

ABSTRACT

Politics in the Renaissance: Kingship in the Writings
of Skelton, Sidney, Sackville, Norton, and Shakespeare

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In the first chapter of “Politics in the Renaissance: Kingship in the Writings of Skelton, Sidney, Sackville, Norton, and Shakespeare,” I argue that Skelton’s *Speculum Principis* shows Skelton’s belief that education was the key to maintaining the hierarchy of the church, nobility, and king, and he continues to espouse these principles during his conflict with Wolsey. In my second chapter, I argue that through allusions to the previous succession crisis and his beliefs about monarchical power, Sidney uses the *Arcadia* to elucidate principles that could help England avoid another bloody succession. In my final chapter, I argue that Thomas Sackville and Thomas Norton created an allusion to the historic John Stewart, Duke of Albany, in *Gorboduc*, but forty years later, Shakespeare took this character from *Gorboduc* and reinvented him as a character in *King Lear* that would appeal to King James VI & I.

Politics in the Renaissance: Kingship in the Writings
of Skelton, Sidney, Sackville, Norton, and Shakespeare

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

| | |
|---|----|
| Introduction..... | 1 |
| Hierarchy and Learning in John Skelton..... | 9 |
| “In Quhome Mony Haue Layd Thair Hoipes”:Succession in <i>The Countess of Pembroke’s Arcadia</i> | 31 |
| The Kings’ Two Albanys: A Reversal of <i>Gorboduc’s</i> Albany in <i>King Lear</i> | 54 |

CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

In the roughly 105 years that my thesis covers (1501-1606), seven monarchs ruled over England,¹ and compared to the present time in which one monarch has reigned for sixty-four years, clearly the Tudor years were a time of significant authoritative upheaval. Although in the present age, princely and aristocratic authority has been diminished, in the Tudor years this authority was still powerfully exercised. Naturally, the writers of this period were not silent on the discussion of authority and important political events of the time: the rights of the aristocracy to exercise authority in government, the importance of education in that role, how succession should occur, the nature of rebellion, or the potential Union with Scotland. In this thesis, I discuss politics in the literature of John Skelton, Philip Sidney, Thomas Sackville, and William Shakespeare. Couched within the relative safety of literature, each of these authors has something to say about monarchical power. As a critical method, I use New Historicism to discuss this topic, for through it, I can place the culture into which these authors produced their literature into conversation with the texts that they produced.

As a critical method, Stephen Greenblatt popularized the term New Historicism in his introduction to *The Power of Forms in the English Renaissance*.² In his brief essay, Greenblatt uses Queen Elizabeth I's reaction to a revival of Shakespeare's *Richard II* as an example of "older forms" of historicist criticism. Greenblatt explains, "Modern historical scholarship has assured Elizabeth that she had nothing to worry about: *Richard II* is not at all subversive but rather a hymn to Tudor order" (4). Yet, according to

Greenblatt, Elizabeth was concerned that *Richard II* might encourage rebellion, for Elizabeth said, “I am Richard II. Know ye not that?” (qtd. Greenblatt 4). In light of these two readings (contemporary criticism and Elizabeth’s), Greenblatt asks a very reasonable question: “How can we account for the discrepancy between Dover Wilson’s historical reconstruction and the anxious response of the figures whose history he purports to have accurately reconstructed?” (4). Greenblatt submits that a “new historicism” is necessary; this new historicism will push against both the “[t]he earlier historicism [that] tends to be monological; that is, it is concerned with a single political vision” and the New Criticism that “conceive[s] of the text as an iconic object whose meaning is perfectly contained within its own formal structure” (Greenblatt 5, 4).

In Greenblatt’s example of *Richard II* and Elizabeth, for instance, a New Historicist essay would continue to take into account the criticism of *Richard II*, “that discovers Shakespeare’s fears of chaos and his consequent support for legitimate if weak authority,” but it would also recognize the behaviors and actions of those who were living at the time (5). According to Greenblatt, “Dover Wilson is not a New Critic,” for he does not attempt to criticize the text without contextualizing it in its historic element (4). On the contrary, Wilson uses the “earlier historicism,” for he assumes “a single political vision ... to be held by the entire literate class” (Greenblatt 5). In his attempt to define New Historicism, Greenblatt writes against moving too far in the direction of an earlier historicism as well as treating the text as a closed system.

Writing in the year 2000, eighteen years later, in *Practicing New Historicism*, Catherine Gallagher and Greenblatt attempt to give a clearer definition of New Historicism. They write,

We had never formulated a set of theoretical propositions or articulated a program; we had not drawn up for ourselves, let alone for anyone else, a sequence of questions that always needed to be posed when encountering a work of literature in order to construct a new historicist reading; we would not be able to say to someone in haughty disapproval, “You are not an authentic new historicist.” (Gallagher 1)

As Greenblatt and other New Historicists attempted to define their craft, they found that it defied a clear set of principles. Gallagher and Greenblatt participated in a group with the intent to determine the basic assumptions of New Historicism, but they found that the interdisciplinary nature of the practice stymied their efforts. They write, “The group came to understand ... that there was, in interdisciplinary studies, a tendency to invoke, in support of one’s own positions, arguments from other disciplines that sophisticated thinkers in those other disciplines had in fact been calling into question” (Gallagher 3). While they were unable to fully “theorize” New Historicism, this group did give birth to the journal *Representations* the intent of which was “to continue as well as broaden the discussion” (Gallagher 3).

Although New Historicism is difficult to clearly define, Gina Hens-Piazza identifies factors that are normally part of a New Historicist approach to a text. She writes, “New Historicist essays include ways of reading that look less at the center and more at the borders of the literary domain, ... identifying and defining the interests and forces of the past and of the present that crisscross and rebound across these representations, [and] exploring narrative as a vast inter-text” (39). Throughout my thesis, I utilize these approaches while attempting to avoid the pitfalls inherent in the use of “narrative as vast inter-text.”

When Hens-Piazza writes that a mainstay of New Historicism is to “look less at the center and more at the borders,” she refers to the way in which New Historicists apply

the context of culture to their literary readings. Rather than looking at the text as a closed system, the New Historicist takes into account how the author was informed by the culture of the time, or how events portrayed in the text effected those in the culture at the time. Hens-Piazza writes, “Attention to these borders often discloses a complicated past that resists the coherence of reigning historical reconstructions, while unaddressed questions lurking in the margins disrupt the integrity of unified readings” (40). In my chapters on these authors, I discuss their works in light of the cultures into which they were written, and as I apply a culture to a text, “unaddressed questions” appear.

In my first chapter, I discuss the importance of Skelton’s *Speculum Principis* to his other writings; as a critical lens, I utilize one of the principles of New Historicism: “culture as text” (Gallagher 9). Gallagher and Greenblatt write,

Major works of art remain culturally important, but they are jostled now by an array of other texts and images. Some of these alternative objects of attention ... are texts that have been regarded as altogether nonliterary, that is, as lacking the aesthetic polish, the self-conscious use of rhetorical figures, the aura of distance from the everyday world, the marked status as fiction that separately or together characterize belles lettres [*sic*]. (9).

Certainly the *Speculum* falls into this category, but putting it on display and contextualizing it with both Skelton’s other texts and the broader culture, the little discussed value of the *Speculum* to Skelton’s thought becomes apparent. Yet, as a function of the field of literary criticism, the importance of the *Speculum* must remain “jostled” with the “major works of art,” that is, Skelton’s poetry.

I argue that the *Speculum* shows both Skelton’s humanism and his use of humanism in bolstering a conservative worldview. By noting Skelton’s humanism in the *Speculum* and then comparing this “alternative object” with the literary invectives against Thomas Cardinal Wolsey, the reader can discern a continuity of thought in which Skelton

continues to use the same principles throughout his poetic career. If readers look at the invectives without this lens, they can still see much about the relationships occurring in the court at that time, yet by looking at the poems in the light of the humanism of the sixteenth century, that is, the culture into which they were written, Skelton's own humanism becomes apparent.

According to Hens-Piazza, a New Historicist criticism usually takes into account the interactions of the text to culture across generations. In order to do this, the New Historicists must use their own subjectivity as they look at the text. Hens-Piazza writes, "When subjectivity serves as a critical tool for New Historicists, it yokes past, present, and future together while elucidating their interconnections" (45). By living outside of the time in which a text was written, the New Historicist can bring evidence from other times to bear on the text that would not be available in either an "old" historicist or a New Critical approach.

In my chapter on Sidney, I discuss the interactions of the text with culture across generations. I argue that Sidney looked back at the bloody succession crisis that had characterized the accession of Queen Mary I. He wrote *Arcadia* partially with the intention to suggest a better method of succession upon the death of Elizabeth. Sidney creates a story in which the characters have to contend with a succession crisis, but he rewrites history to allow for a happy ending to the succession problems, and by engaging in this wish-fulfillment, he suggests the possibility of a better future. With the benefit of living outside of the time in which Sidney wrote *Arcadia*, the modern reader can look back and see that, indeed, Sidney's desires for a better succession were fulfilled when King James VI & I ascended the throne. While it would have been possible for Sidney's fellow Elizabethans to read the *Arcadia* as a blueprint for a better succession than that of

Mary's, it seems that the subjectivity in looking back at both Mary's and James's successions allows this reading to appear more clearly.

