

8. *The Spenserians and King James, 1603–1616*

IN the 1590s the gap between Spenser's political ideals and Elizabethan realities had been becoming increasingly apparent. In *Mother Hubberds Tale* Spenser had attacked the growing political influence of Sir Robert Cecil, who was considered by his enemies to have achieved his control over the patronage system by bribery and corruption. Cecil was also accused by Essex's supporters of lacking faith in the anti-Spanish foreign policy, and towards the end of the reign there were rumours that he was intriguing for a Spanish succession. Essex's supporters placed their hope for the future in the accession of James VI of Scotland, who, it was hoped, would remove Cecil and adopt a more sympathetic attitude to the Puritans. The state of poetry as well as the state of the realm seemed to many poets to be corrupt by the 1590s. There was a vogue for Ovidian love poetry which more moralistic writers found alarming, a dereliction of the poet's public duty of writing didactic verse that could serve the cause of religion. In 1595 Josuah Sylvester published the first instalment of his translation of Du Bartas's *Divine Weeks and Works*, a poem which was to gain enormous popularity in England. Du Bartas Protestantized the courtly poetic of the sixteenth century, adapting a highly rhetorical style with stylized poetic diction to religious topics. In dedicating a new instalment to Essex, Sylvester called on Spenser, Daniel, and Drayton to 'wean our wanton Ile From *Ouids* heires' by writing divine poetry.¹ Spenser's verse had always adopted a moral standpoint that was reasonably acceptable to a Puritan audience, but younger men like Nashe, Marston, and Donne went out of their way to offend the susceptibilities of earnest readers.² Several English poets hoped that James would help to reform English poetry. Gabriel Harvey was a great admirer of his poems.³ The king had translated Du Bartas's *Uranie* and sponsored a Scottish translation of the *Divine Weeks and Works*. He had paid tribute to Sidney in an elegy which was printed at the beginning of the volume produced by Cambridge University. Might not his accession usher in a new age in which those who admired Sidney's political ideals and poetic achievement would be patronized by an enlightened king?⁴

¹ Josuah Sylvester, *The Second Weeke; or, Childhood of the World* (London, 1598), sig. A5^v. On hopes for religious verse see James Doelman, *King James I and the Religious Culture of England* (Woodbridge, 2000), ch. 2.

² See David Perkins, 'Issues and Motivations in the Nashe–Harvey Quarrel', *Philological Quarterly*, 39 (1960), 224–33.

³ Virginia F. Stern, *Gabriel Harvey: His Life, Marginalia and Library* (Oxford, 1979), 126, 223.

⁴ Tournneur's satire *The Transformed Metamorphosis* (1600) seems to prophesy such a reformation: *The Works of Cyril Tournneur*, ed. Allardyce Nicoll (London, 1930), 51–75; David Norbrook, 'Panegyric of the Monarch and its Social Context under Elizabeth I and James I' (unpublished D.Phil. thesis, Oxford, 1978), 122–4.

These political and poetic hopes were unrealistic, given not only the huge number of suitors but James's own political caution in his new kingdom. Far from dismissing Cecil, who had been conducting his own secret negotiations for James's succession, the new king relied heavily on his political advice. He continued the negotiations for peace with Spain which Cecil had initiated and maintained a pacific foreign policy. He gave high honours to several members of the conservative Howard family and aroused great suspicion because of the favour he showed to Henry Howard, Earl of Northampton, whose Catholicism and rumoured disloyalty had excluded him from office in Elizabeth's reign. Ben Jonson had a personal feud with Northampton but he did admire James's policy of European peace. Not all Jacobean poets took the same view. Fulke Greville, who had fallen from office under the new regime, voiced the political disillusionment of the survivors from the Essex circle in his *Life of Sidney*. This work incorporated material which Greville had intended to use in a history of Elizabeth's reign but Cecil, fearing that he would give the work the wrong kind of bias, refused him access to the state papers. It was the more cautious William Camden who produced the definitive history of the reign. In the *Life of Sidney* Greville idealized his friend as the last representative of a heroic age of austere Protestant militancy which had now given way to luxury and cowardice. His friend Samuel Daniel warned that while peace could be a good it could also lead to corruption: peace must be armed—an idea Spenser had symbolized in the figure of Britomart. An unarmed peace, on the other hand,

lets her Armors rust, and shippes to rott
And makes mens worth and honor be forgott.

Under the inefficient administration of Charles Howard, Earl of Nottingham, the navy was indeed rotting.⁵

In the view of his critics James was no more successful at reforming poetry than at reforming corruption in public life. The new king did, of course, give enormous influence to one poet, Ben Jonson. But Jonson had many rivals who felt themselves to be unjustly excluded from favour. Spenser had never written court masques or pageants, and Elizabeth had refrained from showing special favour to one particular poet; in fact she was not an active patron of poetry. The more favour James showed to Jonson, however, the more jealousy he aroused in other poets. As has been seen, Samuel Daniel had been shouldered out of his initial prominent position by Jonson's skill in courtly poetry; Jonson recorded that 'Daniel was at Jealousies with him'. Of another prominent poet, Michael Drayton, Jonson declared that 'Drayton feared him, and he esteemed not of him'.⁶ Drayton had apparently visited James in

⁵ *Samuel Daniel: The Brotherton Manuscript. A Study in Authorship*, ed. John Pitcher (Leeds, 1981), 136. On Daniel and other historians see D. R. Woolf, *The Idea of History in Early Stuart England: Erudition, Ideology, and 'the Light of Truth' from the Accession of James I to the Civil War* (Toronto, 1990). For a more recent analysis of James's early years, emphasizing his early links with the Essex faction, see Leed Barroll, 'Assessing "Cultural Influence": James I as Patron of the Arts', *Shakespeare Studies*, 29 (2001), 132–62.

⁶ *Ben Jonson*, ed. C. H. Herford and Percy and Evelyn Simpson, 11 vols. Oxford, 1925–52 (hereafter *H&S*), i. 136.

Scotland before his accession and obtained promises of favour, and he had such high expectations of the new reign that he rushed into print with a panegyric of James and was widely censured for not showing enough respect for Elizabeth's memory. But James did not keep whatever promises he had had made, and by 1606 Drayton was attacking him and Cecil in his *Pastorals*. Drayton had published a bitter satire on the 'regnum Cecilianum', *The Owle*, at the start of the reign in the apparent hope that James would remove a man he considered as a symbol of the corruption and greed that was affecting society at all levels. Drayton was not a Puritan and may have had Catholic leanings, but he was hostile to James and his advisers on moral grounds.⁷ In his *Pastorals* Drayton praised a small group of poets, including Samuel Daniel, who in his opinion had escaped corruption—and who were out of favour with the Jacobean court. In an elegy for Sir Philip Sidney Drayton complained that since his day English poetry had withered under a 'cold Northerne breath'; Sidney is borne aloft,

Laughing even Kings and their delights to scorne,
And all those Sots that them doe Deifie.⁸

Drayton's idealization of Sidney as an anti-courtly hero resembles Greville's comment that his friend's talents were too great for 'little monarchies'.⁹ Giles Fletcher senior, who had been an Essex supporter, had visited James in Scotland and had apparently, like Drayton, received promises of support which were subsequently not kept; Fletcher's son Phineas criticized this ingratitude and attacked Cecil in a series of eclogues he was writing in the early years of the reign.¹⁰

Thus before James had been long on the English throne there had emerged a group of poets who were alienated from the court and sometimes used the traditional symbolism of Protestant pastoral to voice their discontent. They could almost be described as constituting a poetic 'opposition'. In this period, of course, it is misleading to speak of a formal 'opposition' based on a coherent ideology.¹¹ The political system discouraged the emergence of ideological polarization: there might be opposing factions at court but they were often motivated by personal rather than political disagreements. Political discord was felt to be a symptom of disorder and corruption, something that might be expected in democracies but from which the

⁷ On Drayton see Richard F. Hardin, *Michael Drayton and the Passing of Elizabethan England* (Lawrence, Kan., 1973), Bernard H. Newdigate, *Michael Drayton and his Circle*, 2nd edn. (Oxford, 1961), and Jean F. Brink, *Michael Drayton Revisited* (Boston, 1990).

⁸ *The Works of Michael Drayton*, ed. J. William Hebel, Kathleen Tillotson, and Bernard H. Newdigate, 2nd edn., 5 vols. (Oxford, 1961), ii. 548, 549.

⁹ *A Dedication to Sir Philip Sidney*, in *The Prose Works of Fulke Greville, Lord Brooke*, ed. John Gouws (Oxford, 1986), 24 (above, Ch. 6 n. 35).

¹⁰ Giles and Phineas Fletcher, *Poetical Works*, ed. Frederick S. Boas, 2 vols. (Cambridge, 1908–9), ii. 173–222; Lloyd E. Berry, 'Phineas Fletcher's Account of his Father', *Journal of English and Germanic Philology*, 60 (1961), 258–67.

¹¹ The most emphatic counter-statements to the traditional 'Whig' view that there was an established Jacobean opposition have come from Kevin Sharpe (see his introduction to *Faction and Parliament: Essays on Early Stuart History* (Oxford, 1978)), and Conrad Russell, *Parliaments and English Politics 1621–1629* (Oxford, 1979).

more dignified political system under a monarchy should be immune. Participation in public discussion in Parliaments was a concession from the monarch, which had been established as a convention but which still depended ultimately on his grace and favour. Samuel Daniel praised King James for permitting a greater freedom of political discourse than was necessary under a monarchy; writing a full and objective political history was ‘a liberty proper onely to Common-wealths, and neuer permitted to Kingdomes, but vnder good Princes’.¹² The monarch’s responsibility was to consult with those best qualified to give advice and then to decide impartially, rather than to side with any one faction. Factions that were out of office tended to concentrate their attention not so much on their opponents’ ideas as on their moral character: they must be displaced because they were personally inadequate. And yet, when all these qualifications have been made, it still seems to be possible to detect certain areas of ideological conflict in Jacobean political life. Parliamentarians might unite in agreeing that their freedom of speech was not unlimited, but they could still differ over the definition of those limits. For example, the king considered foreign policy to be a ‘mystery of state’ which Parliaments could discuss only as a special privilege; but some Parliamentarians seem to have considered that they had a right to discuss certain crucial international issues. Foreign policy raised important ideological questions: should it be governed by pragmatism or by Protestant principle?¹³

Analysis of the poetic ‘opposition’ raises similar difficulties. The poets who will be described in this chapter as ‘Spenserians’—Greville, Daniel, Drayton, the Fletchers, and the younger pastoralists, William Browne and George Wither—were in varying degrees critical of dominant tendencies at court. But they were by no means a monolithic, ideologically coherent group. The first and most basic thing that divided them from Jonson, James’s leading panegyrist, was that he was in favour and they were not. At the times when he was not on good terms with the king, especially in James’s later years and the reign of Charles, Jonson can be found imitating some of the Spenserians’ political rhetoric. But when this has been said it needs to be added that the reason Jonson enjoyed such high favour, especially in the earlier parts of James’s reign, was at least partly ideological: as a Catholic, and then a high-church Anglican, he had no sympathy with the tradition of low-church Protestantism with which Spenser was associated. Jonson’s silences are as significant as the topics he chose to write about: Continental politics, Princess Elizabeth, overseas colonization, and evangelical activities did not inspire him with the same enthusiasm as the

¹² Daniel, preface to *The Collection of the Historie of England, The Complete Works in Verse and Prose of Samuel Daniel*, ed. Alexander B. Grosart, 5 vols. (London, 1885–96), iv.78.

