of God for the punishment of their sinnes.⁴⁰

This is a striking passage, if only for the stridency of its attack upon bed-chamber politics. And though the author allies himself with godly Protestantism of the sort that would never overthrow a tyrant, the rhetoric here is anything but obedient and passive. Though the king described here is

presented as a hypothetical figure, the rather direct allusions to James and his signature vices (drinking, hunting, nuzzling minions) were undoubtedly intended and understood. Moreover, the passage articulates a thread of paranoia about the steady encroachment of royal prerogative reminiscent of the “Form of Apology and Satisfaction.” Here, the crown is accused in effect of engrossing the nation’s commons, turning the commonwealth into a private preserve for the king’s “ravenous currs” (or maybe Carrs?). Favoritism, as in Jonson’s play, is both the instrument by which “all other subjects” are victimized and the symptom of encroaching royal prerogatives. And the pamphlet’s invocation of both Tiberius and Nero draws a comparison between James and the Roman tyrants while evoking simultaneously a Jonsonian nostalgia for lost liberties.

This implied nostalgia is republican in the same manner as Jonson’s play: the evocation of Roman history as a story of declining liberties and increasing tyranny is used not to spearhead a call for republicanism as a practical form of government, but rather to underscore English fears about the diminishing scope of political enfranchisement outside of a corrupt-seeming court. As Markku Peltonen has usefully demonstrated, similarly republican habits of thought underpinned the parliamentary activism of the 1620s: men like Thomas Scott and Alexander Leighton, puritan pamphleteers and outspoken critics of early Stuart policy, drew heavily on Roman exempla to depict the perils of a perceived slide toward absolutism.⁴¹ Leighton’s aggressive call for the redress of a decade of grievances after Buckingham’s assassination in 1628, in *An Appeal to the Parliament*, salutes the parliament in Roman terms as “right honorable and high Senators” and compares the murdered favorite unfavorably to Tiberius’s minion:

Sejanus was never so ungratefull, or perfidious to his Master, as he [Buckingham] was, nor never did the State that indignitie and indemnitie, that he hath done to us, nor never trucked with forraignes, to betray so many states as he hath done. When one of the *Ancients of Rome* saw the governours grow carelesse of the publick good, and following of their private gain, he said *Rome wanted nothing to undoe it, but a chapman to buy it*: What a dangerous case then were we in? Who have Rome, the Emperour, Spain and Austria, yea and all the Babilonish crew in France, Italy, and Germanie, as so many *Cowpsmen*, laying their *pates & purses* together, to make purchase of us; especially having such a Coopsmate as he with so many Jesuited *Factors* and *Brokers*.⁴²

This tendency to turn to Tacitus and other histories of early imperial Rome for exemplary stories of eroded liberties and unchecked tyranny provides (as Peltonen suggests) an immediate intellectual context for Eliot’s famous

parallel and the welter of translated texts about Sejanus printed in England during the succeeding decades.⁴³

Given this ongoing and highly topical engagement with Roman materials, it is hardly surprising that dramatists during the period of Buckingham's ascendancy should take Jonson's cue and return to the evocative material of imperial history. The anonymous *Tragedy of Nero*, Massinger's *The Roman Actor*, and May's *Julia Agrippina* all accommodate dramatic and political lessons learned from Jonson's *Sejanus* to the more intensely polarized debate about royal favor galvanized by the perceived corruption of Buckingham. The cultural prestige of Jonson and *Sejanus His Fall* of course has something to do with this return to Roman history. Though the play was not originally popular on stage, it was clearly read with careful respect by successive playwrights and its echoes crop up all over seventeenth-century political drama. More importantly, though, the return to the early Roman empire in later political drama reflects something like a flowering of Jonson's pessimistic vision of tyranny and favoritism. In particular, these later plays share with (and take from) Jonson's *Sejanus* a depiction of imperial favorites empowered by and (ultimately) for a brand of autocratic power seen operating with no counterbalance. The complaint is made succinctly by the rebellious senator Scevinus in the anonymous *The Tragedy of Nero*, after the favorite Nimphidius has accused him of treason to the state. Scevinus responds:

If by the State, this government you meane,
I justly am an enemy unto it.
That's but to *Nero*, you, and *Tigellinus*:
That glorious world, that even beguiles the wise,
Being lookt into, includes but three, or foure
Corrupted men, which were they all remov'd,
'Twould for the common State much better be.⁴⁴

The other late Roman plays considered here are more reticent to endorse rebellion, but they too take as their primary concern the collapse of a glorious Roman world into a state that now consists only of the emperor and his favored intimates.

Massinger's *The Roman Actor* (a play that is liberally studded with borrowings from *Sejanus*) wears its concern with absolutism and institutional degradation on its sleeve.⁴⁵ Near the beginning of the play, the emperor Domitian forces a divorce between the beautiful Domitia and her husband Lamia so that he may have her to himself. In its violation of a subject's domestic autonomy, this act echoes the rape of Lucrece, the paradigmatic

act of royal tyranny and the founding myth of the Roman republic. But in this play's post-republican world, what pleases the emperor has the force of law. Moreover, Lamia is a senator, and Massinger makes it abundantly clear that Domitian's act of aggression represents Rome's institutional imbalance: imperial power has supplanted senatorial influence in the same degree that Domitian can override Lamia's domestic authority. This key episode early in the play establishes Domitian's complete monopoly over political power and vividly underscores the meaning of this imbalance for Roman citizens. Parthenius, the courtly minion who informs Domitia and Lamia of the emperor's will, explains:

When power puts in its Plea the lawes are silenc'd.
 The world confesses one Rome, and one Caesar,
 And as his rule is infinite, his pleasures
 Are unconfi'd; this sillable, his will,
 Stands for a thousand reasons.

(*The Roman Actor*, 1.2.44–48)

Domitian – as this scene is designed to demonstrate – is as extreme a tyrant as one could imagine, and yet Massinger is also careful, in this same scene, to draw invidious parallels between Domitian's tyranny and the corrupt court practices of early Stuart England. Here, for instance, is Lamia's indignant response to Parthenius's imperial errand:

Cannot a man be master of his wife
 Because she's young, and faire, without a pattend?
 I in mine owne house am an Emperour,
 And will defend whats mine. (1.2.65–68)

Lamia's idea is that a world in which the emperor can simply enter one's home and take one's wife is a world in which patents (privileges dispensed by the crown) are the only reliable guarantors of individual liberties. But grievances in the patent system had been a hot-button issue, associated with the malign influence of Buckingham and his associates, since the parliament of 1621. They were certainly on the front burner when Massinger wrote his play in 1626, while impeachment proceedings against the duke accused him of a variety of kinds of profiteering based on royal influence. Patents and monopolies granted to important courtiers and their associates were an inexpensive way to reward court service, but they imposed economic burdens on the general public and interfered with other commercial interests.⁴⁶ Lamia's remark, in short, draws upon an early Stuart buzzword: Massinger taps into fears that the proliferation of patents and monopolies would enlarge the royal prerogative at the expense of subjects, and he links

that to Domitian's more spectacular over-reaching. Likewise, when Parthenius arranges the remarriage of Domitia to the emperor, he commands Lamia to sign papers making the divorce look legal:

Set it under your hand
That you are impotent, and cannot pay
The duties of a husband. (1.2.89–91)

This seems calculated to recall the infamous annulment of Frances Howard's first marriage on similar grounds in 1613, the more so because people suspected royal influence forced the issue in that case as well. Because of the spectacular revelations of poison and intrigue that soon followed, this episode remained etched in the collective memory for quite a long time as a representative anecdote of native court corruption, and I think Massinger expects his audience to make the connection here.

These gestures toward roughly contemporary political configurations are set next to high-sounding evocations of Domitian's god-like authority (offered throughout the play by the emperor and his followers) that likewise echo early Stuart pronouncements concerning the divine right of kings. It is not difficult to see here why Massinger has been described as the preeminent dramatic spokesman for parliamentary opposition to the crown in during the 1620s.⁴⁷ And though they are in some ways fairly disparate-seeming, the Frances Howard scandal resembles the ongoing scandal of royal patents in that in each case the king's influence overrides traditional ways of doing things for the benefit of his favorites. This is the structure of native paranoia that Massinger associates with Domitian's unconfined rule.

Most of the characters in *The Roman Actor* are either Domitian's favorites or his victims. The political world of the play revolves exclusively around the politics of intimacy and favor, for there seems to be no other way for characters in the play even to imagine success in the public sphere. Parthenius, using a keyword borrowed perhaps from Jonson, describes himself as Domitian's "instrument / In whom though absent, his authoritie speaks" (1.2.71–72). Even as he enforces the emperor's will, he attempts to curry favor with Domitia, for he knows that she will become an important vehicle for preferment once she is installed in the emperor's bosom. "I beseech you," he obsequiously implores her,

When all the beauties of the earth bowe to you,
And Senators shall take it for an honour,
As I doe now to kisse these happy feet;
When every smile you give is a preferment,
And you dispose of Provinces to your creatures,
Thinke on *Parthenius*. (1.2.11–17)

The informer Aretinus flourishes as Caesar's "Cabinet counsailor" (4.1.144), and even the putatively virtuous actor Paris owes his success to Domitian. When the actor attends upon the emperor in Act 2, Parthenius welcomes him as a fellow courtier blessed by the emperor's favor:

My lov'd Paris

Without my intercession you well know
 You may make your owne approaches, since his eare
 To you is ever open. (2.1.68–71)

There simply does not seem to be any other avenue for success in the world of this play, so the good and bad alike must rely on and court Domitian's favor. Massinger wants us to think of this as an unfortunate consequence of a political world in which the emperor's rule is "infinite." Another way to put this would be to say that the political universe of *The Roman Actor* is conceptualized along the lines suggested by Scevinus's complaint: the state here really includes only the emperor's handpicked intimates.

Perhaps the most interesting thing about Massinger's staging of overwhelming and all-encompassing imperial power is the way Domitian's unchallenged absolutism threatens to usurp the very language of Roman virtue. At the beginning of play, Paris looks like a strong candidate to be the play's embodiment of disenfranchised virtue. He is unjustly accused of libel by the court informer Aretinus, and gives a stirring self-defense in some ways reminiscent of the historian Cordus in *Sejanus*. He makes bold claims about the need for actors to embody the heroic virtues they perform, thereby setting himself and his colleagues up as living inheritors of a moral tradition:

Nay droope not fellowes, innocence should be bould.
 We that have personated in the Scaene
 The ancient Heroes, and the falles of Princes
 With loud applause, being to act our selves,
 Must doe it with undaunted confidence. (1.1.50–54)

One notes, though, that for all his talk of innocence and exemplarity, Paris says he owes his safety to Domitian's favor (1.1.39–42). During his hearing before the senate, Paris cunningly reminds his audience of the emperor's favor when he wishes that Caesar "sate as judge" (1.3.54). One notes too that Paris's idea of heroic exemplarity – he mentions Hercules, Camillus, and Scipio – is fairly apolitical, a far cry from Cordus's veneration of republican leaders in *Sejanus*. By the end of the play he seems more like a weak courtier than an ancient hero, as he succumbs to Domitia's advances and is killed by the jealous emperor. The character is conceptualized ironically, as a kind of metadramatic joke: his role is to be a profound disappointment, an index

to the failure of theater (and of Massinger's play too) to provide meaningful moral exempla in a world where intimacy with the great is (literally) the be all and end all.⁴⁸ The title of the play is part of the joke, for it seems to announce that this is Paris's play: he is the Roman actor in *The Roman Actor*. In the end, though, there is really only one person in Rome who has the agency to act.⁴⁹

Oddly enough, it is Domitian's flattering "Cabinet counsailor" Aretinus who draws on the exemplary meaning of republican heroes like Pompey and Cato, treating them as part of an unbroken and undifferentiated tradition of Roman greatness culminating in Domitian himself:

he has more, and every touch more Roman,
As *Pompey's* dignitie, *Augustus* state,
Antonies bountie, and great *Julius* fortune,
With *Catoes* resolution. I am lost
In th'Ocean of his vertues. In a word,
All excellencies of good men in him meet,
But no part of their vices. (1.3.16–22)

Aretinus's speech, to use Raymond Williams's vocabulary, marks the efforts of the emperor and his favorites to appropriate and control a particularly volatile residual aspect of Roman culture. Instead of authorizing resistance to or withdrawal from the political world dominated by imperial absolutism, republican Rome is reduced to a few representative figures whose virtues become tributaries to the grand and oceanic figure of the empire.

In *Sejanus*, as Albert Tricomi puts it, the censorship of Cordus's history and the relentless spying undertaken by his underlings dramatize "the means by which the modern state controls the very power of seeing and conceiving."⁵⁰ Massinger does something similar by means of Aretinus's speech and the notably weak brand of exemplarity represented by the co-opted Paris, though he comes at it in another way. Instead of showing the mechanisms of control, Massinger dramatizes their effect upon public discourse. Not only does the emperor's personal will determine the public sphere in Massinger's play, it determines to a considerable degree the discourse with which his subjects think about what it means to be Roman. Domitian's favor is the sine qua non of public success in *The Roman Actor*, and so flattery is the coin of the realm. Paris is no Machiavellian schemer, but he echoes Aretinus's fawning praise of Domitian's ocean of virtue: Paris describes Domitian as a ruler "in whose great name / All Kings are comprehended" (1.3.52–53). And since Paris (like everybody) counts upon the emperor's favor for professional support and security, the actor's blindness to the emperor's failings is hardly surprising. This is part

of Massinger's admonitory depiction of the perils of absolutism: if top-down favor supplants all else as the mechanism structuring public life, then political discourse will likewise become univocal and unbalanced, a kind of echo-chamber in which not even valid precedent can challenge the presumptive authority of the monarch. Consensus, in Domitian's Rome, means only that the public sphere is made up of instruments "in whom though absent, his authoritie speakes."

The all-engrossing power of Massinger's Domitian is an extrapolation, I think, from the way Jonson's Tiberius is shown to monopolize political and discursive authority in the Rome of *Sejanus*. In Jonson's play, though, there is some suspense about the nature and extent of the emperor's real authority, since the Germanican observers disagree among themselves about whether it is Tiberius or Sejanus who really calls the shots. The suddenness with which Sejanus is disposed of answers the question unequivocally, and this revelation lays absolutely bare the conditions of power under imperial rule. Massinger, again responding to Jonson's lead, creates the same kind of suspense around the nature of the emperor's relationship with his wife Domitia, with whom he is genuinely besotted. The comparison between Sejanus and Massinger's Domitia is a useful one, for though the play has a number of imperial minions in secondary roles, Domitia is in some ways this play's major favorite figure. It is Domitia, after all, who gains the most from her intimate relationship with the emperor: her status as Domitian's wife and lover means, as Parthenius puts it, that her desires too are "absolute commands" (1.2.76), and she lords it over the other women of the royal family in a brief scene (1.4) designed to show that imperial favor outweighs even imperial blood as a basis for status.

In the play's main crisis, Domitia falls for Paris and is observed by Domitian as she attempts to seduce the actor. For a time, it unclear what will happen. Domitian, torn between outrage and love, complains of the "magique" of his dotage and of his "thraldome," and for a while it appears that Domitia may be able to maintain her hold over the emperor (5.1.87, 89). Of course, Domitian's extreme uxoriousness is a brand of moral intemperance (like Tiberius's sexual depravity on Capri) that is part of the stereotype of the tyrant, an index to the unruly passions that tyrannize over him.⁵¹ But the conflict that this uxoriousness gives rise to in Domitian's breast after he discovers his wife's betrayal creates a tension in the play between the idea of Domitian as all-powerful (seizing Domitia from Lamia) and the idea of Domitian as a powerless pawn (sharing Domitia with Paris). The play's interest in this question – does the emperor determine everything or can he be dominated by his intimates – is analogous to debates in *Sejanus*

about the nature of the relationship between Tiberius and his minion. And the answer is the same in both plays. In *The Roman Actor*, the question is summarily resolved when Domitian finally overcomes his dotage and signs his wife's death warrant. Massinger treats the emperor's choice here as a parody of stoicism: the emperor boasts of "having got / The victorie of my passions" (132–33) by dooming his wife to death. Instead, of course, it marks the victory of one tyrannical passion over another. The episode tests Domitian's absolute power against the influence of the most favored, but resoundingly confirms it as if specifically to distance his fable from stories of weak, enamored rulers.

If we think of Domitia as this play's main favorite figure, then it is interesting to remember that English opponents of Buckingham often imagined that the duke (like Domitia) had (literally or figuratively) bewitched his king. The prominence of Buckingham, rumored to have enthralled James using both sex and magic, may in fact be why Massinger is more interested than Jonson in the figure of the besotted emperor. But this is no play about a weak king and his powerful favorites, this is a play about the annexation of all agency to the will of the emperor, a play in which even the enchanting intimate is ultimately powerless. This is a vivid reminder of how plays in the tradition of *Sejanus* offer an alternative to other kinds of favorite plays: the play's favorites and intimates rule the roost so long as they are willing to be instruments of imperial pleasure and authority, but that is all. Favoritism here is a structural correlative to absolutism, but the favorites themselves are ultimately powerless and interchangeable. I think Massinger's interest in this story offers a window into the paranoia surrounding Buckingham in the first years of Charles's reign, suggesting something about the way the favorite's authority might have been imagined during these years. *The Roman Actor* was licensed for performance in October of 1626, only a few months after Eliot compared Buckingham to Sejanus in parliament, and it fleshes out the most radical subtextual implications of this Roman parallel: that the favorite's authority is only a stalking-horse under which absolutist power advances itself, and thus that the English state is in real jeopardy of lapsing from one form of government (consitutional monarchy) to another (absolutism). So much for the idea of attacking the favorite while remaining loyal to the king.

The Roman Actor was printed, in 1629, with a commendatory poem by Thomas May. But May's own imperial play *Julia Agrippina* (1628) is proof enough of his admiration for Massinger's efforts. For *Julia Agrippina* combines ethical and structural ideas drawn out of Jonson's *Sejanus* with

thematic ideas derived from Massinger. Indeed, the play is highly self-aware about its own tendency to rehash material from other imperial plays. It opens with an extended frame, based primarily on Seneca's *Thyestes*, in which the fury Megaera summons Caligula to revisit the crimes of the imperial family upon Claudius's Rome. This has both a literal and a meta-theatrical meaning, commenting both upon the way that imperial crimes tend to repeat generation after generation and also upon the belatedness of *Julia Agrippina* itself in relation to other depictions of imperial absolutism. Of course, the gesture toward the idea that imperial crimes repeat themselves is also a gesture toward the idea that corruption is a product of political imbalance rather than of specific personalities.³²

Set against the backdrop of Claudius's murder and Nero's rise to power, the play treats Claudius's son Britannicus as a Germanicus-like figure representing the idea of public virtue within the world of the play. Britannicus is the eldest son of Claudius, and his rival Nero is the son by another marriage of Claudius's wife Agrippina (as in Jonson's play, these personages and the rough outlines of the story are drawn from actual Roman history – Claudius's wife is sometimes referred to as Agrippina the younger to distinguish her from Germanicus's wife). Agrippina and Nero conspire, in the play's opening acts, to kill Claudius and steal the succession from his son and heir. As in *Sejanus*, there is a small group of worthy Romans who support the legitimacy of the emperor and so follow Britannicus. This party is represented primarily by Crispinus Rufus and Lucius Geta, two upstanding commanders of the Praetorian Guard who are stripped of their positions in the play's first political maneuver. These men, like the followers of Germanicus in Jonson's play, must come to grips with the experience of being squeezed out of public life by a handful of corrupted courtiers who owe their power not to virtue, blood, or military prowess but rather to their special relationships with Agrippina and Nero. The senate, here too, is reduced to ceremonial functions despite receiving the emperor's cunning lip service. In a speech written for him by Seneca and worthy of Tiberius, Nero takes office in Act 3 with a great show of humility and virtue:

This sacred *Senate*, which the world adores,
 Shall still retain her old prerogative
 While Nero lives. My privat house affayres
 Shall from the free Republicke bee divided,
 And never turne the course of common Justice.
 No publicke Office shall be bought for gold.³³

As in *Sejanus*, such protestations are meant only for show. In fact, Rome is administered by minions whose great power is derived from privileged access to the “privat house affayres” of the imperial family.

The prevailing minion at the beginning of the play is the freedman Pallas.⁵⁴ In a long and striking soliloquy, Pallas informs us that he has succeeded politically because of his recognition that “not the Senate, / But Caesars chamber did command the world, / And rule the fate of men” (1.108–10). Since Claudius is timid and ineffective, Pallas actually owes his power to “*Agrippinaes* love” (1.81), but he also administers the imperial household. In this case, Claudius’s timidity creates a vacuum of power which is filled by Agrippina and “proud *Pallas* her adulterer” (1.124). With the influence conferred upon him by emperor and empress, Pallas dominates the opening of the play, and we learn from his soliloquy that he is as ambitious and powerful as his prototype Sejanus. He boasts of his domination over the hapless senate, of his triumph over noble Roman patricians, and even of his power over “stupid Caesar” (1.98). With a hubris worthy of Sejanus or even Tiberius (whose favorites were “dumb instruments”), he sees all Romans as “hated instruments” useful only to effect his own will (1.103). Because of Pallas’s prominence in Act 1, the play seems at first to be a rather Jonsonian study of the overweening favorite. But once Nero seizes power – with the help of Pallas, no less – the erstwhile favorite becomes a nonentity in the play. Since Nero cannot abide any rival, he turns on his mother and demotes her minion. In Act 5, Pallas appears onstage to lament that he has been stripped of his office in the imperial household (5.105): a “hated instrument” for Nero’s rise, he is accordingly discarded. This is May’s poetic justice.

