Assessing “Cultural Influence”: James I as Patron of the Arts

LEEDS BARROLL

Recent cultural history has seemed inclined to foster a concept of King James and his English court based on seemingly contradictory but interdependent views. On one hand, many essays have depicted James I as a royal patron of the arts. We are often reminded, for example, that his first act in the literary realm was to take the theaters under his patronage because as part of his entertainment James demanded court performance of plays. He cared enough about public drama, it seems, to have assumed Shakespeare’s own company under the new name of “the King’s Men,” and even to have assigned the remaining London troupes to other members of the royal family. Although these changes in the status of theater companies are of themselves unreliable indices of James’s preoccupation with the London stage,¹ such evidence has encouraged scholars to make related assumptions about the role of the new king in other important initiatives—such as furthering the brilliant and fruitful collaboration of Inigo Jones and Ben Jonson in their series of opulent masques at court, appointing the poet John Donne Dean of Paul’s, and, to be sure, ordering the translation project that resulted in the King James Bible.

The other side of this particular conceptual coin, curiously, is a concomitant view of the new king as somewhat incompetent—as lax, self-indulgent, and even slightly unsavory. An extreme example of such an attitude may be found in the observations of Roy Strong, who describes James as “the bloated, pedantic middle-aged father [of Prince Henry], careless of affairs of state, prepared to accept appeasement at any price, bent on the pleasure of the chase, totally unaesthetic, whose penchant for handsome courtiers was hardly becoming.” Earlier, G. P. V. Akrigg’s book on the Jacobean court, still popular with literary scholars, viewed James as a spend-
thrift king, always absorbed in his current male favorite to the detri-
tment of the state, and concerned with losing status if he did not
maintain himself as the generous benefactor to his supporters, a
practice which depleted the royal budget.²

Interestingly, this dualistic construction of James—as royal, gen-
erative patron of the arts or cultural icon, on the one hand, and as
corrupt dawdler, on the other—has not been understood as trou-
blingly inconsistent because indifference to politics and personal
indolence in a learned king seem to many commentators to augur
well for the arts—presumably, they flourish in such compost. It is
almost as if absorption in the affairs of “high culture” is incompati-
ble with the practice of statesmanship, or vice versa (at least in the
case of James).

This essay, part of a larger effort to determine the structure and
purpose of high cultural practices at court during the first decade
of the Stuart reign, would interrogate the implications of James’s
dual image for our construction of the early court scene. In under-
taking this limited analysis, I think it important to view James’s sit-
tuation not solely from the vantage point of his investment in belles
lettres, but also in terms of the kinds of regnal problems to which
he addressed himself at his accession. In other words, in order to
reconfigure the misleading premises in so many portraits of the
king, it is important here to assess James’s relationship to the de-
velopment of the arts in England in terms of his parallel assumption
of monarchical responsibilities.

Accordingly, in what follows I shall be arguing two points. First,
I would like to challenge the narrative of James’s self-indulgent po-
itical ineptness, focusing primarily on representative activities
surrounding the accession. Second, I hope to counter the view of
King James as the primary instrument of high culture in the Stuart
court by identifying the parameters of his intellectual interests, and
by suggesting his own relative remoteness from contemporary cur-
rents of change in the arts.

There are, however, important caveats that need to be established
in connection with both these points at the outset. It is clearly not
feasible here, nor is it my intention, to offer an extensive analysis of
James’s style of governing, although recent revisionist studies have
begun this task.³ Instead, I have deliberately chosen to concentrate
on events surrounding the first year of James’s reign in order to
demonstrate his political acumen and decisiveness—so reminis-
cent of his Scottish monarchical style. Although the framework of a
single year may indeed seem limited in the context of a twenty-
two-year reign, I would argue that James's activities in 1603 established a structure for governance in England that would function effectively for a decade. Significantly, this is the decade in which the arts burgeoned at the Stuart court, particularly the masque for which the court is renowned. Further, in describing James as a person with narrowly defined intellectual interests, I am hardly subscribing to popular caricatures of the King. On the contrary, although fundamentally unmoved by the artistic innovations that we might associate with the great accomplishments of the early Stuart period, he appears to have been excited by a traditionally academic form of intellectuality rooted in mid-sixteenth-century culture.

Any assessment of the new Stuart monarch at the turn of the century is best framed, in my view, in terms of his preceding persona as James VI of Scotland. There James was challenged by at least three critical problems: the political opposition of powerful Scottish earls to the entente generally beginning to prevail between the Crown and the other magnates who were indispensable to it; the efforts by the Kirk to gain autonomy and then political power through an elected internal hierarchy responsible in theory not to the King but only to God; and the threat of destabilization continually posed by blood feuds among the nobility, revenge patterns often bereft of any broad political goals.⁴

On the whole, James seems consistently and effectively to have managed these formidable threats to the stability of his Scottish kingdom. He dealt with hostile nobles by eventually destroying or neutralizing such threatening figures as Bothwell and the Gowries, even cooperating for a time with the implacable Bothwell.⁵ Meanwhile he worked to stabilize Crown authority by creating or maintaining offices that functioned as lightning rods to absorb attack: Maitland's chancellorship, for example, and, after Maitland's death, the "Octavians" onto whom James displaced antimonarchist resentments. He outmaneuvered the Kirk by eventually pushing it from the political arena through counterpolemic or by carefully chosen confrontations.⁶ And finally, he controlled blood feuds through deploying agents of court power in those localities where feuding was chronic. Having also (and usually in response to these initiatives) endured many assassination attempts in Scotland, the new English king was, in 1603, after many Scottish regnal years, hardly a political innocent, naively self-absorbed and sometimes destructively self-indulgent.

Yet as a consequence of the prevalence in some quarters of view-
ing James as politically foolish, many literary accounts have incompletely contextualized or even ignored significant activity surrounding his 1603 accession, omitting in the process important illustrative texts. Yet it was 1603 that saw the formation of King James’s inner circle of advisors, an important event to attend to here, if only because the James of English literary chronicles is also characterized as exclusively cultivating young favorites whom he presumably advanced to positions of power over the heads of more experienced and wiser nobles. Through reference to well-known though seldom-invoked texts dealing with first decade of the Stuart reign, however, it is possible to shape a narrative somewhat different from the conventional one.

Central to this revised narrative is the so-called secret correspondence, well before Queen Elizabeth’s death, between James VI and Robert Cecil, the queen’s First Secretary. This correspondence demonstrates James’s skilled instrumentality in the cooperative effort to work out the political details of his quiet and assured succession to the English throne. The succession effort principally involved Robert Cecil, but others also contributed to it, including Henry Lord Howard, younger brother of the Duke of Norfolk (Norfolk’s letters to James’s mother, Mary Queen of Scots, as well as other activities, had led to his execution in 1572 in the Tower). Northumberland, whose earldom was situated closest to Edinburgh, and who was married to Dorothy, one of the two sisters of the lately decapitated Earl of Essex, was also a party to the correspondence. But Henry Lord Howard, the future Earl of Northampton, and Robert Cecil, the future Earl of Salisbury, were the principal figures, and James’s initial actions with the English nobility—deliberate and, it would seem, well planned—reflected the Cecil and Howard view of the English situation.

Their dominance of this intrigue excluded those whom they regarded as enemies: Sir Walter Ralegh, Captain of Queen Elizabeth’s Guard, and Henry Brook, 11th Lord Cobham, Warden of the Cinque Ports. Cobham’s position, especially, was a strong one because England, much to the admiration of some foreigners, was able to exercise control over its boundaries far more stringently than could a partially land-bound area such as “France.” The Warden of the Cinque Ports supervised the bureaucracy that administered the seaports, and his authority extended even to the nobility, who were required to show passports when entering or leaving England. Thus Ralegh, official guard over the monarch’s body, and Cobham, controller of access to England by sea, might jointly have proved formi-
dable if anarchy had edged into the immediate power vacuum resulting from the death of the heirless Queen Elizabeth. But by presumably acquiescing in Cecil’s and Henry Lord Howard’s view of things, James of Scotland gambled that these nobles and their associates could deliver the English throne to him—and of course they did. On 31 March, only a week after the Queen’s death, and shortly after Charles Percy, brother of the Earl of Northumberland, and Thomas Somerset, son of the Earl of Worcester, Master of the Horse, rode north as the official messengers announcing James’s accession, he was proclaimed King, and with scarcely any of the difficulties and obstacles many had feared. The conventional narrative of the quiet beginning of the Stuart reign seems to represent this peaceful transition even as axiomatic, but perhaps this is because James’s political adroitness lay just here: in maneuvering to avoid opposition, and thereby presiding over a historical interlude devoid of drama.