¹³ Some of the more extreme statements of the ‘revisionist’ historians are questioned by J. H. Hexter, ‘Power Struggle, Parliament, and Liberty in Early Stuart England’, *Journal of Modern History*, 50 (1978), 1–50; by Theodore K. Rabb and Derek Hirst, ‘Revisionism Revised: Two Perspectives on Early Stuart Parliamentary History’, *Past and Present*, 92 (1981), 55–78 and 79–99; and, with reference to foreign policy, by Simon Adams, ‘Spain or the Netherlands? The Dilemmas of Early Stuart Foreign Policy’, in Howard Tomlinson (ed.), *Before the English Civil War: Essays on Early Stuart Politics and Government* (New York, 1983), 79–101. Since 1984 such questions have been extensively developed: see, for example, Richard Cust and Ann Hughes (eds.), *Conflict in Early Stuart England: Studies in Religion and Politics 1603–1642* (London, 1989) and Johann P. Sommerville, *Royalists and Patriots: Politics and Ideology in England 1603–1640*, 2nd edn. (London, 1999).

Spenserians. Jonson was rather alarmed by the increase in public discussion of political issues in James's reign. Several of the Spenserians, however, took a rather different attitude to mysteries of state and can be found supporting those in Parliament and in London who were trying to extend the limits of public debate or at least to prevent what they regarded as their restriction. Wither, the Spenserian with whom Jonson fell out most violently, was the most ideological of these poets, the most enthusiastic about reaching a wide popular audience with his political rhetoric. At the other extreme, Samuel Daniel distrusted public dissension and apocalyptic fervour but censured the Jacobean court on moral grounds; his quarrel with Jonson was personal more than ideological, though even here there may have been an element of theoretical disagreement. Fulke Greville is exceptionally hard to classify, for while he was jealous of traditional liberties and deeply suspicious of possible illegitimate increases in the royal prerogative, he hated 'popularity' and was so cautious that in his political practice he differed little from more orthodox figures.

What these poets did have in common was an admiration for the great figures of Elizabethan literature, for Sidney and Spenser; and this admiration took on a political colouring, given that the new regime had rejected the Elizabethan ideals of Protestant chivalry. Cecil, Spenser's great enemy, was still in office; Phineas Fletcher and several other poets propagated the myth that Spenser had died in poverty because of Cecil's hostility, and he became a symbol of proud poetic and political independence.¹⁴ Jonson, as has been seen, lacked this poetic and political nostalgia. The same applies to John Donne, who became a prominent figure in the second half of James's reign: his Catholic upbringing had estranged him from Elizabethan public symbolism. His public poetry, with its extravagant imagery of worship and self-abasement, has nothing in common with the Protestant pastoralism favoured by the Spenserians.¹⁵

¹⁴ Fletcher and Fletcher, *Poetical Works*, ii.16; cf. *The Collected Poems of Joseph Hall*, ed. Arnold Davenport (Liverpool, 1949), 123, and the poem by John Lane (a friend of Giles Fletcher senior and of Milton's father) discussed in *The Works of Edmund Spenser: A Variorum Edition*, ed. Edwin Greenlaw et al., 10 vols. (Baltimore, 1932–49), v.325. An indispensable aid for the study of Spenser's reputation is W. Wells (ed.), 'Spenser Allusions in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries', *Studies in Philology*, Special Supplements, vols. 68 (1971) and 69 (1972).

¹⁵ Donne received poor attention in my first edition, down to my mistakenly making him a bishop; the fact that he did not receive such advancement prompted my attempt at a more nuanced account of Donne in 'The Monarchy of Wit and the Republic of Letters: Donne's Politics', in Katharine Maus and Elizabeth Harvey (eds.), *Soliciting Interpretation: Literary Theory and Seventeenth-Century English Poetry* (Chicago, 1990), 3–36. On courtly imagery in Donne see John Carey, *John Donne: Life, Mind and Art* (London, 1990), 113 ff., and Jonathan Goldberg, *James I and the Politics of Literature: Jonson, Shakespeare, Donne, and their Contemporaries* (Baltimore, 1983), 210–19. Arthur F. Marotti, *John Donne, Coterie Poet* (Madison, 1986), 183–95, draws attention to critical and satirical elements in his Jacobean writings, though seeing them as part of a highly conservative coterie; for more emphasis on a critical public role see especially Annabel Patterson, 'All Donne', in Maus and Harvey (eds.), *Soliciting Interpretation*, 37–67, and 'Quod oportet versus quod convenit: John Donne, Kingsman', in *Reading between the Lines* (Madison, 1993), 160–209. Dennis Flynn, *John Donne and the Ancient Catholic Nobility* (Bloomington, Ind., 1995), counters Carey's view of Donne's careerism with an emphasis on his continuing links with Catholic circles. In a series of studies Jeanne Shami has likewise provided a corrective to court-centred readings; see, for example, 'Anti-Catholicism in the Sermons of John Donne', in Lori Ann Ferrell and Peter McCullough (eds.), *The English Sermon Revised: Religion, Literature and History 1600–1750* (Manchester,

Jonson's high ceremonial style was, of course, mainly confined to his masques, and in his non-dramatic verse he favoured a 'plain style'. But his dislike of prophetic radicalism was implicit in this style. His aim was to naturalize poetic artifice, to embody, in a richly matured form, a wisdom based on practical experience. Generalizations about the Spenserians' style are hazardous, for they varied from each other and adopted different kinds of idiom on different occasions. But they all attempted at times to achieve a poetic strain which Jonson normally denied himself. And the language of prophetic poetry had to differ conspicuously from everyday language, for its aim was to move beyond normal experience.¹⁶ Drayton's friend Henry Reynolds was scornful of poetry that merely taught 'Morall doctrine': this could be conveyed just as well in prose. (Jonson tended to compose initial drafts of his poems in prose.) Reynolds believed that poetry could convey hidden mysteries, secrets of the natural world and its divine principles which had been lost since the early days of the world. This kind of wisdom was much superior to anything that could be found in pagan moral philosophers. He even wished that Spenser had been 'a little freer of his fiction, and not so close riuetted to his Morall'; but presumably he would have approved of passages like the *Mutabilitie Cantos* and the description of the Garden of Adonis. Poetry, said Reynolds, should present 'golden fictions'; most modern poetry seemed to him to consist either of versified morality, or worse still, of 'base seruile fawning at the heeles of worldly wealth and greatnesse'.¹⁷ Another friend of Drayton's, William Drummond, was making a similar point when he complained that Donne did not soar high enough in his poetry; he and his school were abstracting poetry into '*Metaphysical Ideas, and Scholastical Quiddities*'.¹⁸ The Spenserian poets tended to adopt a style which drew attention to its own artifice and thus highlighted the inability of language fully to embody transcendent truths: where Jonson's verse gives the impression that ideals can be organically embodied in existing institutions and linguistic formulations, Spenserian verse constantly confesses its inadequacy. Phineas Fletcher addresses God as a remote and mysterious being 'Whose breadth no feet, no lines, no chains, no eyes survey': poetic feet and poetic lines are also inadequate, and Fletcher gives his poem a flowing syntax which finds it hard to reach a definite resolution. Wither describes his poems as '*Raptures*' patterned on David and other biblical prophets, and modulates from visionary elevation to a 'plain style' that is radically different from Jonson's, constantly calling attention to the processes of writing, to the time-lag between representation and inner inspiration. Wither's 'loose' poetics can sound startlingly modern for those used to mak-

2000), 136–66; for a very different view see Debora Shuger, 'Absolutist Theology: The Sermons of John Donne', *ibid.* 115–35.

¹⁶ There is a useful general study of the Spenserians, from the stylistic rather than political viewpoint, by Joan Grundy, *The Spenserian Poets* (London, 1969). On the differences between Jonson and the Spenserians see especially the excellent study by Ina Schabert, *Die Lyrik der Spenserianer* (Tübingen, 1977), 16 ff.

¹⁷ Henry Reynolds, 'Mythomystes', in J. E. Spingarn (ed.), *Critical Essays of the Seventeenth Century*, 3 vols. (Oxford, 1908–9), i.144–78 (163, 147, 155). On Reynolds see Mary Hobbs, 'Drayton's "Most Dearly-Loved Friend Henry Reynolds Esq.":', *Review of English Studies*, 96 (1973), 414–27.

¹⁸ William Drummond, *Works*, ed. J. Sage and T. Ruddiman (Edinburgh, 1711), 143.

ing adjustment for the conventions of Renaissance writing, and has evoked a comparison with Whitman. Fletcher and the other Spenserians frequently associate God and poetic inspiration with images of light and water, infinite and indeterminate essences; they do not share Jonson's fondness for imagery of organic growth. They recognized his poetic merits but they speak of his poetry in distinctive terms. Browne praised Drayton for his visionary and emotional qualities, his 'soul-raping strains', Brooke for the flowing clarity of his inspiration, and in general valued poetry for its emotional rather than purely rational qualities. Jonson, on the other hand, he praised as 'judicious', 'well knowing', 'exact'.¹⁹

The Spenserians' idea of poetry as revealing transcendent truths lent itself to the expression of an apocalyptic world-view: though not yet fully understood, the truth would be unveiled in the future, and a glimpse of it might even be granted to prophetic poets. Spenser had dramatized this idea in his presentation of Una wandering in the wilderness, and similar figures appear in much Spenserian poetry. In *The Faerie Queene* masques and pageants are sometimes symbols of a false claim to immanence, an attempt to trap in the here and now a transcendent divine quality. Daniel and Greville are said to have exchanged letters on the need to 'reform' court masques.²⁰ It is impossible to know exactly what they said, but it is possible to infer from the opinions they expressed elsewhere that they disliked the enormous extravagance of Jonsonian masques and also perhaps had doubts about the ideology they expressed, the glorification of the monarch as a living embodiment of divine qualities. Such language was conventional up to a certain point, but in the Jacobean masques it had reached an unprecedented scale. In the preface to his play *The Queen's Arcadia* (which had the significant alternative title *Arcadia Reformed*) Daniel declared that it was not his intention to show

In lowder stile the hidden mysteries,
And arts of Thrones

and made some comments which apparently referred slightly to the new perspective stage, which Jonson and Jones had recently introduced in *The Masque of Blacknesse*.²¹ Daniel may have been suggesting that Jonson's praise of King James was becoming too loud.