As Pallas fades from the center of the play, more and more attention is paid to a second plot, in which (following Tacitus) Nero allows his friend Otho to seize a young beauty named Poppaea from her husband only to become smitten by her beauty and then to snatch her for himself. Though May, like Jonson, takes his plots from Roman history, his craftsmanship can be seen in the careful way in which he uses these two plots to reinforce and parallel each other.⁵⁵ Poppaea’s first husband is Crispinus Rufus, the rusticated supporter of Britannicus who has been stripped of his command. His enforced divorce from Poppaea doubles his unjustified loss of office. As with the seizure of Domitia in *The Roman Actor*, these injustices demonstrate and allegorize the decline of Roman liberties: the concentration of power in the hands of the emperor and his minions undermines the bonds of family and service that constitute a healthy state, since the virtuous Crispinus is derived at once of office and of mastery over his own household.

Otho uses his intimacy with the emperor (he knows Nero's "heart / And secret thoughts" [3.328–29]) to "fetch Poppaea from her husband" (3.366). But if erotic conquest runs along lines of force, Nero can have anybody he wants. Otho attempts to keep his beloved away from the emperor, but eventually Nero commands his underling to bring his new-won love to court. And in the end the emperor cannot resist seizing Poppaea for himself. This, too, is poetic justice: Otho becomes procurer for the emperor's erotic appetite, just another imperial instrument like his counterpart Pallas. This bitter poetic justice is central to May's moral sensibility: those who benefit from a brand of imperial power that overrides custom and law subsequently find themselves defenseless against the emperor's tyranny. To put this in Jonsonian terms, friendship with the emperor seems to offer power but finally entails servitude, as Otho himself acknowledges in an early conversation with his imperial master:

No man, whom you
Are pleas'd to call a friend, deserves that name,
Unless hee know himselfe to bee your servant.

(*Julia Agrippina*, 2.370–72)

The power that comes with imperial favor is ultimately servitude because it has no basis independent of the emperor's will. This conception of imperial power is given an extreme formulation when Pallas describes himself as a "peece of earth" brought to life by the favor of Agrippina:

What act on earth,
What undertaking should he tremble at
Whom *Agrippinas* favours animate?
And what had I been but a peece of earth
Cold, dull, and uselesse, had I not been quicken'd
By your aetheriall touch.

(3.151–56)

Though Pallas presumably means "favours" in its erotic sense, the passage also epitomizes the play's conception of identity within the public sphere. Since all power comes from above, Romans are all conceived of as cold, dull, and useless until animated by imperial favor. Instead of being citizens, Romans are imagined as completely subjected.

This parallel plotting insists, perhaps somewhat heavy-handedly, on an essentially Jonsonian model of the relationship between absolutism and favoritism. As in *Sejanus*, the point here is that the state is fundamentally unbalanced, with all influence deriving ultimately from the emperor. In such a system, imperial intimates like Pallas and Otho outrank patricians and senators. But since the power of Nero's minions is derived from the

all-encompassing authority of the emperor, their service to Nero cannot really be based on healthy reciprocity. As a result, even close associates are merely “hated instruments” of the emperor’s imperious will. Though Nero professes friendship toward Otho, and though he has a momentary scruple about seizing his friend’s beloved, all hesitation is quickly swept away: “Now faire *Poppaea*, thou art mine alone” (5.381)! Like Tiberius’s favor for Sejanus and Macro, Nero’s intimacies are finally too one-sided to be anything other than abject servitude, regardless of the language in which they are described by the participants. That is why Otho – Nero’s friend – tries at first to keep *Poppaea* hidden: everybody knows what will happen the moment the emperor claps eyes on his friend’s beloved.

Unlike *Sejanus His Fall* – where Tiberius’s erotic intemperance is associated with, but does not determine, his instrumental political alliances – *Julia Agrippina* is full of political alliances forged at the groin. Pallas owes his influence, early in the play, to the fact that he is *Agrippina*’s lover, and there is brief hint toward the end of the play that *Poppaea* will play a similar role in Nero’s Rome, parlaying Nero’s affection into political influence:

Nero must bee wrought

With cunning to my ends, or else my fortune
Is low and poore, my title nought at all.
’Tis not the love of *Caesar*, but the honour,
And that high title which attends his love
That is *Poppaeae* aime.

(5. 372–77)

As befits a play that begins with the Senecan trope of repetition, May’s narrative stretches over two separate political moments (the reigns of *Claudius* and *Nero*, respectively), but shows that the essential structures of intimacy remain essentially unchanged. In fact, I think May uses the gender disorder of *Claudius*’s reign – in which the “tygresse *Agrippina*” (1.122) rules for her weak husband – to allegorize a moral disorder of empire itself. If, in the conventional gender ideologies of the period, the husband should rule the wife as the king rules the state and as reason rules animalistic passion, *Agrippina*’s ascendancy represents the general inversion of orthodox government: the triumph of effeminate passion over moral reason and thus of tyranny. But once *Nero* assumes the throne, he too rules all on the basis of an unruly will that is in this same sense effeminate: bestial, incontinent, and ungovernable. This semi-allegorical depiction of unruly tyrannical will is of course familiar from the period’s many other erotic favoritism plays, and May’s interest in this configuration (as with *Massinger*’s) may have

had to do, too, with well-known rumors concerning the erotic relationship between Buckingham and King James.

This means that both Agrippina and Nero are in some sense besotted or bewitched, unable to contain themselves. I think May's interest in this point is ethical: he wants to show that tyrannical power is moral weakness, and so for example Nero is shown having moral qualms about his betrayal of friendship before seizing Poppaea from Otho. But there is a subtle and unresolved tension in the play between this aspect of favoritism (in which even emperors can be subjected) and the inexorable logic of absolutism (in which everybody is always subjected to the emperor). Jonson sidesteps this tension by displacing Tiberius's appetites – relocating them in Capri and confining their representation to Arruntius's speech – so that they do not interfere with the logic of top-down power that *Sejanus* everywhere insists upon. Massinger places it front and center in the conflict between Domitian and his own uxorious will, but shows imperial power triumphing over lust. May simply attempts to finesse this tension by giving short shrift to the looming question of Poppaea's influence. We never see her exert any. The narrative is dominated, instead, by the experiences of favorites like Pallas and Otho who enact imperial will and count on the bonds of affectionate intimacy only to be crushed and discarded.

May's status as significant republican writer (the translator of Lucan as well as a defender of parliamentary prerogative) has been demonstrated by David Norbrook.⁵⁶ *Julia Agrippina* is republican too, at least in the sense that republicanism is by definition the antithesis of early imperial absolutism: to deplore the latter is to invoke the former. But the play's political morality, insofar as it has a positive political morality, is conventional enough and does not seem to me to be inconsistent with the ideals of the balanced constitution. That is, in native terms, the opposite of absolutism is constitutional monarchy, and so in deploring the former May is endorsing the latter. This is not in and of itself especially radical. Instead, the radicalism of this play – and of the *The Roman Actor* for that matter – should be understood in terms of the unusually fraught political climate of 1628 and the beginning of Charles's reign. These years saw – to name only the more spectacularly divisive events – the attempt to impeach Buckingham, the hasty dissolution of parliaments, the failure of the Rhé expedition, the controversial forced loan, and Buckingham's assassination. By the time the parliament of 1628 was assembled, hostility toward Buckingham had merged with a more overarching and freshly outspoken concern to defend the subject's liberties against the encroachments of the crown. As L. J. Reeve has put it, “the traditional notion of evil council had never been

further than the shortest of steps from a reflection upon the monarch. In a situation such as that prevailing in 1628 this distinction could not be sustained.”⁵⁷ The utility of these imperial stories in the 1620s, in fact, has everything to do with the recognition that blaming evil counsel was an increasingly inadequate screen for suspicion of the crown itself. The Roman stories rehearsed by Massinger and May treat favoritism as a symptom of imperial tyranny rather than the other way around, and so ensure that their implied criticism of Buckingham is couched in a larger attack on overgrown prerogative and the perceived imbalance of the Caroline state.

This is also the reason for the urgency of debate about the meaning of Eliot’s invocation of Sejanus in his attack on Buckingham in 1626: because the wickedness of Sejanus cannot be blamed for the greater wickedness of Tiberius, the parallel contains an implicit criticism of the crown. Eliot, predictably, denied the implication, testifying in the Commons that he had “a heart as loyal and as faithful” to the crown “as any man that is about him.”⁵⁸ But the imprisonment of Eliot and his colleague Sir Dudley Diggs was the occasion for a great deal of anger about the expansion of prerogative at the expense of the liberties of the subject. Member after member opined in effect that “the prerogative of the King and the liberty of the people must have a reciprocal relation and respect,” each implying that this reciprocity had been violated.⁵⁹ It was felt, in other words, that by clamping down on Eliot for comparing Buckingham to Sejanus, Charles was edging the state ever closer to the imbalance characteristic of imperial Rome. For all of Eliot’s protestations, therefore, Charles’s understanding of the parallel is not unwarranted: the invocation of Sejanus in parliament is inextricably entangled with the sense that Charles’s England was becoming uncomfortably much like Tiberius’s Rome. This entanglement – the sense that favoritism and evil counsel are symptoms rather than causes – gets explored in *The Roman Actor* and *Julia Agrippina*. Both plays are fascinated by royal favoritism – by the nature of royal affection and the corrupting influence of its recipients – but they are more concerned with the political exclusions that occur when the emperor’s favor becomes the only determinant of political influence.

That said, each of these plays is deeply and demonstrably indebted to Jonson’s much earlier *Sejanus*, which in many ways shares their political concerns. It is as if the convulsions of the early Caroline state dredged up an anxious perspective on absolutism and favor that had been more or less dormant (theatrically speaking, at least) since Jonson’s play. Moreover, the utility that Jonson’s play evidently had for both May and Massinger allows

us to recognize real intellectual continuities between the late Elizabethan concerns that Jonson stages and the conflicts of the late 1620s. In particular, the paranoid political outlook of the early Caroline period shares with the Elizabethan Jonson an understanding that royal favoritism can be thought of primarily as an instrument for the extension of prerogative and the erosion of liberty and law. This is not of course the only way to think about favoritism at either moment, but it is clearly a rather radical conception of the institution, and one with an intellectual history that predates Sir John Eliot. This is instructive, I think, the more so because the political breakdown that occurred at the tail end of Buckingham's career is so often considered an "intellectual watershed" in the history of parliamentary distrust of prerogative.⁶⁰ It means that some of the most radically oppositional parliamentary responses to Buckingham and Charles were at least thinkable much earlier. Insofar as the political ideas shared by Jonson, May, and Massinger are facilitated by the use of Roman stories thematizing the disastrous results of imperial prerogative, we can call their understanding of favoritism republican.

"WHAT ARE WEE PEOPLE?": CLASS AND THE REPUBLICAN
CRITIQUE OF FAVORITISM

To this point, I have been concerned mostly to trace what I have called a republican conception of favoritism in Roman plays from very different political moments. I wish to turn my attention now to aspects of *Sejanus* that are clearly not present in any of these later Roman favoritism plays: its strained endorsement of quietism and its horrified denunciation of the mob as the ultimate manifestation of Roman political disorder. We might say that where May and Massinger develop Jonson's analysis of absolutism and favor, his hostility toward rebellion and popular unruliness is developed for the 1620s by Edmund Bolton, whose *Nero Caesar, or Monarchie Depraved* (1624) takes the position that "sacred monarckie" itself preserved "the people of ROME from finall ruine, notwithstanding all the prophinations, blasphemies, & scandals of tyrannous excesses, wherewith NERO defiled & defamed it."⁶¹ The coming of the empire, in other words, saves Rome from civil war and anarchy despite the unparalleled wickedness of an emperor like Nero. The overthrow of even a tyrant is never acceptable. The text is dedicated ("with leave") to Buckingham and, in its 1627 edition, to Charles himself. In the address to Charles in the second edition, Bolton takes pains to distinguish himself from "popular Authors" who "have so busied themselves to lay open the private lives of Princes in their vitious, or

scandalous qualities . . . that the nationall and publick Historie is almost thereby utterly lost.”⁶²

May and Massinger are both demonstrably ambivalent about the rebelliousness of subjects. *Julia Agrippina*, for instance, tests the idea of quietism by making Poppaea’s husband, Rufus Crispinus, a spokesman for virtuous country retirement:

Let us enjoy that happinesse then *Lucius*
 The country sports and recreations
 And friends as innocent as wee, with whom
 Wee need not feare the strength of richest wine
 In drawing out our secrets: but well fill’d
 At suppertime may hold a free discourse
 Of *Caesar’s* weaknesse, of wealth and pride
 Of his freed’men, how lordly *Pallas* rules;
 How fierce and cruell *Agrippina* is,
 What slaves the Roman Senate are become,
 And yet next morne awake with confidence.

(2.182–92)

The loss of Poppaea to Nero’s companion Otho follows hard upon this paean to retirement, though, and serves as a reminder that the encroachments of tyranny are felt everywhere. Patient retirement thus receives no endorsement as a strategy for coping with tyranny. And unlike *Sejanus*, this anecdote is not counterbalanced by any instances that warn against active resistance.

The Roman Actor features the assassination of Domitian, who falls at the hands of a pack of conspirators (including Domitia and Parthenius). The tribunes who discover the crime promise to see to it that the rebels are punished, but the tone of the last scene is ambivalent about the murder:

I. TRIBUNE. Force the doores. O Mars!
 What have you done?
 PARTHENIUS. What Rome shall give us thanks for.
 STEPHANOS. Dispatched a monster.
 I. TRIBUNE. Yet he was our Prince
 How ever wicked, and in you ’tis murder
 Which whosoe’re succeeds him will revenge.

(5.2.75–79)

One could read this ending as an expression of royalist orthodoxy of course—regicide is to be punished—but Parthenius’s exclamation gives voice to the idea that Rome will indeed be better off for the murder, and I imagine that

Massinger's audience would at least have been tempted to agree. The tribune also promises to refer Domitia's case to the senate (5.2.86), a gesture that seems like a kind of poetic justice if we recall that she was originally stolen from the senator Lamia by imperial fiat. If nothing else, the assassination momentarily reinvests the senate with the authority stolen by the crown. Unlike *Sejanus*, moreover, the major arguments against regicide in the body of the play are practical rather than ethical: "What we cannot helpe / We may deplore with silence" (3.1.109–10). The virtues of passive fortitude are embodied, in the play by Junius Rusticus and Palphurius Sura, two stoics tormented and executed by Domitian in Act 3. But on the eve of Domitian's fall, they show up in a staged dream to wave bloody swords at the emperor. This undermines their association with stoic quietism, and also lends a kind of supernatural sanction to the rebellion.

Accompanying Massinger's un-Jonsonian attitude toward tyrannicide is an even more un-Jonsonian attitude toward what we would now call social class. Where the Germanican party in *Sejanus* was essentially a patrician group, the movement to oust Domitian in *The Roman Actor* originates with Stephanos, a freed former bondsman of the emperor's cousin Domitilla. It is Stephanos who urges his mistress, in conspicuously heroic terms, to leave her passive fortitude behind:

One single arme whose master does contemne
His owne life holds a full command ore his,
Spite of his guards. I was your bondman, Ladie,
And you my gracious patronesse; my wealth,
And libertie your guift; and though no souldier,
To whom or custome, or example makes
Grimme death appeare lesse terrible, I dare dye
To do you service in a faire revenge. (3.1.40–47)

This courageous resolution is couched in unambiguously patriotic terms: "I am confident," Stephanos declares, "he deserves much more / That vindicates his countrie from a tyranne, / Then he that saves a citizen" (3.1.76–78). Stephanos's rebellious rhetoric, here and elsewhere, combines a patriotic dedication to the public good with a staunch desire to serve his "gracious patronesse." He thus evokes a pre-imperial ethic that combines reciprocal social bonds with an overriding respect for the greater good. His service is not servitude.

In *Cassius Dio*, Domitian's assassination is masterminded by Parthenius, who sends in the freedman Stephanos to strike the first blow because he is physically the strongest of the conspirators. In *Suetonius*, the same

Stephanus offers to become part of the assassination plot because he has been accused of embezzlement.⁶³ The Stephanos of *The Roman Actor*, a figure who consistently articulates a persuasive ethical rationale for killing Domitian, is apparently Massinger's creation. According to the list of characters printed in the edition of 1629, the role of Stephanos was doubled with the role of the unfortunate Lamia, who is executed by Domitian in Act 2. This meta-dramatic aspect of performance may have helped shape the meaning of Stephanos's courageous spirit for Massinger's audience, rendering him the spokesman for a broad-based popular resistance to the tyrannous emperor. At any rate, Massinger's decision to focus attention on the unexpected courage of Stephanos marks a real change in political emphasis from Jonson's play. Like *Sejanus*, *The Roman Actor* shows how the triumph of absolutism results in a political sphere populated exclusively by servile favorites, the instruments of the emperor's will. But Massinger's depiction of those who are wrongfully disenfranchised as a result of the emperor's all-encompassing prerogative includes a much broader cross-section of the citizenry than does Jonson's: members of the imperial family, disaffected courtiers, senators like Lamia, and decidedly non-aristocratic freedmen like Stephanos.

The difference, I would suggest, reflects a significant change in the English political climate in the 1620s, as animosity toward Buckingham and related concerns about the expansion of Stuart prerogative took on new urgency in light of the ongoing crisis of European war. Anxiety about England's foreign policy and the spread of international Catholicism raised the stakes of court politics for outside observers, and Buckingham provided a convenient focal point for gentry and popular resentment. The result, as numerous scholars have pointed out, is an increased politicization of both gentry and popular strata of society as more and more people sought out political news and contributed political comment in a variety of media ranging from newsletters to ballads to gossip.⁶⁴ The contentious parliaments of the 1620s, as Conrad Russell argues, were increasingly recognized as a representative body mirroring the concerns "of the people."⁶⁵

Of course, the more people there are clamoring to participate in the public sphere, the more people there are to be concerned by the exclusivity of royal patronage as a system structuring the distribution of wealth and influence. As a case in point, recall the libel *Tom Tell-Troath*, whose authorizing conceit is that King James, surrounded by his own appointees, desperately requires somebody from outside the court to instruct him as to the plain truth of popular opinion. Massinger's outrage at the exclusivity of royal

favor as a political system has more in common with *Tom Tell-Troath* than with *Sejanus*. Jonson's play is exercised by the exclusion from the court of neo-chivalric, aristocratic patriotism (the values associated with Essex as well as with blue-blooded Elizabethan Catholics), but it remains hostile to popularity and in favor of enfranchisement only in narrowly elitist terms. Massinger, by contrast, sets absolutism and favor against a broader spectrum of disenfranchised citizenry, and thus implicitly idealizes a more inclusive public sphere consisting, we might say, of vocal citizens rather than of aristocratic subjects.

The radical implications of this change in political mindset are even clearer in the anonymous *Tragedy of Nero*, an interesting play that has received very little critical attention despite its evident popularity and surprisingly strident republicanism.⁶⁶ Though the authorship and date of composition remain uncertain, the title page of the 1624 edition describes the play as "newly written," and the play's emphasis upon the treacherous Nymphidius – "the onely favorite of the Court" (I.I.64) – seems cognate with the anti-Buckingham sentiments spurred by hostility to his efforts to facilitate the Spanish match in 1621–23.⁶⁷ The author of this play makes use primarily of Tacitus for the story's backbone, bolstered by an array of other classical sources, and quotes from *Sejanus* particularly when characterizing Nymphidius. *The Tragedy of Nero* features two parallel plotlines. One follows the erotic politics of Nero's court, and the other offers a highly sympathetic account of the plotting of the Pisonian Rebellion and features stirring justifications of tyrannicide by Seneca and the poet Lucan among others. The former uses competition over erotic access to depict a corrupt court in which intimacy and favor predominate over virtue and merit. The latter, we might say, offers a moral blueprint for justifiable resistance.

The play opens onto a debate between Petronius – depicted here as an epicurean ex-courtier disaffected with the falsity and instability of court life – and Antonius, who is madly in love with Nero's empress Poppea (as her name is spelled here). Antonius's love is of course political, for he is driven to court the empress by "clyming thoughts" (I.I.33) and prevented in his love by the court favorite Nymphidius, who seems to owe his preeminence at court to his regular access to the "empresse chamber" (I.I.62). Petronius, who wishes to distinguish between honest country pleasures and the duplicitous world of the court, urges his friend to beware of the empress's beauty. Nymphidius, for his part, is happy to enjoy Poppea's bed, but is really interested in using her as a stepping-stone to supplant his erstwhile master Nero:

'Tis not *Poppeas* armes,
 Nor the short pleasures of a wanton bed,
 That can extinguish mine aspiring thirst
 To *Neroes* Crowne; By her love I must climbe;
 Her bed is but a step unto his Throne.

(1.3.70–74)

Erotic and political appetites are thus entangled from the beginning of the play, as the competition between Antonius and Nimphidius over Poppea's favor stands in for the more general courtly struggle for access to and favor of the great.