In my chapter on Sidney, I make use of cultural artifacts related to him. I use Sidney's *Defence of Poesy* and his letters to show his Christianity and, specifically, his identity with Protestantism. Through this Protestant identity, I argue that Sidney may have intended Euarchus to represent Edward VI, the young king whom the Protestants hoped would solidify the movement of the English church away from Catholicism. I also use Sidney's letters to show that long before James's accession to the throne was assured, Sidney already hoped that James would succeed Elizabeth.

I use the intergenerational connectedness in my chapter on Sackville, Norton, and Shakespeare by suggesting that Shakespeare used the character of the Duke of Albany from *Gorboduc*, rewriting him in *King Lear* in order to ingratiate himself to James. The dukedom of Albany was one of the noble Scottish titles that James held in his own right, and this dukedom united with the crown upon James's accession in Scotland. After acceding to the English throne, James desired to unite by law the two realms that had already been united in his person; Shakespeare appears to have written Albany with the potential act of union in mind. Looking back on Shakespeare's authorial decision in light of four hundred years of personal union between the English and Scottish crowns, the modern reader of *King Lear* can appreciate how Shakespeare anticipated the Act of Union still one hundred years away.

Hens-Piazza writes that a close scrutiny of inter-textuality is a typical characteristic of New Historicist criticism. She writes

New Historicist practices involve more than juxtaposing texts in order to establish equal footing between the literary and nonliterary. Convinced that all elements of a cultural system – be it texts, artifacts, or practices –

are imprinted with a 'shared code, a set of interlocking tropes and similitudes that function not only as objects but as the conditions of representation,' they seek out a more intimate or embedded connection between texts. (49 partially quoting Greenblatt)

For the New Historicist, all social interactions between the text and culture are possible areas of connectivity. Hens-Piazza explains that this practice has led some to some push-back against New Historicism, for sometimes these critics make connections between the text and cultural phenomena that seem completely unrelated.

Because of concern over this practice of New Historicism, Frank Kermode criticized this method by writing a mock essay in New Historicist style³ in which he connects Richard Strauss and Shakespeare's *Coriolanus*. In this essay, Kermode tells an anecdote about Richard Strauss's life, and after attacking New Historicism, he writes, "Since I have been imitating or mimicking this 'intellectual posture', [sic] it may be thought right that I should provide some sort of historical thread connecting Strauss and Menenius." (352). He then proceeds to an ingenious connecting of these two persons (one fictional and one real). By doing this, he mocks the New Historicist trope of using anecdotes to show the cultural connectedness of one item to another. In particular, he criticizes Greenblatt's connection of a nineteenth century Baptist preacher with *King Lear*.

When Kermode criticizes New Historicism for the "excesses" of anecdotes, he is partially right. It does seem inappropriate use an anecdote of stretched and dubious relevance to the text. I do not believe that I ever fall into this practice; I give anecdotes only when they seem to have direct bearing and unequivocal connectedness to the texts in which I am trying to reveal some new possibility. I also avoid bringing cultural artifacts

into the conversation with texts if they do not seem to connect either directly or reasonably with the text or authors about whom I write.

The authors under discussion argue for different outcomes in issues surrounding monarchical authority. Skelton wants to continue the ancient privileges of the aristocracy and the sovereignty of the king; concerned by the childless virgin queen, Sidney, Sackville, and Norton encourage Elizabeth to ensure peaceable succession after her death, and Shakespeare wants to please his new king by writing a character calling on his noble titles and seeming to support the union of Scotland and England. Yet, because of the nature of the government at the time, all of these authors treat with grave respect the Crown as the source of authority. In order to understand the perspective from which these writers come, the reader must understand the culture in which they write. Through the pages of the thesis, in New Historicist fashion, I hope to recreate some part of the culture that inspired the authors of this bygone era

CHAPTER TWO

Hierarchy and Learning in John Skelton

When John Skelton wrote the *Speculum Principis*¹ for the young Prince Henry, Duke of York, he could not have known that he was writing for his next sovereign lord. Skelton wrote the *Speculum* in 1501 as a function of his position as royal tutor to King Henry VII's second heir. However upon the death of the duke's elder brother in April 1502, both young Henry and Skelton's fortunes changed; now, Henry was the next in line to be king of England. In the *Speculum*, Skelton encourages the young prince² to love virtue over might, riches, and vice, and he pleads with Henry to love education. Next, he asks for patience for daring to recommend these things to Henry's princely ears, but he reminds him that no one is too high to fall. Skelton "except[s] no race, no class, no condition, [and] no sex" from his claims (qtd. Carlson 40). Finally, he commends the prince to avoid sins of the body, to keep, listen to and treat councilors well, and he explains to the prince how he ought to treat the masses. While scholars have generally dismissed the importance of the *Speculum*, throughout his poetic career, Skelton returns to the themes he discusses in it. While Skelton could be proud of some of the ways in which Henry's life shows the influence of Skelton's principles, ultimately, from Skelton's perspective, Henry failed to maintain his sovereignty by giving away too much authority to Lord Chancellor Thomas Cardinal Wolsey; in order to show this violation of order, following humanistic principles, Skelton attacks the learning of Wolsey and others to show that they do not have a right to rule.

Scholarly treatment of Skelton's *Speculum* has been generally dismissive or silent.³ Thomas Penn writes, "[T]he *Speculum Principis* shows why Skelton, for all his pride in his role, was ultimately too self-absorbed to be the perfect teacher. A set of second-hand moral exhortations, it has the air of a rushed job, something distractedly thrown together" (105). Years later, however, Skelton would present a copy of the *Speculum* to Henry upon his accession to the throne, and before he did, he bound it in a new volume. David R. Carlson writes, "There is no evidence that Skelton was ever involved in anything like editorial work on his own writings ... with one exception: the manuscript copy of his *Speculum principis* [*sic*]" (16). Even though he recognizes that Skelton had time to edit the extant text of the *Speculum*, Carlson applies the same argument to the *Speculum* as Penn. He writes, "Skelton does not seem to have invested much time or ambition into writing even this most extensive sample of his Latin writing. The piece appears to have been cobbled together hurriedly, out of such *compendia* of narrative and moral commonplaces as the *Dicta et facta memorabilia* of Valerius Maximus and the *Disticha Catonis*" (Carlson 5). Despite the scholarly consensus on the lack of importance of the *Speculum* as a literary document, its historic importance should be admitted, for Skelton saw fit to present this document as a reminder to the new king of the services he did for him in his youth.

While Skelton may very well have used the *Disticha Catonis* in his composition of the *Speculum*, he was judicious in the items he chose to include and the way in which he included them. The critics are correct to say that Skelton's *Speculum* is a collection of commonplace sayings, but these sayings were organized by a man commissioned to teach the sovereign's second son. It is absurd to think that Skelton would not have been deeply

contemplative about what he wrote down for Henry's edification. Surely, if Skelton felt that the *Speculum* was "cobbled together hurriedly," he would have corrected whatever errors existed before presenting it to his king from whom he sought advancement eight years later. At the very least, Skelton was apparently pleased enough with the work to believe that it could influence the king to give him royal favor, and Skelton appears to have been right, for the king created him *orator regius*.⁴ Rather than merely plagiarizing Maximus and Cato "haphazardly," the *Speculum* represents Skelton's sincere instruction to his young charge, and this is evidenced by the fact that Skelton doubles down on the instruction eight years later when the young man becomes king.

While critics and historians have questioned the amount of influence Skelton had on Henry's early development, Henry seems to affirm Skelton's influence on him by creating him *orator regius* after his accession. Some scholars see Skelton as instilling a "stern piety and a fear of the seven deadly sins" while others "doubt the value of the poet's influence on Henry's character" (Smith 93; Pollard 17). The latter tend to cite Skelton's habit of writing ribald poetry during his time as Henry's royal tutor, bad character evidenced by his later invectives against Wolsey and others, and the almost certainly true reports that Skelton violated his priestly vow of chastity.⁵ Yet, the *Speculum* speaks to a very moral type of instruction that Skelton probably provided to the young prince, and when the reminiscence of their relationship appear to have won him royal preferment, the king seems to give tacit affirmation that the net result of their relationship was positive.

Upon Henry's accession to the throne, Skelton had reason to believe that his former pupil would hold to his teachings. Counseling Henry on his treatment of the

lower classes, Skelton admonishes his pupil in the *Speculum*, “Sympathize with those who suffer. . . . Give to the poor. Learn to be compassionate, learn to feel pity” (Carlson 41). In one of his very first acts, Henry would follow his tutor’s advice of treating his subjects with compassion. In his explanation of Henry’s dismantling of abusive fiscal practices, J.J. Scarisbrick illustrates this point. Scarisbrick writes that Henry VII left to his son a state in an unusually good condition: Henry VIII “inherited a fortune which probably no English king had ever been bequeathed, [sic] he came to a kingdom which was the best governed and most obedient in Christendom” (11). Among these benefits, Henry VII also left his son many able ministers, but two of them certainly did not follow the pattern of righteous behavior that Skelton had set forth in the *Speculum*. These men, Richard Empson and Edmund Dudley, were “the most prominent of the lawyers Henry VII had used to execute the severe fiscal policies of his last years” (Ives 24). Upon hearing of their abuse, the new King Henry became enraged, and in one of his first official acts, he disposed of this injustice in his kingdom. Scarisbrick writes, “even as he came to the Tower amidst the trumpets and rejoicing on that 23 April, the second day of his reign, [Empson and Dudley] were seized and brought thither as prisoners, where they languished until their execution sixteen months later” (12). After Henry ordered the arrest of Empson and Dudley, he began to dismantle the abusive fiscal practices his father had instituted. Eric Ives writes, “Two days later general pardon was proclaimed for every offence imaginable, including those which the old king’s agents pursued so rigorously” (24). A mere two days into his reign, Henry already began to treat his subjects with the kind of respect that Skelton encouraged. Surely, this must have been gratifying to Skelton as he looks to see that perhaps his new king internalized his instruction.