The first major revival of Spenserian poetry took place in the period 1612–14, and it coincided with, and was to some extent stimulated by, a series of political changes. In 1610 Henry IV of France was assassinated, an event which aroused great alarm in England and the expectation that James might now be persuaded to play a more positive role in the struggle against the Habsburg powers. In the absence of a clear lead

¹⁹ Fletcher and Fletcher, *Poetical Works*, ii.322; William Browne, *Poems*, ed. G. Goodwin, 2 vols. (London, 1894), i.239–40; George Wither, *Britain's Remembrancer* (n.pl., 1628; Spenser Society reprint, Manchester, 1880), fo. 138'; Thomas O. Calhoun, 'George Wither: Origins and Consequences of a Loose Poetics', *Texas Studies in Literature and Language*, 16 (1974), 263–79 (278).

²⁰ Joan Rees, *Fulke Greville, Lord Brooke, 1554–1628: A Critical Biography* (London, 1971), 201.

²¹ Daniel, *Works*, iii.214; see further my article 'The Reformation of the Masque', in David Lindley (ed.), *The Court Masque* (Manchester, 1984), 94–110.

from James it had been Henry IV who had shown most enthusiasm for taking a stand against Spanish military power; but it seemed likely that after his death France would move closer to Spain, and Protestants feared a new move by the Habsburg powers to exploit their weakness. German Protestant princes had formed an Evangelical Union with which James was persuaded to make an alliance. He also agreed to a marriage between his daughter Elizabeth and Prince Frederick V of the Palatinate, the most militant Calvinist power in Europe. Salisbury's death in 1612 opened the way to a political realignment at court and several former Essex supporters hoped that the new Secretary would be an advocate of a more activist foreign policy. In 1611 Philippe Duplessis-Mornay, who had advocated close links between English and Continental Protestants since the days of Sidney, dedicated to James a treatise on the evils of the Papacy and urged him to mount a vigorous campaign against Rome.²²

Phineas Fletcher inserted extensive references to these political changes, drawing on Duplessis-Mornay's *Mysterie of Iniquitie*, in his apocalyptic allegory of the Gunpowder Plot, *The Locusts, or Apollyonists*. Though his subject is national his poem has a European scope: he shows how the Jesuits are trying to increase their political influence throughout Europe, from the Netherlands to Russia. He praises the Venetians for their resistance to Spanish influence: Fletcher was one of those who hoped that they might be persuaded to become Protestants. All those who dislike political and religious authoritarianism seem to him to be potential Protestants; and he assumes that poetry flourishes best under conditions of religious and political liberty. In a remarkably early example of British Philhellenism, he praises Ancient Greece and laments that now the Muses are slaves because of the Turkish occupation—there had recently been a Greek revolt against the Turks but it had collapsed. In Britain, by contrast, the Muses flourish under a learned king: in this poem Fletcher reverts to the old ideal of James as the ideal Protestant poet-king, defending the faith with pen rather than the sword.²³ James had published a series of theological works warning of the dangers to royal authority presented by Catholic fanatics.

But the implication of Fletcher's poem is that the sword has to be held in reserve because the Jesuits are constantly conspiring and will gain easy victories where courts are complacent. James insisted on the evils of war and had no intention of imitating the militaristic Henry IV. Duplessis-Mornay's dedication of the *Mysterie of Iniquitie* had upset him because it seemed to imply the legitimacy of an ideological war against the Catholics: James wrote to Mornay to insist that he did not agree with such a policy.²⁴ The English translation of this book was dedicated not to James but to his elder son Prince Henry, who was believed to be more sympathetic to a militant, or at least a vigilant, foreign policy. Fletcher dedicated his poem to Henry rather than

²² Philippe Duplessis-Mornay, *Le Mystere d'iniquité* (Saumur, 1611), trans. Samson Lennard, *The Mysterie of Iniquitie* (London, 1612). This work included a discussion, with quotations, of Dante's attacks on the clergy in *De monarchia*, *Purgatorio*, xvi, and *Paradiso* ix, xvii, and xxix: see Paget Toynbee, *Dante Studies* (Oxford, 1921) (above, Ch. 2 n. 37).

²³ Fletcher and Fletcher, *Poetical Works*, i.155; on the sources see 311–12.

²⁴ S. L. Adams, 'The Protestant Cause: Religious Alliance with the W. European Calvinist Communities as a Political Issue in England, 1585–1630' (unpublished D.Phil. thesis, Oxford, 1973), 157.

James. In another poem on the Gunpowder Plot, by Francis Herring, a conspirator makes the point that it is essential to kill Henry as well as James or a terrible revenge will be taken on the Catholic powers: the slightly tactless implication is that Henry will be much more politically effective than his father ever was.²⁵ Several works dedicated to him expressed apocalyptic hopes that he might marshal a decisive Protestant victory. There were rumours that after his sister's marriage he planned to go to Germany and fight alongside the Protestant princes. Attempts were being made to mould him into a new Protestant leader on the model of Leicester, Sidney, and Essex: one elegist was to adapt a poem about Sidney to mourn the prince.²⁶

For present purposes Henry's private political views are not particularly material; what counts is the public image which many writers combined to create and which Henry up to a point endorsed. He had exalted ideas of monarchy and patronized artists and architects who could express the ideals of princely magnificence in spectacular forms; but he insisted that splendour should be accompanied by readiness for action, and should not degenerate into the effeminacy and unnecessary luxury which critics found in James's court. Though his name made many people compare him to Henry VIII, his self-conscious piety made him more reminiscent of Edward VI. In the year of his installation a Puritan publisher issued an edition of Sir John Cheke's elegy for Edward, which had hinted that the young king devoted rather too much time to courtly revelry towards the end of his reign.²⁷ Henry did take an interest in revels but he made sure that they could be harmonized with Protestant zeal. His father preferred masques to tournaments but Henry loved the tiltyard, and the barriers with which he celebrated his approaching installation as Prince of Wales revived the atmosphere of the Elizabethan Accession Day tilts. Henry was presented as a knight who would revive the decaying spirit of chivalry. He chose the name of Moeliades, an anagram of 'miles a deo': Henry was a Protestant soldier. The verses for this occasion were provided by Ben Jonson, who seems to have had doubts about the warlike advice that was being given to Henry: his friend Sir Robert Cotton had presented him with a treatise on the virtues of peace. Jonson reminded the prince of the dangers of irresponsible militancy and urged him to obey his father.²⁸ Jonson did try to gain favour at Henry's court, having perhaps become somewhat disillusioned with the licence James permitted; but though his entertainments for Henry reflected the prince's specific preoccupations, he regularly struck a note of caution. In *Oberon* (1611), he uncharacteristically drew on Spenserian 'faerie' mythology: the prince

²⁵ Francis Herring, *Popish Pietie*, trans. A.P. (London, 1610), sigs. B2^v-3^r; this is a translation of *Pietas pontificia* (London, 1606); another translation, by John Vicars, was refused a licence in the 1630s.

²⁶ *The Poems of Sir Arthur Gorges*, ed. Helen Estabrook Sandison (Oxford, 1953), 117, 181-2, 238. On Henry's public image see J. W. Williamson, *The Myth of the Conqueror: Prince Henry Stuart: A Study of 17th Century Personation* (New York, 1978). For more recent studies see Roy Strong, *Henry Prince of Wales and England's Lost Renaissance* (London, 1986) and T. V. Wilks, 'The Court Culture of Prince Henry and his Circle, 1603-1613' (unpublished D.Phil. thesis, University of Oxford, 1988).

²⁷ Sir John Cheke, *A Royal Elegie Briefly Describing the Vertuous Reigne and Happy Death of King Edward the Sixth* (London, 1610). The volume was dedicated to Viscountess Lisle, the wife of Sir Robert Sidney, and the publisher also praised her daughter Lady Mary Wroth.

²⁸ On Jonson's relations with Henry see Williamson, *Myth of the Conqueror*, 75-102.

was identified with the Fairy King Oberon. Jonson may perhaps have been hinting at the defects of James's court: a group of satyrs explained that they had left their old master Bacchus, the god of disorderly revelry, and come to serve Oberon.²⁹ But Jonson did not have major ideological objections to James's rule, and here he emphasizes that the prince must pay tribute to his father, who is celebrated as a god over kings.

Under Henry's influence, other masque-writers gave a different emphasis to the form. To some extent his court continued the patronage of Queen Anne, whose household had welcomed many former members of the old Essex circle. It was Samuel Daniel, a favourite writer of the queen's, who wrote the masque for Henry's installation, and he did so in a conscious critique of the over-hyperbolic conventions of James's masques.³⁰ The masques for Princess Elizabeth's wedding, in whose production Henry seems to have had considerable influence, introduced some new poets to court. Jonson was out of the country at the time of the marriage. The four Inns of Court between them staged two masques; this was the first time that the lawyers had paid this tribute to a member of the new royal house. One of the masques, written by George Chapman, glorified projects of colonization in the New World, a topic which aroused Henry's enthusiasm, particularly as it was a means of resisting Spanish power in the part of the world from which they drew their chief financial strength. Other masques and pageants at this time celebrated Protestant militancy. A draft has survived of a masque for Elizabeth's wedding which would have glorified the marriage as a means towards the apocalyptic reunion of Protestants throughout the world; the central figure of the masque was the figure of Aletheia, the apocalyptic Truth. The internationalist vision of this masque project contrasts strikingly with Jonson's celebration in his masques of England's splendid isolation, standing above the conflicts that beset the rest of Europe.³¹ In his masque Chapman makes a speaker declare that the Britons are no longer, as Virgil had suggested, in the *Georgics*, divided from the world: the Palatine match had brought Britain into the mainstream of European Protestant politics. The figure of Protestant Truth also began to reappear in civic pageants at this time.