The ongoing erotic contest occasioned by Poppea is abruptly halted in Act 4, when Nero accidentally kills his wife in a sudden fit of jealousy. Indeed, the abrupt dismissal of Poppea demonstrates that she is conceived of as little more than a vehicle for the play's depiction of the competition for favor. One sees at once, though, why she is necessary to the play, for Nero is here depicted as a man so depraved and self-centered as to be beyond even the minimal degree of human reciprocity required to bestow favor selectively. This play's Nero is a figure obsessed only with his own theatrical performances: he stages triumphs to celebrate his prowess as a singer, and puts on performances of such tremendous length that people fake their own deaths to escape them.⁶⁸ In the play, the emperor's endless interest in his own theatricals is made to represent at once his solipsism and his absolute power: he lives in a world of his own making and has the ability to impose it upon everyone else. Indeed, he is given as a kind of absolute misanthrope, so besotted with his own power that he fantasizes about seeing the world destroyed and wishes he could kill all of Rome himself (3.2.60–108). It is difficult to imagine such a figure really choosing to favor anybody in particular – he is far more exaggeratedly erratic than, say, Jonson's Tiberius – and so it is Poppea's lust that makes possible the play's depiction of corrupt court favor as an ongoing cultural fact. This division of labor makes it possible for the play to emphasize at once the complete autonomy of the emperor's power and the way that absolutism creates a culture of favor that includes a few corrupt courtiers but excludes everybody else.

The play is very eager to insist, though, that the corrupt favor that structures its political world derives from Nero's absolutism. The rebels insist upon this, dismissing Poppea and the other denizens of Nero's inner circle as "odious Instruments of Court" (2.3.132). As in the other Roman plays we have looked at, favoritism is conceived of as an instrumental extension of the emperor's absolute power. With the exception of the ambitious

Nimphidius, Nero's close associates recognize that they are little more than tools as well. Tigellinus, a member of the emperor's entourage throughout the play, likens himself and his associates to the emperor's "footstools" (5.3.6). In a rare moment of lucidity after he has been deposed by Galba, the erstwhile emperor Nero tells Tigellinus that the corruption of favorites has been his own fault:

The people forsake me without blame,
 I did them wrong to make you rich, and great,
 I took their houses to bestow on you:
 Treason in them hath name of libertie,
 Your fault hath no excuse, you are my fault,
 And the excuse of others treachery.

(5.3.13–18)

Both Nero and the favorite Nimphidius die in the play's final act, and in fact it is the execution of the favorite that brings the play to its conclusion. One imagines that the original audience associated Nimphidius with Buckingham and so especially relished the upstart favorite's ultimate punishment. But if we imagine the play as an artifact of the early 1620s, then it is Nero's blunt admission of responsibility ("you are my fault") that is really remarkable, for it constitutes an unusually clear and direct assault upon the commonplace distinction drawn between the innocent king and the corrupting evil favorite. To be sure, opposition to Buckingham in parliament tended for reasons of political tact to be couched in terms of the king's innocence, so much so that it is often asserted that "the parliamentary gentry attacked Buckingham so violently because their assumptions made it unthinkable for them to attack the King."⁶⁹ *The Tragedy of Nero* suggests that it was indeed thinkable to transfer blame from the corrupting favorite to the king so long as one did it under the cover of Roman exempla. In fact, the apportioning of blame performed so explicitly here is very much in keeping with the depiction of favoritism as instrumental in these Roman plays in general. One might say that this is part of their purpose. I do not mean to imply that anybody in the original audience of *The Tragedy of Nero* actually took Nero as a transparent stand-in for King James. What I do want to insist upon is that this play, like other depictions of Roman absolutism, offers us Nero and his court as a kind of carnival mirror in which perceived aspects of contemporary English politics – expanding prerogatives and the dominion of the favorite – appear in grotesquely exaggerated form.

The rebel conspirators couch their resistance to Nero and his odious instruments in explicitly republican terms. Though they recognize – like

Jonson's Germanicans – the legitimacy of imperial power, they also recognize that Nero's tyranny has overreached itself to the point where rebellion is justified:

We seeke not now (as in the happy dayes
O'th common wealth they did,) for libertie;
O you deere ashes, *Cassius* and *Brutus*
That was with you entomb'd, there let it rest,
We are contented with the galling yoke,
If they will only leave us necks to beare it.
(2.3.18–23)

Though the plot to overthrow Nero is discovered and prevented, there can be little doubt that the play's author approves of the active courage of the conspirators. The conspirator Scevinus, in a speech I have quoted above, denounces the fact that the public sphere has been collapsed to "three, or four, / Corrupted men" and remains unapologetic about his attempt on the emperor's life. Likewise, the conspirator Flavius, face to face with the emperor himself, defends his rebellion in no uncertain terms:

Nero, I hated thee;
Nor was there any of thy souldiers
More faithfull, while thou faith deserv'st then I;
Together did I leave to be a subject,
And thou a Prince.
(4.5.3–7)

Where Neronian tyranny is predicated upon the assumption that all Romans are of necessity subjected to the emperor's will, the rebels assert that obedience is contingent upon the emperor's fulfillment of his part of a reciprocal social contract. This is a neat reversal of the argument in Bolton's exactly contemporary royalist history *Nero Caesar*, and it is a position that, like Bolton's, is conceived as an intervention in contemporary political discourse about monarchy.

The other remarkable thing about *The Tragedy of Nero* is its consistent concern with the thoughts and feelings of "the people" as a broadly construed social group. This is clear from the outset, when an unnamed Roman citizen chastises his fellows for their willingness to enjoy the spectacle of Nero's trivial public triumphs:

Whether Augustus Tryumph greater was
I cannot tell; his Tryumphs cause I know
Was greater farre, and farre more Honourable.
What are wee People? or our flattering voices,

That alwayes shame, and foolish things applaud
 Having sparke of Soule? All Eares, and eyes,
 Pleas'd with vaine showes, deluded by our senses,
 Still enemies to wisdom, and to goodnesse.

(1.2.50–57)

The speaker here invokes the idea, well-known from *Sejanus* and indeed from Shakespeare's Roman plays, that the people are hopelessly fickle, easily tricked, and in need of government. But I think the passage – which is after all spoken by a member of the supposedly ignorant class – raises this stereotype in order to interrogate it. This particular Roman sees through Nero's shows, after all, and raises the possibility that “wee people” ought to be something beyond spectators. When Nero sets fire to Rome in 3.4, it is “wee people” who burn, and the play goes out of its way to show the suffering of common citizens. By the end of the play, when Nero informs us that “the people forsake me without blame,” he attributes to them both political importance and the capacity for rational political choice.

By paying attention to the people's stake in Rome and to their role in the state, *The Tragedy of Nero* establishes a continuity of interest between the republicanism of the elite Pisonian rebels and the common citizens of Rome. All parties suffer at the hands of Neronian tyranny and both groups are improperly excluded from the state by the rule of three or four corrupted men. This unspoken alliance resembles the inclusiveness of rebellion in Massinger's *Roman Actor*, though the effect here is a good deal more politically polemical. There are no morally compromised characters like Domitia or Parthenius in the Pisonian rebellion, after all, just aggrieved citizens with legitimate reasons to resist Nero's tyranny. But, like Massinger's play, *The Tragedy of Nero* depicts a state dominated by a handful of corrupt courtiers whose power derives from imperial favor to the exclusion of meritorious aristocrats, gentry, and commoners alike. This in turn forges a meaningful connection between a kind of nascent class-consciousness – the recognition that “wee People” have shared interests and duties in the state that are distinct from but related to the needs and practices of other classes of people – and the republican nostalgia for the liberties enjoyed by Romans “in the happy dayes / O'th common wealth.” For this reason, I can think of no other text that so perfectly instantiates Holstun's argument about the emergence of class-conscious republicanism in the opposition to Buckingham during the 1620s.

One way to think of these plays is as a single ongoing conversation about favoritism, prerogative, and the nature of the public sphere. All of the later

plays I have discussed are manifestly indebted to Jonson's *Sejanus*, and each pushes his analysis of instrumental favoritism in new directions. Massinger evidently knew *The Tragedy of Nero*, for he borrows from it on more than one occasion.⁷⁰ And the figure of Stephanos in *The Roman Actor* seems designed to gesture toward the kind of inclusive, republican rebelliousness that we see invoked in *The Tragedy of Nero*. May's poem commending *The Roman Actor* praises Massinger for writing something of more lasting importance than "great *Domitians* favour," a conceit that plays nicely off the way Domitian's favor operates within the play to appropriate even republican discourse.⁷¹ I take May's poem as a gesture of support for a like-minded writer eager to articulate a public-spirited critique of absolutist engrossment. May's *Julia Agrippina* is heavily indebted to *Sejanus*, of course, but it draws upon *The Roman Actor* as well.

The subject of this conversation is instrumental favor, the idea that favoritism as a central, corrupt aspect of government stems from political imbalance and the overextension of prerogative. This is a radical idea from the beginning because it ensures that blame for favoritism as an element of political corruption must be traced back to absolutism rather than to the Machiavellian cunning or wicked charm of the favorites themselves. Like any good conversation, though, this one goes in unexpected directions. Jonson's concern for the disenfranchised Germanic elite finds an answer in the much more inclusive political groupings aligned to oppose instrumental favor in later plays. Likewise, his strained endorsement of passive fortitude gives way to a more openly rebellious attitude as the Overbury scandal and then the perfidious influence of Buckingham magnify hostility toward favoritism. These alterations and responses provide a kind of case study in the relationship between residual and emergent aspects of oppositional culture. Jonson's old play provides a spark for some radical writing decades later that transforms the meaning of his political vision and turns it into something new. The utility of *Sejanus* to later writers has to do with the radical potential of his analysis of instrumental favoritism, even though Jonson himself would have been uncomfortable with the way this potential is realized.

The trajectory of this particular playwrights' conversation runs parallel to (and forms a small part of) the larger history of interest in Tacitean history in England, a history that Malcolm Smuts and others have traced from the Essex circle outward into the more broadly based anticourt sentiments of the 1620s. More importantly, perhaps, the animosity directed at the exclusivity of imperial favor raises questions about alternative modes of enfranchisement, a development that leads in *The Tragedy of Nero* and

The Roman Actor to a rethinking of the nature of the state along surprisingly inclusive and implicitly republican lines. For this reason, I think it is appropriate to see our playwrights' conversation as part of the gradual development of oppositional republican habits of thought that has begun to be traced by scholars like Holstun, Peltonen, and Norbrook.⁷² I do not wish to suggest here that these plays in and of themselves create ideologies or effect social change. But their interlinked and meticulous explorations of imperial absolutism do allow us to glimpse something of the emergence of a radical conception of favoritism that is in turn part of the broader development of anticourt and republican structures of feeling in the 1620s and beyond.

Afterword:
“In a true sense there is no Monarchy”

The idea of impersonal royal love, the love of a ruler for his or her subjects in general, is a fully conventional aspect of the idea of monarchy in early modern England. One thinks of the affectionate rhetoric of Elizabeth's so-called golden speech, of James's paternalism, or of the emphasis upon love as government so characteristic of the Caroline court. In a suggestive essay, Judith Richards has traced the increased prominence given to this idea of royal love within the affective rhetoric of monarchy from the early sixteenth century on, arguing that this language began then to crowd out a more specifically feudal vocabulary of specific duties and allegiances. The importance of this change in emphasis has to do with the way subjects are imagined to relate to the crown and to participate in the nation as an imagined community: the language of impersonal royal love offers (at least notionally) a model of state in which English subjects are tied to their monarch not by traditional duties of rank or position but by a more undifferentiated and inclusive kind of sentimental bond.¹ Conceiving of the polity in these terms likewise conjures up a vision of the ideal monarch, one for whom personal and particular forms of love and favor are replaced by an impossibly general love and under whom impartial distributive justice replaces more specific structures of allegiance. It would be inaccurate to read this idea of rule – embodied, say, by Shakespeare's Henry V – as part of an absolutist political imaginary, for the fantasy coexists throughout the period with the idea that the monarch should rule by means of common law and in tandem with parliament. But it is certainly structured by habits of thought associated with divine right and sacred kingship in that it attributes to the monarch a capacity for love and generosity in general that is more readily understood as an attribute of the Christian God.²

Because the texts that I have discussed in this book examine personal affective relationships that conflict in various ways with this ideal conception of royal love, we might say that the discourse of favoritism, taken cumulatively, puts crippling pressure on the ideas of state, ruler, and subject

bolstered by it. This formulation is perhaps too general to account for the entire range of texts and ideas discussed in the preceding chapters, but it does highlight one crucial way in which the radical implications of the discourse of favoritism are not precisely or entirely republican in nature despite the prominence of republican or neo-Roman thought in the period I have undertaken to survey. There are of course some prominent counter-examples – most notably the Roman plays discussed in the [preceding chapter](#) – but in general we can say that the constitutional radicalism of the discourse of favoritism, rather than imagining new forms of government, stems from a sustained inquiry into the emergent self-contradictions of traditional British kingship. That is, instead of saying that monarchy is inferior to some alternative mode of government, critiques of favoritism say in effect that it is impossible. As a result, reading the discourse of favoritism makes available a tradition of native constitutional inquiry that feeds into and helps lay the groundwork for the nascent republicanism of Caroline and interregnum England but that is clearly not coterminous with it.³

Arguments about the structural impossibility of kingship take on an increasingly republican flavor after the execution of Charles I, of course. We can see this vividly in the various writings of Francis Osborne, who both argues explicitly in favor of republican modes of government and explores, in numerous texts, the problematic nature of the politics of intimacy under James and Charles.⁴ Osborne is best known today for his salacious memoir of James's reign and for his dramatization of the Overbury scandal (entitled *A True Tragicomedy*), but he also composed several essays during the 1650s on the problem of royal favoritism including one in which he argued quite explicitly that since kings are inevitably guided by favorites and other intimates, the whole notion of god-like personal authority is an unsustainable fiction: "All our State-Leviathans being so far guided by their Servants, Wives, Mistresses, or Favourites, that in a true sense there is no Monarchy, all things for the most part succeeding according to the perswasions of others, if not contrary to the will of the Prince."⁶ This is certainly part of Osborne's republicanism, but it seems to me that in this case the specific argument comes directly out of the kind of inquiry into favoritism and intimacy contained in late Elizabethan and early Stuart political literature rather than from classical republicanism as such.

There is a similar interplay between republicanism and this homegrown critique of the ideology of royal love in the work of Osborne's more famous contemporary, John Milton. I am particularly interested in *Paradise Lost*, because Milton's rabble-rousing Satan in that poem has been read so

frequently in autobiographical terms, as a refraction of the poet's own republican politics and polemics.⁷ I read Satan as a more composite figure, however, a kind of anthology of seventeenth-century oppositional stances designed to test the worldly languages of opposition against a king whose authority is beyond question. That is, I want to argue that the jealousy that drives Milton's Satan to oppose both Adam and the Son is designed to recall early Stuart arguments in which a language of amity and fellowship was used to criticize incipient tyranny, the insularity of the court, and the representative figure of the corrupt favorite.

Since Milton's own sense of political engagement was formed in relation to Caroline controversies, this suggestion is not incompatible with the autobiographical questions that have been so central to the poem's commentators.⁸ But looked at from this perspective, what is at stake in the poem's political conflict is the contested meaning of royal love rather than the relative merits of monarchy and republicanism. Satan's oppositional rhetoric invokes a comparison between earthly and heavenly politics, certainly, but that comparison is designed to demonstrate the utter difference between heavenly monarchy and its institutional echo on earth. More particularly, Milton uses Satan's political language to sharpen the contrast between worldly and divine kingship, a move that allows him simultaneously to accommodate divine monarchy to fallen readers by underscoring what it is not and also to reinforce his own disdain for worldly kings who lay claim unworthily to attributes of divine rule. *Paradise Lost*, as I read it, argues not that monarchy is inferior as a political arrangement but that in a true sense there is no monarchy on earth because mortal kings are incapable of the kind of impersonal, general love that is commonly imagined to be constitutive of the office.

Early in book nine of *Paradise Lost*, as Satan plans his temptation of Eve, he pauses to give vent to his "bursting passion."⁹ In this soliloquy, Satan imagines Adam as a political rival, a kind of night-grown mushroom allowed to flourish by the whim of the divine king at the expense of his more deserving subjects:

this new favourite

Of heaven, this man of clay, son of despite,
Whom us the more to spite his maker raised
from dust.

(lines 175–78)

Satan complains of God's favorite as if from the position of an aristocrat disenfranchised by court politics, and so it is possible to hear, in his bitter complaint, the ring of what Blair Worden has called the "aristocratic

and nostalgic strain within seventeenth-century republicanism.”¹⁰ Prior to 1649, though, this native political habitus has more to do with opposition to real or imagined royal innovations than with any thought of altering the ancient constitution. It is therefore only partly accurate, as Worden notes, to call it republicanism at all.¹¹ Satan speaks here out of a species of envy that is entirely characteristic of his motives throughout the poem and that resonates with a longstanding native tradition of aristocratic hostility toward status innovations stemming from personal royal favor. This tradition, insofar as it imagines a guaranteed place in governance for an enfranchised elite, is an important seedbed for native republicanism though it has little in common with the more broadly egalitarian ideas that have subsequently come to be associated with the word. We might say, in fact, that Satan views Adam as a Buckingham figure in book nine: as a royal favorite who is simultaneously a symptom of unchecked royal authority and an affront to more meritocratic principles of rule.

Worden finds this strain of aristocratic opposition to tyranny to be particularly in evidence in the description of Satan’s rebellion in book five of *Paradise Lost*, and indeed I think Milton would have expected his readers to intuit a connection between the characterization of rebellion there and the language of favoritism in book nine. I suspect, too, that Milton had early Caroline controversies in mind when, in book five, he has Satan call upon his co-conspirators to join him in seeking “new Counsels” (line 681). The phrase is not unique enough to treat as a quotation, perhaps, but I take it to be a half-buried allusion to the conflict surrounding parliament’s attempt to impeach Buckingham in 1626. On 11 May of that year, King Charles sent Sir Dudley Diggs and Sir John Eliot to the tower for their attacks against the favorite and (by extension) his royal patron. In particular, Diggs and Eliot had suggested that Buckingham might be charged with the murder of King James, and Eliot (as we saw in the [previous chapter](#)) had compared the favorite to Sejanus. On 12 May, the Vice Chamberlain Sir Dudley Carleton offered a plea for temperance in the House of Commons, which contained the following alarming admonition:

move not his Majesty with trenching upon his prerogatives, lest you bring him out of love with Parliaments. In his message he hath told you that if there were not correspondency between him and you, he should be enforced to use new counsels. Now I pray you to consider what these new counsels are, and may be, I fear to declare those that I conceive. In all Christian kingdoms you know that Parliaments were in use anciently, until the monarchs began to stand upon their prerogatives, and at last overthrew the Parliaments throughout Christendom, except here only with us.¹²

Carleton was shouted down for the perceived threat and the Commons responded by drafting a remonstrance and determining to hold their ground. The whole episode – the scandalous speeches by Diggs and Eliot as well as Carleton’s plea – became notorious, and Milton alludes specifically to the accusations leveled at Buckingham in the parliament of 1626 on several occasions in polemical writings from the late 1640s and early 1650s.¹³ For Milton, recollecting the episode a great deal later, the threat of “new counsels” would presumably have been meaningful in terms of Charles’s subsequent decision to rule without parliament, a decision understood as symptomatic of the tyrannical impulses for which, Milton thought, the king deserved his fate.

In the specific context of Satan’s dawning rebellion, organized as a jealous response to an innovation in the sovereign’s favor, the evocation of this old controversy seems intentional.¹⁴ But, in a characteristically Miltonic twist, it is Satan, not his sovereign God, who seeks new counsels and turns ultimately toward personal rule. What is underscored here is Satan’s rather worldly assumption that courts are sites for competition over the king’s favor, and that the Son’s rise might therefore threaten his own special place “in favour and pre-eminence” (5.661). But God – unlike human monarchs – is in fact an “all-bounteous king” (5.640), a king whose love and generosity extends to all his deserving subjects. Raphael’s account of the courts of God, accordingly, emphasizes the openness of access, the egalitarian qualities that coexist with hierarchy in heaven’s court culture:

wider far

Than all this globous earth in plain outspread,
 (Such are the courts of God) the angelic throng
 Dispersed in bands and files their camp extend
 By living streams among the trees of life,
 Pavilions numberless, and sudden reared,
 Celestial tabernacles, where they slept
 Fanned with cool winds, save those who in their course
 Melodious hymns about the sovereign throne
 Alternate all night long. (5.648–57)

Where human courts are of necessity designed to exclude, heaven’s courts are infinitely expansive. Where access to human kings is regulated along rigid and architecturally reified lines, heaven’s courts are open, unfixed places where access to the sovereign is granted to all. As Satan himself admits during the course of his passionate soliloquy in book nine, “God in heaven / Is centre, yet extends to all” (lines 107–08).

This implied contrast is of course lost on Raphael's audience in book five, since Adam and Eve have no experience of worldly courts to draw on. It is intended, rather, for Milton's readership. For them – and so for us – I think the comparison is designed to operate according to a familiar Miltonic hermeneutic: it accommodates the meaning of divine kingship to fallen understanding by invoking associations that underscore precisely what it is not. The pursuit of divine favor and bounty is not a zero-sum game organized around exclusions because the conventional royalist language of all-bounteous monarchy and love for subjects in general is true here only. Satan may dress himself in the mantle of those “faithful and courageous Barons, who lost their lives in the Field, making glorious Warr against Tyrants for the common liberty,” but these are borrowed robes.¹⁵ The point is not only that Satan has made a political error, but that in recognizing the nature of this error we become aware of a gap between Satan's rhetoric and the traditions he echoes that in turn underscores the unbridgeable distance between God and worldly kings. Kingship as an ideal predicated on love in general is only possible for God; Satan's error is to treat God as limited in ways that all other kings must necessarily be.

A similar strategy of accommodation operates in book two, when Beelzebub first broaches the idea of wreaking revenge upon God's “new favourite”:

There is a place
 (If ancient and prophetic fame in heaven
 Err not) another world, the happy seat
 Of some new race called Man, about this time
 To be created like to us, though less
 In power and excellence, but favoured more
 Of him who rules above; so was his will
 Pronounced among the gods, and by an oath,
 That shook heaven's whole circumference, confirmed.