In 1512, around three years after Henry began to root out this centralized corruption, Skelton wrote “The World Nowadays,” a poem in which he lists terrible practices (as he sees them) going on in the world. He ends the poem on a hopeful stanza that perhaps God will change the state of the world:

God is not dead nor sick;
He may amend all yet,
And trow ye so indeed,
As ye believe ye shall have meed.
After better I hope ever,
For worse was it never. (139)

Despite the hope for a better future on which Skelton ends the poem, one cannot quite feel optimistic about a poem that ends with the line “For worse was it never.”

Nonetheless, at the end of the poem, Skelton looks forward to a life in which God may change the evil to good, but God has not done so yet, and Skelton sees the world decaying around him. Hopefully, God will intervene, but that belongs to an unknown future. Despite the gloom, however, Skelton sees one present joy:

God save our sovereign lord the King
And all his royal spring,
For so noble a prince reigning,
Saw I never (138)⁶

Through his use of *God* in the future and the *king* in the present, Skelton strikes the only positive notes in the poem. By thematically pairing God and the king, perhaps Skelton suggests that God will use the king to effect his (and Skelton’s) ends. After all, when Skelton looks to the throne, he sees a man in whom he tried to instill his principles as a child. From his second day on the throne, Henry utilized Skelton’s advice, rooting out a source of centralized corruption that burdened the lower classes. In a few places in “Nowadays,” Skelton speaks of legal corruption, but it is always localized.⁷ If ever

Skelton's worldview had a chance of succeeding, surely it is when a man such as this sits upon the throne.

Even after he grew to adulthood, Henry appears to have followed some of the basic educational imperatives that Skelton set forth in the *Speculum*. In the *Speculum*, Skelton advises Henry to "Read books, look through chronicles, study histories, commit them to memory" (qtd. Carlson 41). Skelton was successful in instilling this habit in the young prince, for according to James P. Carley, Henry read deeply in his attempt to prepare himself for writing anti-Lutheran tracts, and to prepare for the legal question surrounding his annulment.⁸ Carley writes, "When a book interested him, Henry was a compulsive annotator, and his copies of Erasmus's works are deeply scored (usually positively), as are his copies of Luther (negatively)" (100). Skelton was successful in instilling a love of learning and study in his pupil, and Henry also followed Skelton's advice to "commit [books, chronicles, and histories] to memory." Lucy Baldwin Smith writes, "The monarch's command of the minutiae of power was prodigious. He was endowed with an encyclopedic memory and could recall the hundreds of gifts, annuities and offices bestowed upon the hordes of petitioners who attached themselves to his royal bounty" (30). Smith explains that Henry used this power over minutiae to criticize the wording from his ministers and often corrected what they said in order to make their meaning more clear or precise. Skelton should have been proud of how he taught his pupil to value study, for he helped to set Henry on the path to do so for the rest of his life.

Although Skelton, among others, may have had high expectations for the young king, some felt that he was not fulfilling his political responsibilities. About Henry's first year on the throne, A.F. Pollard writes, "Though he had wedded a wife and been crowned

a king, Henry was as yet little more than a boy. . . . He was still in his eighteenth year; and like most young Englishmen of means and muscle, his interests centered rather in the field than in the study” (36). Pollard seems to echo Henry’s contemporary detractors, “the Courtenays, the Talbots, the Howards and the Staffords” who felt that the king engaged far too much in play, and not enough in work (Maynard 38). However, the comparison between the young king and his father may be partially unfair. Theodore Maynard writes, “The old King [Henry VII] had found time for sport and music, for he was not always buried in his accounts, but the young King was acting in such a way that they feared he could not be attending to public business” (38). Henry’s detractors were partially wrong, for the king did attend to his stately affairs, but perhaps due to the vigor of youth, he did so at unaccustomed times. Smith writes, “[Henry] preferred late hours, dedicating the morning to the chase and the early afternoon to eating, and he interviewed foreign ambassadors on impulse and at erratic times, often postponing the real work of government until midnight” (28). Although he postponed the work, he did get it done. Smith continues to describe the scrupulousness to detail with which Henry attended the affairs of state (29). Although he did not follow the conventional patterns of business, he did attend to his kingly duties.

Despite his unconventional working habits, Henry showed a great amount of intellectual vigor from his childhood through his early reign. In 1499, Erasmus met Henry as a child, and Skelton sent a letter to Erasmus purportedly from the young duke. When Erasmus had another encounter with the prince around 1506, he believed that someone must have helped Henry write that letter too, but after seeing other letters from the prince that showed signs of much learning, Erasmus had to conclude that, indeed,

Henry was the true author of the letters (Scarisbrick 14). Praising Skelton for his influence on this part of Henry's life, Scarisbrick writes, "Presumably Skelton and [William] Hone pushed Henry's pen to paper, for in the later life Henry was never an industrious letter writer. ... But Henry was undoubtedly a precocious, nimble-minded pupil. He knew Latin and French and some Italian. He is said to have acquired some Spanish, and about 1519 had a sufficient (if passing) interest in Greek" (14). In many respects, Skelton's time as a royal tutor was a resounding success; he had taught his pupil, it seems, a way to think.

On the vexed question of Skelton's philosophical orientation, the *Speculum* has become an argument against classifying him with the humanists. Carlson writes, "The question of Skelton's involvement with the new learning has tended to elicit only extreme responses: on the one hand, that he was no humanist at all, and, on the other, that he was one of the giants of the movement in England." (7) Indeed, for centuries the *Speculum* could shed no light on this controversy, for it had been lost and was known only through name from Skelton's list of works in the *Garland of Laurel*. When F.M. Salter rediscovered it in 1934, it did not prove to be the Renaissance masterpiece for which scholars had hoped. H.L.R. Edwards writes, "To some students the *Speculum* has proved a sad disappointment. ... It is the oddest mixture of medieval and Vulgate Latin. ... Skelton was never able to reach the flawless purity of the Renaissance stylist" (75). And Nan Cooke Carpenter writes that Skelton partially used "the medieval tradition of rhymed Latin prose (Reimprosa) [in the *Speculum Principis*] from medieval hymn forms, or some other source" (114). These arguments against the humanism of the *Speculum* are based

on form, but in other ways, the *Speculum* shows that Skelton aligned himself with humanist thought.

While scholars debate the degree of Skelton's humanism, in his view on education, Skelton is unquestionably a Renaissance humanist. Fritz Caspari writes,

During the sixteenth century, English humanists evolved a social doctrine with which they tried to defend and improve the existing order of society. They used their knowledge of Plato and Aristotle, of Cicero and Quintilian, to justify the aristocratic structure of English society, the hierarchy of 'order and degree' in the state. Their particular concern was to devise means whereby, in the social and political framework of Tudor England, the ruling members of society would also be its 'best' men. (2)

As a firm believer not only in the order of the English state but in the importance of the Catholic Church as well, Skelton supported the social, political and religious interactions of the king, the nobility and the church. William Nelson writes, "[Skelton] demanded that the King rule his own land, that the Church retain its ancient prerogatives, that education keep in view its ultimate purpose, the increase of virtue and religion" (237). When Skelton perceives that this hierarchy is under attack, he often tries to invalidate the education of the party from whom he detects the threat. By doing this, he aligns himself with the humanist notion that the rulers of the state must be the best men; if Skelton can invalidate their learning, he can attack their right to rule.

Writing to the young Prince Henry in the *Speculum*, Skelton argues that by obtaining education Henry should be able to prove himself to be the best of men.

Quoting "Aristotle's remarks to Alexander," he writes,

you have overcome your enemies, Alexander; you have won many realms; you have subjected many empires; you have obtained sole rule over the entire east and still you either have neglected to rule or have been unable to govern the miniscule province of your body and soul.

Therefore, leaving all else aside, princes especially should enlighten their lives ... with excellence in learning, which is the property of a noble soul. (qtd. Carlson 39)

Through his use of Aristotle, Skelton shows that he aligns with other sixteenth century humanists on the principles of education. Caspari writes that “Erasmus and such English humanists as Sir Thomas More, Sir Thomas Elyot, and Thomas Starkey ... urged gentlemen and noblemen ... to prove their worth by showing that they were equal to the tasks that men of power and influence were expected to perform. They had to acquire learning if they wished to maintain their traditional positions” (14). To this list, Skelton should be added, for this is the purpose for which he urges Henry to take his education seriously: the highest and most important duty of education in a prince is to bolster his sovereignty.