But by 1613 such apocalyptic enthusiasm was taking on a rather strained and desperate note, for the unexpected death of Prince Henry in November 1612 had removed the leading focus of Puritan hopes. There were fears that the marriage would be abandoned now that its most enthusiastic advocate was dead; in fact the

²⁹ Cf. Williamson's discussion of this masque, Williamson, *Myth of the Conqueror*, 95–102.

³⁰ On the queen's masques see Barbara K. Lewalski, *Writing Women in Jacobean England* (Cambridge, Mass., 1993), ch. 1, and Leeds Barroll, *Anna of Denmark, Queen of England: A Cultural Biography* (Philadelphia, 2001), ch. 4; on Daniel's relations with Henry see *The Brotherton Manuscript*, ed. Pitcher, 26–35, 93–4, and “‘In those figures which they seeme’: Samuel Daniel's *Tethys' Festival*”, in Lindley (ed.), *The Court Masque*, 33–46. Strong claims that if Henry had lived, ‘the art of festival in Stuart England would have taken a very different course from that which ended in the sterility of the self-adulatory masques of the Caroline age’: Henry Prince of Wales and England's Lost Renaissance, 139. See further Tristan Marshall, *Theatre of Empire: Great Britain on the London Stages under James VI and I* (Manchester, 2000), ch. 3.

³¹ See David Norbrook, ‘*The Masque of Truth: Court Entertainments and International Protestant Politics in the Early Stuart Period*’, *The Seventeenth Century*, 1 (1986), 81–110.

wedding went ahead but the rejoicings were overshadowed by mourning for Henry. There was an unprecedented outbreak of public grief, and innumerable elegies were published in which Henry was praised as a model of godliness: several elegists noted his preference for warlike pursuits as opposed to ‘the gaudy show Of ceremonies’.³² Henry’s death, following soon after Salisbury’s, left a lack of serious political opposition to the king’s new favourite Robert Carr, Viscount Rochester, and to the Howards with whom he was allying himself. The Howards did not constitute a coherent political bloc, but their enemies feared that they were conspiring together to persecute Puritans and improve the lot of Catholics. Northampton was especially hated because of his alleged pro-Spanish bias: contemporary opinion was summed up by the epitaph

Here lyes my Lord of Northampton, his Maiestie’s erwigg,
Wth a Papisticall bald crowne, & a Protestant perewigg.³³

An even more succinct satirist wrote of the Howards:

when *they* are great
they emprison & beat[.]

The fear that a pro-Spanish faction was coming to dominate the court increased when it was revealed that Rochester was to marry the Earl of Suffolk’s daughter Frances. This marriage constituted a particularly bitter blow to those who idealized the great days of the Elizabethans, for Frances was married to the young Earl of Essex. Now the family name was being dishonoured by a particularly sordid divorce case. George Abbot, the recently appointed Archbishop of Canterbury, had grave doubts about the legitimacy of the divorce. The wedding festivities of 1614 did not arouse the same degree of public enthusiasm as Elizabeth’s wedding the previous year. The Inns of Court initially planned to collaborate on a joint masque but in the end only Gray’s Inn staged a masque, sponsored by Sir Francis Bacon who was anxious for court favour; the other Inns dropped out of the project, possibly because of their dislike of the marriage.³⁴ Only after strong pressure from the king did the City provide a wedding masque. The most enthusiastic praise of the marriage came from people who were anxious at all costs to gain favour with the newly rising faction at court, such as Bacon and John Donne, who even offered to publish a prose defence of the divorce. George Chapman published a somewhat embarrassed poem in praise of the marriage in an attempt to rescue his desperate financial state—his hopes of advancement from Henry had come to nothing and he had not yet been paid for his masque for Princess Elizabeth.³⁵ The atmosphere for the festivities of 1614 was in

³² *The Complete Works of John Webster*, ed. F. L. Lucas, 4 vols. (London, 1927), iii.277.

³³ *The Dr. Farmer Chetham Manuscript*, ed. A. B. Grosart, 2 vols., Chetham Society (Manchester, 1873), ii.198; the other epigram quoted is an annotation in a Folger Shakespeare Library copy of Fulke Greville’s *Workes* (London, 1633) (*Alaham*, 3); see below, Ch. 10 n. 115.

³⁴ E. A. J. Honigmann (ed.), *The Masque of Flowers*, in T. J. B. Spencer et al. (eds.), *A Book of Masques in Honour of Allardyce Nicoll* (Cambridge, 1967), 149–78 (152–3).

³⁵ Chapman, ‘Andromeda liberata’, in *The Poems of George Chapman*, ed. Phyllis Brooks Bartlett (New York, 1941), 301–35.

general an uneasy one, and the widespread hostility to the dominant groups at court contributed to the political tensions that disrupted the Parliament held that summer. There were rumours that the government planned to manipulate the Parliament and members responded by behaviour that made it completely unmanageable.³⁶ Fears that the English court was being dominated by Catholic sympathizers were heightened by reports that war was about to break out on the Continent. It was believed that James had been lulled into complacency by his pro-Spanish councillors and was doing nothing to prevent a planned Catholic attack on the Protestant states in Germany.³⁷

Jonson and the Spenserians responded to these events in rather different ways. Jonson does not seem to have shared in the extreme mourning for Henry's death. Though he seems by this time to have returned to the Church of England he did not like the militant apocalyptic fervour that was expressed in so many of the elegies. His friend Richard Corbett revealed the attitude of many anti-Puritan observers in a satire that ridiculed the elegists for Henry, many of whom were of low social status: what did the grief of a cobbler or a Geneva bridegroom matter, and what right had such people to express their opinions about matters far above their understandings?³⁸ Jonson, who was travelling on the Continent at the time, had not written an epithalamium for Princess Elizabeth, but he did celebrate the Somerset marriage in a masque and in verses for the attendant barriers. Jonson was being somewhat inconsistent in doing so, for he had already celebrated Frances Howard's first marriage in a masque, *Hymenaei*, which contained mystical praise of the marriage bond. When the first masque was staged the Puritans had been campaigning for a number of reforms including relaxation of restrictions against divorce—a reform first formulated in Edward VI's reign—but the high-church party had been firmly opposed to any erosion in the traditional status of marriage. Such principles could be easily overruled, however, when it was a matter of pleasing the king's new favourite. There were, however, less cynical reasons for defending the new marriage: Frances Howard's marriage had been arranged when she was very young and it had become for her an imprisonment. The campaign of opposition to the match revealed the British public in a mood of self-righteousness which Jonson found unattractive. The misogyny that often lay behind Puritan insistence on strict female virtue could be felt in the many denunciations of Frances Howard's wantonness. As for Somerset, though he aroused much jealousy he was no monster and there is testimony to his character from George Chapman and Samuel Daniel even after his fall. Jonson saw it as his function to strengthen unity at court and respect for established institutions, and he rallied behind the king and his favourite. His masque and barriers do, how-

³⁶ These rumours were exaggerated: see Linda Levy Peck, *Northampton: Patronage and Policy at the Court of James I* (London, 1982), 205–10. For a fuller analysis of the politics and culture of 1614, which I have not been able to consult, see Stephen Clucas and Rosalind Davies (eds.), *1614: Year of Crisis. Studies in Jacobean History and Literature* (Aldershot, 2002).

³⁷ See, e.g., *Historical Manuscripts Commission. Report on the Manuscripts of the Marquess of Downshire Preserved at Easthamstead Park, Berks.*, iv, ed. A. B. Hind (London, 1940), 425, 514.

³⁸ *The Poems of Richard Corbett*, ed. J. A. W. Bennett and H. R. Trevor-Roper (Oxford, 1955), 8–10.

ever, rather conspicuously abstain from direct praise of the couple; and as we shall see, there are signs that by the summer of 1614 his loyalty to the official line was under severe strain.³⁹

Where Jonson's responses were somewhat evasive, however, the Spenserians responded to the crisis by a strong affirmation of Elizabethan poetic and political traditions. The years 1613–14 saw a revival of pastoral poetry; and in adopting the persona of the plain-speaking shepherds the Spenserians were indicating their dissatisfaction with contemporary events. In 1614 the Elizabethan anthology *England's Helicon* was reprinted with additional poems by Christopher Brooke and William Browne and the new motto:

The Courts of Kings heare no such straines,
As daily lull the Rusticke Swaines.⁴⁰

This might also be taken as the motto of Browne's long poem *Britannia's Pastorals*, of which the first part appeared in November 1613. In a commendatory poem Michael Drayton, who was described by a contemporary as '[o]ur still reviving Spencer', praised Browne for redeeming the world of pastoral which, he said, was 'utterly neglected' today.⁴¹ Neither Donne nor Jonson was fond of the pastoral convention, partly because of its prophetic associations. Browne's originality in *Britannia's Pastorals* lies in the connections he makes between the symbolic figure of the shepherd as Protestant prophet and the celebration of the English countryside. Throughout the poem the country is associated with moral purity, the court with corruption. Browne's poem owes a lot to Drayton's *Poly-Olbion*, of which the first part had been published in 1612. This was an extremely ambitious project to mythologize the English countryside, to present an imaginative vision of its history and geography. Drayton was thus following Spenser's lead in *Colin Clouts Come Home Againe*. Like Browne, Drayton praised the country for its associations with moral virtue; he paid little attention to cities and the court. He celebrated the martial glories of the past, and dedicated the poem not to James but to Prince Henry, who was portrayed on the title page in full armour.

Drayton's poem contained few direct political allusions, but Browne explicitly linked his praise of the countryside with a commitment to Protestant politics. In cantos 4 and 5 of Book I Browne tells the story of Aletheia, the embodiment of

³⁹ Jonson may have inserted satirical references to the divorce in revisions to *Epicoeue*, though the case is hard to prove: Thomas Kranidas, 'Possible Revisions or Additions in Jonson's *Epicoeue*', *Anglia*, 83 (1965), 451–3. For a new discussion of the whole episode, emphasizing misogynistic elements in contemporary criticisms, see David Lindley, *The Trials of Frances Howard: Fact and Fiction at the Court of King James* (London, 1993); for the wave of manuscript satires see James L. Sanderson, 'Poems on an Affair of State', *Review of English Studies*, 17 (1966), 57–61.

⁴⁰ *England's Helicon 1600, 1614*, ed. Hyder Edward Rollins, 2 vols. (Cambridge, Mass., 1935), ii.9. For more on the 1614 *England's Helicon* see Jane Tylus, 'Jacobean Poetry and Lyric Disappointment', in Maus and Harvey (eds.), *Soliciting Interpretation*, 174–98 (183); on the Spenserians at this period see Michelle O'Callaghan, *The 'Shepherds Nation': Jacobean Spenserians and Early Stuart Political Culture, 1612–1625* (Oxford, 2000), chs. 1–2, and "'Now thou may'st speak freely': Entering the Public Sphere in 1614", in Lucas and Davies (eds.), *1614: A Year of Crisis*.