(2.345–53)

This is a prequel to Satan's complaint in book nine, and the word “favoured” here is the site of a complex pun. Since Beelzebub is comparing the power and excellence of men and angels, one tends at first to understand the word in its political sense and to read the passage, accordingly, as expressing resentment born of political rivalry: this new race is favored above its natural superiors. But since “to favor” can also mean “to resemble,” there is a subtly contradictory alternative meaning to the passage as well, one governed by Beelzebub's discussion of likeness: the new race is created in God's image. At stake in this distinction are competing and incompatible conceptions of the nature of hierarchy under God. The former meaning

imagines the relative status of God's creation in terms of the unstable rivalries of court competition, while the latter alludes to the visible signs of a more objective relation to Godhead that is also constitutive of real merit.

I take this to be an example of what John Leonard (following Christopher Ricks) calls an "anti-pun": a pun that creates its particular linguistic effect by evoking two meanings but excluding one of them.¹⁶ This sort of pun in Milton typically operates in a complex relation to the fall, invoking and excluding a specifically postlapsarian meaning while offering simultaneously a prelapsarian alternative. This instance is no exception. By invoking the politics of favoritism Milton reminds us of the rivalries and resentments to which postlapsarian personal monarchy is structurally susceptible, but reminds us at the same time of a superior model for the relationship between sovereign and subject – one grounded in God's love and the objective truth of creation – which obtained before the fall. The purpose of this pun (as with other anti-puns in the poem) is to call the reader's attention to the effects of the fall. In this case, it underscores as precisely as possible the difference between God's monarchy and postlapsarian appropriations of the language of sacred kingship. The upshot, it seems to me, is to imply not only that divine monarchy is categorically unlike the human institution, but even more strongly that the conceptual vocabulary that comes with the latter (in which favor is a prize fought over by courtly rivals) is the marker of its own fundamental impossibility.

Favoritism, therefore, provides a key way of thinking about the difference between the politics of affection in a worldly context and the plenitude of God's love. Raphael's punning allusion to the language of favoritism, with its implicit assertions about the nature of royal love, therefore reminds us that "in a true sense there is no monarchy" save God's.¹⁷ This perspective is of course entirely compatible with the worldly republicanism advocated by Milton in *The Readie and Easy Way* (1660). Indeed, reading the politics of *Paradise Lost* in this way may offer some insight into the socio-genesis of the poet's republican thinking by linking his constitutional radicalism to a native constitutional tradition that was increasingly critical of the imbalances attendant upon flawed personal monarchy.¹⁸

It would be possible, of course, to extend my survey of the discourse of favoritism well beyond Milton and Osborne, into the Restoration and beyond. One might look, for instance, at the politicized rhetoric of sexual excess surrounding Charles II, of whom the Earl of Rochester, wrote "his scepter and his prick are of a length / And she may sway the one

who plays with th' other."¹⁹ Or at plays like Robert Howard's *The Great Favourite* (1668), John Crowne's *The Ambitious Statesman, or, The Loyal Favourite* (1679), or John Banks's *The Unhappy Favourite* (1681). Or at the publication context of Elizabeth Cary's *History of the Life, Reign and Death of Edward II*, in two separate states in 1680.²⁰ Or at historical compendia like Nathaniel Crouch's survey of *The Unfortunate Court Favourites of England* (1695), a volume which contains chapters on (among others) Gaveston and the Spencers, Wolsey and Cromwell, Essex, Buckingham, and the Caroline Earl of Strafford. As is evidenced by recastings (like Banks's play) of the legend of the dashing Elizabethan Earl of Essex, the persistence of interest in the figure of the favorite owes something to nostalgia for pre-Stuart monarchy. And the exclusion crisis of 1678–81 revived old concerns about royal tyranny and the enfranchisement of subjects and was met by a renewed interest in the figure of the all-powerful favorite. Interest in the favorite as a representative political figure does not simply evaporate by 1660.

I have chosen to end with Milton, though, because the way he imagines favoritism – as part of a worldly political perspective and thus as a marker for the inevitable failure of kings to live up to their heavenly model – seems to me like a logical endpoint for the strands of semi-theorized constitutional inquiry that I have been concerned to trace in the present study. From the mid-1580s on, the figure of the all-powerful royal favorite is used to grapple in a variety of ways with tension between the Aristotelian ideal of constitutional balance and the concern that monarchy, because of its personal nature, might be structurally vulnerable to imbalance leading toward tyranny. Milton, in effect, abstracts and generalizes this basic tension, treating the language of favoritism as an indicator of the imbalanced nature of personal monarchy and simultaneously as a sign of the difference between earthly kings and God. This move makes it possible, I think, to see a meaningful continuity between the kinds of encoded constitutional inquiry carried out in the discourse of favoritism before the civil war and the republicanism that flourished after it. The latter emerges to fill a void created by the sense of the impossibility of monarchy fostered to a considerable degree by the former.

Let me be clear about this: I am not arguing that animosity toward favorites or the larger discourse of favoritism caused the civil war. To say that sort of thing would be to overestimate the causal power of figural language and to underestimate (massively!) the complexity of historical cause and effect. In order to think about the significance of this material one needs a more nuanced way to think about the social or political impact of figural

language. For me, the key is this: historical subjects interpret developing circumstances in terms of common sense paradigms, habits of thought, and structures of feeling that are perforce inherited and that are shaped by discursive conventions.²¹ This general proposition offers a non-teleological way to think of the impact of literature as part of an ever-evolving menu of ways of understanding that inevitably structures apprehension of events even as it is in turn reshaped and reordered by emergent pressures of circumstance. There is obviously no direct or inevitable path from the ideological dissonance of the late Elizabethan state to the outbreak of civil war, but there are (as I have tried to show throughout) very material continuities traceable between the uses of the corrupt favorite in early texts like *Leicester's Commonwealth* or Marlowe's *Edward II* and the response to controversial Jacobean and Caroline favorites, and again between the representations mobilized in the service of hostility toward Buckingham and the response to Henrietta Maria, Charles's personal rule, and even the execution of Strafford. The discourse of favoritism did not cause the civil war, but it did help create powerful comparative frameworks that shaped and directed responses to local concerns from the nasty nineties through the interregnum.

This project began with the simple observation that Elizabethan and early Stuart readers, writers, theatergoers, and the compilers of manuscript miscellanies were surprisingly fascinated by the idea of the all-powerful royal favorite. The bibliography of primary texts dealing very centrally with favorites is massive, much more so than I could have anticipated at the outset of my research for this project. It has become increasingly clear to me that favoritism was a compelling topic for so many people precisely because writing about favorites and the politics of intimacy served as a kind of cultural repository for fundamental constitutional concerns that were often evaded and finessed elsewhere in the culture's political writings. That these concerns are encoded in various ways is presumably what enables their expression. It would be possible, therefore, to see the cultural work done by this body of literature in terms of long-familiar new historicist models of subversion and containment, in which radical possibilities are deployed safely in literature and so co-opted or defused. Another way to look at this, though, would be to say that the discourse of favor helped to nurture and sustain a tradition of radical inquiry into the nature of monarchy, providing a conceptual vocabulary with which to think beyond the orthodoxies of official political discourse and with which to ask questions about the nature of personal monarchy especially

during periods of heightened ideological tension. Instead of attempting to nail down any kind of chimerical causal relationship between the kinds of inquiry embodied in the texts I have surveyed and the eventual execution of Charles I, then, let me end with a question: given the fact of civil war, how can one say that the subversive perspectives made available within the discourse of favoritism were – ultimately – contained?

Notes

1 “PREROGATIVE PLEASURES”: FAVORITISM AND MONARCHY IN EARLY MODERN ENGLAND

1. This speech was printed for Joseph Doe in London in 1643.
2. I quote from volume II of *A Collection of State Papers Relating to Affairs In The Reign of Queen Elizabeth, from the Year 1571 to 1596*, ed. William Murdin (London, 1759), 204.
3. I have found the following studies indispensable: Simon Adams, *Leicester and the Court: Essays on Elizabethan Politics* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2002); Alastair Bellany, *The Politics of Court Scandal in Early Modern England: News Culture and the Overbury Affair, 1603–1660* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002); Neil Cuddy, “The King’s Chambers: The Bedchamber of James I in Administration and Politics, 1603–1625” (D.Phil. Diss., Oxford University, 1987); Paul E. J. Hammer, *The Polarisation of Elizabethan Politics: The Political Career of Robert Devereux, 2nd Earl of Essex, 1585–1597* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999); Alan Kendall, *Robert Dudley, Earl of Leicester* (London: Cassell, 1980); Roger Lockyer, *Buckingham: The Life and Political Career of George Villiers, First Duke of Buckingham, 1592–1628* (London: Longman, 1981).
4. Robert Shephard, “Royal Favorites in the Political Discourse of Tudor and Stuart England” (Ph.D. Diss., Claremont Graduate School, 1985), 280. See 276–359.
5. In addition to Bellany, *The Politics of Court Scandal*, see: Thomas Cogswell, “Underground Verse and the Transformation of Early Stuart Political Culture” in *Political Culture and Cultural Politics in Early Modern England*, ed. Susan D. Amussen and Mark A. Kishlansky (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1995), 277–300; Adam Fox, “Ballads, Libels and Popular Ridicule in Jacobean England,” *Past and Present* 145 (1995): 47–83; Andrew McRae, “The Literary Culture of Early Stuart Libeling,” *Modern Philology* 97 (2000): 364–92; Arthur Marotti, *Manuscript, Print, and the English Renaissance Lyric* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1995).
6. The most levelheaded discussion I know of the idea of bureaucracy as it applies to early modern England is provided by G. E. Aylmer, *The King’s Servants: The Civil Service of Charles I, 1625–1642* (1961; rev. ed. London: Routledge & Kegan

- Paul, 1974), 453–69. I refer here to Annabel Patterson, *Early Modern Liberalism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), and to Jürgen Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society*, trans. Thomas Burger with Frederick Lawrence (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1989).
7. Habermas, *Structural Transformation*, 19.
 8. H. R. Woudhuysen, *Sir Philip Sidney and the Circulation of Manuscripts, 1558–1640* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996), 389; on the circulation of news and libel concerning Somerset see Bellany, *Politics of Court Scandal*.
 9. In addition to Bellany, *Politics of Court Scandal*, see especially the following: Richard Cust, “News and Politics in Early Seventeenth-Century England,” *Past & Present* 112 (1986): 60–90; F. J. Levy, “How Information Spread Among the Gentry, 1550–1640,” *The Journal of British Studies* 21.2 (1982): 11–34; Levy, “Staging the News” in *Print, Manuscript & Performance: The Changing Relations of the Media in Early Modern England*, ed. Arthur F. Marotti and Michael D. Bristol (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 2000), 252–78.
 10. Bellany, *Politics of Court Scandal*, III–14.
 11. Sir John Fortescue, *On The Laws and Governance of England*, ed. Shelley Lockwood (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 83.
 12. *Ibid.*, 17.
 13. *Ibid.*, 54.
 14. G. M. Pinciss, ed., *The Faithful Friends* (Oxford: Malone Society, 1975), lines 133–42.
 15. Habermas, *Structural Transformation*, 11.
 16. Pinciss, ed., *The Faithful Friends*, lines 145–51.
 17. I quote *Henry V* from *The Riverside Shakespeare*, ed. G. Blakemore Evans *et al.* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1975), 4.7.37. Subsequent citations are given parenthetically.
 18. See Pinciss’s introduction, pp. vii–xv.
 19. On the problematics of intimacy in the Henriad, see Laurie Shannon, *Sovereign Amity: Figures of Friendship in Shakespearean Contexts* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002), 165–84. I started thinking about the second tetralogy in conjunction with Fortescue after hearing Constance Jordan make a similar connection to different ends in a paper entitled “Constructing the Monarch’s Power, the Subject’s Property” at the Modern Language Association Conference in New York, December, 2002.
 20. Shannon, *Sovereign Amity*, 125–55. John Guy describes the importance of the language of classical friendship to describe all kinds of political relationships in “The Rhetoric of Counsel in Early Modern England” in *Tudor Political Culture*, ed. Dale Hoak (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 292–310.
 21. I quote the letter as printed in *Cabala Sive Scrinia Sacra: Mysteries of State and Government, In Letters Of Illustrious Persons* (3rd edition; London, 1691), 255–57.

22. Joad Raymond makes this suggestion too in “Popular Representation of Charles I” in *The Royal Image: Representations of Charles I*, ed. Thomas N. Corns (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 47–73. See especially p. 51. See also L. J. Reeve, *Charles I and the Road to Personal Rule* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 30, 218.
23. James Scott, *Domination and the Arts of Resistance: Hidden Transcripts* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990), 191.
24. See Kevin Sharpe, *The Personal Rule of Charles I* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992), 146, 164.
25. This plot device may allude to actual figures like William Monson or Arthur Brett, would-be favorites advanced as potential rivals to Buckingham in 1618 and 1622 respectively.
26. See Frances E. Dolan, *Whores of Babylon: Catholicism, Gender, and Seventeenth-century Print Culture* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1999), 118–36.
27. See L. W. B. Brockliss, “Concluding Remarks: The Anatomy of the Minister-Favorite” in *The World of the Favourite*, ed. J. H. Elliott and L. W. B. Brockliss (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1999), 282–83.
28. Quoted in Keith Lindley, *Popular Politics and Religion in Civil War London* (Aldershot: Scolar Press, 1997), 34.
29. Quoted in Lockyer, *Buckingham*, 451.
30. David Norbrook points out, too, that the proceedings of the 1628 Parliament were reprinted in 1641 as part of a concerted effort to link the grievances of the Long Parliament with those before the personal rule. See *Writing the English Republic: Poetry, Rhetoric and Politics, 1627–1660* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 79.
31. Glenn Burgess, *The Politics of the Ancient Constitution: An Introduction to English Political Thought, 1603–1642* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1992), 145.
32. *Ibid.*, 213.
33. Anon., *Thomas of Woodstock or Richard the Second Part One*, ed. Peter Corbin and Douglas Sedge (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2002), 4.3.40.
34. Frederick J. Furnivall, ed., *Harrison’s Description of England in Shakespeare’s Youth*, 2 vols. (London, 1877–78), 1: lviii–lix.
35. *Leicester’s Commonwealth: The Copy of a Letter Written by a Master of Art of Cambridge (1584) and Related Documents*, ed. D. C. Peck (Athens: Ohio University Press, 1985), 187–88.
36. *Ibid.*, 189.
37. This libel, which was printed in London in 1643 as *The Five Years Of King James, or, The Condition of The State of England, and The Relation It Had To Other Provinces* circulated in the 1620s and 1630s under that title or as “A Discourse of Passages Between the Earls of Essex, Northampton, and Somerset, the Countess of Somerset, Sir Thomas Overbury, and others.” I quote from page 70 of the 1643 edition, which is inaccurately attributed to Fulke Greville. See Bellany, *Politics of Court Scandal*, 96–97.

38. William B. Bidwell and Maija Jansson, ed., *Proceedings in Parliament, 1626*, 4 vols. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1991), 1: 460–61.
39. *Ibid.*, 461.
40. Aylmer, *The King's Servants*, 461.
41. Steve Hindle, *The State and Social Change in Early Modern England, c. 1550–1640* (Houndmills, Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2000), 235. Controversy concerning the nature of these transformations has centered around G. R. Elton's contention that the 1530s witnessed a massive bureaucratization of the central government under the watchful eye of Thomas Cromwell, a position first formulated in *The Tudor Revolution in Government* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1953) and rebutted in Christopher Coleman and David Starkey, ed., *Revolution Reassessed: Revisions in the History of Tudor Government and Administration* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986).
42. For a useful summary see Alan G. R. Smith, *The Emergence of a Nation State: The Commonwealth of England, 1529–1660* (London: Longman, 1984), 36–41, 88–97.
43. See, for instance, the narrative history of this transformation offered by Wallace MacCaffrey in his “Patronage and Politics Under the Tudors” in *The Mental World of the Jacobean Court*, ed. Linda Levy Peck (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 21–35.
44. On the favorite's role in handling expanded patronage demands, see Linda Levy Peck, “Monopolizing Favour: Structures of Power in the Early Seventeenth-Century English Court” in *The World of the Favourite*, 54–70. On the administrative utility of royal intimates see David Starkey's discussion in “Intimacy and Innovation: The Rise of the Privy Chamber, 1485–1547,” 82–100, in Starkey *et al.*, *The English Court, From the Wars of the Roses to the Civil War* (London: Longman, 1987).
45. See especially I. A. A. Thompson, “The Institutional Background to the Rise of the Minister-Favourite,” 13–25 and Antonio Feros, “Images of Evil, Images of Kings: The Contrasting Faces of the Royal Favourite and the Prime Minister in Early Modern European Political Literature,” 205–22, both in *The World of the Favourite*.
46. See also Antonio Feros, *Kingship and Favoritism in the Spain of Philip III, 1598–1621* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), especially pages 11–14, which draw a contrast with David Starkey's account of the politics of intimacy in Tudor England.
47. Judith Richards, “Love and a Female Monarch: The Case of Elizabeth Tudor,” *The Journal of British Studies* 38 (1999): 133–60. I quote from page 139.
48. Christopher Marlowe, *Edward the Second*, ed. Charles R. Forker (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1994), 1.1.79.
49. Starkey *et al.*, *The English Court*. See especially Starkey's own essay on Henrician innovations, pp. 71–118.
50. I quote from Starkey's introduction to *The English Court*, 4–5.
51. Starkey, “Intimacy and Innovation,” and Cuddy, “The King's Chambers.”

52. See Pam Wright, "A Change in Direction: The Ramifications of a Female Household, 1558–1603" in *The English Court*, 147–72. I quote from page 159.
53. *Leicester's Commonwealth*, 110.
54. Starkey, "Intimacy and Innovation," 83.
55. Quoted from Ernst H. Kantorowicz, *The King's Two Bodies: A Study in Medieval Political Theology* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1957), 11.
56. See Shannon, *Sovereign Amity*, 156–84.
57. Edward Hall, *Hall's Chronicle* (London, 1809), 598.
58. Seth Lerer, *Courtly Letters in the Age of Henry VIII: Literary Culture and the Arts of Deceit* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 34–86.
59. See, for example, Greg Walker, *John Skelton and the Politics of the 1520s* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988) and Perez Zagorin, "Sir Thomas Wyatt and the Court of Henry VIII: The Courtier's Ambivalence," *Journal of Medieval and Renaissance Studies* 23 (1993): 113–41.
60. I quote the poem from *John Skelton: The Complete English Poems*, ed. John Scattergood (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1983), lines 667 and 663 respectively.
61. Wolsey has a particularly interesting afterlife in the allusive political imagination of Elizabethan and early Stuart England. He is added to *The Mirror For Magistrates* in the 1587 edition, staged in Fletcher and Shakespeare's *Henry VIII* (1613), compared in gossip to Buckingham in 1628 (see James Orchard Halliwell, ed., *The Autobiography and Correspondence of Sir Simonds D'Ewes*, 2 vols. [London, 1845], II: 210), and remembered by Thomas Fuller as the archetypal wicked favorite as late as 1642. Fuller's volume, *The Holy State and the Profane State*, also treats Brandon as an example of the virtuous favorite.
62. On Tacitus and European interest in favoritism see J. H. Elliott's introduction to *The World of the Favourite*, 2.
63. On late Elizabethan perceptions of corruption see J. E. Neale, "The Elizabethan Political Scene" in *Essays in Elizabethan History* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1958), 59–84, and Joel Hurstfield, "Political Corruption in Modern England: The Historian's Problem" in *Freedom, Corruption and Government In Elizabethan England* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1973), 137–62. On the growing use of monopolies and customs farms to reward service see Simon Adams, "The Patronage of the Crown in Elizabethan Politics: The 1590s in Perspective" in *Leicester and the Court: Essays on Elizabethan Politics* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2002), 68–94. I quote from page 82.
64. Peck, "Monopolizing Favour," 54.
65. Adams, "The Patronage of the Crown," 82.
66. Peck, ed., *Leicester's Commonwealth*, 96.

2 LEICESTER AND HIS GHOSTS

1. *The Prose Works of Fulke Greville, Lord Brooke*, ed. John Gouws, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986), 105.