The first month after his accession saw the formation of those key associations of James that would dominate the first ten years of the new reign. On 11 April, for example, James wrote the Privy Council of England, summoning Robert Cecil north to Scotland to convey to him their consensus on the timing of the state funeral of Queen Elizabeth, the coronation, and the procession south into England of the royal court of his consort, Queen Anna, as well as various other matters “not fit for paper neither fit for us to resolve of, until we hear from you of our Privy Council.” Cecil, riding north with his fellow in the secret correspondence, Henry Lord Howard, met up with James in York where the three talked for an hour before the ceremonial dinner to be given for the new King by the Lord Mayor of that city. Cecil then returned to London while James continued his leisurely progress, attended by Henry Lord Howard, who by 25 April (when Howard wrote Cecil that James had decided upon his new Lord Chamberlain), was already entrusted with overseeing access to the king and inditing letters for him (Hatfield, 15:58).

The Chamberlainship was an important and powerful office, coveted by many earls and barons—an anachronistic combination of royal household duties reaching back to the twelfth century and of much wider, seventeenth-century administrative responsibilities involving constant access to the monarch. Thus one contemporary described the Lord Chamberlain as “the greatest governor in the king’s house.”

He disposeth of all things above stairs. He hath a greater command of the King’s guard than the captains hath. He makes all the [court] chaplains, chooseth most of the King’s servants, and all the persuivants.
Assessing “Cultural Influence”

James had apparently resolved early in his progress to London to maintain the temporary appointment of Thomas Lord Howard of Walden made by Queen Elizabeth (Hunsdon being ill), for on 6 April (James had only reached the border town of Berwick-on-Tweed), the King wrote the Privy Council:

For as much as for many services necessarily to be attended both about the Queen’s funerals, our reception into the cities and towns of this our realm, and our coronation, the use of a Lord Chamberlain is very needful, and that the Lord Hunsdon, who now hath that place, is not able by reason of his indisposition to execute the services belonging to his charge, we have thought good to appoint our right trusty and right well-beloved the Lord Thomas Howard of Walden to exercise that place for the said Lord Hunsdon; and for that purpose we have directed our letters specially to him.16

Lord Howard of Walden was, significantly, the forty-one-year-old nephew of Henry Lord Howard who at present was inditing the King’s letters.17 And although all Crown officials at the death of the monarch customarily and ceremonially demonstrated the end of their tenure by breaking their staffs of office at the time of the royal funeral, James, before Elizabeth’s funeral on 28 April, commanded Howard that

after the staff [is] broken at the funerals by the Lord Thomas, he shall notwithstanding bring a white staff to Theobalds [where James was to meet the male nobility of England], and that if it need any express warrant, either you shall use one of the blanks you have, or send hither, and a warrant shall be sent with all speed.18

James’s action here, coupled with later gestures towards these Howards, further demonstrates his intention to depend on the Howard-Cecil axis, but also his declaration of independence from the memory of Queen Elizabeth, who had executed Henry Lord Howard’s brother. For not only did Henry Lord Howard, as Northampton, become a key figure at James’s court until Northampton’s death in 1614, and not only was a relative that Northampton most valued made Lord Chamberlain, but James went so far as to restore the entire family to its former status.

Sixty-three at the time of James’s accession, Henry Lord Howard had never married. But his older brother the Duke of Norfolk had fathered sons before his execution and attainder in 1572, and these fatherless nephews were Henry Lord Howard’s closest male rela-
tives. Having made one of these nephews the new Lord Chamberlain, James went on to honor another, now dead. Philip Howard had become 1st Earl of Arundel during Elizabeth’s reign, but because of accusations of treason, Arundel, like his father Norfolk, had also been imprisoned and attainted, and died in the Tower in 1595. He too left a son (Henry Lord Howard’s great-nephew), another Thomas Howard, who of course had no title to inherit after his dead father’s attainder. King James wrote finis to the whole situation in a paragraph of activity which also suggests the shape that his political inner circle would take.

Soon after appointing Lord Howard of Walden his Lord Chamberlain, James created him one of the first new earls of his reign as 1st Earl of Suffolk. Then, less than a year later, James created his secret correspondent, Henry Lord Howard, 1st Earl of Northampton. At that time, James also addressed the problem of Henry Howard’s great-nephew, the other Thomas. In a definitive gesture, the King restored in blood the nineteen-year-old son of the attainted Arundel, and recreated him as Earl of Surrey and Earl of Arundel. Thus, very significantly, the brother, the son, and the grandson of the executed and attainted Duke of Norfolk, killed for his sympathy to James’s mother, were all earls within two years of James’s arrival in England.

Illustrative of James’s attitude towards this group is the account of a moment at Burleigh-on-the-Hill during James’s progress south when Henry Lord Howard arranged an audience for the new Lord Chamberlain’s younger brother (William Howard) and William’s son.

My lord Henry Howard at their first coming to Burleigh brought them presently [immediately] unto the king and my lord [William Howard] and he kneeling down, the king gave my young lord his hand and then came unto my lord William in like sort, and willed them to stand up, and, turning unto my lord Henry, said “Here be two of your nephews [sic], both Howards. I love the whole house of them.” And then turning again unto my young lord [William Howard’s son], said, “I love your whole house.” And then my lord [William] kissed again his hand, and the king said they should never repent his coming into this kingdom, and so drew my lord Henry along the gallery with him.

In short, James’s favors at this early point in his reign were hardly whimsical. Whether proceeding from a strong and vengeful need for a symbolism that redeemed the memory of his mother or from the necessity of political repayment to Henry Lord Howard, the
new King's preferments seem to have been intelligent, systematic, and clearly defined. Indeed, Scaramelli, the Venetian Secretary for English affairs, noted wryly at this time that "The King continues to support those houses and persons who were oppressed by the late Queen" (SPV, 10:17), and that those who had been members of the Elizabethan Privy Council were now frenetically trying to prove that they had been uninvolved in the execution of Mary Queen of Scots.

The measures James took to assure his physical security at the accession also attest to his political sagacity and to its role in the early configuration of his court. James's fear of assassination has often been treated humorously by historians who themselves, had they suffered James's experiences in Scotland, might have been equally cautious. But James's anxiety, however intense, was none-theless turned here to the service of his political program. In one stroke, the king combined two objectives: that is, he provided for the security of his person while simultaneously disempowering a foe of his supporters, Sir Walter Ralegh (who several months later would be involved in the conspiracy to seize the King conventionally known as the "Bye [actually the "Maine] Plot").

Prior to the accession, as noted above, Cecil and Henry Lord Howard had made their hostility to Ralegh obvious: his removal had been a condition of their cooperation with James. Thus on 8 May Ralegh was quickly relieved of his position as Captain of the Guard, and James, typically reconfiguring the political situation so as to suit himself, replaced Ralegh with the Scottish Sir Thomas Erskine, a Gentleman of the King's Bed Chamber in Scotland since 1585. Importantly, in the fighting during the Gowry attempt to assassinate James, Erskine was said to have physically protected the King's life, receiving a wound in the hand, and for those services Erskine had been granted a third part of Gowry's former honors. Now he became Captain of the Yeomen of the King's Guard, a post he would hold for James until 1617.