⁴¹ Newdigate, *Michael Drayton and his Circle*, 199; Browne, *Poems*, i.10.

Protestant Truth. Like the woman in the wilderness, and Spenser's Una, she wanders alone through a desolate landscape. She is refused admission at an abbey and is shut out from court because Adulation is a privileged guest there. Did Browne know that it had been planned to celebrate Elizabeth's wedding with a masque of Aletheia? Certainly there are allusions in the poem to recent history: at one point Browne reprints his own elegy for Prince Henry, and there is a lengthy description of the Vale of Woe where various Protestant heroes are lamenting. The fate of the second Earl of Essex is pathetically described: this would have been especially topical just before the remarriage of his son's wife to the king's favourite. Sir Walter Raleigh makes an appearance; he had been in prison since the start of James's reign, and was in a black mood after Henry's death had removed his hopes of imminent release. (Raleigh's appearance in the poem may be said to have constituted some pre-publicity for his *History of the World*, whose publication in 1614 was to be swiftly halted by King James.) Browne dedicated the first part of the poem to Edward Lord Zouche, who was known as a strong Protestant and an enemy of Northampton. The idealization of country life in Browne and Drayton may seem to have much in common with Jonson's praise of Penshurst and Sir Robert Wroth—indeed, Drayton praises Waltham Forest in *Poly-Olbion*—but Jonson's political rhetoric is significantly different. Where Browne and Drayton praise the countryside as the site of rural simplicity and also as a place where martial virtue can be nourished, far from the luxury of courts, Jonson celebrates the common commitment of court and countryside to a traditional order of ritual and revelry, and praises the country as an image of the king's peace.⁴² Browne associates the countryside both with political liberty and with poetic inspiration, and the very formlessness of *Britannia's Pastorals* becomes a symbol of imaginative freedom as opposed to courtly restraint—hence its later appeal to the young Keats and the Leigh Hunt circle. The somewhat incongruous association between 'faerie' mythology and political radicalism which was to be a feature of English political traditions down to Shelley's *Queen Mab* and beyond was already emerging in the Jacobean period.⁴³

Political comment still forms a subordinate element in Book I of *Britannia's Pastorals*: Part II, published in 1616, was to contain more explicit satire. But Browne's next pastoral work, *The Shepherds Pipe* (1614), formed a kind of poetic manifesto with strong political undertones.⁴⁴ The seventh eclogue glanced at the Somerset marriage in denouncing the unfaithful 'Phillis'. The volume included not only eclogues by Browne but also poems by his friends John Davies of Hereford,

⁴² For contrasting representations of the 'country' and the country house in Jonson and the Spenserians see Annabel Patterson, *Pastoral and Ideology: Virgil to Valéry* (Oxford, 1988), 143–4, Richard Helgerson, *Forms of Nationhood: The Elizabethan Writing of England* (Chicago, 1992), 107–47, and O'Callaghan, *The 'Shepherds Nation'*, 44–8, 104–7.

⁴³ Jeffrey N. Cox, *Poetry and Politics in the Cockney School: Keats, Shelley, Hunt and their Circle* (Cambridge, 1999), 75, 99, 126.

⁴⁴ Browne, *Poems*, ii.77–164; James Doelman (ed.), *Early Stuart Pastoral* (Toronto, 1999), includes editions of *The Shepherds Pipe* and Wither's *The Shepherds Hunting*, and the latter is also available in William B. Hunter, Jr. (ed.), *The English Spenserians: The Poetry of Giles Fletcher, George Wither, Michael Drayton, Phineas Fletcher, and Henry More* (Salt Lake City, 1977).

Christopher Brooke, and George Wither. Though most of these poems have a festive flavour, all three friends had strong and controversial political interests. Davies was patronized by the Earl of Northumberland, who had been imprisoned in the Tower for his alleged complicity in the Gunpowder Plot; in 1609 he had addressed to his patron a poem which implied that James was ‘Upon the *Rack* of Conscience bound’ for this unjust imprisonment. The poem was censored, he tartly commented in a manuscript version, by the ‘p[re]cisenesse of the chaplaines allowed to allow Books’.⁴⁵ Wither, the addressee of Browne’s opening eclogue, was himself in prison by the time the volume was entered in the Stationers’ Register. Wither had made his poetic debut with a series of elegies for Prince Henry and an epithalamium for Princess Elizabeth, in both of which he voiced a fierce Protestant patriotism. Early in 1613 he published a long satire, *Abuses Stript and Whipt*, which achieved an enormous popular success. One reason for the poem’s fame—or notoriety—was a series of veiled attacks on corruption in high places; some passages were widely taken to refer to Salisbury and Northampton. Wither’s poem stands in the tradition of Protestant satires on abuses that went back to Robert Crowley in the sixteenth century. Wither gives no sign of direct acquaintance with Crowley’s poetry, but he probably knew *Piers Plowman*—Drayton had drawn heavily on the poem in his *Legend of Cromwell* (1607).⁴⁶ William Browne was interested in medieval poetry and published a poem by Hoccleve in *The Shepherds Pipe*. Wither made no attempt to imitate the stylized diction of some of the older prophetic poetry; he wrote in flowing couplets which aimed to reach the widest possible readership. But he saw himself, like Crowley, as a man whose poetic gifts gave him an obligation to speak out and denounce abuses even at the risk of arousing the disapprobation of those in authority. Like Crowley, Wither was no man of the people—he came from a respectable country family—but he was always ready to vindicate his ‘ancient-used *Hampshire Dialect*’ against the fashions of court and town. He took the unusual step of dedicating *Abuses Stript and Whipt* to himself, declaring that a ‘common *Mecænas*’ would hardly be pleased with his ‘free speech’.⁴⁷ In fact Wither took the precaution of including complimentary addresses to various leading courtiers, all of them people known for their strong Protestantism. But Wither never tried to make demonstrative rhetoric into a serious poetic art. Jonson’s masques and his poems to his patrons adopt a stance of moral independence but they rely on his sense of intimacy with the monarch and his other patrons, a knowledge of their interests and character. The address is primarily to them, and the reader is involved at a certain distance, over-hearing Jonson’s conversation with a wise and noble courtier. Wither’s dedicatory addresses are often frankly pragmatic, appeals for favour without any great measure of personal involvement; his poetry addresses the common reader, the person who may not read much poetry but who has a general interest in moral and political

⁴⁵ Stephen Clucas, ‘“Noble Virtue in Extremes”: Henry Percy, Ninth Earl of Northumberland, Patronage and the Politics of Stoic Consolation’, *Renaissance Studies*, 9 (1995), 266–91 (273–80).

⁴⁶ Drayton, *Works*, v.172–3.

⁴⁷ George Wither, *Juvenilia*, 3 vols., Spenser Society (Manchester, 1871), i, sig. A3^r, 9 (I cite original pagination).

matters. Jonson's constant satire of Puritans and ignorant citizens defines his audience as an erudite and conservative one; Wither, while declaring that he is not himself a Puritan, refuses to attack them:

Who are so much tearm'd *Puritans* as they
That feare God most?⁴⁸

Wither's poetry was considered to be politically inflammatory, and in 1614 he was arrested.⁴⁹ The timing of his arrest is significant: elections were being held, in an atmosphere of great suspicion, for the Parliament which was to assemble that spring. Wither's imprisonment seems to have been arranged by Northampton, who had opposed the summoning of the Parliament in case it led to demonstrations of hostility to pro-Spanish courtiers and who had been attacked in Wither's poem. He seems to have felt that Wither should be discouraged from making further political trouble at such a sensitive period. From his prison Wither composed *A Satyre*, in which he appealed to the king, insisting that he could not have known of his imprisonment, which he blamed on corrupt courtiers. In later writings he continued to claim the king's favour; as will be seen, by the end of the reign he had certainly gained it. Even if his praise of James was sincere, however, Wither was constitutionally incapable of advancing praise to someone in power without an immediate counter-move. If the king's judgement is good, it is hard to see why

each fleeing *Parasite* is bold
Thy Royall brow vndaunted to behold:
And euery *Temporizer* strikes a string,
That's Musicke for the hearing of a King?⁵⁰

Wither was not released until some time after the end of the Parliament, when several MPs arrested for provocative behaviour during the sitting had already been set free.

Wither's imprisonment became the occasion for a manifestation of political discontent by a group of his friends. In his eclogue in *The Shepheards Pipe* Christopher Brooke attributed to Browne the sentiment that

Thought hath no prison and the minde is free
Vnder the greatest king and tyrannie

and Browne replied to Brooke that 'thou canst give more to kings than kings to thee'.⁵¹ Wither reaffirmed this group identity when he reprinted his contributions to *The Shepheards Pipe* in 1615 with some further eclogues, *The Shepherds Hunting*. Browne's eclogue served as publicity for Brooke's poem *The Ghost of Richard III*, a sententious denunciation of tyranny, which was entered in the Stationers' Register the day before *The Shepheards Pipe*. In the tradition of More's Tacitean satire,

⁴⁸ George Wither, *Juvenilia*, i.276.

⁴⁹ Allan Pritchard, 'Abuses Stript and Whipt and Wither's Imprisonment', *Review of English Studies*, NS 14 (1963), 337–45.

⁵⁰ Wither, *Juvenilia*, iii, sig. Dd7r.

⁵¹ Browne, *Poems*, ii.147.

Brooke presented Richard as a master-dissimulator who used flattering clergy to bolster his power. Richard resolved to

in thine owne power, still be free,
And what seemes best, thinke absolutely well . . .
Nor bound thy selfe, being a boundlesse *King* . . .

he must become ‘absolute instated’.⁵² The poem’s fear of tyranny is very close to language Brooke was using in Parliament. He had joined in the attack on the government’s unpopular ‘impositions’, taxes on trade, from early in the session. The king, he insisted, had no absolute power to make any laws to the prejudice of his subjects: if the king could ‘impose by his absolute Power, then no man [would be] certain what he hath, for it shall be subject to the King’s pleasure’.⁵³

The connections between poetry and politics here are especially striking. The 1614 Parliament was in fact an unusually literary body. It has gone down in history as the ‘Addled Parliament’, a chaotic failure that was eventually dissolved without passing any legislation. For revisionists, the angry words spoken by some MPs against the government stayed well within an ideological consensus, and can often be ascribed to manipulation by patrons like Northampton. The worries about an ‘absolute’ king are not to be taken as reflecting a constitutional conflict, for on some revisionist definitions the term was taken in the very restricted sense of a monarch who claimed the right to make laws without consulting anybody else; James was cautious about making such claims. But the debates in Parliament constantly compared the current monarchy with earlier English periods and with Continental states, revealing a recurrent fear that elements of popular consent at one stage inherent in the English constitution were being eroded.⁵⁴ Brooke’s speeches and his poetry reveal such fears of a slowly emergent absolutism. He certainly did not believe that there was no difference between James I and Richard III, but the cartoon-like villainy of his tyrant offered a warning about what might happen if Parliament were not vigilant. It is quite true that the political allegiances of 1614 are bewilderingly complex; in bringing together literary and historical perspectives, however, it is possible to see the Parliament’s failure as marking a significant moment in the emergence of a political public sphere.