2. *Ibid.*, 108.
3. Gouws cautions against assuming that Greville intended to criticize James, but I still find Ronald Rebbholz persuasive: see *The Life of Fulke Greville, First Lord Brooke* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1971), 205–15. As John Watkins demonstrates, Greville's *Dedication* is also ambivalent about Elizabeth: *Representing Elizabeth in Stuart England: Literature, History, Sovereignty* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 76–86.
4. Sir Robert Naunton, *Fragmenta Regalia, or, Observations on Queen Elizabeth, Her Times & Favorites*, ed. John S. Cerovski (Washington, DC: Folger Shakespeare Library, 1985), 40.
5. Quoted from Cerovski's introduction to *Fragmenta Regalia*, 19.
6. Watkins, *Representing Elizabeth*, 69–75.
7. Francis Osborne, *The Works of Francis Osborne* (London, 1673), 688.
8. Serious factionalism emerged in the 1590s; historians who emphasized the importance of factional struggle before this point were misled by ideologically motivated early Stuart accounts of Elizabeth. See: Simon Adams, "Eliza Enthroned? The Court and its Politics" and "Favourites and Factions at the Elizabethan Court," both collected in his *Leicester and the Court: Essays of Elizabethan Politics* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2002), 24–67; Paul E. J. Hammer, "'Absolute and Sovereign Mistress of Her Grace'? Queen Elizabeth I and her Favourites, 1581–1592" in *The World of the Favourite*, ed. J. H. Elliott and L. W. Brockliss (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1999), 38–53; Hammer, *The Polarisation of Elizabethan Politics: The Political Career of Robert Devereux, 2nd Earl of Essex, 1585–1597* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999).
9. Naunton, *Fragmenta Regalia*, 40.
10. I quote from *Leicester's Commonwealth: The Copy of a Letter Written by a Master of Art of Cambridge (1584) and Related Documents*, ed. D. C. Peck (Athens: Ohio University Press, 1985), 107. Subsequent citations are given parenthetically.
11. Peck discusses the piece's publication and circulation in the introduction to his edition as well as in "Government Suppression of Elizabethan Catholic Books: The Case of *Leicester's Commonwealth*," *Library Quarterly* 47 (1977): 163–77. H. R. Woudhuysen discusses the piece's manuscript circulation in *Sir Philip Sidney and the Circulation of Manuscripts, 1558–1640* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996), 147–49.
12. See Adams, "Favourites and Factions," 47–53.
13. On the association between unregulated desires and political tyranny in classical literature see Rebecca Bushnell, *Tragedies of Tyrants: Political Thought and Theater in the English Renaissance* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1990), 20–36.
14. D. C. Peck, ed. "'News from Heaven and Hell': A Defamatory Narrative of the Earl of Leicester," *English Literary Renaissance* 8 (1978): 141–58; 149. The title is Peck's.
15. *Ibid.*, 157.

16. D. C. Peck, ed. "The Letter of Estate': An Elizabethan Libel," *Notes and Queries* n.s. 28 (1981): 21–35; 24. Subsequent citations are given parenthetically.
17. See Ian Frederick Moulton, *Before Pornography: Erotic Writing in Early Modern England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 113–59.
18. Peck prints Sidney's response as an appendix C to his edition of *Leicester's Commonwealth*. Richard McCoy describes conflicts between Leicester and his rivals over the nature of his pedigree in *The Rites of Knighthood: The Literature and Politics of Elizabethan Chivalry* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989), 32–54.
19. See Carole Levin, *The Heart and Stomach of a King: Elizabeth I and the Politics of Sex and Power* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1994), 72–83, and also Levin's essay "We shall never have a merry world while the Queene lyveth': Gender, Monarchy, and the Power of Seditious Words" in *Dissing Elizabeth: Negative Representations of Gloriana*, ed. Julia M. Walker (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1998), 77–95.
20. William Allen, *An Admonition to the Nobility and People of England and Ireland Concerninge the Present Warres* ([Antwerp], 1588), 18.
21. Alan Kendall, *Robert Dudley, Earl of Leicester* (London: Cassell, 1980), 201.
22. Peck, "The Letter of Estate," 21–22.
23. Thomas Rogers, *Leicester's Ghost*, ed. Franklin B. Williams, Jr. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1972), lines 795–98. Subsequent citations are given parenthetically by line number, where applicable, or by page number. The poem was not printed until 1641, but it exists in manuscript much earlier. Though Rogers may have begun the piece toward the end of Elizabeth's reign, references to the accession of James I make it clear that it was at least revised and emended after 1603. The connection between Rogers's Poem and Kyd's play is pointed out in Fredson Bowers, "Kyd's Pedringano: Sources and Parallels," *Harvard Studies and Notes in Philology and Literature* 13 (1931): 241–49; 249.
24. Thomas Kyd, *The Spanish Tragedy*, ed. J. R. Mulryne (2nd edition; New York: Norton, 1989), 3.12.28. Subsequent citations are given parenthetically.
25. For a reading of Kyd's play that draws out the implications of its class animosities, see Katharine Eisaman Maus, *Inwardness and Theater In The English Renaissance* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995), 55–71.
26. I quote from *The Works of John Webster: An Old-Spelling Critical Edition*, vol. 1, ed. David Gunby, David Carnegie, Anthony Hammond, and Doreen DelVeccio (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 5.3.151–57. The allusion to Leicester was pointed out in *Complete Works of John Webster*, ed. F. L. Lucas, 4 vols. (1927; rpt. New York: Gordian Press, 1966), 1: 256–57.
27. Isabella Barrios, ed., *The Diary of the Lady Anne Clifford* (Boulder, CO: Aardvark Press, 1997), 95.
28. For Peck's listing, see *Leicester's Commonwealth*, appendix A. I quote from page 225.
29. Three manuscripts that Peck does not mention are: Houghton fMS Eng 868 and BL MSS Add. 61,692 and Egerton 3878. Woudhuysen notes further omissions in *Sir Philip Sidney*, 148n.7.

30. They are: Harley MSS 405, 4282, 6021, 7582, Lansdowne MS 215, Stowe MS 156, Hargrave MSS 168, 311. I have compiled this list by relying on the online catalogue of the British Library (<http://molcat.bl.uk/msscat/INDEX.ASP>) and *A Catalogue of the Harleian Manuscripts in the British Museum*, 4 vols. (1808–12; rpt. Hildesheim, NY: G. Olms, 1973). There are some manuscripts for which I have not been able to find a description, but the general point holds.
31. See David Lindley, *The Trials of Frances Howard: Fact and Fiction at the Court of King James* (London: Routledge, 1993) and Alastair Bellany, *The Politics of Court Scandal in Early Modern England: News Culture and the Overbury Affair, 1603–1660* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 164–76.
32. Wotton's tract was printed in 1641 and reprinted in *Reliquiae Wottonianae* (London, 1651) but had circulated in manuscript somewhat earlier.
33. I am grateful to Emily Walhout of Houghton Library for providing me with this information, and to Leslie A. Morris, the curator of manuscripts at Houghton, for helping me ascertain that this manuscript is in fact compiled upon a single sheaf of paper and is therefore not just two separate documents bound together at a later date.
34. One might add to such a list several examples of the brief epitaph on Leicester ("Heere Lyes the valiant soldier / that never drew his sword") that appear in seventeenth-century manuscript miscellanies that also contain similar squibs on Buckingham and Somerset. One example is the Bodeian Library's Ashmole MS 38, a verse miscellany compiled in 1638 by Nicholas Burghes, which contains numerous poems about Jacobean favorites as well as a truncated version of the Leicester epitaph (p. 181). The epitaph has been printed several times. See D. C. Peck, "Another Example of the Leicester Epitaphium," *Notes and Queries* n.s. 23 (1976): 227–28.
35. Richard Dutton, *Licensing, Censorship and Authorship in Early Modern England: Buggeywords* (Houndmills, Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2000), xviii. See also Kevin Sharpe, *Reading Revolutions: The Politics of Reading in Early Modern England* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000). Albert H. Tricomi details one instance of this kind of analogical reading in "Philip, Earl of Pembroke, and the Analogical Way of Reading Political Tragedy," *Journal of English and Germanic Philology* 85 (1986): 332–45.
36. Peck disputes the connection with Strafford on the grounds that the reprints appeared "some months after Wentworth's execution in May" (*Leicester's Commonwealth*, 223–24), but in fact a recent study of the pamphlet wars surrounding Strafford's last months shows that "his death released a flood of popular anti-Strafford pamphlets": see Terence Kilburn and Anthony Milton, "The Public Context of the Trial and Execution of Strafford" in *The Political World of Thomas Wentworth, Earl of Strafford, 1621–1641*, ed. J. F. Merritt (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 230–51, p. 242.
37. See L. W. B. Brockliss's comment on Strafford in "Concluding Remarks: The Anatomy of the Minister-Favorite" in *The World of the Favorite*, ed. J.H. Elliott and L.W.B. Brockliss (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1999), 282–83.

38. Lucy Hutchinson, *Memoirs of the Life of Colonel Hutchinson With a Fragment of Autobiography*, ed. N. H. Keeble (1908; London: J. M. Dent, 1995), 69.
39. See *Leicester's Commonwealth*, appendix A, 223.
40. Anon., *A Declaration Shewing the Necessity of the Earl of Straffords Suffering* (London, 1641), Sig. B3.
41. *Leicesters Common-Wealth fully Epitomiz'd* (London, 1641), 16. Subsequent citations are given parenthetically.
42. *Leicester's Commonwealth*, 223–24.
43. *A Declaration*, sigs. A4 and B3 respectively.
44. Conrad Russell, *The Causes of the English Civil War* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990), 23.
45. For a useful overview of the relevant historiographical conflicts, see Peter Lake, "Retrospective: Wentworth's Political World in Revisionist and Post-Revisionist Perspective," in *The Political World of Thomas Wentworth*, 252–83.
46. On the availability of republican ideas in late Elizabethan England, see for example the following: Patrick Collinson, "The Monarchical Republic of Queen Elizabeth I" in his *Elizabethan Essays* (London: The Hambledon Press, 1994), 31–57; Andrew Hadfield, "Shakespeare and Republicanism: History and Cultural Materialism," *Textual Practice* 17 (2003): 461–83; Markku Peltonen, *Classical Humanism and Republicanism in English Political Thought, 1570–1640* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995).
47. S. R. Gardiner, ed., *The Constitutional Documents of the Puritan Revolution, 1625–1660* (1889; Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1927), 205.
48. D. C. Peck prints several versions of this poem in "Another Example of the Leicester Epitaphium." On the earl's misadventures in the Low Countries see Kendall, *Robert Dudley*, 204–27.
49. *The Works of Francis Bacon*, ed. James Spedding *et al.*, 14 vols. (London: Longman, 1861–74), ix:42. Adams discusses Leicester the Machiavel and Essex the dashing soldier as two opposed stereotypes in "Favourites and Factions," 274–79.
50. Williams, ed., *Leicester's Ghost*, xi–xxi.
51. Woudhuysen points out that *Leicester's Commonwealth* is commonly accompanied in manuscripts by material relating to Essex (*Sir Philip Sidney*, 149).
52. *Leicester's Ghost*, 87.
53. See Jean R. Brink, *Michael Drayton Revisited* (Boston: Twayne, 1990), 46.
54. Thomas Scott, *Robert Earle of Essex His Ghost, Sent From Elizian* ("Printed in Paradise" [London?], 1624).
55. I. R. [John Russell], *The Spy, Discovering the Danger of Arminian Heresie and Spanish Treacherie* ("Strasburgh" [really Amsterdam], 1628), sig. D2.
56. N. W. Bawcutt, ed., *The Control and Censorship of Caroline Drama: The Records of Sir Henry Herbert, Master of the Revels 1623–73* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996), 209.

57. The play was not printed until 1649, when it appeared together with Cavendish's *The Country Captaine*. The composite volume has a title page with publication information (London, 1649), as do each of the plays. The title page for *The Varietie* says that this portion of the volume was printed for Humphrey Mosley (London, 1649). Each play is paginated separately. I quote here from page 3 of *The Varietie*. Subsequent citations are given parenthetically by page number.
58. This is probably a reference to the prominence of Jeffrey Hudson, Henrietta Maria's dwarf.
59. Anne Barton, *Ben Jonson, Dramatist* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), 300–04, Martin Butler, *Theatre and Crisis, 1632–1642* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), 195–98, and Dale B. J. Randall, *Winter Fruit: English Drama, 1642–1660* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1995), 318–20.
60. Naunton, *Fragmenta Regalia*, 67.
61. Barton, *Ben Jonson*, 303–04.
62. Clarendon, quoted in Barton, *Ben Jonson*, 304. On the conflict between Buckingham and Arundel see Kevin Sharpe, "The Earl of Arundel, His Circle and the Opposition to the Duke of Buckingham, 1618–1628" in *Faction & Parliament: Essays on Early Stuart History*, ed. Kevin Sharpe (1978; London: Methuen, 1985), 209–44.
63. Arundel's wife was the daughter of Gilbert Talbot, Earl of Shrewsbury, the stepbrother of Cavendish's father. When Talbot died in 1616 Cavendish served as executor of his estate and in this capacity had to manage disputes involving Arundel. See Geoffrey Tresse, *Portrait of A Cavalier: William Cavendish, First Duke of Newcastle* (New York: Taplinger Publishing Company, 1979), 42, 48.
64. Thomas P. Slaughter, ed., *Ideology and Politics On the Eve of the Restoration: Newcastle's Advice to Charles II* (Philadelphia: American Philosophical Society, 1984), 48.
65. *Ibid.*, 48.
66. *Ibid.*, 57–58.
67. *Ibid.*, 72.
68. *Ibid.*, 22.
69. Watkins, though, challenges such oversimplifications in *Representing Elizabeth*.
70. See especially Barton, *Ben Jonson*, and Butler, *Theatre and Crisis*.
71. Butler, *Theatre and Crisis*, 198.
72. See for example David Underdown, *A Freeborn People: Politics and the Nation In Seventeenth-Century England* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996), 80–89.

3 AMICI PRINCIPIS: IMAGINING THE GOOD FAVORITE

- I. Antonio Feros, "Images of Evil, Images of Kings: The Contrasting Faces of the Royal Favourite and the Prime Minister in Early Modern European Political

- Literature, c. 1580–c. 1650” in *The World of the Favourite*, ed. J. H. Elliott and L. W. B. Brockliss (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1999), 205–22. This extends and revises Leicester Bradner’s essay “The Theme of *Privanza* in Spanish and English Drama, 1590–1625” in *Homenaje A William L. Fichter: Estudios Sobre El Teatro Antiguo Hispánico Y Otros Ensayos*, ed. A. David Kossoff and José Amor Y. Vázquez (Madrid: Editorial Castalia, 1971), 97–106.
2. See: Laurie Shannon, *Sovereign Amity: Figures of Friendship in Shakespearean Contexts* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001); Laurens J. Mills, *One Soul in Bodies Twain: Friendship in Tudor Literature and Stuart Drama* (Bloomington, IN: Principia Press, 1937).
 3. Cicero, *On Friendship & The Dream of Scipio (Laelius de Amicitia and Somnium Scipionis)*, ed. J. G. F. Powell (Warminster: Aris & Philips, 1990). The translation is Powell’s and appears on p. 37.
 4. *Ibid.*, 39.
 5. Shannon, *Sovereign Amity*, 125–55.
 6. See John Guy, “The Rhetoric of Counsel in Early Modern England” in *Tudor Political Culture*, ed. Dale Hoak (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 292–310.
 7. *Ibid.*
 8. *Ibid.*, 298.
 9. *Ibid.*, 294.
 10. *Ibid.*, 302–10.
 11. Simon Adams, “Eliza Enthroned? The Court and its Politics” in *Leicester and the Court: Essays on Elizabethan Politics* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2002), 24–45.
 12. Adams, “Favourites and Factions at the Elizabethan Court” in *Leicester and the Court*, 46–67.
 13. *The Old Arcadia* (hereafter *OA*), ed. Katherine Duncan-Jones (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985), pages 6, 5 respectively. For Sidney’s revised version (hereafter *NA*) my text is Carl Dennis’s facsimile edition of the 1590 text of *The Countesse of Pembrokes Arcadia* (Detroit: Kent State University Press, 1970). Subsequent citations will be given parenthetically. In quoting from the *NA* facsimile I silently expand some contractions and correct some obvious typographical errors.
 14. This problem is a staple of the humanist literature of counsel, though Sidney’s treatment presumably has to do with personal experience as well: his suspiciousness of the kind of court career represented by the Earl of Leicester, his uncle and mentor, and the frustrations of his career at court. See Blair Worden, *The Sound of Virtue: Philip Sidney’s Arcadia and Elizabethan Politics* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1996), 127–45, and F. J. Levy, “Philip Sidney Reconsidered” in *Sidney in Retrospect: Selections from English Literary Renaissance*, ed. Arthur F. Kinney *et al.* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1988), 3–14.
 15. Worden, *The Sound of Virtue*, 152.
 16. *Ibid.*, 146–52.

17. See Martin Bergbusch, "The 'Subalterne Magistrate' in Sir Philip Sidney's *Arcadia*: A Study of the Character of Philanax," *English Studies in Canada* 7 (1981): 27–37.
18. Debora Shuger reads the *Old Arcadia*'s ambivalent treatment of the passions of its aristocratic heroes as a critique of Livian republicanism in "Castigating Livy: The Rape of Lucrece and *The Old Arcadia*," *Renaissance Quarterly* 51 (1998): 526–48. Joshua Scodel shows that Sidney uses excess passion as a mark of aristocratic nature even in a text that is simultaneously preoccupied with its destructive potential: *Excess and the Mean in Early Modern English Literature* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002), 155–64.
19. See Annabel Patterson, *Censorship and Interpretation: The Conditions of Writing and Reading in Early Modern England* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1984), 41–42.
20. Worden, *The Sound of Virtue*, 246.
21. Katherine Duncan-Jones, *Sir Philip Sidney: Courtier Poet* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1991), 256–60. D. C. Peck, the modern editor of *Leicester's Commonwealth* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 1985), notes that the libel "first attracted the notice of the English government in August or September 1584" (5).
22. *Leicester's Commonwealth*, 13–32.
23. Adams, "Favourites and Factions."
24. See Richard C. McCoy, *Sir Philip Sidney: Rebellion in Arcadia* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1979), 184–87, and Martin N. Raitiere, *Faire Bitts: Sir Philip Sidney and Renaissance Political Theory* (Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 1984), 21–25.
25. On Huguenot borrowings from Catholic political theory see Quentin Skinner, *The Foundations of Modern Political Thought*, 2 vols. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1978), II: 320–23.
26. *Leicester's Commonwealth*, 17.
27. See McCoy, *Sir Philip Sidney*, 174–90. See also Clare R. Kinney, "Chivalry Unmasked: Courtly Spectacle and the Abuses of Romance in Sidney's *New Arcadia*," *Studies in English Literature, 1500–1900* 35 (1995): 35–52.
28. See Richard McCoy, *The Rites of Knighthood: The Literature and Politics of Elizabethan Chivalry* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989).
29. Raitiere, *Faire Bitts*, 26–33. Worden, in *The Sound of Virtue*, treats Cecropia as a figure for Mary, Queen of Scots (172–83). Barbara Brumbaugh argues that Cecropia in fact stands for the Catholic church in general in "Cecropia and the Church of Antichrist in Sir Philip Sidney's *New Arcadia*," *Studies in English Literature, 1500–1900* 38 (1998): 19–43.
30. David Bevington, *Tudor Drama and Politics: A Critical Approach to Topical Meaning* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1968), 294.
31. Though Henry VIII is never brought on stage, the play's account of the mercurial rise of the common Cromwell counts on audience familiarity with a notion of that king as a figure for bluff good fellowship. Compare Samuel Rowley's early Jacobean comedy *When You See Me, You Know Me* (1605).

32. I quote the play from *The Shakespeare Apocrypha*, ed. C. F. Tucker Brooke (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1918), 167–90. These disparaging remarks are from 4.2.65 and 66 respectively. Subsequent citations are given parenthetically by act, scene, and line.
33. See Curtis Perry, *The Making of Jacobean Culture: James I and the Renegotiation of Elizabethan Literary Practice* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 83–114.
34. *King James VI and I: Political Writings*, ed. Johann P. Somerville (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 181.
35. Glenn Burgess, *The Politics of the Ancient Constitution: An Introduction to English Political Thought, 1603–1642* (1992; University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1993), 152–56.
36. See John Hazel Smith's discussion of the play's date in *The Plays of George Chapman: The Tragedies with Sir Gyles Goosecappe*, ed. Allan Holaday *et al.* (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 1987), 16–17. See also Albert Tricomi, "The Dates of the Plays of George Chapman," *English Literary Renaissance* 12 (1982): 242–66. Smith reproduces the two quartos in a facing page edition; subsequent citations will refer to Q1 in Smith's edition and will be given parenthetically.
37. Compare Jonathan Dollimore, *Radical Tragedy: Religion, Ideology and Power in the Drama of Shakespeare and His Contemporaries* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986), 182–88.
38. Jonathan Goldberg, *James I and the Politics of Literature: Jonson, Shakespeare, Donne, and Their Contemporaries* (1983; Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1989), 155–61.
39. *The Tragedie of Chabot, Admirall of France*, ed. G. Blakemore Evans in *The Plays of George Chapman*, I.I.2.
40. On *Chabot*, see Curtis Perry, "1603 and the Discourse of Favouritism" in *The Accession of James I: Historical and Cultural Consequences*, ed. Glenn Burgess, Rowland Wymer, and Jason Lawrence (forthcoming, New York: Palgrave, 2005–06).
41. *The Queen of Corinth*, ed. Robert Kean Turner in *The Dramatic Works in The Beaumont and Fletcher Canon*, gen. ed. Fredson Bowers, 10 vols. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1966–96), VIII: 3–III. I quote here from 4.3.133–35. Subsequent citations are given parenthetically.
42. This may also allude to *Leicester's Commonwealth*, where royal favorites are referred to as "great falcons for the field" (72).
43. See David Lindley, *The Trials of Frances Howard: Fact and Fiction at the Court of King James* (London: Routledge, 1993) and Alastair Bellany, *The Politics of Court Scandal in Early Modern England: News Culture and the Overbury Affair, 1603–1660* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002).
44. See Suzanne Gossett, "'Best Men are Molded out of Faults': Marrying the Rapist in Jacobean Drama" in *Renaissance Historicism*, ed. Arthur F. Kinney and Dan S. Collins (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1987), 168–90, and Karen Bamford, "Sexual Violence in *The Queen of Corinth*" in *Other Voices, Other Views: Expanding the Canon in English Renaissance Studies*,

ed. Helen Ostovich, Mary V. Silcox, and Graham Roebuck (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1999), 234–52.