James was no less astute in regard to another important political situation—the composition of the Privy Council of England. At the accession the Council had been composed of fourteen men, but James soon raised the number to twenty-four. Some time before 14 April 1603, Edward Bruce, Abbot of Kinloss, recently (in February) created Baron Kinloss, aware of and instrumental to the King's secret correspondence with Cecil and Henry Howard, had traveled to London carrying orders that he was to be admitted to all future meetings of the Privy Council (SPV, 109:10). By 4 May four more
Scottish nobles had been sworn in, including John 7th Earl of Mar, James’s closest Scottish advisor.\textsuperscript{25} Shortly thereafter, five additional Englishmen were appointed (assignments that might well temper our sense of a “flood of Scots” now attaining office in England). The new English members included the new Lord Chamberlain; his uncle (Henry Lord Howard); the Earl of Northumberland (also, we recall, privy to the secret correspondence); Thomas Cecil, 2nd Lord Burleigh, Robert Cecil’s older brother and heir to Queen Elizabeth’s great Lord Treasurer; and Lord Mountjoy (the future Earl of Devonshire). Having added five Scottish and five English nobles friendly to him, James had also diluted the Council’s (Elizabethan) authority in the very process of inflating its numbers.\textsuperscript{26}

The pervasive denigration in literary tradition of King James has effectively eclipsed the foregoing events, and thus misses the main political schema of James’s early reign: his pattern of consistent allegiance to his own political base. Scottish earls such as Mar and Kinloss and English advisors such as Salisbury and Northampton were the core of James’s kingship and the insurers of his safety, and James appears to have treated them appropriately. Indeed, the tone of his later letters to these supporters suggests that here was a special kind of intimacy of interests that others of the court, including any young favorites, simply did not share.

During the time of the secret correspondence, James, Cecil, and Northampton had all identified themselves by numbers rather than by name (that is, James = 30, Northampton = 3, Cecil = 10), and the King continued to refer to his nobles familiarly by these numbers even after he was safely King of England. For instance, during August 1604, when the Spanish Constable of Castile was expected to sign the Peace Treaty, James elected to be out of London, hunting in Royston, while Queen Anna remained in the city to act as the regal representative, attended by Cecil, the Lord Chamberlain, and Northampton, among others. Prior to his own short visit to London to participate in the final ceremonies King James wrote Cecil from the hunting lodge on 5 August (anniversary of the Gowry Plot), calling him, as usual, his “little beagle,” teasing him, Suffolk, and Northampton about what was now their involvement with a second female court, and making jokes in a tone that suggests the intimacy James seems to have felt with this group:

Ye and your fellows there are so proud now that ye have gotten the guiding again of a feminine court in the old fashion as I know not how to deal with you. . . . Well, I know Suffolk is married and hath also his
hands full now in harboring that great little proud man [Cecil] that comes in his chair. But for your part, Master 10, who is wanton and wifeloose, I cannot but be jealous of your greatness with my wife, but most of all I am suspicious of 3, who is so lately fallen in acquaintance with my wife. . . . But for expiation of this sin I hope ye have all three with the rest of your society taken this day a Eucharistic cup of thankfulness for the occasion which fell out at a time when ye durst not avow me. And here hath been this day kept the feast of King James’s deliverance. . . . All other matters I refer to the old knave the bearer’s report, and so fare ye well.  

This tone helps to define an inner cluster of peers in England who constituted what might be called James’s iron circle in the years before Cecil’s death in 1612. Indeed, accounts of the early Stuart court that omit reference to this close-knit group and to the Scottish history preceding it cannot adequately encompass the complex matrix of relationships comprising James’s political network. Thus the most common portrait in literary studies of the monarchical James is, in my view, severely reductive. In these early years of his reign, impulse seldom, if ever, seems to have interfered with James’s political decision-making—he may have been the new king, but he was hardly new to kingship. And it is worth remembering that while a seventeenth-century European king may, from the cradle, have taken his position as “God’s Anointed” for granted, James was not born King of England. On the contrary, it was a regnancy for which he had striven and schemed for a considerable period.

But even though the English members of the secret correspondence necessarily held the king’s primary political allegiance, James did not cultivate them exclusively. For other and perhaps equally important reasons, he seems to have made a point of honoring—without politically advancing—quite a different group of nobles. This group, associated with the uprising of the Earl of Essex two years previously, had developed as a social faction after his beheading, and would become political playmakers later in the reign. It is important to consider these nobles briefly here, because the followers of the dead hero of this “Essex group,” as I shall term it, seem to have enjoyed attention from James, although it differed in kind and purpose from that informing his relationships to those nobles selected to help him govern. James cultivated this group while, at the same time, astutely exploiting the symbolism of his public largesse to them.  


The Essex circle had been only incidentally, briefly, and quite incompletely a party of political conspirators. The earl’s own wild personality may have plunged those around him into a confrontation that finally had to be defined as “treason,” but it was personal loyalty and family ties, not a political platform, which gave coherence (such as there was) to this collection of rebellious nobles. Thus it is not the group’s politics per se but its social identity as a circle that constitutes its importance to the early Stuart court and to James’s monarchical policies.

The group’s inspiration or principle of cohesion seems to have been the concept embodied by Sir Philip Sidney, that astonishingly charismatic figure who, himself an almost-member of the highest peerage, became one of its idols. Sidney’s premature death led to his secular consecration as the Renaissance beau ideal of poet-courtier-warrior: and, indeed, the following verses from a contemporary sonnet illustrate the feelings evoked by—or, at least, thought to be appropriate to—his demise.

Bewail, I say, his unexpected fall.
I need not in remembrance for to call
His youth, his race, the hope had him of aye
Since that in him doth cruel death appall—
Both manhood, wit, and learning every way.
Now in the bed of honor doth he rest,
And evermore of him shall live the best.

It was King James VI of Scotland who wrote these lines in 1586, appending to them a eulogy in Latin in honor of the dead poet.29 James, like many English nobles, was thus attuned to Sidney’s symbolic stature, and his admiration of Sidney’s poetry may have been enhanced by the fact that Sidney himself never made any great headway as a courtier with Queen Elizabeth.

When Sidney died, he left his sword to Robert Devereux, 2nd Earl of Essex, and four years later the earl married Sidney’s widow, Frances née Walsingham; thus Essex, by a kind of osmosis of identity, himself replicated and magnified the Sidney concept. For by such reincarnation Essex could become not only the flower of chivalry, but also, perhaps, of earldom too—a sphere to which Sir Philip Sidney, no matter his illustrious lineage, had not managed to ascend. Indeed, Essex’s image as the peerage’s avatar of Sidney was put into focus in the 1590s by the dramatist George Peele in an eclogue. He wrote of
Young Essex, that thrice honorable earl
Yclad in mighty arms of mourner's hue
As if he mourn'd to think of him he missed,
Sweet Sidney, fairest shepherd of our green,
Well lettered warrior, whose successor he
In love and arms had ever vowed to be.30

Those earls who were friends of Essex had several points of contact with him and with each other, including an early association as young, fatherless nobles who had been gathered together under the wardship and in the household of William Cecil, 1st Lord Burghley, Queen Elizabeth's architect of policy and also Master of Wards.31 Essex was an older boy in this household, but he seems to have formed permanent friendships with three earls in particular who had all sat with him at Cecil's table. They were Henry Wriothesly, 3rd Earl of Southampton; Roger Manners, 5th Earl of Rutland; and Edward Russell, 3rd Earl of Bedford. Two of them, Rutland and Southampton, would, in the end, ride with Essex in 1601 at the head of his two hundred men in the ill-conceived attempt at a coup. But prior to this disaster Rutland had married, in 1599, Sir Philip Sidney's daughter, Elizabeth, whose mother was now Essex's wife. In the same year, the young Earl of Southampton, secretly, and without the Crown's permission, had married Elizabeth Vernon, the Earl of Essex's first cousin. Further, Southampton's first child was named Penelope, presumably after Essex's sister, Penelope Rich, the "Stella" of Sidney's sonnets.