The friendship between Brooke and the Spenserian poets brought together different but overlapping literary worlds. Brooke had shown no previous poetic ambitions, and his closest literary friendship was with John Donne, no admirer of Spenser. Amongst those who contributed commendatory verse to his *Ghost of*

⁵² Christopher Brooke, *The Ghost of Richard III* (London, 1614), sigs. G2^v–3^r; *The Complete Poems of Christopher Brooke*, ed. Alexander B. Grosart, in *Miscellanies of the Fuller Worthies’ Library*, iv (Blackburn, 1872), 161. See O’Callaghan, *The ‘Shepheards Nation’*, ch. 2, and “‘Talking Politics’: Tyranny, Parliament, and Christopher Brooke’s *The Ghost of Richard III* (1614)”, *Historical Journal*, 41 (1998), 97–120, and James Doelman, ‘Born with Teeth: Christopher Brooke’s *The Ghost of Richard III*’, *The Seventeenth Century*, 14 (1999), 115–29.

⁵³ *Wentworth Papers 1597–1628*, ed. J. P. Cooper, London, Camden Society, 4th series, 12 (1973), 67; Maia Jansson (ed.), *Proceedings in Parliament 1614 (House of Commons)*, *Memoirs of the American Philosophical Society*, 172 (Philadelphia, 1988), 95 (passage in brackets added).

⁵⁴ For differing views see Glenn Burgess, *Absolute Monarchy and the Stuart Constitution* (New Haven, 1996), ch. 1, and Sommerville, *Royalists and Patriots*, 224–65.

Richard III were Jonson and Chapman, both of whom, like Donne, had recently written in praise of the Somerset marriage. There are signs, however, that in 1614 Jonson was feeling the strain of his role as panegyrist of the Somerset marriage, and was keen to embrace non-courtly worlds. He had been travelling abroad with the son of Sir Walter Raleigh and had helped Sir Walter in compiling and publishing his *History of the World*, which was recalled by James after its publication in 1614 for presenting the divine punishment of monarchs too sympathetically. Jonson's contacts with the Inns of Court were particularly close at this time; he addressed a warm poem to his friend John Selden's *Titles of Honour* in which for the first time he acknowledged that he had been 'deceiv'd' and had 'prais'd some names too much'. He hailed Selden as a 'Monarch in Letters!' and praised him for dedicating his book to 'no great Name' but his fellow lawyer Edward Heyward.⁵⁵ Selden and Heyward had both contributed commendatory poems to *Britannia's Pastorals* and Selden had also provided notes for Browne's poem and for Drayton's *Poly-Olbion*; Selden may have been the 'Jockie' of Browne's *The Shepherds Pipe*.⁵⁶ Though Selden's profound scholarship refrained from any clear polemics, his work was to provide grounding for criticisms of royal policy in Parliament, and he would himself later become an active Parliamentarian. Members of the Inns of Court were playing a leading role in the emergence of a series of literary clubs which met at taverns near the bookselling centre of Paul's Churchyard. Wither and Browne allegorized convivial gatherings at the Devil and St Dunstan in their pastorals; Jonson wrote a series of rules for gatherings at the tavern's 'Apollo Room'. Donne, Brooke, and Jonson were members of another group that met at the Mermaid Tavern.⁵⁷ These clubs brought together figures with Parliamentary, legal, and courtly connections across a broad range of political sympathies: the wit John Hoskyns was on friendly terms with Northampton. Brooke collaborated with Hoskyns and others on the notorious *jeu d'esprit* 'The Parliament Fart', which was not calculated to inspire political ideals, while Hoskyns has been credited as the inventor of English nonsense verse on the basis which emerged from the literary games of the 'Sireniacs'.⁵⁸

Such apparently 'pure' poetry may seem a long way from concrete engagement with the political world. The distance from nonsense to Parliament, however, is perhaps never entirely unbridgeable, and at this period the clubs provided a bridge. These clubs anticipate in increasingly articulate and institutionalized form the phenomenon Jürgen Habermas describes as a 'literary public sphere', and whose origins

⁵⁵ Anna R. Beer, *Sir Walter Raleigh and his Readers in the Seventeenth Century: Speaking to the People* (Houndmills, 1997), 31–5; Cyndia Susan Clegg, *Press Censorship in Jacobean England* (Cambridge, 2001), 96 ff.; David Riggs, *Ben Jonson: A Life* (Cambridge, Mass., 1989), 192 ff.; *H&S*, ii. 158–61, ll. 21, 65–9.

⁵⁶ Anne Lake Prescott, 'Marginal Discourse: Drayton's Muse and Selden's "Story"', *Studies in Philology*, 88 (1991), 307–28; O'Callaghan, *The 'Shepherds Nation'*, 42.

⁵⁷ I. A. Shapiro, 'The "Mermaid Club"', *Modern Language Review*, 45 (1950), 6–17; Pascal Briost, 'Que de choses avons nous vues et vécues à la Sirène', in Dominique Julia (ed.), *Culture et société dans l'Europe moderne et contemporaine* (Florence, 1992), 89–132; O'Callaghan, *The 'Shepherds Nation'*, 37–9.

⁵⁸ Noel Malcolm, *The Origins of English Nonsense* (London, 1997), 5–17. For Hoskyns I follow throughout Baird W. Whitlock, *John Hoskyns, Serjeant-at-Law* (Washington, 1982); see also David Norbrook, 'Rhetoric, Ideology, and the Elizabethan World Picture', in Peter Mack (ed.), *Renaissance Rhetoric* (London, 1994), 140–64 (147–58).

he locates in Parisian *salons* and English coffee-houses of the later seventeenth century. For Habermas, such a literary public sphere is a precondition for a political public sphere, where debate would be relatively independent of the patronage structures of court and other institutions. The members of these Jacobean clubs did have some strong patronage ties and professional affiliations which cut across their sense of solidarity, and in that sense the Habermasian model does not fully apply. On the other hand, it can be argued that their political significance ultimately overshadowed their role as a literary forum.⁵⁹ Their rhetorical play was designed to sharpen the wits of members who would go on to present arguments as lawyers or as MPs; in the humanist tradition of arguing *in utramque partem*, it was recognized that arguing a paradoxical or absurd case was excellent training quite beside the pleasure it provided. Hoskyns took the process of rhetorical education seriously: he had composed a rhetorical treatise for a young friend, Robert Harley, who was to become a leading Puritan MP. For the figure of ‘division’ he offered the following example: ‘All men exclaim upon these exactions. Nobles, gentlemen, commonalty, poor, rich, scholar, merchants, peasants, young, old, wise, ignorant, high, low, and all cry out upon the hard impositions of these burdens.’⁶⁰ When Hoskyns campaigned against impositions in 1614 he had a rich rhetorical storehouse to draw on. Training in rhetoric kept club members constantly aware of classical rhetorical and political traditions. Hoskyns drew heavily on Lipsius and was a great admirer of Tacitus. Brooke consciously patterned his *Ghost of Richard III* on the ornate, ironic rhetoric of Seneca. Davies of Hereford had recently praised Greville’s *Mustapha*, which was circulating in manuscript along with Buchanan’s still-proscribed *De jure regni*. In praising Brooke’s poem, Jonson would have recalled that he himself had composed a play about Richard late in the previous reign, at a time when Richard was often invoked as a parallel to Cecil.⁶¹

Classical analogies were constantly to the fore in contemporary responses to the 1614 Parliament, even if they have been played down by later historians. They brought with them a strong anxiety about the way monarchical power may limit free speech and historical enquiry—an anxiety that may have led them on occasion to exaggerate the perils in which they stood. From the classical tradition, early modern scholars could find several words for free speech, including the Greek *parrhesia*, which could take on strongly positive connotations as a boldness in the face of political intimidation. The *locus classicus* for the recurrent hostility between absolutism

⁵⁹ Jürgen Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society*, trans. Thomas Burger with Frederick Lawrence (Cambridge, Mass., 1989), 27 ff.; Briost, “‘Que de choses avons nous vues et vécuës à la Sirène’”, 127. See further below, pp. 287–8.

⁶⁰ Whitlock, *John Hoskyns, Serjeant-at-Law*, 138–9; John Hoskins, *Directions for Speech and Style*, ed. Hoyt H. Hudson (Princeton, 1935), 31.

⁶¹ John Davies of Hereford, *Complete Works*, ed. A. B. Grosart, 2 vols. (Edinburgh, 1878), ii.k.53, praises *Mustapha* ‘as it is written, not printed’. The Folger manuscript, Folger Shakespeare Library V.b.223, is bound up with the first English translation of Buchanan’s *De jure regni*, and was said by Israel Gollancz to have been written out by Davies (*Athenaeum*, 19 Jan. 1907, 78–9), though later scholars have not agreed. On Jonson see Blair Worden, ‘Ben Jonson among the Historians’, in Kevin Sharpe and Peter Lake (eds.), *Culture and Politics in Early Stuart England* (London, 1994), 67–90 (76).

and free speech was Tacitus' account of how Sejanus had suppressed the historian Cremutius Cordus. Jonson had dramatized the episode in his *Sejanus* and been called in question by Northampton.⁶² A significant publication of 1614 was Sir Arthur Gorges's translation of Lucan's *Pharsalia*, an epic written in the shadow of Tacitus which returns again and again to the theme of stifled voices and suppressed memories of freedom. Sir Walter Raleigh contributed a commendatory poem in which he warned that being a truth-teller at court might lead to death, just as in Lucan's time.⁶³ Sir Henry Wotton, disturbed at Northampton's attempts to muzzle criticism through the Star Chamber charge of *scandalum magnatum* (defaming a peer), drew a parallel with Cremutius Cordus.⁶⁴ As the Parliament proceeded, warnings about the dangers of excessive royal power became increasingly daring. Sir Edwin Sandys, with whom Brooke was closely aligned, quoted some lines of Juvenal (*Satires*, 10.112–13) which warned that few kings go to the grave without bloodshed, and made a speech which declared that monarchy was originally elective and that monarchs were accountable to the people. He was called before the Council for his speeches, though no charges were made. Hoskyns was one of several MPs delegated by Sandys to consult the chronicles for precedents, and his brief would have included a study of the reign of Richard III. Hoskyns and his friends used the library of Sir Robert Cotton, whose attempt to revive a Society of Antiquaries in 1614 was halted under royal disfavour.⁶⁵

The MPs' onslaughts extended to the church. Richard Neile, a high-church bishop who was to become a strong ally of Archbishop Laud, led the way in refusing a request from the Commons to the Lords for a consultation over impositions; Hoskyns responded with the provocative warning that if the bishops went too far they would be overthrown: 'Scotland and Germany have swept away greater miters than his.'⁶⁶ Brooke's poem was calculated to fuel in turn the anxieties of those suspicious of the clergy's political role: in his Paul's Cross sermon, Dr Shaw tries to cover up the king's tyranny with a mixture of 'clouted Creame' and 'spleenful Venome'.