During Henry’s early reign, Skelton’s principles appear to have taken root, for they are displayed in his behavior; however, despite Skelton’s general success in teaching Henry how to think as a king, to some degree, from Skelton’s perspective, Henry’s education failed. As one of most important purposes of education is the maintenance of the state, Skelton failed to teach him how to maintain the right relationship with his courtier and future lord chancellor, Thomas Wolsey.⁹ During Wolsey’s ascendancy, Skelton would write harsh invectives against him; perhaps the king’s dangerous relationship represented a frustrating example of Skelton’s failure as a tutor. Although Skelton does not criticize the king in his attacks on Wolsey, he inherently criticizes the king’s decision to allow him the prominence he ought not to have had.

In the *Speculum*, Skelton advises Henry on the judicious use of counselors’ advice. He writes, “You have advisors, but they are either learned or ignorant, and the

first are indecisive and the other are wrong: you are wise on your own account” (Skelton qtd. in Carlson 39). While at first Skelton seems to be saying that there are no good advisors, clearly this is not what he means, for later he writes, “Listen to the other point of view. ... Content yourself with wise counsel. ... Respect those who serve you” (qtd. Carlson 41). Skelton also sees the need to recognize the line between a good councilor and a person pursuing merely self-aggrandizement, for in the same list of admonishments, he says, “Pursue flatterers with hatred” (Carlson 41). As Henry’s scholarly pursuits and book-learning make clear, Henry was certainly capable of hearing advice and judiciously deciding between conflicting councilors, yet Skelton intended to teach Henry to maintain the correct ordering of the state through his education. Although Skelton wanted the monarch to be able to distinguish between a good remark and a bad remark from a counselor, maintaining order was the most important goal. Rather than advocating against counsellors, Skelton admonishes the young prince to listen to counsel and have the wisdom to decide the case for himself.

Henry’s relationship with Wolsey did not start out as one to which Skelton probably would have objected. Skelton expects the king to have counselors, and he expects the king to take their advice seriously and respectfully. Besides, Wolsey’s position began sufficiently low in the social order. Derek Wilson explains that Wolsey began his career in Henry VIII’s court by acting as a go-between for the king and the council. Wilson writes, “Someone as dignified as the Earl of Surrey or an Archbishop of Canterbury could not be expected to go scurrying about the countryside on horseback or be rowed up and down the Thames on such routine matters” (85). This relatively humble office was the beginning of Wolsey’s service to the king, but after service of three years,

Wolsey helped the king with his campaign against France in 1513 (Guy 41). Because of his wartime assistance, Wolsey rose in Henry's esteem. A contemporary, George Cavendish, writes that the king's "estimation and favour [of Wolsey] put all other ancient counsellors out of their accustomed favour" (qtd. Guy 41) This may have been an indication to Skelton that something was amiss with the order of the English court. For a conservative with a hierarchical worldview, when the "ancient counsellors" are being replaced, the entire hierarchical order is threatened.

Three years later, in 1516, the same year as Wolsey's creation as both cardinal and lord chancellor, Skelton levels his first attack against him in "Against Venomous Tongues." In order to take full advantage of his new emoluments, Wolsey created a new livery for himself, and, apparently, Skelton made a negative comment about the livery to a courtier, who reported Skelton's comment back to Wolsey. Against this backbiter, Skelton writes, "But if that I knew what his name hight, / For clattering of me I would him soon 'quite'" (248). However, most of the poem is an invective against Wolsey, so if Wolsey did not know of Skelton's feelings after the courtier betrayed Skelton, Wolsey surely knows about them after this poem. Three years earlier, the king had begun to favour Wolsey more than his "ancient counsellors," and perhaps Skelton was brooding against Wolsey since that time; if so, Wolsey's new offices were the last Skelton could stand. Carpenter writes, "In speaking out for the conservative party against Wolsey ... the royal orator would inevitably have invited the Cardinal's wrath" (83). Following the humanist view of learning, Skelton believed that education shows a person's right to rule, so as the king elevates Wolsey beyond his station in life, Skelton attacks Wolsey's learning in order to emphasize that he does not belong in so elevated a position.

In “Against Venomous Tongues,” Skelton defends himself from the charge that he tries to control his betters, and by creating the conceit of a school, Skelton implies that, in fact, Wolsey is the party trying to control his betters. He writes,

Whosoever that tale unto you told,
He saith untruly, to say that I wold
Control the cognizance of noble men
Either by language or with my pen.
.....
My school is more solemn and somewhat more haut
Than to be found in any such fault. (246)

Wolsey and Skelton share similar histories: Both Skelton and Wolsey are churchmen; both were associated with the king’s father, and both of them hold preferment based on a previous relationship with the crown. In “Tongues,” Skelton emphasizes the similarity between their stations by implicitly creating two different schools. While in the denotation of the sentence, Skelton merely defends himself from Wolsey’s charge that Skelton controls his betters, yet Skelton connotatively aligns Wolsey with a school opposite to Skelton’s. In the poem, Skelton’s school is *more* haute and *more* solemn; by using the word *more*, Skelton inherently juxtaposes a school against his own that must be *less* solemn and *less* haute. Skelton’s school is better than Wolsey’s, for Skelton will not “Control the cognizance of noble men.” While Wolsey is at the zenith of a political ascendancy that precludes his rightful position in English society, Skelton is content to serve as the king’s *orator regius* with no political power.¹⁰ Skelton’s school respects and teaches respect for the stratified English society.

By placing Wolsey in a school in opposition to Skelton’s school that will not “Control the cognizance of noble man,” Skelton implies that Wolsey is the controlling party. Skelton continues, “My schools are not for unthrifths untaught, / For frantic faitors

half mad and half straight” (246). Surreptitiously, Skelton reminds Wolsey and the courtly reader of the most famous graduate of the Skelton school, the king. Because Skelton has taught the king, Wolsey would have a very difficult time arguing against the claim that Skelton’s schools “are not for ... frantic faitors half mad,” for if Wolsey were to do so, he may offend the king.¹¹ Skelton’s school is not just “more solemn” and “more haut,” but (Wolsey’s fancy new liveries notwithstanding) Skelton’s school is the *most* solemn and *most* haut, for he taught the very fount of honor.

Although Skelton attacks his learning, Wolsey, in fact, received education from Oxford, obtaining both bachelor and master’s degrees and studying for but not taking a B.Th. (Gwyn 2). Yet, from Skelton’s point of view, Wolsey’s background as the son of a grazier does not warrant his elevation to such an important position as lord chancellor, so Skelton acknowledges an appearance of Wolsey’s learning, but he refuses to accept its reality.¹² Skelton writes, “But yet I may say safely, so many well-lettered, / Embroidered, enlaced together, and fettered, / And so little learning, so lewdly allowed” (247). Here, Skelton puns on the livery controversy surrounding this poem. In *well-lettered*, Skelton refers to his complaint about the new cardinal’s use of livery, but he also uses it as a foil against the claim that Wolsey has “so little learning.”¹³ In fact, with two degrees from Oxford and partial study for the bachelor of theology degree, Wolsey is “well-lettered,” yet despite his degrees, according to Skelton, he possesses “so little learning.”

Through Skelton’s juxtaposition of Wolsey’s degrees with his lack of learning, Skelton shows that he aligns himself with the prevailing wisdom of the time. For

Skelton, education is “the property of a noble soul,” one that should bolster the existing social order with the king at its head (qtd. Carlson 39). According to Nicholas Orme,

The church ... by preaching a code of belief, worship and behavior, stimulated the teaching of children in prayer and confession, deportment in church and Christian ethics. Law and custom, which required the male aristocracy to govern and defend the realm, necessitated boys being taught to read, in order to understand administrative and legal documents, and to be trained in military techniques. (154)

At the time, English education was centered on the promotion of the hierarchical values that Skelton supported. The two largest societal movers, the state and the church, dictated the direction in which children should be educated. Skelton acknowledges Wolsey’s degrees, but he refuses to label them with name of *learning*, for if Wolsey had truly been learned, he would have understood his place in the world. By being complicit in the disorder that allowed him to ascend to the highest appointed office in the realm, Wolsey shows that his education has failed, for he failed to support “the hierarchy of order and degree” (Caspari 2). English education at the time supported this order, so despite his degrees, Wolsey is unlearned, for he does not understand that he exercises authority that rightfully belongs to the king.

Five years after “Against Venomous Tongues,” Edward Stafford, the Duke of Buckingham, was convicted of treason and executed, and Skelton blamed this on Wolsey (Scarbrick 120). Wolsey and Buckingham did share an enmity with one another; Scarbrick explains, “[b]ut before all else, [Buckingham] loathed Wolsey for his base birth, his overweening ways and his authority in the land. On one occasion he had been astounded to see Wolsey dare to wash his hands in water that the king had just used. Outraged, he picked up the basin and threw its contents at Wolsey’s feet” (120). Despite their bad relationship, Scarbrick does not believe that Wolsey was a conspirator against

Buckingham.¹⁴ Nonetheless, as Skelton believed that Wolsey was unjustly involved with Buckingham's prosecution, and as Buckingham was the very zenith of non-royal nobility in England, this event earned Wolsey more of Skelton's anger.

Composed a year after the critical success of *Speak, Parrot* and the trial and condemnation of Buckingham, Skelton confronts this matter directly in *Colin Clout*.