It was Southampton, serving with Essex in Ireland, who seems to have been closest to Essex, and these two were the earls most severely punished for the uprising in 1601. While Essex was beheaded, Southampton was granted some leniency. Although his earldom was attainted and he was sent to the Tower, presumably until death, he was at least permitted to live. The other earls in Essex's circle, Rutland and Bedford, were judged to have involved themselves in the conspiracy for Southampton's sake only and thereby escaped the Tower, but they were forced to pay brutally heavy fines: £30,000 for Rutland and £20,000 for Bedford.32

Other nobles were connected to the Essex group in various ways. For example, Charles Blount, Lord Mountjoy, as is well known, was the lover of Essex's sister Penelope, Lady Rich, who bore several of Mountjoy's children while still married to Lord Rich. Another noble, Sir Robert Sidney, was Sir Philip Sidney's brother and had
long corresponded with Essex, who supported him for the Lord Chamberlainship in the 1590s. Also the brother of Mary Sidney Herbert, Countess of Pembroke, Robert was thus the uncle of her son William, the young Earl of Pembroke, who after 1615 would himself become James’s Lord Chamberlain.

At the time of the accession, the most visible symbol of the Essex group and remnant of the previous reign was the young Earl of Southampton in the Tower. With his title attainted and all his possessions seized by the Crown, Southampton, even before Elizabeth’s death, had written to King James in Scotland with the consequence that Southampton’s case became a topic of discussion in the secret correspondence. Edward Bruce, Abbot of Kinloss (“8”) commented on the matter to Henry Lord Howard:

The earl of Southampton has written to 30 [James] an earnest letter for a warrant of his liberty immediately upon 24 [Queen Elizabeth’s] death, which 30 refuses to grant without consent and authority of the [Privy] Council, and what they advise him to do shall be performed with diligence. It is enjoined to you by 30 to speak with 10 [Robert Cecil] and if he find it expedient to enlarge him and that his present [immediate] service may be of any use in the state, he shall be content and assures he be presently [immediately] relieved: otherwise to let him stay till further resolutions be taken for the best course in his business. (Bruce, p. 51)

Responding with characteristic care, James had obviously conditioned his assent on that of the Privy Council of England. It is important to note, however, that elsewhere he showed a definite leaning towards the idea of granting relief to Southampton (whom he had never met). For in another secret letter several months before Elizabeth’s death, James responded to Northampton’s comments on persons faring poorly under Elizabeth, writing:

Your observing of their names in particular puts me in mind of one of them, poor Southampton, who lives in hardest case of any of them, and if in any sort your means may help to procure him farther liberty or easier ward, pity would provoke me to recommend it unto you. (Bruce, p. 71).

Again the prudence: the request is merely that Southampton be permitted to walk about the Tower grounds more extensively or perhaps to be confined elsewhere. Nevertheless, Southampton’s membership in a circle associated with Sir Philip Sidney, for whose death James had written two sonnets, may have been a factor
in James’s concern. And since Essex had claimed to support James as England’s future monarch, James may also have felt he owed Essex (whom James had already mystified as his “martyr”) a debt that should be ostentatiously repaid.

Whatever his primary motive, James made Southampton’s release one of the earliest official acts at his accession (24 March 1603); the release was ordered on 5 April, along with that of Sir Henry Neville, another member of the Essex conspiracy, even before the King arrived in London (and more than a month before the appearance of a patent for a group of London actors as “The King’s Servants”).32 Five Privy Councilors, writing to the King on 10 April about various matters, indicated that the Southampton order had been attended to. Thus, in early April, Henry Wriothesly—technically he was no longer “Southampton”—was free to walk the streets, but still with no home to call his own.34 It is no wonder then that before reuniting himself with his family, Southampton rode north to meet King James still in progress from Scotland.

On other fronts as well, King James was beginning to publicly elaborate this kindly attitude towards the Essex conspirators and their friends. For several months prior to the accession, Charles Blount, Lord Mountjoy, had secretly corresponded with James to assure him that Essex would indeed support James’s claim to the English throne.35 As Essex’s successor in Ireland, Mountjoy in December 1602 had effected the surrender of Tyrone who subsequently acknowledged James as the new King of Ireland. James’s response as English king to Mountjoy’s initiative was swift: as early as 26 April 1603, he made Mountjoy one of the new Privy Councilors and summoned him home with honor on 26 May.36

Four days earlier, on 22 April, James had extended himself to other members of the Essex group, when in his progress south he stopped at Belvoir Castle where he was entertained by Roger Manners, Earl of Rutland, and his wife Elizabeth, daughter of James’s youthful ideal, Sir Philip Sidney. Later in the day, James dined at Exton with Sir John Harington, father of the Countess of Bedford, whose husband had ridden in the Essex uprising. He then moved on to spend the night and Easter Sunday at Harington’s other house, Burleigh-on-Hill.37

This particular visit not only attests to James’s self-conscious cultivation of nobles in the Essex group, but also to the mode by which he continually delineated boundaries in his relationships with appropriate members of the peerage. For it was at Burleigh, we recall, that James instructed one of his political confidants, Henry Lord
Howard, to inform his nephew, Lord Howard of Walden, of his permanent appointment as Lord Chamberlain. That evening, after this crucial piece of business had been attended to, James gave audience to only two visitors. According to Sir Thomas Lake, James’s traveling secretary, in correspondence with Cecil for the King, there “came hither my Lord of Southampton and my Lord of Pembroke, and have been well used” (Hatfield, 15.58).

The young Earl of Pembroke, in association with Southampton, was, in fact, to form the core of a new royal circle, distinct from the protective iron band of James’s political associates, and in this case well represented by Essex-related nobles. This new group would be composed of younger men, English and Scots, whom James seems to have cultivated, to put it simply, because it pleased him to do so. Significantly, however, James was extremely slow to bestow on such nobles any formal political power, although he did require their company in the alternative lifestyle he subsequently developed in England—a lifestyle marked by the practice of hunting deer and living quasi-rustically at his lodges away from the London area, such as Royston and Newmarket. These younger men, sometimes members of the Bed Chamber, sometimes not (those in the Bed Chamber were at that time generally Scots who did not have baronies or earldoms), were treated as favorites long before Somerset and Buckingham would redefine what a “favorite” could finally attain to.38

As the nephew of Sir Philip Sidney and son of the learned editor of the Arcadia, as a friend of the Haringtons (he had spent Christmas at Burleigh with members of the Essex group and with his uncle Sir Robert Sidney), and as an attractive, well-titled, and rich twenty-three-year-old earl, William Pembroke obviously interested James early on. On 28 April, only four days after Pembroke had come with the thankful Southampton to Burleigh to meet King James, he was in London to participate in Elizabeth’s funeral, bearing, by James’s decree, the great banner, assisted by the Earl of Nottingham’s son, Lord Howard of Effingham.39

Thereafter both Southampton and Pembroke were the recipients of much largesse,40 and perhaps it was James’s treatment of them that gave rise to the speculation by the Venetian ambassador that the King might be intending to pardon all nobles who had been punished for any offenses at all against the late Queen, Pembroke himself having incurred Elizabeth’s anger.41 But James evidently confined himself to a strategic program that combined personal pleasure with political symbology—the cultivation of young favor-
ites with the honoring of the group associated with Sir Philip Sidney and then the Earl of Essex. On 17 May James made both Southampton and Pembroke Gentlemen of the King’s Privy Chamber, a position they eventually shared with more than twenty others. These Gentlemen, while lacking the intimate access of the (primarily Scottish) Bed Chamber, had important privileges: a warrant of this same year, 1603, illustrates their access to the King.\textsuperscript{42} According to this warrant, only members of the Privy Council and those sworn to the Privy Chamber were to be admitted there—

Always provided that if any nobleman or gentleman of quality shall desire at any time to speak to the King, the King shall be acquainted therewith by some sworn to his Chamber [i.e., a Gentlemen of the Privy Chamber], and he will thereupon assign a time for audience.\textsuperscript{43}

In according further favor to these two earls, James, having earlier given Henry Wriothesly his physical freedom, conferred on him an official Grant of Pardon and Restitution on May 16, thus returning Southampton his title and all his confiscated property. One week later, the King dined in great state, and his carver was, significantly, this same one-time leader, with Essex, of the uprising against Queen Elizabeth.\textsuperscript{44} Pembroke, on the other hand, required less aid than Southampton. Young, single, and with few pressing responsibilities, he was now the owner of Wilton although his mother still resided there. James sojourned to Wilton often, and even made it the temporary royal court during the autumn of 1603 when plague gripped London.\textsuperscript{45}