⁶² David Colclough, 'Parrhesia: The Rhetoric of Free Speech in Early Modern England', *Rhetorica*, 17 (1999), 177–212; Worden, 'Ben Jonson among the Historians', 78–9.

⁶³ David Norbrook, 'Lucan, Thomas May, and the Creation of a Republican Literary Culture', in Sharpe and Lake (eds.), *Culture and Politics in Early Stuart England*, 45–66 (51–4). The translation was dedicated to the Countess of Bedford, who was associated with politics critical of the Howards and Buckingham: Lewalski, *Writing Women in Jacobean England*, 117. In the wake of the Overbury scandal a correspondent spoke of divisions at court between the 'domus Julia' and the 'Pompeiana familia', 'which is the aggregation of good patriots': *Historical Manuscripts Commission Report on the Manuscripts of the Marquess of Downshire Preserved at Easthampstead Park, Berkshire*, v, ed. G. Dyfnallt Owen (London, 1988), 284.

⁶⁴ *Life and Letters of Sir Henry Wotton*, ed. Logan Pearsall Smith, 2 vols. (Oxford, 1907), ii.23.

⁶⁵ Doelman, *Early Stuart Pastoral*, 65, suggests that the 'Neddy' of Browne's third eclogue could be Sir Edwin Sandys; O'Callaghan, *The 'Shepherds Nation'*, suggests Sir Edward Phelips. On Sandys's political views see Noel Malcolm, 'Hobbes, Sandys, and the Virginia Company', *Historical Journal*, 24 (1981), 297–321, and on his leading role in the 1614 Parliament, Theodore K. Rabb, *Jacobean Gentleman: Sir Edwin Sandys, 1561–1629* (Princeton, 1998), ch. 7; on the Juvenal allusion see 193 and Jansson (ed.), *Proceedings in Parliament 1614*, 316; on the historical research, *ibid.*, 225–6, 306–7, and Kevin Sharpe, *Sir Robert Cotton, 1586–1631: History and Politics in Early Modern England* (Oxford, 1979), 36, 162–3.

⁶⁶ Jansson (ed.), *Proceedings in Parliament 1614*, 341.

Brooke was here closely following Sir Thomas More. The deeper anxiety behind the Shaw episode is that here, contrary to the normal fiction that the king is being led astray by bad advisers, it is the king who is using the clergy more than they are using him. Hoskyns followed up his attack on the bishops with a reference to a ‘sermon at Paul’s Cross in R.3.’—surely a glance at More, perhaps via Brooke. Hoskyns’s provocativeness led to his being thrown in jail, whence he advised his son sardonically on the dangers of political rhetoric:

Keepe [your tongue] in thral whilst thou art free:
Imprison it or it will thee.⁶⁷

As a concerned participant in this session, Wotton was torn between worries about Northampton’s conduct and worries that there was some justice in the earl’s suspicion that the Commons was becoming subversive. One of those arrested, Christopher Neville, attacked Neile and other bishops as those who ‘to please the King . . . care not what they say to hurt the country’, being ‘their masters’ spaniels but their country’s wolves’: the implied opposition between the personal interests of the king and the interests of the country as a whole was bold indeed. Wotton dismissed his speech as a mere rhetorical exercise: Neville was ‘a young gentleman fresh from the school, who having gathered together divers Latin sentences against kings, bound them up in a long speech, and interlarded them with certain Ciceronian exclamations’. Perhaps, then, Northampton was being paranoid about what were only verbal gestures. There were indeed allegations that he had paid Hoskyns and other MPs to disrupt Parliament, so that their apparent independence was merely a reflection of a traditional clientage system. And yet Wotton was not confident that what he had heard in Parliament could be so easily dismissed as irrelevant to the political future. He commented that such speeches were ‘better being in a Senate of Venice where the traiters are perpetual princes, than when those that speak so irreverently are so soon to return (where they should remember) to the natural capacity of subjects’. Wotton had recently returned from Venice and he was in a good position to assess the balance of monarchical and political elements in the English constitution. Hoskyns and his allies, he felt, were pushing their demands for the right to speak out so far that they were undermining the constraints a monarchical government must necessarily place upon public oratory. James had termed Southampton and his supporters in the previous Parliament the ‘thirty doges’.⁶⁸ Hoskyns’s case was to be taken

⁶⁷ Brooke, *The Ghost of Richard III*, sig. F2^r, ed. Grosart, 97; Sir Thomas More, *The History of Richard III*, ed. Richard S. Sylvester, in *The Complete Works of St. Thomas More*, ii (New Haven, 1963), 66–8; Jansson (ed.), *Proceedings in Parliament 1614*, 419–20, 353 n. 42 (Jansson declares herself unable to locate the sermon referred to, but this seems a likely candidate); Whitlock, *John Hoskyns, Serjeant-at-Law*, 469. Hoskyns’s poem circulated widely in manuscript, attracting some readers with Puritan sympathies: David Colclough, ‘“The Muses Recreation”: John Hoskyns and the Manuscript Culture of the Seventeenth Century’, *Huntington Library Quarterly*, 61 (2000), 369–400 (386–9).

⁶⁸ Jansson (ed.), *Proceedings in Parliament 1614*, 419–20; *Life and Letters of Sir Henry Wotton*, ii, 37–8; Neil Cuddy, ‘The Conflicting Loyalties of a “Vulger Counselor”: The Third Earl of Southampton, 1597–1624’, in John Morrill et al. (eds.), *Public Duty and Private Conscience in Seventeenth-Century England: Essays Presented to G. E. Aylmer* (Oxford, 1993), 121–50 (138).

up at the very beginning of the 1621 Parliament, as a threat to the principle of free speech for Members. In itself that principle was a strictly limited one, and neither the MPs nor the extra-parliamentary poets were arguing for a universal and unconditional right to free speech. Nonetheless, the impassioned invocation of different kinds of concept of freedom from different historical eras and different contexts did produce a sense of solidarity amongst different writers and public figures which could work against the tendency to division and compartmentalization inherent in the patronage system.⁶⁹

Northampton's harsh actions against oppositional speech stemmed from his belief that it was necessary to defend monarchy against tendencies that threatened it. In the 1614 Parliament he lamented the diffusion of 'new opinions' when 'the scum are sent out of the university'. The classical parallel for oratory he preferred was Menenius Agrippa's use of a fable of the discontented body politic to quell a popular rebellion. He compared the House of Commons to a theatre: a place for demonstrative rather than deliberative rhetoric, for the king's views to be applauded rather than subjected to critical scrutiny. Northampton here anticipated the views of Hobbes and Newcastle that humanist scholarship instilled a cult of liberty incompatible with monarchical government. There was 'never any thing so dearly bought', Hobbes complained, 'as these Western parts have bought the learning of the Greek and Latine tongues . . . the *Universities* have been to this nation, as the wooden horse was to the Trojans'.⁷⁰

On the Habermasian model, the public sphere responded to a growth in economic relationships which gained increasing autonomy from the crown. The events of 1614 offer a striking example of the intersections between economics, politics, and literary history. Brooke and Sandys were strongly involved with trading interests, Sandys being a leading champion of the Virginia Company. At the same time, they were suspicious of the crown's attempts to find an accommodation with the large trading companies which would permit their privileged status and limit dependence on Parliament; Sandys was at the head of a series of parliamentary assaults on monopolies culminating in the Statute of Monopolies. Most of the writers under discussion here had links of some kind with trading companies, though as so often in this period their particular interests sometimes pulled them in different directions. There was a common involvement in colonial expansion in Ireland and the New World. Brooke had helped to arrange the finances for Chapman's masque for Princess Elizabeth, which celebrated colonization in the New World, and in 1622 he published a poem in praise of the Virginia settlement. Wither was also an enthusiastic supporter of the Virginia enterprise, and he took an interest in a colonial project closer to home:

⁶⁹ Christopher Thompson, *The Debate on Free Speech in the House of Commons in February 1621* (Orsett, 1985); David Colclough, "'Better Becoming a Senate of Venice': Freedom of Speech and the Addled Parliament", in Lucas and Davies (eds.), *1614: Year of Crisis*; Dr Colclough is working on a fuller study of freedom of speech in early Stuart England. See further below, pp. 307–13.