45. I quote Townshend's masque from David Lindley, ed., *Court Masques: Jacobean and Caroline Entertainments, 1605–1640* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), 156. Subsequent citations will be given parenthetically by page number.
46. Martin Butler, "Reform or Reverence? The Politics of the Caroline Masque" in *Theatre and Government Under the Early Stuarts*, ed. J. R. Mulryne and Margaret Shewring (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 118–56. I quote from page 119.
47. *Le Balet Comique* was composed by Balthazar de Beaujoyeux. Margaret M. McGowan discusses the occasion of its composition and performance in the introduction to her edition of the text (Binghamton, NY: Medieval and Renaissance Texts and Studies, 1982), 12–18. A modern translation of *Le Balet Comique De La Roynne* with a transcription of the original music has been provided by Carol and Lander MacClintock (Musicological Studies and Documents 25 [n.p., American Institute of Musicology, 1971]).
48. I quote from McGowan's facsimile edition, p. 3.
49. Shannon, *Sovereign Amity*, 127.
50. Lindley, ed., *Court Masques*, 148.
51. *Ibid.*, 171–72.
52. On the role of Momus within this masque see Kevin Sharpe, *Criticism and Compliment: The Politics of Literature in the England of Charles I* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 195–97, 233–43, and Butler, "Reform or Reverence," 137–42.
53. Carrell's play – based on a Spanish play entitled *La Duquesa de Mantua* – was printed in London in 1629. I refer to this edition throughout and will give citations parenthetically by signature number. The play's title page specifies that the play has been "lately Acted, first before the Kings Majestie, and since publicly at the BLACK-Friers." Though we do not know for certain when it was composed or first performed it is typically assumed on internal grounds to have been about this time. The printed cast list allows the date of performance to be narrowed to 1625–29: see Gerald Eades Bentley, *The Professions of Dramatist and Player in Shakespeare's Time, 1590–1642*, 2 vols. (1971; rpt. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1986), II: 251–52.
54. The title page of the 1640 edition specifies that the play was never acted.
55. Walter Montagu, *The Shepheard's Paradise* (London, 1659), p. 164. Subsequent citations are given parenthetically by page number.
56. See Kevin Sharpe's chapter "The Image of Virtue: The Court and Household of Charles I, 1625–1642" in *The English Court From the Wars of the Roses to the Civil War*, ed. David Starkey et al. (London: Longman, 1987), 226–60.
57. I quote the play from volume IV of *The Dramatic Works of Sir William D'avenant*, 5 vols., (1872–74; rpt. New York: Russell & Russell, 1964), p. 278. Subsequent citations are given parenthetically by page number as this edition is not lineated.

58. See Lucy Hutchinson, *Memoirs of the Life of Colonel Hutchinson, With a Fragment of Autobiography*, ed. N. H. Keeble (1908; rev. ed. London: J. M. Dent, 1995), 68–70. I quote from p. 70. See also Frances Dolan, *Whores of Babylon: Catholicism, Gender, and Seventeenth-Century Print Culture* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1999), 118–36.
59. Studies locating Davenant's play in the context of Caroline symbolics of love include Sharpe, *Criticism and Compliment*, 79–82, and Erica Veevers, *Images of Love and Religion: Queen Henrietta Maria and Court Entertainments* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 65–70.
60. Sharpe, *Criticism and Compliment*, 286.
61. R. Malcolm Smuts, *Court Culture and the Origins of a Royalist Tradition in Early Stuart England* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1987), 193, 244 respectively.
62. Sharpe is primarily concerned to demonstrate the vitality of the Caroline court and its capacity to accommodate differences of opinion. See *Criticism and Compliment*, 265–301.
63. Smuts, *Court Culture*, 275. On the emergence and consolidation of Caroline court culture see 183–209.
64. Raymond Williams, *Marxism and Literature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977), 123.

4 POISONING FAVOR

1. Robert P. Shephard surveys the favorite as poisoner in "Royal Favorites in the Political Discourse of Tudor and Stuart England," Ph.D. Dissertation: Claremont Graduate School, 1985, 283–95.
2. *Leicester's Commonwealth: The Copy of a Letter Written by a Master of Art of Cambridge (1584) and Related Documents*, ed. D. C. Peck (Athens: Ohio University Press, 1985), 90–91.
3. *Ibid.*, 116.
4. Sir Robert Naunton, *Fragmenta Regalia or Observations on Queen Elizabeth, Her Times & Favorites*, ed. John S. Cerovski (Washington: The Folger Shakespeare Library, 1985), 51. *Ben Jonson: The Man and His Work*, ed. C. H. Herford and Percy and Evelyn Simpson, 11 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1925–52), 1: 142.
5. *Leicester's Commonwealth*, 85.
6. I quote the poem as printed in *The Poetical Works of William Drummond of Hawthornden*, ed. L. E. Kestuer, vol. 11 (Manchester: University Press, 1913), 297. There is no reason, though, to think that the poem is by Drummond.
7. On Essex's use of the Lopez case, see Paul E. J. Hammer, *The Polarisation of Elizabethan Politics: The Political Career of Robert Devereux, 2nd Earl of Essex, 1585–1597* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 138–40, 158–63.
8. *The Works of Francis Bacon*, ed. James Spedding *et al.* 14 vols. (London, 1861–74), IX: 42
9. Anne Somerset provides a narrative of these events in *Unnatural Murder: Poison at the Court of James I* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicholson, 1997). On

the circulation of news and gossip see Alastair Bellany, “The Poisoning of Legitimacy? Court Scandal, News Culture and Politics in England, 1603–1660,” Ph.D. Dissertation: Princeton University, 1995, 12–438, as well as his *The Politics of Court Scandal in Early Modern England: News Culture and the Overbury Affair, 1603–1660* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002). See also David Lindley, *The Trials of Frances Howard: Fact and Fiction at the Court of King James* (London: Routledge, 1993).

10. *Works*, xii: 338–39. See also Bellany, *The Politics of Court Scandal*, 181–211.
11. *Cobbett’s Complete Collection of State Trials and Proceedings For High Treason and Other Crimes and Misdemeanors From The Earliest Period to The Present Time*, 33 vols. (London: R. Bagshaw, 1809–1826), ii: 950–51. Subsequent citations will be given parenthetically, omitting the volume number, which is always ii.
12. Somerset, *Unnatural Murder*, 294–95; Bellany, *The Politics of Court Scandal*, 183–89.
13. The piece appears in numerous manuscripts from the 1620s and 1630s, either under this title or as “A Discourse of Passages Between the Earls of Essex, Northampton, and Somerset, the Countess of Somerset, Sir Thomas Overbury, and others.” It was later printed as *The Five Years of King James* (London, 1643). I quote from *The Harleian Miscellany*, ed. William Oldys, et al., 10 vols. (1808–13; rpt. New York: AMS Press, 1965), v: 355.
14. Bellany, “The Poisoning of Legitimacy,” 519–20.
15. *Ibid.*, 519–31.
16. William Prynne, *Romes Master-peece* (London, 1643), 34.
17. George Eglisbam, *The Forerunner of Revenge* (“Franckfort,” 1626), 19. Subsequent citations will be given parenthetically by page number.
18. Thomas Birch, ed., *The Court and Times of Charles the First*, 2 vols. (London, 1848), i: 373. See Bellany, “The Poisoning of Legitimacy,” 550–52.
19. See my discussion of this play in chapter 5.
20. The play was printed in 1639.
21. Robert Howard’s play, entitled *The Great Favourite, Or, The Duke of Lerma* (London, 1668), is described on the title page as a revision of an “old play” (sig. A2v). Since the revisions Howard describes in his epistle primarily involve shoring up the plot and sanitizing the characters, it seems likely that the favorite’s use of poison is a holdover from the older version.
22. See Linda Levy Peck, *Court Patronage and Corruption in Early Stuart England* (Boston: Unwin Hyman, 1990).
23. See the following: Fredson Bowers, “The Audience and the Poisoners of Elizabethan Tragedy,” *Journal of English and Germanic Philology* 36 (1937): 491–504; Jonathan Gil Harris, *Foreign Bodies and the Body Politic: Discourses of Social Pathology in Early Modern England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998); Tanya Louise Pollard, “Dangerous Remedies: Poison and Theater in the English Renaissance,” Ph.D. Dissertation: Yale University, 1999; Mariangela Tempera, “The Rhetoric of Poison in John Webster’s Italianate Plays” in *Shakespeare’s Italy: The Function of Italian Locations In Renaissance Drama*,

- ed. Michelle Marrapodi, A. J. Hoenselaars, Marcello Cappuzzo, and L. Falzon Santucci (1993; Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1997), 229–50.
24. *King James VI and I: Political Writings*, ed. Johann P. Sommerville (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 23.
 25. Edward Coke, *The Third Part of The Institutes of The Laws of England Concerning High Treason, and Other Pleas of The Crown, and Criminal Causes* (London, 1644), 47, 48.
 26. Morris Palmer Tilley, *A Dictionary of The Proverbs in England in The Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1950), 548.
 27. Thomas Sackville and Thomas Norton, *Gorboduc, or Ferrex and Porrex* in *Drama of the English Renaissance, I: The Tudor Period*, ed. Russel A. Fraser and Norman Rabkin (New York: Macmillan, 1976), 87.
 28. *Works*, xii: 309.
 29. *The Poems of Richard Corbett*, ed. J. A. W. Bennett and H. R. Trevor-Roper (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1955), 19.
 30. Katharine Eisaman Maus, *Inwardness and Theater In The English Renaissance* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995), 40.
 31. William Shakespeare, *Othello* in *The Riverside Shakespeare*, ed. G. Blakemore Evans *et al.* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1975), 2.1.297. Subsequent quotations from Shakespeare are from this edition and will be cited parenthetically.
 32. Poison has a strong and enduring affiliation in the English imagination with popery. Among the reasons for this are its powerful association with Italy via Roman and Italian histories and the association of Catholic recusants with sinister interiority. But *Leicester's Commonwealth* – a Catholic libel accusing a Protestant favorite of poisoning enemies – shows that apostasy and secrecy are in some ways more fundamental to the figuration of the character than papacy.
 33. Quoted in Somerset, *Unnatural Murder*, 249, 251.
 34. *Leicester's Commonwealth*, 89.
 35. *Ibid.*, 82.
 36. Lindley, *The Trials of Frances Howard*.
 37. Thomas Tuke, *A Treatise Against Painting and Tincturing of Men and Women* (London, 1616), sig. H2.
 38. James Shirley, *The Traitor*, ed. John Stewart Carter (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1965), 4.1.190–93.
 39. Tuke, *A Treatise*, sig. Irv.
 40. On the ideological importance of friendship see Laurie Shannon, *Sovereign Amity: Figures of Friendship in Shakespearean Contexts* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002).
 41. James I, *Political Writings*, 182–83.
 42. Bellany traces attempts to construct the scandal as a drama of royal justice in *The Politics of Court Scandal*, 212–47.
 43. British Library, Additional MS 15,476, fol. 91.
 44. *The Works of John Webster*, vol. 1, ed. David Gunby *et al.* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 1.1.11–15.

45. *Thomas of Woodstock*, ed. Peter Corbin and Douglas Sedge (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2002), 3.2.157. Subsequent citations will be given parenthetically.
46. On the date and sources of the play see the introduction in *The Plays and Poems of Philip Massinger*, ed. Philip Edwards and Colin Gibson, vol. 1 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1976), 199–203. I use this text of the play and will give subsequent citations parenthetically.
47. Henry Peacham, *Minerva Britanna or A Garden of Heroical Devises* (London, 1612), 48.
48. See Mario DiGangi, *The Homoerotics of Early Modern Drama* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 103–07.
49. *Leicester's Commonwealth*, 125.
50. *Ibid.*, 88–89. On the impact of the queen's gender on the politics of access see Pam Wright, "A Change in Direction: The Ramifications of a Female Household, 1558–1603" in David Starkey *et al.*, *The English Court From the Wars of the Roses to the Civil War* (London: Longman, 1987), 147–72.
51. See Neil Cuddy, "The Revival of the Entourage: The Bedchamber of James I, 1603–1625" in *The English Court, 173–225*, and also Cuddy's "The King's Chambers: The Bedchamber of James I in Administration and Politics, 1603–1625," D.Phil. Dissertation: Oxford, 1987.
52. *Works*, XII: 319.
53. Buckingham was believed to have made use of the sorcery of Doctor Lamb, who was therefore killed by a mob in the streets of London in 1628. See Roger Lockyer, *Buckingham: The Life and Political Career of George Villiers, First Duke of Buckingham 1592–1628* (London: Longman, 1981), 451.
54. See Bellany, "The Poisoning of Legitimacy," 519–29. See also the account of James's death in Lockyer, *Buckingham*, 233–34.
55. Shirley, *The Cardinal* (London, 1652), 24. Subsequent citations will be given parenthetically by page number. The play was licensed and performed in 1641, and invokes controversy surrounding Archbishop Laud. See Deborah G. Burks, "'This sight doth shake all that is man within me': Sexual Violation and the Rhetoric of Dissent in *The Cardinal*," *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies* 26 (1996): 153–90. The idea of Laud as a favorite may seem inappropriate since he did not operate by monopolizing access to the king. But as with Strafford, animosity toward Laud was sometimes linked to the memory of Buckingham in the popular imagination. Likewise, the image of Laud as court favorite evoked the memory of Cardinal Wolsey, who was often remembered as a favorite of Henry VIII: see the anonymous pamphlet *Canturburies Dreame* (London, 1641).
56. Though the king is more commonly thought of as the head of state, this figuration is not unheard of. John Donne, in his *Devotions Upon Emergent Occasions*, describes the body as a commonwealth headed (as it were) by the heart: "the *Heart* alone is in the *Principallitie*, and in the *Throne*, as *King*, the rest as *Subjects*" (Quoted from Jonathan Sawday's useful discussion of bodily metaphors for the state in *The Body Emblazoned: Dissection and the*

- Human Body in Renaissance Culture* [London: Routledge, 1995], 34). If, as Scott Manning Stevens argues, “affect and intellect . . . were, according to the majority of authorities, located in the heart and head respectively,” then the somatic metaphor here may also imply that the king’s patronage is affective rather than rational. See Stevens, “Sacred Heart and Secular Brain” in *The Body in Parts: Fantasies of Corporeality in Early Modern Europe*, ed. David Hillman and Carla Mazzio (New York: Routledge, 1997), 263–82. I quote from p. 267.
57. Martin Butler, *Theatre and Crisis, 1632–1642* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), 79–82. Compare Brendan O Hehir, *Harmony From Discords: A Life of Sir John Denham* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1968), 38–47. As Butler points out, it is not clear that the play was completed in time to be performed at court (82).
 58. *The Poetical Works of Sir John Denham*, ed. Theodore Howard Banks (1928; Hamdon, CT: Archon Books, 1969), 153. On Denham’s royalism see John M. Wallace, “Coopers Hill: The Manifesto of Parliamentary Royalism, 1641,” *ELH* 41 (1974): 494–540.
 59. *Poetical Works*, 2.172–88. Only Act I is divided into scenes. Subsequent citations will be given parenthetically.
 60. Conrad Russell (*Parliaments and English Politics, 1621–1629* [Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1979], 316) discusses the handling of this possibility in parliamentary debates and ambassadorial communications. See also Bellamy, “The Poisoning of Legitimacy,” 524–26.
 61. Coke, *The Third Part of The Institutes*, 50
 62. On the stereotyped figure of the Jewish physician/poisoner and his use in similarly contradictory constructions of alienness, see Harris, *Foreign Bodies*, 79–106.

5 EROTIC FAVORITISM AS A LANGUAGE OF CORRUPTION IN EARLY MODERN DRAMA

1. William Shakespeare, *Measure for Measure* in *The Riverside Shakespeare*, ed. G. Blakemore Evans *et al.* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1975), 4.3.156–57.
2. *King James VI and I: Political Writings*, ed. Johann P. Sommerville (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 4.
3. For further examples see: Carole Levin, *The Heart and Stomach of a King: Elizabeth I and the Politics of Sex and Power* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1994), 66–90; Robert Shephard, “Sexual Rumours in English Politics: The Cases of Elizabeth I and James I” in *Desire and Discipline: Sex and Sexuality in the Premodern West*, ed. Jaqueline Murray and Konrad Eisenbichler (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1996), 101–22; Michael B. Young, *King James and the History of Homosexuality* (New York: New York University Press, 2000), 8–68.
4. Shephard, “Sexual Rumours,” 103–04.
5. Samuel Rawson Gardiner, ed., *Parliamentary Debates in 1610* (London: Camden Society, 1862), II. The remark is attributed to Thomas Wentworth, MP from

- Oxford. On the word “cock,” see Gordon Williams, *A Dictionary of Sexual Language and Imagery in Shakespearean and Stuart Literature*, 3 vols. (London: Athlone, 1994), 1: 256–61.
6. See Bruce Smith, *Homosexual Desire in Shakespeare’s England: A Cultural Poetics* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991), 202–03, and Alastair Bellany, *The Politics of Court Scandal in Early Modern England: News Culture and the Overbury Affair, 1603–1660* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 255–57.
 7. *Court Masques: Jacobean and Caroline Entertainments, 1605–1640*, ed. David Lindley (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), 171–72.
 8. See: James Holstun, *Ehud’s Dagger: Class Struggle in the English Revolution* (London: Verso, 2000), 159–60; David Underdown, *A Freeborn People: Politics and the Nation in Seventeenth-Century England* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996), 38.
 9. William Prynne, *The Popish Royall Favourite* (London, 1643), 56.
 10. I quote Osborne’s memoir, first printed in 1658, from *The Works of Francis Osborne* (London, 1673), 535. Subsequent citations are given parenthetically.
 11. Osborne’s father was a minor court functionary under Elizabeth and James, and Osborne himself served in the household of William, Earl of Pembroke. See Lois Potter’s introduction to Osborne’s play *The True Tragicomedy*, ed. John Pitcher and Lois Potter (New York: Garland, 1983), vi–xiii. In his memoirs, Osborne tells us that he regularly frequented St. Paul’s walk and listened to “News-mongers” who “not only take the boldness to weigh the publick but most intrinsick actions of the State” (*Works*, 502).
 12. James I, *Political Writings*, 23.
 13. The play is heavily topical: one of the passions is compared to William Prynne, and there are allusions to the assassination of Henri IV of France, the Gunpowder plot, and the assassination of Buckingham. The play was printed in London in 1655 with a printer’s epistle commenting upon the play’s seemingly prophetic anticipation of civil war (sig. A2). See also Dale B. J. Randall, *Winter Fruit: English Drama, 1642–1660* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1995), 231–32.
 14. See Rebecca Bushnell, *Tragedies of Tyrants: Political Thought and Theater in the English Renaissance* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1990).
 15. Quoted in Levin, *Heart and Stomach*, 76.
 16. *Ibid.*, 66–90.
 17. Strode, *Floating Island*, sig. B4.
 18. Underdown, *Freeborn People*, 52.
 19. See Mario DiGangi, *The Homoerotics of Early Modern Drama* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 100–33.
 20. *The Hastings Journal of the Parliament of 1621*, ed. Lady De Villiers, *Camden Miscellany* 20 (London: Royal Historical Society, 1953), 33.
 21. See note 3 above, and Shephard, “Royal Favorites in the Political Discourse of Tudor and Stuart England,” Ph.D. Dissertation: Claremont Graduate School, 1985.

22. On the purifying potential of sacred monarchy, see Ernst H. Kantorowicz, *The King's Two Bodies: A Study in Medieval Political Theology* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1957), 3–23. On the growing sense of political corruption see Linda Levy Peck, *Court Patronage and Corruption in Early Stuart England* (Boston: Unwin Hyman, 1990).
23. See DiGangi, *Homoerotics*, 102–03, and Simon Shepherd, “What’s So Funny About Ladies’ Tailors? A Survey of Some Male (Homo) sexual Types in the Renaissance,” *Textual Practice* 6 (1992): 17–30.
24. DiGangi, *Homoeroticism*, 100–03.
25. See the following: Alan Bray, *Homosexuality in Renaissance England* (1982; rpt. New York: Columbia University Press, 1995); Gregory W. Bredbeck, *Sodomy and Interpretation: Marlowe To Milton* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1991); DiGangi, *Homoerotics*; Jonathan Goldberg, *Sodometries: Renaissance Texts, Modern Sexualities* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1992); Goldberg, ed., *Queering the Renaissance* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1994); Smith, *Homosexual Desire*.
26. Goldberg, *Sodometries*, 19.
27. Cynthia Herrup, *A House in Gross Disorder: Sex, Law, and the 2nd Earl of Castlehaven* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 33.
28. I quote from the Malone Society edition of *A Knack to Know A Knave*, ed. G. R. Proudfoot (Oxford: University Press, 1964), lines 13–20. Subsequent citations are given parenthetically by line number.
29. Bray, *Homosexuality*, 28–32. See also Jonathan Ned Katz, “The Age of Sodomitical Sin, 1607–1740” in *Reclaiming Sodom*, ed. Jonathan Goldberg (New York: Routledge, 1994), 43–58.
30. Robert Alter, “Sodom as Nexus: The Web of Design in Biblical Narrative” in *Reclaiming Sodom*, 28–42. I quote from p. 33.
31. See Proudfoot, *A Knack*, vi.
32. The other episode that stands outside of the two main plots is a comic interlude written for Will Kemp.
33. My account of the scene differs from that of Simon Shepherd, who thinks Edgar passes a just sentence on his favorite (“What’s So Funny,” 24).
34. Bray, “Homosexuality and the Signs of Male Friendship” in *Queering the Renaissance*, 42–43.
35. The title “Charlemagne” was supplied by Franck L. Schoell in his edition of the play (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1920). The play, which has also been titled “The Distracted Emperor,” is not named in the sole surviving manuscript (British Library Egerton MS 1994). John Henry Walter, who edited *Charlemagne* for the Malone Society (London: Oxford University Press, 1938), supplies a speculative date of 1604, though he notes that a portion of the play is written on paper with a watermark common between 1605 and 1632 (ix, v, respectively). However, the manuscript was prepared for the stage by Sir George Buc, who became Master of the Revels in 1610, and Richard Dutton has demonstrated that there is no evidence that Buc read plays for the stage prior to 1610 (*Mastering the Revels: The Regulation and Censorship of English*

Renaissance Drama [Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 1991], 142–51). The presence of his hand in the manuscript points toward a date between 1610 and 1622, when his career at the Revels office came to an end. On Buc's hand, see, in addition to Walter, ed., *Charlemagne*, vii–viii, T. H. Howard-Hill, "Marginal Markings: The Censor and the Editing of Four English Promptbooks," *Studies in Bibliography* 36 (1983): 168–77.