Pembroke and Southampton—about ten years apart in age, but joint heirs of the Sidney-Essex legacy—serve as important indicators of James’s public posture regarding the Essex-Sidney faction, a posture emphasized in an extremely significant incident that occurred soon after James’s first meeting with the two young earls. As the Venetian ambassador wrote to the Doge,

On his journey his Majesty meantime has destined to great reward the Earl of Southampton and Sir Henry Neville, as I have informed you, and also others, and has received the twelve-year-old son of the Earl of Essex and taken him in his arms and kissed him, openly and loudly declaring him the son of the most noble knight that English land had ever begotten. He has appointed the lad to bear the sword before him on his entry into the city [London], and has destined him to be the eternal companion of his eldest son, the Prince of Wales. (SPV, 10:26)
Finally, an even more emphatic and emblematic act occurring in the early summer of 1603 at the annual Feast of the Order of the Garter, held on 2 July, epitomizes James’s approach to the political affiliations through which he shaped the ceremonies of his accession. To be inducted as a Knight of the Garter was a significant honor vied for by the most prestigious members of the nobility. Controlled by the Crown, membership never rose above twenty-four, the number of the spaces in the Chapel of St. George at Windsor vacated only at the death of the incumbents (whose names still decorate their individual stalls today).

Six persons were inducted into the Order in the first Feast of King James’s reign. First, of course, was James himself, in a private and elaborate ceremony. Next, in absentia, was the King of Denmark, Queen Anna’s brother. Next, the Duke of Lennox, the ranking noble of both kingdoms as the only duke, cousin to the King, and the peer nearest to the throne in succession during the minority of the two very young princes. Just as significantly, the fourth new Knight of the Garter was the Earl of Mar—so trustworthy that his family hereditarily served as the guardians of the Scottish heir apparent. In such a context, then, the filling of the two remaining vacancies was eloquent statement. And the last two new Knights of the Garter were English: Southampton and Pembroke, as James simultaneously saluted Essex, Sidney, and the new possessors of two long-standing English earldoms.46

The foregoing account of James’s very early political acumen in England represents only a fragment of the material that could be invoked by a revisionist historian to discredit the notion of an irresponsible and self-absorbed James and to create a counterimage—that of a King with energy and interests appropriate to the record of his accomplishments. Nonetheless, I hope I have suggested on a small scale James’s skill in political maneuvering, particularly his ability to separate the substantive from the symbolic—to consolidate power at the same time that he engaged in public acts which defined his monarchical style. Whatever James’s faults and vulnerabilities as a ruler (for I certainly do not mean to imply that he had none), and however much they may have worsened in his later years, his political disposition in 1603, at age 37, seems seasoned, sophisticated, and engaged.

Any urging of James’s early skills as ruler, however, cannot omit reference to a particular activity which to many commentators has seemed to epitomize his supposed sloth in this sphere, that is, his absorption in the hunt. Indeed, early in his English reign James
began locating himself whenever possible at one of several hunting lodges where he would be found for much of his reign. But when "hunting" James observed not a slothful but a demanding routine. He rose before five in the morning and was on horseback until the early afternoon when he returned to his residential quarters to rest and to deal with whatever state affairs required his direct attention. Hardly in fugue or attempting to avoid responsibility, he could assume the presence in London of certain very industrious and judicious nobles, the members of his inner political circle. This group featured, as we have seen, English lords such as Robert Cecil, Earl of Salisbury, Principal Secretary; Henry Howard Earl of Northampton, Lord Treasurer; and Thomas Howard, Earl of Suffolk, Lord Chamberlain; but for James it was also undergirded by the Scots inner circle of Esmé Stuart, Duke of Lennox; George Home, Earl of Dunbar; and Thomas Erskine, Lord Fenton, Captain of the Guard. Additionally, the Earl of Mar, a deeply trusted intimate, provided on-site supervision of Scotland and was in regular correspondence with both Fenton and Northampton.47

With such men—perhaps venial but certainly loyal and effective—in place, and with Salisbury working with a Privy Council much enlarged (and diluted) from that of Elizabeth's day, James received in his rural retreats regular packets that kept him abreast of affairs, responding as necessary to Cecil's occasional requests for his presence in London beyond routine annual appearances.48 Thus the following letter of December 1610 to Cecil from his lodge at Royston is not atypical—here I am interested less in the specific situation than in the evidence of James's concern with maintaining the lines of regnal communication.

As for this particular that troubleth you, it is true that the first night of Lake's coming to Royston, he did broadly and roundly inform me that ye had told him that there was a worse thing in head than anything whereof ye had advertised me, which was that ye had intelligence that, if the Lower House had met again, one had made a motion for a petition to be made unto me that I would be pleased to send home the Scots if I look for any supply from them. But the next morning, when I urged him to repeat the words again, he minced it in those terms as ye now have it under his hand, which yet is directly contrary to that which ye affirm in your letter. (Hatfield, 21:265)49

The king often, of course, sent his commands through his officials. Thus, on 8 March 1605, the Earl of Worcester, James's Master of the Horse, writing to Cecil from Thetford, describes James's at-
tention to his duties as well as the problems of his officials who were not, perhaps, so ruraly inclined as was their king.

I enclose the sweet and comfortable fruit of his Majesty’s own garden. He willed me to say that when he sat last among you he took on him the office of attorney with the gentlemen then convened, so now he has done the same in writing “postels” upon the copy of Bywater’s sweet and charitable collections. His Majesty has sent you by the Duke of Lennox the letters from France, wherein he notes both the King and the Queen with Rosny give him the style of “King of England, Scotland, & c.” but the Duke of Guise writes him “King of the Isle of Great Britain.” He begins his journey homewards on Tuesday next. He will stay three days at Newmarket and four at Royston. And then I hope to the wished land of two months’ rest. (Hatfield, 17:88–89)

Relevant to our sense of James’s engagement, small details interestingly intermingled with larger ones. Thus on 22 February 1608, Sir Thomas Lake, who often, as we have seen, wrote Cecil for James, sent the following missive from “court at Royston”:

Your packet came about 6 this morning, so I had time to cause some of the letters for alehouses to be made ready before his Majesty’s going. Herewith you shall receive six of them. The rest shall be done at Newmarket. I have sent also the two bills and the commission for exemption from juries, concerning which it is to good purpose that which you have written by way of caution; for it was the first news I had at my arrival here, that one came to me in the name of himself and one of his fellows to show me a motion they intended for his Majesty which was for the benefit of thirty of those exemptions. Upon reading of your letters by his Majesty I had a just occasion to tell him of it; but your letter has armed him.

His Majesty willed me also to signify that he is desirous to hear of the success [outcome] of the matter of the fines in the King’s Bench, or what the impediment is why it is not put to a point; for except there be any greater [impediment] than he has yet heard, he thinks it should not stay [delay]. (Hatfield, 20:79)

This is the description of a king at a hunting lodge, but hardly of a king mesmerized by hunting.

If the activities alluded to so far suggest James’s inclination to rule intelligently, albeit in his own style, how does this portrait connect to the question of his relationship to the arts? In the first place, it argues that if James was interested in the arts at all, it was not as a function of his ineptness as ruler. But what of the other
issue introduced at the outset of this essay—that is, the influence of James’s intellectual interests on court culture? As I suggested earlier, the caricature of James as a lazy and politically indifferent monarch has implicitly reinforced the notion of his supposed interest in the arts, creating, as it were, a critical expectation that the King’s influence is to be found at the center of early Stuart artistic achievement. James’s putative involvement with Shakespeare’s acting company when they became “the King’s Servants,” Ben Johnson’s continual references to him in the poet’s many court masques, and James’s own publication of a book of poetry are often cited as evidence for this view.