There, he writes,

For ye play so at the chess,
As they suppose and guess,
That some of you but late
Hath played so checkmate
With lords of great estate (Skelton 279)

According to Maurice Pollet, "With *Colin Clout* the duel between Skelton and Wolsey enters an acute phase" (130). Because of Skelton's attacks, Wolsey began to threaten those who were publishing poems against him, and Skelton did seek sanctuary away from Wolsey during this time (Pollet 130). However, Skelton had some amount of popular backing for his enmity; Edwards writes, "the nobility were far from being the only people in England who hated Wolsey. All over the kingdom talks were being whispered of his pride, his plate and his women, his gorgeous robes and fabulous meats and the palaces he was never tired of building" (210). Because of this popular disgust, Skelton decided to write a poem that he hoped would be relatable to the general public rather than another poem like *Speak, Parrot*, which was filled with thick and complicated erudition (Carpenter 89). Skelton's goal remains the same; he intends to show the threat Wolsey poses to the hierarchical order generally and the king in particular.

Like "Against Venomous Tongues," Skelton frames his argument in *Colin Clout* with an attack on Wolsey's learning. A.R. Heiserman writes, "The 'one' which appears

here and there in *Colyn Cloute* is and is not Wolsey: it is what Wolsey stands for. He is a disruption of that natural order in which the king checks commons and clergy, and clergy advises and teaches both” (217). Throughout the satire, Skelton attacks the way in which the clergy have taken too much of the state’s power for themselves. Caspari writes, “The English humanists did not create a new structure of society. ... Humanistic ideas ... became a powerful element in a predominant sixteenth-century belief in a social hierarchy which it was the duty of the ruler and of the aristocracy to maintain and in which every man had his place, high and low” (9). Following this humanist principle, Skelton attempts to show that both the clergy and the nobility are to blame for the disruption of order in English society. True to his *modus operandi*, Skelton attacks the education of both of these groups, for if they were learned, they would know their place in society.

While Skelton never directly attacks the king for allowing this disorder to occur, he does inherently criticize him; practically, the king is responsible for the appointing of bishops, so he is partially responsible for the problem. According to G.W. Bernard, “Although the form of episcopal appointments was papal, in practice bishops were chosen by the king, often from among his close counsellors, and frequently they remained leading ministers despite their episcopal dignities and responsibilities” (43). Bernard explains that Wolsey was the most prominent example of this practice, but he was not the only occurrence.¹⁵ The king elevates his advisors to positions of high authority within the English church, but they do not lose their authority within the state. For Skelton this dual authority conflates the positions of the state and the church, allowing churchmen to have too much power. Nelson writes, “Skelton vigorously

attacked the abuses of the clergy, particularly of the bishops. He protested that the rulers of the Church were grasping, unlearned, and lazy” (111). When the churchmen become advisors to the king, they take power that rightfully belongs to the noble lords, so in *Colin Clout*, Skelton attacks both the clergy and the noblemen. When the clergymen threaten the hierarchical positions of the nobles, this power imbalance also threatens the king, for his authority is secure within the balance of an unshaken hierarchy. Time and time again, Skelton cites the lack of learning as one of the main problems.

In *Colin Clout*, Skelton frames his complaint against Wolsey and the clerics by placing his arguments in the mouth of the title character, a common rural man. Greg Walker writes, “The poet deliberately distances his attack on Wolsey from the charge of personal vindictiveness by placing it in the mouth of one who is ostensibly a supporter of the clergy, and gives it a veneer of authenticity by setting that narrator in a long tradition of honest Christian witnesses” (Walker 128). Towards the end of the poem, Colin Clout does express his respect for the cloth:

Of no good bishop speak I,
Nor good priest I ascry,
.....
But my recounting is
Of them that do amiss. (Skelton 282)

Certainly, Walker is correct in his claim that by using this convention in *Colin Clout*, (as he does not do in “Against Venomous Tongues”) Skelton obtains distance and avoids a direct attack on Wolsey. However, distance is not the only reason Skelton uses this convention.

By using *Colin Clout*, Skelton inverts the positions of unlearned and learned and emphasizes the disorder of English society and the threat it poses to the king. Colin says,

And if ye stand in doubt
Who brought this rhyme about,
My name is Colin Clout.

.....
For ... my rhyme be ragged,
Tattered and jagged, (Skelton 251)

Because Skelton considers Wolsey a threat to the English hierarchy, Skelton wants to invalidate Wolsey's learning, and by placing the attack in the mouth of someone whom Wolsey and the clergy would consider unlearned, Skelton seems to suggest that even the common man can see the benefit of the English political and religious hierarchy to the order of the English state. Colin Clout says,

For, as far as I can see,
It is wrong with each degree:
For the temporality;
Accuseth the spirituality;
The spirituality again
Doth grudge and complain
Upon the temporal men
Thus each of the other blother
The one against the other.
Alas, they make me shudder! (Skelton 251)

From his lowest position within it, Colin Clout makes the case for the maintenance of the hierarchical order, yet Wolsey and the clerics cannot see that the order is threatened by their behavior. From his simple, rustic place in the world, "as far as [he] can see" the temporal and spiritual powers have particular responsibilities in the English hierarchy. For Skelton each of these spheres of responsibility has a relationship to the king's authority, and if these spheres become imbalanced, they threaten the king.

If Colin Clout is able to understand and accept the need for and correctness of the English hierarchy, Skelton seems to imply that he is more learned than the priests and lords who seem to accept the disordered world in which they now live. This disorder,

neglected by those who ought to know better, speaks very poorly for the state of English politics. Skelton does not directly confront the king in *Colin Clout*, yet because he is the apex of the hierarchy that is out of balance, Skelton surreptitiously criticizes him. By allowing this disorder in the hierarchy to continue, Henry allows a threat to his own sovereignty to persist unchecked.

While Skelton implicitly derides the learning of the clergy through the character of Colin Clout, he also directly calls them unlearned. Colin Clout says that before they become priests, the clergy are

.....bestial and untaught
But when they have once caught
Dominus vobiscum by the head¹⁶
Then run they in every stead,
God wot, with drunken nolls!
Yet take they cure of souls,
And wotteth never what they read,
Paternoster, Ave, nor Creed;
Construe not worth a whistle (Skelton 256)

Skelton explains that not only do the clergy fail to teach what they ought, but even after they become priests, they remain as ignorant as they were before. For those who become priests, they only change their station; they do not change their learning. Not only do they lack education of spiritual matters, but they also take on matters that do not belong to them. In the penultimate line above, Skelton recalls a line from “Against Venomous Tongues”: “Your Paternoster, your Ave nor your Creed” (Skelton 246). In the latter line, Skelton directly attacked Wolsey for failing to teach religion in his “school.” Arthur F. Kinney explains that “this is the text the Cardinal forgets both to speak and to practice” (124). Now, by bringing in a line so close to his personal attack on Wolsey, Skelton suggests that the problem has expanded; it is no longer just Wolsey who is forgetting to

carry out his religious function, but the entire clerical class. Perhaps they forget to preach, for they are too worried about temporal problems outside their rightful sphere of responsibility.

The threat to the king does not end with the clergy taking on a role outside its sphere, for any imbalance to the system threatens the king's sovereignty; on the contrary, the nobles are also to blame. The clergy have seized temporal power because the nobles have allowed it. Colin Clout says,

But noblemen born
To learn they have scorn,
But hunt and blow an horn,
Leap over lakes and dykes
Set nothing by politics (Skelton 268)

About this passage, Heirserman writes, "In the first place ... the prelates have no business being temporal rulers. But their intrusion into the affairs of state ... is made possible by the negligence of lords (203). In this section, Skelton's humanism becomes apparent, for he criticizes the lords for failing to allowing their learning to prove that they are the best men; this failure has caused them to appear to "set nothing by politics." Caspari writes, "Inevitably, those members of the old ruling classes who stubbornly clung to the standards of a former age, who refused to acquire such ignoble qualifications as 'bookish learning', ... lost prestige and influence" (13). Skelton tries to help the nobility understand that by giving up learning, they are giving up their rightful place in society, and it is being filled by churchmen like Wolsey, low-born and with no right to rule.

Even as he tried to educate a prince to stand for the hierarchical order, Skelton played midwife to the king who would set himself up as the supreme governor of the English church and remove the centuries-old spheres of separate responsibility between

the church and state. In his *Speculum*, Skelton defends the hierarchy in which each individual knows his place based on his status, and he refuses to recognize with the label of *learning* any new or old idea that disrupts this order. Although he tried to inculcate this understanding into young Henry, once Henry became a man he was only to concur with Skelton's understanding so far. In that Henry was very jealous of points touching his privilege or honor, he concurred with Skelton's conservative worldview, but if it suited his purposes, Henry was also willing to raise individuals of base birth such as Wolsey, and, for Skelton, he was too willing to leave administrative tasks in the hands of such men. In many ways, Skelton's tutoring of Henry was a success: he encouraged the Young Henry to treat his subjects well, and he helped to foster the monarch's life-long interest in learning. But as a man of education, he saw Henry veering off the course that Skelton considered right, and he tried to correct it time and time again.

While he was a humanist, it would be inappropriate to place Skelton in the same category of humanists with More and Erasmus who "urged gentlemen and noblemen to shed some of their outmoded prejudices," for Skelton celebrated the order that some of those prejudices brought (Caspari 14). But he was witness to a world in flux, and he tried to use some of the humanistic principles of education to shore up the hierarchical model that had existed for centuries. It is a mercy that Skelton died when he did, for had he lived a few short years longer, he would have had the misfortune to see his former tutor break with Rome and begin to dismantle the Catholic Church in England, one of the mainstays of the hierarchical structure he loved so well. Skelton would have been heartbroken to see his most famous pupil ensure the truth of his final line of poetry:¹⁸ "Nor heresy will never die" (Skelton 428).