36. *Charlemagne*, line 1845. Subsequent citations are given parenthetically by line number.
37. Several of the characters are given names derived from the romance tradition associated with Charlemagne.
38. *Letters From Petrarch*, ed. and trans. Morris Bishop (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1966), 25. The story is also alluded to in John Skelton's *Why Come Ye Nat To Courte* (1522) to comment upon Cardinal Wolsey's favor with Henry VIII.
39. *Leicester's Commonwealth: The Copy of a Letter Written by a Master of Art of Cambridge (1584) and Related Documents*, ed. D. C. Peck (Athens: Ohio University Press, 1985), 89.
40. *Calendar of State Papers and Manuscripts Relating To English Affairs, Existing in The Archives and Collections of Venice and in Other Libraries of Northern Italy*, 38 vols. (London: H. M. Stationery Office, 1864–1947), vol. x (1603–07): 70.
41. Historical Manuscripts Commission, *Report on the Manuscripts of . . . the Marquis of Downshire*, vol. v (London: H. M. Stationary Office, 1988), 507.
42. *Calendar of State Papers . . . Venice*, vol. xix (1625–26): 604–05.
43. Goldberg, *Sodometries*, 123.
44. Stuart Clark, "King James's *Daemonologie*: Witchcraft and Kingship" in *The Damned Art: Essays in the Literature of Witchcraft*, ed. Sydney Anglo (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1977), 156–81.
45. James I, *The Workes of the Most High and Mightie Prince, James* (London, 1616), 120.
46. *Ibid.* 117.
47. In Petrarch, the ring is thrown into a marsh near Aix-la-Chapelle, which then becomes Charlemagne's favorite city (*Letters From Petrarch*, 26).
48. My text is edited by Fredson Bowers from vol. v of *The Dramatic Works in the Beaumont and Fletcher Canon*, gen. ed. Fredson Bowers (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), 153–288. I quote here from 1.3.129–31. Subsequent citations are given parenthetically by act, scene, and line.
49. Philip J. Finkelpearl, *Court and Country Politics in the Plays of Beaumont and Fletcher* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990), 219–23.
50. John Michael Archer discusses the play's resonance with early modern notions of Russia in *Old Worlds: Egypt, Southwest Asia, India, and Russia in Early Modern English Writing* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2001), 130–38. Since Russia was associated in the western imagination with tyranny and servitude, the setting may have helped underscore the kind of tensions discussed by Finkelpearl: at what point does Archas's exaggerated obedience become base slavery? On Russian despotism see also Marshall T. Poe, *A People Born to*

Slavery: Russia in Early Modern European Ethnography, 1476–1748 (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2000).

51. Archer, *Old Worlds*, 131.
52. See Deborah Kuller Shuger, *Habits of Thought in the English Renaissance: Religion, Politics, and the Dominant Culture* (1990; rpt., Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1997), 218–49; Elizabeth A. Spiller, “The Counsel of Fulke Greville: Transforming the Jacobean ‘Nourish Father’ through Sidney’s ‘Nursing Father,’” *Studies in Philology* 97 (2000): 433–53.
53. For details of the play’s revival see Gerald Eades Bentley, *The Jacobean and Caroline Stage*, 7 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1941–68), III: 370–73.
54. Archas himself becomes a figure of Christ-like self-sacrifice toward the end of the play (“I dye, for saving all you” [4.5.124]), the antithesis of parasitism.
55. See Martin Butler, “*Love’s Sacrifice*: Ford’s Metatheatrical Tragedy” in *John Ford: Critical Revisions*, ed. Michael Neill (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 201–31, esp. 202–05, and Sandra A. Burner, *James Shirley: A Study of Literary Coteries and Patronage in Seventeenth-Century England* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1988), 41–84.
56. A. C. Wood, ed., *Memorials of the Hollis Family, 1493–1656* (London: Camden Society, 1937), 106. On Weston as successor to Buckingham see also Kevin Sharpe, *The Personal Rule of Charles I* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992), 145–53.
57. An associate of Castruchio’s recalls his “vices strip’t and whip’d” and his “trim eclogues,” fairly self-evident allusions to Wither’s *Abuses Stript and Whipt* (London, 1613), *The Shepherds Pipe* (London, 1614), and *The Shepherds Hunting* (London, 1615). I quote *The Cruel Brother* from vol. 1 of *The Dramatic Works of Sir William D’avenant*, 5 vols. (1872–74; rpt. New York: Russell & Russell, 1964), 115–97. Subsequent citations are given parenthetically by page number. I quote here from p. 141.
58. The comic device of a madman who sees himself as the favorite is repeated in Lodowick Carlell’s play *The Fool Would Be a Favourite* (c. 1632–37).
59. Christopher Marlowe, *Edward The Second*, ed. Charles R. Forker (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1994), 1.4.72–73.
60. A. T. Moore (*Love’s Sacrifice* [Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2002], 4–9) notes that we have very little basis upon which to venture a firm date of composition. I use Moore’s edition here, supplying citations parenthetically by act, scene, and line.
61. On Shirley, see Ruth Marion Little, “Perpetual Metaphors: The Configuration of the Courtier as Favourite In Jacobean and Caroline Literature,” Ph.D. Dissertation: University of Cambridge, 1993, 228–86.
62. See Peter Ure, *Elizabethan and Jacobean Drama: Critical Essays* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1974), 93–103, and Mark Stavig, *John Ford and The Traditional Moral Order* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1968), 122–43. See also *Love’s Sacrifice*, 80–82.
63. Moore speculates that this may be evidence of some form of censorship (*Love’s Sacrifice*, 273–74).

64. Glenn Burgess, *The Politics of the Ancient Constitution: An Introduction to English Political Thought, 1603–1642* (1992; University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1993), 179–211.
65. Ford's use of Heywood's play is discussed in Butler, "Ford's Metatheatrical Tragedy," 208–10.
66. On Ford's dedicatees, see Lisa Hopkins, *John Ford's Political Theatre* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1994), 3–38.
67. On Arundel, see Kevin Sharpe, "The Earl of Arundel, His Circle and the Opposition to the Duke of Buckingham, 1618–1628" in *Faction & Parliament: Essays in Early Stuart History*, ed. Kevin Sharpe (1978; London: Methuen, 1985), 209–44. On Cavendish, see my discussion of *The Varietie* in chapter 2.
68. This notion is central to Girard's thinking and so appears in many places. See for example his *Violence and the Sacred*, trans. Patrick Gregory (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1977), 39–67.
69. See Moore's overview of modern criticism: *Love's Sacrifice*, 77–85.
70. See Butler, "Ford's Metatheatrical Tragedy," and Kathleen McLuskie, "'Language and Matter with a Fit of Mirth': Dramatic Construction in the Plays of John Ford" in *John Ford: Critical Revisions*, 97–127.
71. McLuskie, "Dramatic Construction," 123.
72. Burgess, *The Politics of the Ancient Constitution*. See also L. J. Reeve, *Charles I and the Road to Personal Rule* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989).
73. John Guy, "The Rhetoric of Counsel in Early Modern England" in *Tudor Political Culture*, ed. Dale Hoak (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 292–310.
74. On this see especially Reeve, *Charles I*, 30, 94–95, 218–19.
75. Strode, *The Floating Island*, sig. C4v.

6 "WHAT PLEASSED THE PRINCE": EDWARD II AND THE IMBALANCED CONSTITUTION

1. *The Annals Of English Drama* (Alfred Harbage, revised by Samuel Schoenbaum and Sylvia Stoler Wagonheim [London: Routledge, 1989]) also notes payment to Chettle and Porter for a lost play called *The Spencers* in 1599. I am grateful to Charles Whitney for this reference. Ben Jonson, likewise, began to compose a play on the subject of *Mortimer His Fall*, though only a fragment survives.
2. Thomas Smith, *De Republica Anglorum* (London, 1583), 7.
3. Patrick Collinson, "The Monarchical Republic of Queen Elizabeth I" in his *Elizabethan Essays* (London: Hambledon Press, 1994), 31–57.
4. Thomas May, *A Discourse Concerning the Successes of Former Parliaments* (London, 1642), p. 3.
5. Sir John Fortescue, *On The Laws and Governance of England*, ed. Shelley Lockwood (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 83.
6. *Ibid.*, 4.
7. Aristotle, *Politics*, trans. H. Rackham (1932; Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1959), 263.

8. *Ibid.*, 265
9. Fortescue, *Laws and Governance*, 17.
10. See John Guy, "The Elizabethan Establishment and the Ecclesiastical Polity" in *The Reign of Elizabeth I: Court and Culture in the Last Decade*, ed. John Guy (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 126–49, and J. P. Sommerville, "Richard Hooker, Hadrian Saravia, and the Advent of the Divine Right of Kings," *History of Political Thought* 4 (1983): 229–45.
11. *A declaration of the true causes of the great troubles, presupposed to be intended against the realme of England* (n.p. [Antwerp?], 1592), 52–54.
12. *Ibid.*, 68.
13. See Guy, "The 1590s: The Second Reign of Elizabeth I?" in *The Reign of Elizabeth I*, 1–19.
14. *Ibid.*, 12.
15. Compare James Voss, "Edward II: Marlowe's Historical Tragedy," *English Studies* 63 (1982): 517–30.
16. See Peter Holmes, "The Authorship and Early Reception of *A Conference About the Next Succession To The Crown Of England*," *The Historical Journal* 23 (1980): 415–29.
17. Guy, "The 1590s," 12–13.
18. R. Doleman, *A Conference About the Next Succession To The Crowne of Ingland* ("Imprinted at N." [Antwerp], 1595), 58–59.
19. Christopher Marlowe, *Edward the Second*, ed. Charles R. Forker (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1994), 1.4.55. Subsequent citations are given parenthetically. On Marlowe's play and the succession crisis, see Mark Thornton Burnett, "Edward II and Elizabethan Politics" in *Marlowe, History, and Sexuality: New Critical Essays on Christopher Marlowe*, ed. Paul Whitfield White (New York: AMS Press, 1998), 91–107, and Ronald Knowles, "The Political Contexts of Deposition and Election in *Edward II*," *Medieval and Renaissance Drama in England* 14 (2001): 105–21.
20. Doleman, *A Conference*, 22.
21. On the similarities between Parsons's tract and the traditional language of the balanced constitution see Guy, "The 1590s," 12–13.
22. See, most recently, Richard Hillman, *Shakespeare, Marlowe and the Politics of France* (Houndmills, Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2002), 72–111.
23. Bruce Smith, *Homosexual Desire in Shakespeare's England: A Cultural Poetics* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991), 212–13. I quote Suetonius from *The Historie of Twelve Caesars, Emperours of Rome*, trans. Philemond Holland (London, 1606), p. 107 (mispaginated as 99).
24. *Leicester's Commonwealth: The Copy of a Letter Written by a Master of Art of Cambridge (1584) and Related Documents*, ed. D. C. Peck (Athens: Ohio University Press, 1985), 188, 108 respectively.
25. Compare Jonathan Goldberg, *Sodometries: Renaissance Texts, Modern Sexualities* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1992), 119.
26. In addition to *ibid.*, 105–43, and Smith, *Homosexual Desire*, 209–23, the most influential studies are: Emily C. Bartels, *Spectacles of Strangeness: Imperialism, Alienation, and Marlowe* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1993),

- 143–72; Alan Bray, “Homosexuality and the Signs of Male Friendship in Elizabethan England,” *History Workshop* 29 (1990): 1–19; Gregory Bredbeck, *Sodomy and Interpretation, Marlowe to Milton* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1991), 56–77; Mario DiGangi, *The Homoerotics of Early Modern Drama* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 107–15.
27. On the conflict between the monarchy and affectionate friendship see Laurie Shannon, *Sovereign Amity: Figures of Friendship in Shakespearean Contexts* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002), 125–84. On *Edward II* see 160–65.
28. Morris Palmer Tilley, *A Dictionary of the Proverbs in England in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1950), 486. Forker modernizes the word “mushrump” and thus loses the pun.
29. *Edward the Second*, 47.
30. On the symmetry between Edward and Mortimer see also Patrick Cheney, *Marlowe’s Counterfeit Profession: Ovid, Spenser, Counter-Nationhood* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1997), 157–74.
31. See my “Inwardness as Sedition in Heywood and Marlowe” in *The Future of the Middle Ages and the Renaissance: Problems, Trends, and Opportunities for Research*, ed. Roger Dahood (Turnhout, Belgium: Brepols, 1998), 109–28, and Joan Parks, “History, Tragedy, and Truth in Christopher Marlowe’s *Edward II*,” *Studies in English Literature 1500–1900* 39 (1999): 275–90.
32. Paul Yachnin, *Stage Wrights: Shakespeare, Jonson, Middleton and the Making of Theatrical Value* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1997), 1–24.
33. Drayton, “Of Poets and Poesie” in *The Works of Michael Drayton*, 5 vols., ed. J. William Hebal et al. (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1931–41), III: 228. Bernard Mellor’s edition of *The Poems of Sir Francis Hubert* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 1961) uses the 1629 edition of *Edward The Second* as its copy text but includes variants in the commentary. On Drayton’s influence, see 295–96 and the note to stanza 228, pp. 307–08. Quotations from this edition are cited parenthetically hereafter by stanza number. Quotations from the variants quoted in Mellor’s notes are cited parenthetically by the stanza number they appear under in the notes. Quotations from the edition of 1628 (London, printed for Roger Michell) will also be cited parenthetically by stanza. Jean Robertson provides a useful supplement to Mellor’s bibliographical work in “Sir Francis Hubert’s *The History of Edward the Second*,” *Book Collector* 21 (1972): 214–26.
34. Hubert, *Poems*, 175.
35. On Heyward see Cyndia Clegg, *Press Censorship in Elizabethan England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 198–217. See also Robertson, “Sir Francis,” 217n.10.
36. Hubert, *Poems*, 2.
37. According to Mellor (Hubert, *Poems*, 280), the Elizabethan manuscript contains 352 stanzas but breaks off about two-thirds of the way through the narrative that takes 664 stanzas in the 1629 version. I’m estimating, therefore, that the poem as originally conceived had about 530 stanzas in all. The emended

- Jacobean poem, as printed in 1628 and preserved in numerous manuscripts, contains 580 stanzas.
38. Mellor (Hubert, *Poems*, 279–80) collates six manuscript copies of the poem. One of these is the Elizabethan version, and another (Bodleian MS Rawl. Poet. 170) includes a fragment that seems to represent a later version than other manuscripts (on the latter see Robertson, “Sir Francis,” 215–16). Another – Bodleian MS Rawl. Poet. 98 – is cut considerably but contains none of the additions Hubert made after 1628. Other copies not discussed by Mellor include Bodleian MS eng. poet E. 112, Folger MS V.a.234, and four copies at the Beinecke Library, Osborn MSS b9, b12, b373, and fb7. Robertson (“Sir Francis,” 215) has called attention to three of these. I have not looked at the Yale copies personally, but the catalogue description for each specifies that it resembles the 1628 printed edition. See the online catalogues for the Beinecke’s James Marshall and Marie-Louise Osborn collection (New Haven, 1998; accessed October, 2003) at: <http://webtext.library.yale.edu/beinflat/osborn.bshelf.htm> and <http://webtext.library.yale.edu/beinflat/osborn.fbsshelf.htm>. H. R. Woudhuysen identifies two additional manuscripts of Hubert’s poem (Society of Antiquaries, MS 22 and Harvard, MS Eng. 1382) but does not discuss them. See *Sir Philip Sidney and the Circulation of Manuscripts, 1558–1640* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996), 71–72n.31.
 39. The letter is reproduced in Robertson, “Sir Francis,” 216–17.
 40. A point noted by Jeffrey Masten in “Is the Fundament a Grave” in *The Body in Parts: Fantasies of Corporeality in Early Modern Europe*, ed. David Hillman and Carla Mazzio (New York: Routledge, 1997), 145n.46.
 41. *The Hastings Journal of the Parliament of 1621*, ed. Lady De Villiers, *Camden Miscellany* 20 (London: Royal Historical Society, 1953), 33.
 42. Curtis Perry, “Yelverton, Buckingham, and the Story of Edward II in the 1620s,” *Review of English Studies* n.s. 54 (2003): 313–35.
 43. For details of the speech’s composition and a discussion of manuscript copies see Kevin Sharpe, *Sir Robert Cotton, 1586–1631: History and Politics in Early Modern England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1979), 177–80.
 44. The speech is reprinted in Sir John Eliot, *An Apology For Socrates and Negotium Posterorum*, ed. Alexander Grosart, 2 vols. (privately printed, 1881), 1: 140–48. I quote here from 1: 147.
 45. Vivienne Larminie, *Wealth, Kinship and Culture: The 17th-Century Newdigates of Arbury and Their World* (Woodbridge, Suffolk: Boydell Press, 1995), 157–74. On Newdigate’s parliamentary diary see *Commons Debates 1628*, ed. Robert C. Johnson, Mary Frear Keeler, Maija Jansson Cole, and William B. Bidwell, 4 vols. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1977–78), 1: 26–27. On *The Emperor’s Favorite*, see T. H. Howard-Hill, “Another Warwickshire Playwright: John Newdigate of Arbury,” *Renaissance Papers* (1988): 51–62. A microfilm copy of the play can be found in the Warwickshire County Record Office: MI 351/3/A.414/20/f145. I am grateful to Rosalind Green who moved heaven and earth to afford me an opportunity to read this play.
 46. Larminie, *Wealth, Kinship and Culture*, 160.

47. It was entered in the Stationers' Register in May of 1629.
48. The phrase comes from Patrick Collinson, "Ecclesiastical Vitriol: Religious Satire in the 1590s and the Invention of Puritanism," *The Reign of Elizabeth I*, 170. For a stimulating discussion of intellectual continuities across this period see also Collinson's "The Elizabethan Exclusion Crisis and the Elizabethan Polity," *Proceedings of the British Academy* 84 (1994): 51–92.
49. Mellor, in Hubert, *Poems*, 289. On the poem's relation to Essex see also xxiv–xxviii.
50. Glenn Burgess, *The Politics of the Ancient Constitution: An Introduction to Political Thought, 1603–1642* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1992), and also *Absolute Monarchy and the Stuart Constitution* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1996).
51. Thomas Beard, *The Theatre of Gods Judgements* (London, 1597), 359.
52. *Leicester's Commonwealthe*, 86.
53. Controversy over the authorship and date of this text is summarized in Barbara Kiefer Lewalski, *Writing Women in Jacobean England* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1993), 317–20.
54. Meredith Skura criticizes the exclusive focus on Isabel in "Elizabeth Cary and Edward II: What Do Women Want to Write?," *Renaissance Drama* 27 (1996): 79–104, and Stephanie Wright discusses the limitations of a critical tradition that reads Cary as a writer who is only of interest because of her gender in "The Canonization of Elizabeth Cary" in *Voicing Women: Gender and Sexuality in Early Modern Writing*, ed. Kate Chedgzoy, Melanie Hansen, and Suzanne Trill (Keele, Staffordshire: Keele University Press, 1996), 55–68. Notable counter-examples include Lewalski's clear-headed discussion of the *History* in *Writing Women* (201–11), and Gwynne Kennedy, *Just Anger: Representing Women's Anger In Early Modern England* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 2000), 75–114. Kennedy examines the modulation of Isabel's anger in terms of the text's interest in larger questions of resistance to authority.
55. Louise Schleiner, *Tudor and Stuart Women Writers* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994), 175–91.
56. During the period in which the *History* was written, Cary and Falkland were quarreling over Cary's formal conversion to Catholicism in 1626. The conversion was made public by Buckingham's sister, Lady Denbigh, herself a crypto-Catholic and one of Cary's erstwhile friends. Outraged, Falkland attempted to cut off support to his wife. The letters that Cary wrote during this period seeking assistance elsewhere make frequent reference to her friendship with Denbigh as well as with Buckingham's wife and mother. See Heather Wolfe, ed., *Elizabeth Cary, Lady Falkland: Life and Letters* (Tempe, AZ: MRTS, 2001), 32–45.
57. *Ibid.*, 212. On Cary's relation to Drayton see Virginia Brackett, "Elizabeth Cary, Drayton, and Edward II," *Notes and Queries* n.s. 41 (1994): 517–19.
58. Wolfe, ed., *Life and Letters*, 212
59. F. J. Levy, *Tudor Historical Thought* (San Marino: The Huntington Library, 1967), 271.