I’ve argued elsewhere that the designation of Shakespeare’s company as “The King’s Servants” need not have involved King James directly; indeed, it seems far more likely that this patronage was effected through the efforts of other members of the peerage. More relevant to the immediate context, my own recently published study of Anna of Denmark seeks to demonstrate that it was James’s Queen Consort and her own court (comprised primarily of nobility from the Essex circle) that developed the Stuart masque and that constituted the primary network of patronage for the leading poets and dramatists of the time. Thus if any royal figure is to be associated with the artistic productions for which the first decade of the Stuart reign is now primarily valued, it is probably not James who should be cited, but Anna. Any reconstruction of Anna as a powerful presence at court, however, need not deny James his own sphere of influence in the intellectual life of the time. Indeed, for this reason, it seems of great importance to distinguish between the kinds of pursuits that engaged James and Anna, and thus between the cultural imprints that each might have made during the reign.

While James’s intellectual interests can hardly be denied, the term “intellectual,” even as it implies curiosity and erudition, need not involve the arts. Indeed, there is little evidence that James had any nurturing interest in painting, sculpture, architecture, music or what we might term belles lettres. Certainly as a young man James wrote verses and, in 1589, he even essayed a short masque for the wedding of the Earl of Huntley to Ludovic Stuart’s sister. Moreover, during the last twenty years of his life he continued to write poems from time to time—for example, on the occasion of Anna’s death in 1619.

Nonetheless, it does not appear that King James had a serious or abiding interest in verse. Even those poems James wrote after the 1580s demonstrate his interest in examining political and social is-
sues rather than in emulating the verse achievement of the English Renaissance. Verses in this vein include, for example, several sonnets, one in Latin, on the Danish astronomer Tycho Brahe whom James met in Denmark after his marriage to Anna in 1589, and his Lepanto, printed in 1590. Both poetical exercises underscore James’s concern with politics and in the natural world, apparent in his prose writings. Thus the verses of Lepanto demonstrate his lifelong concern with the strategic importance of Venice as a dominant power in the Mediterranean, while the sonnets on Brahe represent James’s reactions to Brahe’s sophisticated laboratory-building-observatory and the work that was going forward there under the most famous astronomer in Europe. Indeed, this admiration of Tycho Brahe may stand in instructive contrast to James’s unremittent hostility to the widely admired Edmund Spenser for verses the King construed as directed against his mother, even though most English writers of the time admired Spenser as preeminent among poets (see n. 28).

James’s imagination seems to have been stimulated not only by such ideas as governance and astronomical science, but also by theological distinctions. Further, he was, as is well known, intrigued by what one might call, for want of appropriate early modern terms, abnormal psychology and by zoology. In fact, it might be generalized that if James paid attention to high cultural product at all, it was to individual instances of such product that held immediate relevance to one or another of his own interests. James’s fascination with Venice and its constitution, (adumbrated by his writing of the Lepanto), is an emphatic example. The ambassadorial missives of the Venetian emissaries in London consistently noted the king’s curiosity about and copious knowledge of that Italian city-state. Thus it is noteworthy that one of Shakespeare’s first new plays presented at the new court was the Venice-oriented Othello, performed during the Christmas season of 1604–5, and featuring a Venetian victory over the Turks—the subject of the Lepanto.

But this Christmas season at court provides even more telling evidence of James’s special interests than does Othello. Neither this play, nor Measure for Measure, written, many critics suggest, to cater to James’s tastes, won from him any special attention at all. Rather, it was an old play that attracted the king. Among all the dramas performed during these 1604 holiday festivities—Othello, Merry Wives of Windsor, Measure for Measure, Comedy of Errors, Love’s Labor’s Lost, Henry V, Every Man Out of His Humor, Every
Man in His Humor, and The Merchant of Venice—it was only The Merchant of Venice that James demonstrably reacted to. He specifically ordered the play repeated—and the very next time the company performed before him, two days later. Thus presumably something in that comedy—Venice? the trial scene and legal conundrums raised by Shylock and Portia?—engaged James’s interest beyond the patriotic appeals of Henry V, the newness of Othello and Measure for Measure, or the sophistication of Love’s Labors Lost and Every Man Out.\(^{54}\)

If, in fact, James can be described as having any taste for dramatic literature, his reaction to The Merchant of Venice, taken together with his responses eleven years later, in 1615, to plays he saw when visiting Cambridge, may suggest the nature of that taste. To honor the King’s visit to the university, Cambridge provided disputations in divinity, law, philosophy, and “phsicke,” all of which James attended and listened to carefully. In addition, Latin plays were written and presented by the members of the various colleges. On this occasion, John Chamberlain, who was present, wrote Dudley Carleton that “the King was exceedingly pleased many times both at the plays and at the disputations, for I had the hap to be for the most time within hearing, and often at his heels he would express as much” (Chamberlain 1.587–88). Thus, on the first night the students at St. John’s presented Edward Cecil’s Aemelia (now lost); on the second night Clare Hall gave George Ruggle’s longish Ignoramus, a play that satirized lawyers; on the third night the students at Trinity College acted Thomas Tomkis’s Albumazar; and on the fourth evening, Samuel Brooke’s Latin pastoral Melanthe concluded these entertainments.

Interestingly, James particularly favored two of these plays (as he had favored Merchant of Venice). A few days after the King had returned from Cambridge to his court, Chamberlain wrote:

The King hath a meaning and speaks much of it to go again privately to Cambridge to see two of the plays, and hath appointed the time about the 27th of the next month: but it is not likely he will continue in that mind, for of late he hath made a motion to have the actors come hither. (Chamberlain, 2:591)

But, as it happened, James did choose to return to Cambridge in May “to see the play Ignoramus” and, I think, perhaps also Melanthe, if he saw, as he purposed, two plays.\(^{55}\) During this return visit, he also heard Latin disputations once again (Chamberlain, 2.598),
so it would seem that Latin disputations and Latin comedies, artistic fare perhaps more readily associated with the previous half-century, were the chief sources of the King's own pleasure on this Cambridge occasion. As for James's attraction to the genre of drama, we must deal with the fact that, as far as can be determined, Shakespeare's *Merchant of Venice* and Ruggles's *Ignoramus* share the distinction of being the only plays known to have been seen twice by King James—and at his command. Thus, James is clearly not to be found among those that favored the cutting edge of dramatic achievement in his time, *Merchant* having been printed five years before James's accession. Rather, in the case of *Merchant*, Venice and “law” may have been the attraction—topics that elsewhere seem to have interested the King to greater or lesser degree all his life. Similarly, questions of law and issues of disputation seem to be the link between the two Cambridge plays he most enjoyed—as is well known, *Ignoramus* was a farcical satire on lawyers.

If indeed “drama” had special meaning for the King, it did so in terms of his own agendas—though now we do not deal with stage plays. Rather, one might think of several well-known incidents of stage that seem to have engaged James closely. Take, for example, his responses to the Hampton Court Conference which he convened very early in his reign (14 January 1604) and during which he often reproved Puritan prelates for making quite radical suggestions about the administration of religion in England. Writing confidentially to Henry Lord Howard after the close of the Conference, James described the experience as follows: “We have kept such a revel with the Puritans here these two days as was never heard the like, where I have peppered them as soundly as ye have the Papists there.” Because “revel” ordinarily described festivities and entertainments at court during the holiday season, it is significant that James playfully used the word to convey his sense of entertainment in dealing with those advocates of the Puritan religious position who were allowed to attend the second day of the Hampton Court Conference. Since the Conference was held during the winter holidays, James presumably regarded this activity as his true “revels,” despite the fact that he had watched a number of plays by the London companies to which he seems to have been indifferent.

In 1606, a more dramatic situation, the Gunpowder Plot, drew James to another spectacle, the one-day trial of Henry Garnet, Provincial of all Jesuits in England. John Chamberlain noted that the
trial “lasted from eight in the morning till seven at night. The King was there privately and held it out all day” (1:220). Presumably James was attracted to the theoretical issues (and drama) raised by Garnet’s intellectual positions. Thus when Garnet was given the opportunity to speak and he embarked on the well-known defense of the concept of equivocation that caused a sensation at the time, the Venetian ambassador claimed the speech shocked the court officials—and also the king “who is particularly versed in such matters.”