CHAPTER THREE

“In Quhome Mony Haue Layd Thair Hoipes”: Succession in *The Countess of Pembroke’s Arcadia*

In *The Countess of Pembroke’s Arcadia*¹, Sidney follows the exploits of the princes Pyrocles and Musidorus who fall in love with the princesses and sisters, Philoclea and Pamela respectively. These men have very difficult tasks in obtaining their suits, for the princesses’ father, Basilius King of Arcadia, sequesters them away. According to an oracle, if Basilius allows his daughters to marry, terrible things would befall his crown and his person, so in order to stay the fates, Basilius remands his daughters to the inept care of Dametas, a shepherd, to keep them from falling under the influence of men. Unfortunately for Basilius, once Pyrocles and Musidorus fall in love, they refuse to allow the king’s will to stop them from the pursuit of their goal. In order to get close to the objects of their affection without suspicion, Pyrocles dresses like an Amazon warrior and takes the name Zelmane, and Musidorus pretends to be a shepherd, Dorus, working under the supervision of Dametas. After Musidorus gives Pamela enough clues to discern his identity, he tells her a story of his and Pyrocles’s exploits in Asia, but he tells her the tale in the third person in order to avoid arousing the suspicions of those around him. Through three of his tales within the inset story, Sidney shows his disapproval for oligarchy, his preference for close hereditary succession, and his preference for male princes, but he does give allowances for women to inherit the throne; by applying the principles of strong leadership and close hereditary succession at the end of the romance,

Sidney intends to show how England can do what it failed to do at the death of King Edward VI: avoid a bloody succession at the future death of Queen Elizabeth I.

When Pamela asks Musidorus about the good king Euarchus, Musidorus is more than happy to oblige. Pamela commands, “tell me since I perceive you are well acquainted with that story, what prince was that Euarchus ... of whom much fame goes for his rightly royal virtues” (Sidney *Arcadia* 253). Euarchus’s father died young, so Euarchus became the sovereign of Macedon at a young age. Because of his youth, others handled the reins of government, but they did not handle them well. Musidorus explains their bad behavior: “his authority having been abused by those great lords and little kings who in those between-times of reigning, by unjust favouring those that were partially theirs, and oppressing them that would defend their liberty against them, had brought in ... the worst kind of Oligarchy” (Sidney *Arcadia* 254). After Euarchus takes on the authority of government, he handles these problems, and his subjects grow to love him for it (Sidney *Arcadia* 255). Because of the badly run government, Euarchus inherits a state full of disorder; however, with his virtue, he settles it well.

Both here and elsewhere in *Arcadia*, Sidney criticizes oligarchy as a form of government. Musidorus defines “the worst kind of Oligarchy”: “that is, when men are governed indeed by a few, and yet are not taught to know what those few be to whom they should obey” (Sidney, *Arcadia* 254). While Sidney seems to criticize a particular form of oligarchy here, at the end of the romance he disparages a similar suggestion that no prince should rule Arcadia. Sidney writes, “For some there were that cried to have the state altered and governed no more by a prince: marry, in the alteration, many would have the Lacedaemonian government of a few chosen senators. ... But these were rather

the discoursing sort of men than active, being a matter more in imagination than practice” (*Arcadia* 767). At the point of succession of an Arcadian prince, the men of action all want monarchy, and only those who are idle would choose an oligarchy. For Sidney, by its very nature, an oligarchical government implies badly constructed government, and this is the situation in which Euarchus grew up.

Continuing his story to Pamela, Musidorus explains that he and Pyrocles were shipwrecked off the coast of Phrygia. During the shipwreck, Musidorus and Pyrocles become separated, and Pyrocles falls into the hands of the wicked king of Phrygia. Because of the king’s hatred of Musidorus and because of Pyrocles’s relation to Musidorus, the king decides to put Pyrocles to death. Musidorus gives the king’s reason for this deed: “For having quite lost the way of nobleness, he strave to climb to the height of terribleness” (Sidney, *Arcadia* 266). Yet, as Pyrocles is on the cusp of execution, through complicated maneuvering, Musidorus arrives and saves him from this fate.² The princes rally the dissatisfied element against the king, and they defeat the king’s forces soundly. Referencing the forces in rebellion to their king, Musidorus explains, “they ... met [the king] with little delay in the field, where himself was slain by Musidorus after he had seen his only son ... slain by the hand of Pyrocles” (Sidney *Arcadia* 270). Sidney allows Musidorus and Pyrocles to destroy the king and his son, the natural heir of Phrygia. While the kingdom is left without leadership, the masses proclaim Musidorus, their deliverer, king. Yet, in the end, Musidorus does not take up the mantle of kingship; rather, he finds the next heir and creates him the king of Phrygia.

During the Medieval period, the prevalent political opinion allowed rebellion if the king had ceased to behave as a king, but by Sidney’s time, this had changed.

According to Robin Headlam Wells, “Although medieval political theorists strongly deprecated rebellion, they conceded that a king who violated his coronation oath could no longer expect obedience from his subjects” (45). In order to alter this Medieval model, “the Royal Supremacy, a cult of royal authority had of necessity to be set up, and the king’s person suffused with a glow of divinity” (Le van Baumer qtd. Wells 46). By the time of Sidney’s writing, Elizabeth I had developed such a secular cult concerning her personality. According to Richard McCoy, “Elizabeth’s cult would become the most successful Protestant version of sacred kingship in the English Reformation” (59). Elizabeth successfully created the cult in part by establishing ornate court proceedings during holidays. (McCoy 59).³ Through the behavior of the characters in *Arcadia*, Sidney displays a reluctance to accept this new Tudor model. According to Tracey Sedinger, “Despite sixteenth-century political-theological discourses on obedience and subjection, recent historians of the Tudor polity have suggested that republican citizenship remained a viable mode of political activity” (57). In moving towards this older version in which the king’s authority was less than absolute, Sidney gravitates in this direction of “republican citizenship.” The duty of the populace to their sovereign extends only so far; even so, Sidney does not reject the Tudor model outright: he shows a tremendous respect for the royal line. In fact, he extends the authority of the line beyond the person of the sovereign.

Because the king of Phrygia had lost his kingly nature, Sidney, via his narrator Musidorus, does not repudiate the people for revolting. During his explanation of power during Euarchus’s minority, Musidorus says, “For [those controlling an Oligarchy], having the power of kings but not the nature of kings, used the authority as men do their

farms of which they see within a year they shall go out, making the king's sword strike whom they hated, and the king's purse reward whom they loved; and (which is worse of all) making the royal countenance serve to undermine the royal sovereignty" (Sidney *Arcadia* 254). Because they did not have the nature of kings, the lords in Euarchus's time behave badly; they lack this nature, so they cannot rule as kings. Obviously, therefore, Sidney believed that kings do have a particular nature. Sidney may have shared some commonality of opinion with Shakespeare's Richard II, who says, "Not all the water in the rough rude sea / Can wash the balm off from an anointed king" (Shakespeare 95). But contrary to Richard, this only applies to kings as they behave as kings; by behaving badly, a king can wash off his own balm, and this is what the king of Phrygia did. However, if the king has not lost his kingly virtue, the people may not righteously revolt against him.

While the revolt against the king of Phrygia was entirely justified, Sidney does not allow Musidorus to take up the mantle of Phrygian kingship; rather, kingship still belongs to the line of the destroyed Phrygian king. Sidney appears to illustrate that there is something important about the royal line. Musidorus says of himself, "But he, thinking it a greater goodness to give a kingdom than get a kingdom, understanding that there was left of the blood royal and next to the succession an aged gentleman of approved goodness ... did, after having received the full power to his own hands, resign all to the nobleman" (270). The estates of Phrygia offered Musidorus kingship, but by giving it up, he shows a respect for the royal line that fits well with the Tudor model of kingship. For Sidney, the king may be in error, and the people may remove him with justification, but they may not destroy his line; the line is more important than the man.

Directly after the tale of the death of the king of Phrygia, Musidorus tells Pamela of the King of Pontus whom he and Pyrocles defeated. Although this story has different specifics, the overall theme is the same: the princes confront an abusive king and defeat him. However, in this case, the heroes rally the newly liberated Phrygia to their aid in the destruction of this wicked king, so, rather than a rebellion from within, this is an invasion from without. Nonetheless, rebellion is an aspect of this plot, for Musidorus says, “There might Pyrocles quietly have enjoyed that crown by all the desire of that people, most of whom had revolted unto him” (Sidney, *Arcadia* 273). As in the case of Phrygia, Sidney does not appear to condemn the people for rallying to the side of Pyrocles, for Pyrocles destroys a wicked king. In many ways, this story teaches the same lesson as the destruction of the king of Phrygia. However, in one important detail, the stories differ: in the case of the king of Pontus, the heir presumptive is a woman.