⁷⁰ Peck, *Northampton: Patronage and Policy at the Court of James I*, 179, 183; Elizabeth Read Foster (ed.), *Proceedings in Parliament, 1610*, 2 vols. (New Haven, 1966), i.79; Thomas Hobbes, *Behemoth; or, The Long Parliament*, ed. Ferdinand Tönnies (1889), reprint, ed. Stephen Holmes (Chicago, 1990), 40.

before publishing his first poems he had apparently been in Londonderry. He was patronized by Sir Thomas Ridgeway, a political ally of Sandys. Wither seems also to have had family links with the Merchant Adventurers, the company which supervised the wool trade. This company's fate was under scrutiny in the 1614 Parliament, with a proposal to dissolve the Merchant Adventurers and found a new body controlled by Alderman William Cokayne—for which Jonson was to write a masque (above, Ch. 7 n. 59). Brooke strongly attacked this proposal: though it could be presented as an attack on a traditional monopoly, it also had overtones of court clientage which made it suspect to its critics. A number of Spenserians had links with the Merchant Adventurers. In the Elizabethan period Essex had recommended Sylvester for a post in one of their Continental stations and he was at last rescued from financial ruin after Henry's death by a post at Middelburg. Giles Fletcher senior was a member of the company. William Ferrar, who composed commendatory verses to *Britannia's Pastorals* and was addressed by Wither in *The Shepherds Hunting*, came from a family closely associated with the company and with Sandys. In 1614 Brooke introduced a bill calling for sumptuary legislation; such legislation appealed to Puritans who disliked personal vanity but also had the more practical aim of protecting the wool trade. Browne and another contributor, John Davies of Hereford, both attacked sartorial extravagance in their eclogues. If classical pastoral rested on a split between labour and poetic contemplation, this new model pastoral had a practical interest in wool production.⁷¹

Many years later Milton, in *Areopagitica*, was to make a connection between monopolies in the wool trade and the licensing of books: 'Truth and understanding are not such wares as to be monopoliz'd and traded in by tickets and statutes, and standards. We must not think to make a staple commodity of all the knowledge in the Land, to mark and licence it like our broad cloath, and our wooll packs.'⁷² As will be seen in the next chapter, Wither, in many ways the most radical of the Spenserians, was to anticipate Milton in extending his critique of economic monopolies to the sphere of literary production. His poetic individualism in the end worked against that fidelity to the stylized conventions of pastoral which can still be found in Spenser, and that Milton was to retain in *Lycidas*. In a note to *The Shepherds Hunting*, he acknowledges that he is 'erring from the true nature of an *Eglogue*' in speaking so much in his own person rather than adopting a conventional persona. He declares

⁷¹ On Brooke's different patronage connections see Menna Prestwich, *Cranfield: Politics and Profits under the Early Stuarts* (Oxford, 1966), 141; Christopher Brooke, *A Poem on the Late Massacre in Virginia* (London, 1622). I consulted this poem (not included in Grosart's edition) in a transcript in the Folger Shakespeare Library; on Wither, see Cyril Falls, *The Birth of Ulster* (London, 1936), 223; Anthony Wither's letter of September 1614, 'I send you here the picture of his mind that is one of my own tribe and name . . . it got him out of prison', looks like a reference to *A Satyre* (*Historical Manuscripts Commission Report on the Manuscripts of the Marquess of Downshire*, iv, 516); Josuah Sylvester (trans.), *The Divine Weeks and Works of Guillaume de Saluste Sieur du Bartas*, ed. Susan Snyder, 2 vols. (Oxford, 1979), i.14–15, 27–8; Joan Kent, 'Attitudes of Members of the House of Commons to the Regulation of "Personal Conduct" in Late Elizabethan and Early Stuart England', *Bulletin of the Institute of Historical Research*, 46 (1973), 41–71 (44, 50–1).

⁷² *The Complete Prose Works of John Milton*, ed. Don M. Wolfe et al., 8 vols. in 10 (New Haven, 1953–82), ii.535–6.

that one of his models is the Psalms of David; and increasingly in his later poems he abandons courtly and Italianate forms and turns directly to Protestant prophecy in a direct and colloquial style. In the first eclogue of *The Shepherds Hunting*, Wither has Browne draw attention to the fact that he is invoking ‘our true Pan’, a ‘power, that we neglect in other layes’. Wither habitually writes in tetrameter or pentameter couplets which tend to be diffuse, like Browne’s, in order to give an effect of personal spontaneity, quite different from Jonson’s more restrained and disciplined couplets. In some ways Wither is returning to the older traditions of the ‘gospellers’ who tried to use immediately accessible verse forms, but he has a much more elevated conception of the dignity of poetry. In the fourth eclogue of *The Shepherds Hunting* he says that poetry can help the mind to transcend earthly imprisonment and find consolation in the joys of nature and in contemplation of the divine. Poetry is not just a carefully polished articulation of moral truths, but can offer by its harmony an adumbration of heavenly music.⁷³

After his release Wither declared to King James that he would write no more satires for a time and would turn to panegyrics of virtue. But not long after the tumult of 1614 had died down a new crisis began and the other Spenserians returned to satire. In 1615 it began to be rumoured that Frances Howard had arranged for Sir Thomas Overbury, a friend of Somerset’s who had opposed the marriage, to be murdered. He was poisoned and died a slow and agonizing death. She and her husband were put on trial the following year and were found guilty of murder. Browne and Brooke both contributed to a collection of elegies for Overbury in 1616, and Davies of Hereford published his own elegy with a dedication to Pembroke.⁷⁴ Drayton revised his satire *The Owle* for the 1619 edition of his collected poems to include an allusion to the Overbury affair. He also dropped a sonnet to James I from this edition. *The Owle* provided a model for two new satires by Thomas Scot and William Goddard which scathingly attacked the court in the aftermath of the Overbury affair. In Goddard’s fable, the owl complains that the navy is being neglected, that too much money is being spent on extravagant houses, and that murders committed by the great go unpunished (the death sentence on the Earl and Countess was never carried out). With a daring glance at James’s relations with his favourites, he attacks the ‘plumy peacocks pride | To striue to lie by’s sou’raigne Princes side’. Still more provocatively, the nobles, rejecting the conventional distinction between the king and his corrupt advisers, retort to the king that ‘from your selfe sprange firste this faults abuse’, a ‘peremptory answer’ which so incenses him that a civil war breaks out, and the owl is able to escape because of this ‘Civill strife’.⁷⁵ The second book of

⁷³ Wither, *Juvenilia*, ii, sig. li5^r.

⁷⁴ O’Callaghan, *The ‘Shepheards Nation’*, 106–7. *Sir Thomas Overburie his Wife with New Elegies* (London, 1616), sigs. ¶4^{r-v}, ¶6^{r-7}; Davies, *A Select Second Husband for Sir Thomas Overburies Wife* (London, 1616).

⁷⁵ Thomas Scot, *Philomythie or Philomythologie* (London, 1616), 26–9 (cf. Margot Heinemann, *Puritanism and Theatre: Thomas Middleton and Opposition Drama under the Early Stuarts* (Cambridge, 1980), 113–14); William Goddard, ‘A Morall Satire Intituled the Owles Araygnement’, in *A Satirycall Dialogue* (n.pl., 1616), sigs. F2^r ff.; see further ‘Afterword’, below, at n. 128 and Alastair Bellany, *The Politics of Court Scandal in Early Modern England: News Culture and the Overbury Affair, 1603–1660*

Browne's *Britannia's Pastorals*, also published in 1616, reflects the dominant disillusion with the court: the tone is more satirical and Browne attacks the neglect of the navy and other abuses. The tone of the poem can be indicated by quoting the marginalia of a contemporary reader: 'Great men have not such rest as clowns'; 'Poor labour to feed the luxury of the rich'; 'Parasites are enlightened by the beams of kings'.⁷⁶ Browne dedicated the second book to the Earl of Pembroke, who was beginning to emerge as a political leader rather than just a literary patron. By 1619 attacks on courts were becoming so widespread that one writer was commissioned to answer 'the perverse petulance of many *Poets*, which laid so many odious aspersions vpon Courts, as if no vertue had in them any residence'.⁷⁷

There was, of course, a notable exception to this pattern: Ben Jonson, who was by now committed to his role as leading court poet. This involved him in an awkward reversal in moral judgements. While abstaining from the bitter attacks on Somerset, he found himself by the 1616 masque committed to defending a realignment of court politics in which the king had decided that his favourite should be dropped. By 1615 a new favourite, George Villiers, had been brought forward by Pembroke and his supporters in an attempt to counter Somerset's influence, and the balance of power had already been shifting in his direction when the murder scandal was revealed. In *The Golden Age Restored* Jonson had to make sense of this volte-face, and he did so, interestingly, in a muted invocation of Elizabethan symbolism: the figure of Astraea, so often associated with Elizabeth, descends to administer justice—though her power is pointedly subordinated to that of Jove/James. Jonson presented Somerset and his supporters as law-breakers and rebels, thus sidestepping the difficult fact that the king himself had been strongly behind their ascendancy. Henceforward Jonson dropped Somerset and made no further reference to him.⁷⁸

This response may be contrasted with that of his old rival Samuel Daniel, who kept in contact with Somerset but voiced his extreme shock at recent events in an epistle to the Countess of Bedford.⁷⁹ This leading patron had appeared in many Jacobean masques but had now withdrawn from court for reasons of health and finance. Daniel tells her that she is better off in her retired state, and uses the imagery of masques to reveal the corruption that has overtaken court life:

you may with an vndeuided brest
Inioy the blessings w^{ch} your peace imparts
And be spectator of the roles they act
Who personate vppon this stage of Court,

(Cambridge, 2002), 178–9. Goddard's *A Mastif Whelp* (1615) is dedicated to a group of members of the Inner Temple.

⁷⁶ *The Works of John Milton*, ed. Frank A. Patterson et al., 20 vols. (New York, 1931–40), xviii.339. For rejection of the ascription of these marginalia to Milton, see John T. Shawcross, entry in William B. Hunter et al. (eds.), *A Milton Encyclopaedia*, 9 vols. (Lewisburg, Pa., 1978–83), v.74.

⁷⁷ 'A.D.B.', *The Court of the Most Illustrious and Magnificent James, the First* (London, 1619), dedication to the Duke of Buckingham.

⁷⁸ Martin Butler and David Lindley, 'Restoring Astraea: Jonson's Masque for the Fall of Somerset', *ELH* 61 (1994), 807–27 (819–21).

⁷⁹ *Samuel Daniel: The Brotherton Manuscript*, 63–5.

And note wth what poore cuning they compact
 All their disguisings . . .

howe

Appearing not in their owne visages
 They all weare masks, and onlie are in shew.

Daniel says that the court has no room to display her virtue, ‘w^{ch} th’open plaines illustrate, not a wood’. The court is as dark as the Wood of Error at the start of *The Faerie Queene*; virtue, for Daniel, can best be found in the open country far from court. The Spenserian revival of 1613–14 had expressed similar views. Daniel associates the court both with masques and with a dark and deceitful forest. It is possible that he may be glancing at his old rival Ben Jonson, whose *The Forest* had just appeared in his collected works.⁸⁰ For a poet who had identified himself as firmly with the court as Jonson, it was becoming a little difficult to maintain credibility as a moral authority.

⁸⁰ *Samuel Daniel: The Brotherton Manuscript*, 148, ll. 67–72, 80–2; Lindley, *The Trials of Frances Howard*, 162. For an overview of Jonson’s relations with the court see Martin Butler, ‘“Servant, but not Salve”: Ben Jonson at the Jacobean Court’, *Proceedings of the British Academy*, 90 (1995), 65–93.