Perhaps, in the end, most relevant to James’s own sense of “theater”—separate from his realpolitik—was his sense of himself, in his regal role, as a kind of Solomon. If he was at all drawn to acting, it was to the role of transcendent Judge/King, master of equity and religious and secular law. An incident in 1618 provides a cogent example of this histrionic James who was not necessarily, I think, following here his well-known observation in the Basilikon Doron that kings were, in some sense, like actors in a theater. Different impulses seem to have been in play in this case of the trial of Lady Roos. Daughter of James’s frequent spokesman, Sir Thomas Lake, she was accused of “precontracts, adultery, incest, murder, poison” against her husband, William Cecil Lord Roos. As part of the litigation, Sir Thomas Lake and his wife put in a bill in Star Chamber against their son-in-law while, on the other side, the Earl of Exeter, who was defending Roos, put in a bill on his behalf. James himself decided to be the judge in this case, adjudicating the trial in Star Chamber beginning from 9 A.M. to noon on the first day and from 8 A.M. to 1 P.M. the next. John Chamberlain remarked during this event that James

made a short speech the first day in which among other things he compared himself to Solomon that was to judge between two women (for so he said he would parallel them as women) and to find out the true mother of the child (that is, verity). He sits again on Monday, and then Wednesday.

Such, I think, was James’s notion of court recreation (perhaps unwittingly—or wittingly?)—suggested much earlier, in 1604, through the Duke in Measure for Measure). For more leisurely moments, James evidently insisted on the vigorous activity of hunting on horseback—insisted to such an extent that he defined it (as opposed, say, to drama) as his “solace,” that is, as the activity that recreated him and, it might also be speculated, was necessary to his
physical and psychological well-being. At least before Cecil’s death in 1612, James’s sojourns in the country were clearly not viewed by him or his counselors as holiday trips. They represented a preferred locale of living and mode of governing by proxy, punctuated by necessary visits to the London area. This was a style of life obviously not conducive to ongoing involvement with artistic ambitions at court.

If we reconsider James’s interest in the arts, then, we might conclude that the King’s recreations and aesthetic pleasures were identifiable in the way he chose to lead his life. Certainly he was not dependent for such satisfactions on the productions of London poets and dramatists destined, ironically enough, for a greatness that would enhance James’s own reputation in cultural history. Although in other spheres of activity James’s intellectual legacy was considerable—including his organization of a remarkable translation of the Bible and a number of important writings on kingship and religion—he does not appear to have been a patron of poetry, painting, music or drama.61 Put simply, James did not live an arts-centered life. For the royal patronage of the arts during the first half of James’s reign we must, as I have argued elsewhere, look to his consort, Anna of Denmark.

Notes


9. As the Venetian ambassador observed (in another context): “The Earl [of Northumberland] had been as it were banished from court because his estates on the borders of Scotland were so great, and because the Queen had some suspicions of those secret intelligences with the King of Scotland, which is now apparent” (SPV, 10:17). For more recent discussion of Northumberland’s role and motives here, see Mark Nicholls, “The ‘Wizard Earl’ in Star Chamber” *The Historical Journal* 30 (1987), 173–89, esp. 174–75 and nn.

10. This was a post Cobham had vied with Essex to obtain. The Cinque Ports were situated on the southeast coast of England. The Warden had continuous jurisdiction from Seaford in Sussex to Birchington over the five ancient ports of Hastings, Sandwich, Dover, Romney, and Hitherto—places which often saw Shakespeare and his fellows, or other acting companies when they were on tour, as well as over a number of other towns added to the original group. For foreign comment, and for a description of the port traffic controls themselves, see W. B. Rye, *England as Seen by Foreigners* (London: John Russell Smith, 1865), 14. Henry Cuff, secretary to the Earl of Essex, had referred to the “Cinq Portes” as “the keys of the realm” (Bruce 82). For a vignette of the passport problems encountered in 1608 by the Duke of Wurttemberg trying to return from England to the continent, see *Hatfield*, 20:241–42. One gathers, for example, that a shipmaster could be penalized £20 (a year’s living for a grammar master) for each person carried from England without passport.

11. Sir Robert Carey, brother of the ailing 2nd Lord Hunsdon, had raced north to be the first to tell James that Queen Elizabeth was dead and that James had been declared king of England, but his authority was angrily repudiated by the Privy Council writing at 10 P.M. on 24 March. The same letter designated Percy and Somerset as the official messengers. See David Calderwood, *History of the Kirk of Scotland*, ed. Thomas Thomson (Edinburgh: Woodrow Society, 1844), 6:206–9. Carey was blundering into an otherwise systematic removal of obstacles to James’s peaceful accession, a process noted in the letter of the French ambassador Marin Cavali to the Doge of Venice and to the Senate in SPV, 15:43. Among other activities, Robert Cecil “stayed the journey of the Captain of the Guard [Sir Walter Raleigh]” who was in process of conducting many suitors north to the King on 9 April. See *SPD*, 8:2.

Press, 1999), 81–95. Maurice Lee, 106–7 has also commented on the smooth transition to England as an indication of James’s political abilities.

13. From this and later conversations it was decided that the date of the coronation should be King James’s name day (i.e., St. James Day, 25 July). Queen Anna’s itinerary south was also worked out, a place being established as the rendezvous point for the new queen and the English party of ladies and lords which the Privy Council decided should journey north to meet her. These Ladies of Queen Elizabeth’s Bed Chamber and Privy Chamber were released from their ceremonial attendance upon the body of Queen Elizabeth following her funeral on 28 April. See Hatfield, 15:49, 52–53.

14. Among his other duties, the Lord Chamberlain made the arrangements for the royal progresses—such as the one going on now from Scotland; he received ambassadors and conducted them into the Royal Presence, and he was ultimately responsible for all ceremony and entertainment, such as the performance of plays at court during the holidays. The Master of the Revels reported to the Lord Chamberlain. See references cited by E. K. Chambers, The Elizabethan Stage (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1923), 1.36–42 (ES), and Barroll in The Revels History of Drama in English, ed. Clifford Leech and T. W. Craik (London: Methuen, 1975), 3:1, “Drama and the Court.” For the court situation in general as it related to this office, see Wright and Cuddy in David Starkey et al., The English Court (London, 1987), 147–72; 173–225.


16. Students of Shakespeare may wish to remind themselves that the patron of his company, the 2nd Lord Hunsdon, had been quite ill for over a year and would die shortly. Thomas Lord Howard had been assisting him in the interim and thus any presumed influence the acting company had over the Master of the Revels, a servant of the Lord Chamberlain, may well have ended a year prior to Elizabeth’s death.

17. Lord Thomas had enjoyed a distinguished naval career, serving against the Spanish Armada in 1588 when he was knighted at sea by the Lord High Admiral, the future Earl of Nottingham, serving in the Azores as commander of the famous Sir Richard Grenville, and also serving at Cadiz.


20. The new Lord Chamberlain seems to have been aware as early as 14 May 1603 that the attainer of his nephew’s earldom would be revoked because he and his wife were then checking exactly what lands were lost by the attainers of the Duke of Norfolk and the Earl of Arundel. See Report on MSS in Various Collections (London: HMSO, 1903), 2:249.

21. Suffolk and Northampton proved to be powerful political figures at the early court while the young Earl of Arundel, heir to his bachelor great-uncle Northampton’s substantial fortune, would become prominent in the politics and culture of the latter part of James’s reign.

22. Willson adopts this patronizing attitude: see p. 274. However, records of
Assessing "Cultural Influence" 159

James's Scottish years sufficiently attest to the real dangers he experienced: see, e.g., SPS, 11:96–97; 166.

23. For opposition to Raleigh in the secret correspondence see Bruce, pp. 18–19. Raleigh was summoned to the Privy Council on 8 May and relieved of his office then: see Acts of the Privy Council of England, ed. J. R. Dasent et al. (London: HMSO, 1890–), 32:498. But this dismissal was anticipated by 28 April, or even earlier, for Cobham had a bitter argument with Cecil about the matter. See Hatfield, 15:61, and John Manningham, Diary, ed. R. P. Sorlien (Hanover, N.H.: University of Rhode Island. 1976), 224.

24. Erskine became Viscount Fenton in March 1606 (see Peerage, 5.294) and a Privy Councillor on 31 January 1611; see John Stow, Annals (London, 1615), sig. 4G6 (p. 910).