As if Sidney’s perception of kingly authority is not confusing enough, he seems to give a special and subordinate role to a female prince, and, remarkably, he does this during the reign of a female prince. In Phrygia, Musidorus finds the nearest of kin to the current monarch; thus he preserves the kingly line. While in Pontus Pyrocles does the same, the new sovereign is a woman, and seemingly because of this fact, Pyrocles operates differently. When Musidorus gives the kingship of Phrygia to the next in line of succession, he does not make any special requirements of a co-authoritative reign, but when Pyrocles gives the crown to the heir presumptive of Pontus, he feels the need to marry her to a nobleman. Musidorus says, “but he, finding a sister of the late king’s, (a fair and well esteemed lady) looking for nothing more than to be oppressed with her brother’s ruins, gave her in marriage to the nobleman of his father’s old friend, and

endowed with them the crown of that kingdom” (Sidney *Arcadia* 273).⁴ In this case, in order for Pyrocles to give the kingdom to the rightful heir, he must marry her to a nobleman, and she not only marries, she must also share her crown.

At first, this could look as though Pyrocles attempts to mollify some faction in Pontus by marrying her to a nobleman; perhaps, Pyrocles has her married for purposes of political union. However, Musidorus accomplishes political union in Phrygia without the marriage of the heir. After putting power into the hands of the Phrygian king’s heir, Musidorus says that he gave him the kingdom “but with such conditions, and cautions of the conditions, as might assure the people (with as much assurance as worldly matters bear) that not only that governor, of whom they looked for all good, but the nature of the government, should be no way apt to decline to tyranny” (Sidney *Arcadia* 271).

Musidorus gave the kingdom to the rightful heir, but he did not feel the need to marry him to someone in order to form good government; he did it without such a precaution. Apparently, Pyrocles marries the heir of Pontus to a nobleman as an added requirement because of her sex.

Strangely enough, Sidney puts this requirement in his fictional universe during a time in which an unmarried queen regnant reigns. About Parliament’s acceptance of Elizabeth as sovereign lady, a contemporary biographer William Camden writes, “She being now 25 years of age, and taught by Experience and Adversity, (two most effectual and powerfull Masters,) had gathered Wisdom above her age: the first proof whereof she gave in chusing her Counsellours” (10; spelling, capitalization original). Elizabeth ascended the throne only four years after Sidney’s fictional limit for unmarried queens regnant. Of course, because this is four years after Sidney’s age of majority, he cannot be

criticizing the queen; however, Camden's comments seem to share a commonality of spirit with Sidney's fictional requirement. After all, Camden goes out of his way to tell his reader that the queen at twenty-five is at a greater level of maturity than other people of the same age.

Most important, however, Sidney does not limit the extra restrictions for female princes to Pyrocles's whim in Pontus. If he had, this would be no proof that Sidney argues for more requirements for female sovereigns. Later in the romance, Sidney codifies extra rules within the ancient laws of Arcadia. Upon being informed of her father's death, Pamela intends to take on the mantle of authority as his rightful heir. Sidney writes, "Philanax answered, her grace knew the ancient laws of Arcadia bare she was to have no sway of government till she came to one and twenty years of age, or were married" (*Arcadia* 765). Encoded in both law and practice, the men in the world of *Arcadia* refuse to allow a young, unmarried woman to rule on her own. Although he wrote at a time of a female prince in England, Sidney seems to suggest that young women should have special requirements before they take control of the throne.

During the last succession crisis, England had failed to follow two of the principles Sidney teaches in the inset story: the importance of putting down oligarchy, and the emphasis on a kingly line rather than a kingly person, but it did, however, follow his requirements for young queens regnant. Because Edward's health had been on the decline for some time, he began to work on his Devise, a will to clarify succession (Skidmore 247). By this document, he sought to ensure the ascendance of Lady Jane Grey, a descendent of King Henry VII through King Henry VIII's younger sister Mary (Skidmore xxi). By doing so, Edward removed his sisters, the Princesses Mary and

Elizabeth, from succession. By this document, Edward tried to ensure that England remained Protestant if he were to die without issue. Once Edward died, following his Devises, the king's Council proclaimed Lady Jane to be Queen of England, but as the eldest surviving child of Henry VIII, Mary also claimed to be queen. The nobility began to choose sides -- some proclaiming for Mary, and others proclaiming for Jane; however, in the end, Mary ascended the throne and returned England to the Catholic Church. Mary executed both Jane, and Jane's husband, Guildford Dudley, Sidney's uncle.

By telling the story of Euarchus's childhood in Musidorus's inset story, Sidney may have intended to recall Edward's childhood. According to Matthew Woodcock, Sidney's "father Sir Henry was a counselor and favorite of Edward VI" (1). In this regard, Sir Henry said of himself

I was ... put to ... Prince Edward, my most dear master, prince, and sovereign ; my dear kinswoman being his only nurse, my father being his chamberlain, my mother his governess, my aunt in such a place ... is called a dry nurse ; for, from the time he left sucking, she continually lay in bed with him, so long as he remained in women's government. As the prince grew in years and discretion so grew I in favour and liking of him (qtd. in Symonds 5).

Sir Henry was with the young king at his death. According to Chris Skidmore, "[Henry] Sidney took the boy in his arms. Edward's last words were: 'I am faint; Lord have mercy upon me, and take my spirit' " (258). After this plea, Edward died. With the depth of Sidney's familial attachment to Edward's court, Sidney may very well have decided to write a tribute to the young king who favored his father and elevated the paternal side of his family.⁵ Sidney has double reason for doing so: he hates the type of government that controlled England during Edward's minority, an oligarchical Protectorate, and he may

wish the young Protestant king had survived to take the reins of his government, and put down the oligarchical model as Euarchus did.

Because of his identification with Protestantism, Sidney may have written a tribute to the young Protestant king. From Sidney's early days, Sir Henry clearly intended that Sidney strongly emphasize his Christian faith. Sir Henry signed off a letter to the young Sidney with "Your loving father, so long as you live in the fear of God, H. Sidney" (qtd Berry 14). To future generation, Sidney is most known for his fiction, and as such, Sidney fulfilled this expectation. In his great work of literary criticism, *The Defence of Poesy*, Sidney immortalizes his Christianity by connecting his love of language to the divine. He writes, "Lord, if He gave us so good minds, how well it might be employed, and with how heavenly fruits, both private and public in singing the praises of the immortal beauty, the immortal goodness of that God who giveth us hands to write and wits to conceive" (Sidney *Defence* 48). Yet, Sidney does not stay neutral on the subject of denominational loyalties (indeed something that would be difficult at the time in which Sidney lived); rather, he projects himself as a Protestant. (Nevertheless, at times, Sidney appeared too comfortable with Roman Catholics for Protestant liking.⁶) The Protestant reverend Theophile de Banos dedicated commentaries on the Protestant intellectual Peter Ramus to Sidney (Sidney, *Correspondence* 645; Duncan-Jones 58). During Banos's communication with Sidney, he writes, "I love and honour you, and will not cease to love you from now on, for the great gifts of religion and virtue with which it has pleased the Lord to signally adorn you" (646). With this connection to Protestantism, Sidney may surely have wished to pay tribute to the tragically-dead Protestant King Edward VI.

Like Euarchus, Edward was a boy of great expectation, and by allowing Euarchus to grow up to take the reins of government, he recalls what may have happened if Edward had grown into a man. At his coronation sermon, the Archbishop of Canterbury, Edward Cranmer, preached a sermon, which clearly shows the hopes raised towards Edward. Cranmer preached, “These acts be signs of a second Josiah, who reformed the church of God in his days. You are to reward virtue, to revenge sin, to justify the innocent, to relieve the poor, to procure peace, to repress violence, and to execute justice throughout your realms” (qtd in Skidmore 61). Cranmer expects a lot out of Edward, for Edward represents a type of the Old Testament boy king Josiah. Yet, unfortunately for the Protestants, Edward was to die before he was able to fulfill most of these acts that the reformers expected, and, worse, upon his death many of his reforms were undone by Queen Mary I.

By allowing Euarchus to live to reform his kingdom, Sidney fulfills the romance trope of wish-fulfillment, for Sidney would have wished that Edward had lived. On Medieval romances, Lee C. Ramsey writes, “Accuracy was important, but insight was more important. ... The line between a model for right actions and a wish-fulfillment hero is faint, and the romance writers had no interest in drawing it more boldly” (70). Contrary to Medieval ‘romancers,’ Sidney does not suggest that the *Arcadia* is good history. In fact, Sidney speaks to the line between history and fiction in his *Defence*. Sidney writes, “So as the other artists, and especially the historian, affirming many things, can in the cloudy knowledge of mankind hardly escape from many lies. But the poet ... never affirmeth; the poet never maketh any circles about your imagination” (*Defence* 34). Following the *Defence*, Sidney presents the *Arcadia* as fiction, and fiction

it is; nonetheless, Sidney still gives it qualities of the romance genre, and wish fulfilment is one of them. As a Protestant, Sidney would have thought it much better if the protestant boy king had outlived Mary, his Catholic sister.

After the death of King Henry VIII, various lords ran the functions of state in Edward's name during his minority. For much of Edward's reign, the government ran quite similarly to the government in Euarchus's minority. About the year 1549 when Edward was eleven or twelve, Chris Skidmore writes:

The polity was ... rapidly deteriorating. 'No improvement is observed in keeping of order or the administration of justice,' [Imperial Ambassador] Van der Delft observed. 'The people are all in confusion, and with one common voice lament the present state of things.' He was not alone in his thoughts. When he visited [John] Dudley [Viscount Lisle, Earl of Warwick, Duke of Northumberland, and Sidney's grandfather], the earl displayed his open discontent with the Protector: 'Now was the time' he added, for the emperor 'to come forward as the King's father' (135).