60. Roger Lockyer, *Buckingham: The Life and Political Career of George Villiers, First Duke of Buckingham 1592–1628* (London: Longman, 1981), 359, 343 respectively.
61. See especially pages 58–63 in the folio text of Cary's *History of the Life, Reign and Death of Edward II* (London, 1680). Subsequent citations will be given parenthetically by page number. There is also a shorter version of a closely related text printed the same year under the title *The History of the Most Unfortunate Prince King Edward II*. I use the folio version of Cary's *History* because its engagement with political controversies surrounding Buckingham is much more extensive. For a full bibliography and a more detailed discussion of the intersection of autobiographical and political contexts, see Curtis Perry, "Royal Fever" and 'the giddy Commons': Cary's *History of the Life, Reign, and Death of Edward II*," forthcoming in *Elizabeth Cary*, ed. Heather Wolfe (New York: Palgrave, 2006).
62. Perry, "Yelverton," 334.
63. I quote this from an anonymous letter delivered to Charles during the impeachment proceedings of 1626, as printed in *Cabala, Sive Scrinia Sacra* (3rd edition, London, 1691), 255.
64. To some degree, these shifts reflect Cary's jumpiness about rebellion: it is one thing to take umbrage at a tyrant and another altogether to overthrow a king. See Kennedy, *Just Anger*, 105–12, and Lewalski, *Writing Women*, 206–11.
65. For numerous instances of this associative cluster see Michael B. Young, *King James and the History of Homosexuality* (New York: New York University Press, 2000), 69–101. I strongly disagree with the anachronistic way Young explains the significance of such texts, however.
66. Lockyer, *Buckingham*, 334.
67. See Burgess, *Politics of the Ancient Constitution*, 179–211.
68. Marchamont Nedham, "Mercurius Melancholicus," *The Second Part of Crafty Crumwell, or, Oliver in his Glory as King* (London, 1648), 5.

7 INSTRUMENTAL FAVORITISM AND THE USES OF ROMAN HISTORY

1. Quoted in Dale B. J. Randall's *Jonson's Gypsies Unmasked: Background and Theme of "The Gypsies Metamorphos'd"* (Durham, NC, 1975), 28. The libel is also reproduced by Richard Cust in "News and Politics in Early Seventeenth-Century England," *Past & Present* 112 (1986): 66–67. For Eliot's parallel see William Bidwell and Maija Jansson, ed. *Proceedings In Parliament, 1626*, 4 vols. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1991–96), III: 223.
2. Samuel Rawson Gardiner, *History of England from the Accession of James I to The Outbreak of The Civil War, 1603–1642*, 10 vols. (London, 1884), VI: 107–08.
3. Samuel Sheppard, "On The Death of Strafford Deputie of Ireland" in *Epigrams* (London, 1651), 103–04.
4. *A Declaration Shewing the Necessity of the Earle of Straffords Suffering* (London, 1641), sig. A4.

5. R. Fletcher, *Ex Otio Negotium, Or, Martiall His Epigrams Translated. With Sundry Poems and Fancies* (London, 1656), 175.
6. *The Powerful Favorite, Or, The Life of Aelius Sejanus* (Paris [London?], 1628) and *Unhappy Prosperity Expressed in the Histories of Aelius Sejanus and Philippa Catanian* (London, 1632) are both translations of Matthieu's 1618 French biography of Sejanus. The *Political Observations Upon the Fall of Sejanus Written in Italian by Gio. Baptista Manzini* (London, 1634) was reissued in 1638 as part of *Remarkable Considerations Upon the Life, and Services of Monsier Villeroy. Together With Certaine Politicall Observations Upon the Fall of Sejanus* (London, 1638) and in the 1639 edition of *Unhappy Prosperity. Gymnasiarchon, Or, The Schoole of Potentates* (London, 1648), was adapted by Thomas Nash (a member of the Inner Temple whose dates are 1588–1648), from a treatise originally written by the Austrian Georg Acacius Enenkel von Hoheneck.
7. See Malcolm Smuts, "Court-Centered Politics and the Uses of Roman Historians, c. 1590–1630" in *Culture and Politics in Early Stuart England*, ed. Kevin Sharpe and Peter Lake (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1993), 21–43. See also Markku Peltonen, *Classical Humanism and Republicanism in English Thought, 1570–1640* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), especially pages 229–307.
8. These are not the only early Stuart Roman plays concerned with favoritism. Others include *The Faithful Friends* (1619–26), Fletcher and Massinger's *The False One* (c. 1620), *The Wasp* (1630s), and Nathanael Richards's *Tragedy of Messallina* (1635, printed 1640).
9. See Martin Butler, "Romans in Britain: *The Roman Actor* and the Early Stuart Classical Play" in *Philip Massinger: A Critical Reassessment*, ed. Douglas Howard (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 139–70. On the influence of *Sejanus* see William Dinsmore Briggs, "The Influence of Jonson's Tragedy In The Seventeenth Century," *Anglia* 35 (1912): 277–337.
10. On the influence of Tacitus see: Smuts, "Court-Centred Politics"; J. H. M. Salmon, "Seneca and Tacitus in Jacobean England" in *The Mental World of the Jacobean Court*, ed. Linda Levy Peck (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 169–88; Alan Bradford, "Stuart Absolutism and the 'Utility' of Tacitus," *Huntington Library Quarterly* 46 (1983): 127–55. J. H. Elliott has recently suggested that the rediscovery of Tacitus – and the resulting interest in Sejanus – may have been responsible for controversy concerning royal favoritism all over Europe during the seventeenth century. See his introduction to *The World of the Favourite*, ed. J. H. Elliott and L. W. B. Brockliss (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1999), 2.
11. James Holstun, *Ehud's Dagger: Class Struggle in the English Revolution* (London: Verso, 2000), 186.
12. Raymond Williams, *Marxism and Literature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977), 121–27.
13. *Ibid.*, 132.
14. I call this vulgar revisionism because it oversimplifies more complex arguments put forward by revisionist historians following Conrad Russell. See

- Peter Lake, “Retrospective: Wentworth’s Political Career in Revisionist and Post-Revisionist Perspectives” in *The Political World of Thomas Wentworth, Earl of Strafford, 1621–1641*, ed. J. F. Merritt (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 252–83.
15. *Leicester’s Commonwealth: The Copy of a Letter Written by a Master of Art of Cambridge (1584) and Related Documents*, ed. D. C. Peck (Athens: Ohio University Press, 1985), 108.
 16. *Epitome de Caesaribus: Libellus de Vita et Moribus Imperatorum, Breviatius Ex Libris Sexti aurelii Victoris*, 4.8. The most convenient reliable version of this Latin text is online at <http://www.gmu.edu/departments/fld/CLASSICS/victor.caes2.html>. An English translation by Thomas M. Banchich can be found online at <http://www.roman-emperors.org/epitome.htm>. I am grateful to William Carey for his clarifying remarks about the relationship between this text and the work of Aurelius Victor.
 17. Philip J. Ayres, “The Nature of Jonson’s Roman History,” *English Literary Renaissance* 16 (1986): 166–81. The argument is supplemented in Ayres’s introduction to his edition of the play (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1990), 28–37. I use Ayres’s edition, and all citations are given parenthetically by act and line numbers.
 18. Ayres, “The Nature,” 168.
 19. On Jonson’s interest in republicanism see especially Julie Sanders, *Ben Jonson’s Theatrical Republics* (Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire: Macmillan, 1998).
 20. See William W. E. Slights, *Ben Jonson and the Art of Secrecy* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1994), 32–56, and John Michael Archer, *Sovereignty and Intelligence: Spying and Court Culture In The English Renaissance* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1993), 102–13.
 21. This Germanic conception of slavery in some ways anticipates what Quentin Skinner calls the neo-Roman theory of civil liberty developed in Caroline and interregnum England: see *Liberty Before Liberalism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998).
 22. I am indebted here to Mario DiGangi’s reading of the play in *The Homoerotics of Early Modern Drama* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 119–24.
 23. Suetonius, *The Twelve Caesars*, trans. Robert Graves, rev. Michael Grant (1979; Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1985), 141; Tacitus, *Annals of Imperial Rome*, trans. Michael Grant (1959; Baltimore: Penguin, 1962), 153. Cassius Dio attributes Sejanus’s influence over Tiberius to the “similarity of their characters” (*Dio’s Roman History*, trans. Earnest Carey, 9 vols. [Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1914–27], vii: 169).
 24. DiGangi, *Homoerotics*, 122.
 25. Archer, *Sovereignty and Intelligence*, 108.
 26. Ayres, “The Nature,” 179. See also Stuart M. Kurland, “‘No Innocence is Safe, When power contests’: The Factional Worlds of *Caesar* and *Sejanus*,” *Comparative Drama* 22 (1988): 56–67.
 27. Richard Dutton describes the play’s discomfort with sententious conclusions as “Brechtian,” in “The Sources, Text, and Readers of *Sejanus*: Jonson’s ‘integrity

- in the Story,” *Studies in Philology* 75 (1978): 192. See also Bruce Boehrer, “The War on History in Jonson’s *Sejanus*,” *Studia Neophilologica* 66 (1993): 209–21.
28. See Ayres’s introduction, *Sejanus*, 16–22. See also Richard Dutton, *Mastering the Revels: The Regulation and Censorship of English Renaissance Drama* (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 1991), 10–14, 164–65, and Annabel Patterson, *Censorship and Interpretation: The Conditions of Writing and Reading in Early Modern England* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1984), 57–65.
 29. Ayres, ed., *Sejanus*, 17–22; Dutton, *Mastering the Revels*, 11–12.
 30. See Blair Worden, “Ben Jonson Among the Historians,” in *Culture and Politics*, 67–89. See also F. J. Levy, “The Theatre and the Court in the 1590s” in *The Reign of Elizabeth I: Court and Culture in the Last Decade* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 274–300. Levy also describes the Essex faction’s interest in Tacitean history in “Francis Bacon and the Style of Politics,” *Renaissance Historicism: Selections from English Literary Renaissance*, ed. Arthur F. Kinney and Dan S. Collins (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1987), 146–67. See also Smuts, “Court-Centered Politics,” 25–30.
 31. Nigel Smith and Peter Lake, “Ben Jonson, *Sejanus*, and (Roman) Catholic Resistance,” paper presented at “1603: The Historical and Cultural Consequences of the Accession of James I,” University of Hull, June 2003.
 32. Mark Bland offers a speculative reconstruction of Jonson’s early connections (in part via Catholic associations) with members of the Essex circle in “‘As far from all reuolt’: Sir John Salusbury, Christ Church MS 184 and Ben Jonson’s First Ode,” *English Manuscript Studies, 1100–1700* 8 (2000): 43–78.
 33. See Simon Adams, “Eliza Enthroned? The Court and its Politics” in *The Reign of Elizabeth I*, ed. Christopher Haigh (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1987), 55–77.
 34. *Thomas of Woodstock*, ed. Peter Corbin and Douglas Sedge (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2002), 3.1.2.
 35. Compare Albert H. Tricomi, *Anticourt Drama in England, 1603–1642* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 1989), 72–79.
 36. J. R. Tanner, ed. *Constitutional Documents of the Reign of James I* (Cambridge: University Press, 1952), 222.
 37. Jonathan Goldberg, *James I and the Politics of Literature: Jonson, Shakespeare, Donne, and Their Contemporaries* (1983; Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1989), 177. See Dutton’s puzzled response in *Mastering the Revels*, 13–14.
 38. Anthony Weldon’s *Court and Character of King James*, here quoted from Robert Ashton, ed., *King James By His Contemporaries* (London: Hutchinson & Co., 1969), 122–23.
 39. Quoted in Goldberg, *James I*, 164.
 40. *Tom Tell-Troath*, as reprinted in *The Harleian Miscellany*, ed. William Oldys, et al., 10 vols. (1808–13; rpt. New York: AMS Press, 1965) II: 435.
 41. Peltonen, *Classical Humanism*, 229–307.
 42. Alexander Leighton, *An Appeal to the Parliament; Or Sions Plea Against the Prelacie* (n.p. [Amsterdam], n.d. [1629]), sig. A1, and p. 161–62, respectively.

- Leighton follows Eliot here, for in the next paragraph Leighton complains of Buckingham's "veneries & venifices," (162) a phrase used in Eliot's speech comparing Buckingham to Sejanus and much debated in its fallout. See *Proceedings*, III: 223: "his veneries, his venefices."
43. Peltonen, *Classical Humanism*, 280–82.
 44. *The Tragedy of Nero*, ed. Elliott M. Hill (New York: Garland, 1979), 4.4.15–21. Subsequent citations will be given parenthetically by act, scene, and line.
 45. On the play's numerous quotations from Jonson see *The Plays and Poems of Philip Massinger*, ed. Philip Edwards and Colin Gibson, 5 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1976), III: 3. My own quotations from the play refer to this text and will be cited parenthetically by act, scene, and line.
 46. See Linda Levy Peck, "Monopolizing Favour: Structures of Power in the Early Seventeenth-Century English Court" in *The World of the Favourite*, 54–70.
 47. See Tricomi, *Anticourt Drama*, 154, and Margot Heinemann, "Drama and Opinion in the 1620s: Middleton and Massinger" in *Theatre and Government Under the Early Stuarts*, ed. J. R. Mulryne and Margaret Shewring (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 237–65.
 48. On the play's antitheatricalism see Butler, "Romans in Britain."
 49. Compare Goldberg, *James I*, 203–09.
 50. Tricomi, *Anticourt Drama*, 75.
 51. See Rebecca Bushnell, *Tragedies of Tyrants: Political Thought and Theater in the English Renaissance* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1990), 175–79.
 52. See Butler, "Romans in Britain," 165–66.
 53. Thomas May, *Julia Agrippina*, ed. F. Ernst Schmid (1914; rpt. Vaduz: Kraus Reprint, 1963), 3.280–85. Subsequent citations are given parenthetically by act and line number.
 54. Butler describes Pallas as "a Buckingham seen in Arundellian perspective, a new man, contemptuous of birth, breeding or prestige, dislodging worthier men and scorning their attainments" ("Romans in Britain," 149).
 55. The stories follow Tacitus primarily, though the 1639 edition of *Julia Agrippina* contains numerous marginal notes identifying passages taken from Cassius Dio or his twelfth-century epitomizer John Xiphilin.
 56. David Norbrook, "Lucan, Thomas May, and the Creation of a Republican Literary Culture" in *Culture and Politics in Early Stuart England*, 45–66, and *Writing the English Republic: Poetry, Rhetoric and Politics, 1627–1660* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 79–92.
 57. L. J. Reeve, *Charles I and the Road to Personal Rule* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 30. See also Conrad Russell, *Parliaments and English Politics, 1621–1629* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1979), 342–59.
 58. *Proceedings*, III: 292.
 59. *Ibid.*, III: 271.
 60. See Russell, *Parliaments*, 343.
 61. Edmund Bolton, *Nero Caesar, or Monarchie Depraved. An historical worke. Dedicated, with leaue, to the Duke of Buckingham, Lord Admirall* (London, 1624), p. 69. May's *Julia Agrippina* spoofs the reversibility of arguments about

the origins of Roman misrule. Nero commands Petronius to compose a satire of “this notorious age” (3.443). Petronius, wise to the perils of criticizing court excess before the emperor, reels off a scathing satire of excess but introduces it as a poem about how “Romes excesse, corruption, luxury, / Ruin'd the present government, and twixt / Caesar, and Pompey caus'd a civill warre” (3.446–48). Petronius, Bolton-like, treats disorder as a self-destructive feature of the late republic rather than as an aspect of the imperial court.

62. Bolton, *Nero Caesar* (London, 1627), sig. A3.
63. *Dio's Roman History*, VIII: 357; Suetonius, *Twelve Caesars*, 311.
64. On the politicization of the gentry and even the populace at large in the 1620s see David Underdown, *A Freeborn People: Politics and the Nation in Seventeenth-Century England* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996), 19–67. James Holstun has recently made the case that increased interest in politics among the gentry and commoners contributed to an emergent, oppositional class-consciousness fostered by resentment of Buckingham. See *Ehud's Dagger*, 143–91. Several historians have seen the growth of the culture of manuscript libel as the expression of expanded political involvement. See for example Alastair Bellany, “Libels in Action: Ritual, Subversion and the English Literary Underground, 1603–42” in *The Politics of the Excluded*, ed. Tim Harris (New York: Palgrave, 2001), 99–124; Richard Cust, “News and Politics in Early Seventeenth-Century England,” *Past & Present* 112 (1986): 60–90; F. J. Levy, “How Information Spread Among the Gentry, 1550–1640,” *The Journal of British Studies* 21.2 (1982): 11–34; Thomas Cogswell, “Underground Verse and the Transformation of Early Stuart Political Culture” in *Political Culture and Cultural Politics in Early Stuart England*, ed. Susan D. Amussen and Mark A. Kishlansky (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1995), 277–300.
65. Russell, *Parliaments*, 417.
66. The play's popularity is demonstrated by the fact that it was reprinted in 1633, and the fact that it is quoted or alluded to in a number of contemporary plays. See Hill, ed., *Nero*, xi–xvii.
67. On the difficulty of dating the play see Hill, in *The Tragedy of Nero*, xv–xvi.
68. See 3.1.30, which is derived from Suetonius, *Twelve Caesars*, 225.
69. Underdown, *A Freeborn People*, 39.
70. *The Tragedy of Nero*, xvii. Suggestively, the stationer Thomas Jones, for whom *The Tragedy of Nero* was printed in 1624, was also involved in the printing of Massinger's *The Virgin Martyr* (1622) and several items by May including the first complete edition of his translation of Lucan's *Pharsalia* (1627).
71. May's poem is reprinted in *Plays and Poems of Massinger* III: 18.
72. Holstun, *Ehud's Dagger*; Peltonen, *Classical Humanism*, and Norbrook, *Writing the English Republic*.

AFTERWORD: “IN A TRUE SENSE THERE IS NO MONARCHY”

1. Judith Richards, “Love and a Female Monarch: The Case of Elizabeth Tudor,” *The Journal of British Studies* 38 (1999): 133–60.

2. See Debora Kuller Shuger, *Habits of Thought in the English Renaissance: Religion, Politics, and the Dominant Culture* (1990; rpt. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1997), 156, 218–49.
3. See especially David Norbrook, *Writing the English Republic: Poetry, Rhetoric and Politics, 1627–1660* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999) and Markku Peltonen, *Classical Humanism and Republicanism in English Thought, 1570–1640* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995).
4. Osborne's republicanism is articulated in essays like *A Perswasive to a Mutuall Compliance Under the Present Government* (Oxford, 1652). See also Quentin Skinner, *Liberty Before Liberalism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 55–57.
5. Lois Potter's edition of this play (New York: Garland, 1983) demonstrates Osborne's authorship.
6. Osborne, *The Works of Francis Osborne* (London, 1673), 693 (misnumbered as 691).
7. If we think of Satan as representing Milton's own political predilections then we have to account for Milton's identification with the character: either he is retreating from his own political engagement or he is ambivalent about the monarchy of God. See, respectively, Blair Worden, "Milton's Republicanism and the Tyranny of Heaven" in *Machiavelli and Republicanism*, ed. Gisela Bock, Quentin Skinner, and Maurizio Viroli (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 225–45, and Norbrook, *Writing the English Republic*, 433–91.
8. For Milton's early involvement with opponents of Buckingham see Barbara Lewalski, *The Life of John Milton* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2000), 32–33.
9. John Milton, *Paradise Lost*, ed. Alastair Fowler (second edition; London: Longman, 1998), 9.98. Subsequent quotations will be cited parenthetically.
10. Worden, "Milton's Republicanism," 237.
11. Worden, "English Republicanism" in *The Cambridge History of Political Thought, 1450–1700*, ed. J. H. Burns and Mark Goldie (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 443–75.
12. Quoted from Samuel Rawson Gardiner, *History of England from the Accession of James I to The Outbreak of The Civil War, 1603–1642*, 10 vols. (London, 1884), VI: 110.
13. *Complete Prose Works of John Milton*, ed. Don M. Wolfe et al., 8 vols. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1953–82), III: 351–2; IV: 372, 451.
14. Thomas N. Corns (*Regaining Paradise Lost* [London: Longman, 1994], 47) likewise draws a connection between Satan's reaction to God's innovations and the English response to the coming of personal rule.
15. I quote from *Eikonoklastes*, where Milton praises the opponents of Henry III and Edward II (*Complete Prose*, III:343).
16. John Leonard, "Self-Contradicting Puns in *Paradise Lost*" in *A Companion to Milton*, ed. Thomas N. Corns (Oxford: Blackwell, 2001), 393–410.
17. For a related argument see Armand Himy, "*Paradise Lost* as a Republican 'Tractatus Theologico-Politicus'" in *Milton and Republicanism*, ed. David Armitage, Armand Himy, and Quentin Skinner (Cambridge: Cambridge University

- Press, 1995), 118–34. See also William Walker, “*Paradise Lost* and the Forms of Government,” *History of Political Thought* 22 (2001): 270–99. The classic study of monarchy in *Paradise Lost* is Stevie Davies, *Images of Kingship in Paradise Lost: Milton’s Politics and Christian Liberty* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1983).
18. Thomas Corns argues that Milton’s republicanism emerged out of his hostility toward Charles and kingship rather than the other way around, in “Milton and the Characteristics of a Free Commonwealth” in *Milton and Republicanism*, 25–42.
 19. *The Complete Poems of John Wilmot, Earl of Rochester*, ed. David M. Vieth (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1968), 60.
 20. D. R. Woolf, unaware of the argument for attributing either text to Cary, treats both versions of the history as topical reactions to the exclusion crisis printed with false early dates. See “The True Date and Authorship of Henry, Viscount Falkland’s *History of the Life, Reign, and Death of King Edward II*,” *Bodleian Library Record* 12.6 (1988): 440–52. Though I don’t agree with the argument, it does demonstrate the ongoing utility of texts about corrupt favorites.
 21. Compare J. G. A. Pocock, “The Concept of a Language and the *Métier d’Historien*: Some Considerations on Practice” in *The Languages of Political Theory in Early Modern Europe*, ed. Anthony Pagden (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 19–38.

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