25. When James left Edinburgh for London his choice of retinue, as Meikle writes, "reflected a carefully considered balance of power between the lairds and nobility." She mentions the Duke of Lennox, the earls of Mar, Moray, and Argyll, the lords Home and Roxburgh together with the secretary James Elphinston [brother of Lord Elphinston], the comptroller (Gospertie), and the gentlemen of his Bed Chamber. See Maureen M. Meikle, "The Invisible Divide: The Greater Lairds and the Nobility of Jacobean Scotland," Scottish Historical Review 71 (1992), 70–87. It should be added that Elphinston and Home were the only Catholics in this group (see John Colville's "Catalogue of the Scottis Nobilitie" in John Colville, The Original Letters of Sir John Colville, ed. Thomas Thomson (Edinburgh: The Bannatyne Club, 1858), 350–54. For a discussion of the duties of particular Scottish nobles in England during the time of the accession, and for several additional names, see Maurice Lee, Jr., Great Britain's Solomon (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1990), 108–10.

26. Hatfield, 15:100–101. James had operated with the Scottish Privy Council in a similar manner in 1598 so that when he went south in 1603, that Council lost much of its impact. (See Meikle, 83).

27. The "old knave" is probably Sir Thomas Lake who often wrote letters from Royston telling Cecil how King James wished to deal with the particular problems.

28. This group also figured importantly in connection with Queen Anna: it included many of the nobles who comprised her court and who would later be instrumental in effecting the rise of Buckingham, the figure who dominated James's last years. See Barroll, Anna of Denmark, Queen of England: A Cultural Biography (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2000), chapter 5.

29. James never met Sidney but communication probably passed between the Scottish king and Sir Philip by way of Patrick Gray, 6th Baron Gray of Scotland (known as the "Master of Gray"). Further, a report in 1599 describes King James commending Sidney as "the best and sweetest wryter that ever he knewe—surely it seemeth he loved him much." (Quoted in James I, New Poems, ed. Allan F. Westcott [New York: Colombia University Press, 1911], lxxix. See also 29 and 88–89 of this edition). Westcott speculates, interestingly, that James needed some poet to put up as a rival to Edmund Spenser whose Faerie Queene was so hostile to Mary Queen of Scots. But Sidney died in 1586 while the earliest evidence of James's displeasure with Spenser was recorded in November 1596, when the Scottish king identified "the second part of" FQ ("9th chapter") as offensive with respect to his mother. See SPS, 12:354, 359–70. Nevertheless, James's purpose in extolling Sidney may have been connected to his unsuccessful attempt to have Spenser prosecuted in England.
34. See SPD, 9:2. See also Chamberlain, 1:192.
35. Mountjoy, as the head in Ireland of England’s largest standing army, had to be treated with care, but he presented no problem—far from it. He had written to Sir George Carew from Ireland on 18 April: “If I shall stay here til all things be so settled that they will never break out again, God knoweth when I shall come over. . . . If I cannot get leave to come over now I shall despair for ever to be rid of this miserable country.” He added: “I pray you let not the King see my last letter to our late Queen, for it is full of fustian.” See Calendar of Carew Manuscripts: 1603–74, ed. J. S. Brewer and William Bullen (London: Master of the Rolls, 1873), 1–2. He perhaps referred to something like his letter to Queen Elizabeth (8 June 1600): “If I with all that I have may stop the gulf of these wars by throwing myself to be swallowed up therein, I shall die a happy and contented Curtius, and one gracious thought of yours thrown after me shall be more precious than all the jewels of the ladies of Rome; but while I live, O let me live in your favor” Original Letters: 3rd Series, ed. Ellis (London: 1846), 152–53.
38. Pembroke’s younger brother Philip fits well what seems to have been the early prescription for a special favorite. The untitled Philip Herbert was made a member of the Bed Chamber in 1603; within two years, he was created both baron and earl.
39. See Peerage, 10.412. The position of the individual carrying the “great banner”—as we may gather from the funeral of Sir Philip Sidney—came just before that section of the long procession reserved for the coffin itself: first came the Great Banner, then the symbolic ornaments of the deceased (each ornament carried by one honored person), and then the coffin. See Thomas Lent, Celebritas et Pompa Funeris (London: 1587). For James’s approach both to Queen Elizabeth’s and to his mother’s (re)burial, see Jennifer Woodward, The Theatre of Death (Woodbridge: the Boydell Press, 1997), Chapter 7. In designating Lord Howard of Effingham as Pembroke’s assistant, James was presumably trying to balance the conferral of favors on two privileged groups. It was at the house of the elder Howard, the Lord Admiral, that James was proclaimed King of England by the peerage.
40. My argument here challenges the DNB discussion of Pembroke which follows the traditional view that King James “never loved or favored” the young earl. See 9.679.
41. He was sent to prison for a brief time by Queen Elizabeth for fathering Mary Fitton’s child and then banished the court: see DNB, 9:679.


44. Nonetheless, Southampton, over the years, did not advance at court as successfully as Pembroke. Presumably preoccupied during the first few years of James’s reign with reclaiming his domain on the Isle of Wight and in reuniting himself with his wife and children, who had been housed by Penelope Rich and others during the confinement in the Tower, he continued to carry out quasi-military responsibilities including his hereditary duty of defending the Isle of Wight against foreign invaders. Although frequently found hunting with the King, he was more often at home than at court. Later, Southampton would be disappointed at lack of court advancement, especially in 1612 when Pembroke, but not he, was appointed to the Privy Council (Chamberlain, 1:352; 358–59).

45. For other instances of Pembroke’s close relationship to James at this time, see Barroll, Politics, Plague, and Shakespeare’s Theatre (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1991), 59–69.

46. Southampton had been nominated but not elected in 1593—see Philip Gawdy, Letters, ed. I. H. Jeayes (London: Roxburghe Club, 1906), p. 70. Robert Cecil, Henry Howard, and Thomas Lord Howard of Walden, members of James’s influential political group, were not yet earls and thus unlikely candidates, but Cecil as Salisbury and Henry Howard as Northampton would be inducted into the Order by James at later dates.


48. Routine appearances were presumably the opening of Parliament on All Saints’ Day, the ceremonial honoring of ambassadors extraordinary when this had a bearing on important or delicate foreign relations, and an indeterminate stay at Whitehall or Hampton Court for Christmas through Twelfth Night and then again for the beginning of Lent. Among unique circumstances were such occasions as the signing of the Spanish peace in 1604.

49. For examples of James’s administration between 1604 and 1612 from such hunting locales as Royston, Newmarket, and Thetford, see Hatfield, 17:72, 89; 18:129; 19:360–61; 20:79; 21:142–43, 262–63; SPV, 12:124, 436. In 1611 James seems to have traveled less: his correspondence with Cecil is dated from London locales such as Whitehall or Hampton Court.

50. For a different view of the relation of Queen Anna’s masques, especially to James’s political plans, see Martin Butler, “The Invention of Britain and the Early Stuart Masque” in The Stuart Court and Europe ed. R. Malcolm Smuts (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 65–85.

51. For a somewhat different view of James’s literary interests, and influence,
especially in Scotland, see Murray Pitcock, "From Edinburgh to London: Scottish Court Writing and 1603" in *The Stuart Courts*, 13–28.


53. See, for example, his interest in the fortunes of a newly born lion cub in the Tower zoo—*Hatfield*, 16:207–8, as well as his treatise on witchcraft most lately contextualized by Jenny Wormald, "The Witches, the Devil, and the King," in *Freedom and Authority*, 165–80.


55. Chamberlain, whose tastes in drama seem to have accorded with those of James, himself had singled out both *Ignoramus* and also *Melanthe*. At the time of the earlier visit, he noted that *Melanthe* gave "great contentment as well to the King as to all the rest."


58. See *Politics, Plague*, 26–27.

59. "A few days ago the Jesuit Provincial of England, imprisoned for complicity in the [Gunpowder] plot, was publicly tried. His Majesty was present incognito," the Venetian ambassador also tells us: see *SPV*, 10.337 and Winwood, 2:205.

60. See *Chamberlain*, 2:211, 214–15, 238, 246–47.