Both Van der Delft, the imperial ambassador, and Sidney's grandfather saw the peril in which court intrigue had left England. This criticism echoes Sidney's, for Van der Delft implies that England would do much better if the Holy Roman Emperor could teach the young king statecraft, but perhaps more importantly, these men yearn for a state in which royal blood controls the affairs of state. At this time, England suffered from the very thing Sidney criticizes: lack of leadership. By telling the story of Euarchus's minority, Sidney recalls the strife through which England had gone a generation earlier.

Just as Sidney criticizes the rule of oligarchy, the oligarchical structure of Edward's Protectorate created the climate which led to the succession crisis. Of the government of Euarchus's minority, Sidney writes, "when men are governed indeed by a few, and yet are not taught to know what those few be to whom they should obey" (*Arcadia* 254). As the Council proclaimed Jane Queen in London, much of the common

population of England had no idea whom to obey. Skidmore tells the story the Council's proclamation of Jane in London: "at seven o'clock in the evening, two heralds and a trumpeter told the news of Edward's death and proclaimed Jane queen in front of thousands of Londoners, who by all reports apparently stood silently astonished, their faces 'sorrowful and averted.'" (265). Certainly the council hoped for a greater reception than this. At this meeting, a commoner, Gilbert Potter, attempted to rally the people of England to support Mary, and when he did this, "he was promptly seized and both his ears severed 'at the root' the following morning" (Skidmore 266). Yet, this event was only the beginning of the council's problem, for confusion reigned throughout the realm as many did not know whom to obey. The council had ordered Jane proclaimed throughout the realm, but as Mary's momentum grew, "one by one, cities and towns refused the council's edict to proclaim Jane queen" (Skidmore 270). For Sidney this confusion is typical of oligarchical modes of government, and it is this government type against which he writes.

In Musidorus's tale, Sidney shows more respect for the kingly line than the kingly person, and this is the principle Edward's council failed to carry out. Although offered the kingdoms of Phrygia and Pontus, Musidorus and Pyrocles take great pains to install the rightful rulers on the throne. Musidorus and Pyrocles had every reason to take control of the throne: the previous king had shown himself a failure as a king, they had quality of blood, and the people wanted them to be kings. But for Sidney, none of these reasons is sufficient. Rather, Pyrocles and Musidorus show their quality by ensuring that the right persons rule. Similarly, according to Henry VIII's will and tradition, Mary had the right to the throne, but because Edward's councilors were following the Tudor model of

kingship in which the individual monarch takes precedence, they signed his Devise. About the Devise, Skidmore writes, “In this Edward sought to divert the succession and disinherit his sisters. This was both remarkable and revolutionary. Edward was abandoning his family, turning against the traditional laws of inheritance and his late father’s wishes” (248). Not everyone in Edward’s government immediately went along with his Devise. At first the judges of the King’s Bench refused to turn the Devise into a legal will, but eventually, through unsavory tactics, Edward was able to convince them to do so (Skidmore 251).⁷ Likewise, Cranmer at first refused, but he was also brought into submission of the Crown (Skidmore 252). Although king, Edward should not have been able to run roughshod over English traditions, but the Tudors had created a government in which the personality was paramount.

In Pontus, Pyrocles ensures that the new queen regnant marries a nobleman, and Edward does the same. In his original Devise, Jane was not to inherit the kingdom, but, rather, her male issues were to inherit. Imperatively, therefore, Jane needed to marry, so Northumberland arranged for Jane to marry his son, Sidney’s uncle Guildford Dudley (Skidmore 249). However, when Edward’s health began deteriorating badly, he knew that he needed to change the mechanism of inheritance of the crown. Skidmore explains Edward’s emendation:

With a few strokes of the pen, where the original line of succession in the ‘Devise’ had read ‘To the Lady Fraunceses heirs males’ followed by ‘For lack of such issue to the Lady Janes heirs males’, [*sic*] it now read: ‘To the Lady Fraunceses heirs males, *if she have any such issue before my death* to the Lady Jane *and her* heirs males.’ By default the crown would be Jane’s (249; italics original to Skidmore).

Although Jane was young, she was married, and this is what Sidney required in both Pontus and Arcadia.

Because Jane meets the minimum qualifications for queens regnant in the *Arcadia*, Sidney does not criticize this part of the succession crisis, and this may represent the complicated relationship he has with his family history. Katherine Duncan-Jones writes,

Sidney is fiercely protective of his grandfather Northumberland, referring to his execution and that of his son Guilford merely as ‘calamities’, [*sic*] and affirming finally ‘let the last fault of the Duke be buried’. [*sic*] Whether by his ‘last fault’ Sidney means his elevation of Jane Grey to the throne or his last-minute attempt to avoid execution by converting to Catholicism is not clear (5).

This ambiguity seems to mark this part of Sidney’s opinion, for his parents taught him to be proud of his Dudley past. Duncan-Jones writes, “As the only legitimate male descendent of John Dudley, Duke of Northumberland, Sidney ... must have realized that it fell to him to rebuild the fortunes of that ambitious family” (44). So, although Sidney appears to vividly criticize the succession crisis in other areas, here, his criticism becomes lax, for although young, Jane is the kind of monarch who could inherit the throne in *Arcadia* and *Pontus*, for she is married to his uncle.

As England failed to follow his principles of good government in the last succession crisis, Sidney anxiously looks forward to a future in which the same thing could possibly happen again. Elizabeth remained unmarried, and childless. Because she has passed the child-bearing years, Sidney knows that Elizabeth will produce no issue to inherit the throne. Sidney wants to avoid the unnecessary bloodshed (much of which damaged his family) that characterized the last succession crisis. Although Sidney would not live to see King James VI & I ascend the throne, he hoped for a peaceful succession with James. In fact, Sidney writes to George Buchanan of James’s Scottish court,

Sir althocht vnknawne to yow, yit knowing *yowr* vertew and loving it, I haue sent this beirare my seruant vnto yow And to desire sik fauour and freindschip of yow, as ye think may be bestowed vpon a young man that desyris to do weill. ... I haif nocht bene without desire to see you, and kiss the hand of the young king, in quhome mony haue layd thair hoipes. (*Correspondence* 920)⁸

Many, including Sidney, laid their hopes on James.

Sidney writes his letter to James in 1579, a time when the Stuart succession at the death of Elizabeth had, by no means, been solidified. According to Samuel R. Gardiner, “If Elizabeth had died before 1587, there can be little doubt that Catherine Gray, or one of her family, would have succeeded her. As long as the Queen of Scots was alive, the reasons which had determined the nation to support Henry VIII ... in excluding the House of Stuart were still of importance” (79). From the time Sidney wrote his letter until past the time he died, the question of English succession was vexed. Gardiner writes, “Englishmen had been looking forward with anxiety to the death of Elizabeth, and had prognosticated that it would be followed by internal convulsion, if not by a foreign invasion” (78). James was but one of at least fourteen people who could make a claim for the English throne (Gardiner 78). Although Gray had the greatest chance of succeeding during Sidney’s lifetime, yet he still writes hopes that James will be his next sovereign lord. In the end, this did happen, and with no protestation or bloodshed. Of course, Sidney did not know this would happen. Nonetheless, at the end of *Arcadia*, Sidney presents a succession crisis, and if things had turned out normally, a smooth transition would have followed.

At the end of the romance, Basilius of Arcadia appears to have died at the hands of Gynecia, his wife. In the meantime, Pyrocles has been discovered in the Princess Philoclea’s bedchamber, and Musidorus has been discovered eloping out of the country

with the heir presumptive, Pamela. The noblemen charge Pyrocles and Musidorus not only with improprieties with the princesses, but also with the death of Basilius, and the chief courtier, Philanax, takes charge of the proceedings. According to the laws of Arcadia, the judgment on the king's death needed to take place without delay. By means of an amazing coincidence, the noble Euarchus happens to arrive for a visit with Basilius at this very time. Because he is the most qualified and noble person available, Philanax asks him to judge several crimes; Euarchus agrees to adjudicate the case. In the meantime, the noblemen sequester the princesses pending the judgment of the court. Euarchus renders judgment against Gynecia for murder, against Pyrocles and Musidorus for theft of Basilius's property, and against Philoclea for unladylike behavior (Pamela is exempted, for she is sovereign under the laws of Arcadia). However, once Basilius appears alive, Euarchus's judgments are not carried out.

At the apparent death of Basilius, the social order began to break down and confusion reigned; the state was in danger of falling into the same disarray as England had at the death of Edward. After the discovery of the apparent death of Basilius, shepherds discover the terrible tragedy that Gynecia poisoned the king. Because Gynecia did not mean to kill Basilius, she is deeply grieved, and she offers her life to the shepherds. Sidney notes the strange disorder of status: "The poor men looked one upon the other, unused to be arbiters in princes' matters, and being now fallen into a great perplexity, betwixt a prince dead and a princess alive" (*Arcadia* 732). Much like England's last succession crisis, Sidney places the lowest people in the position of arbiters of state. Similar to Gilbert Potter the common man, because of the vacuum of

power, places himself in the position to make important decisions. However, Sidney allows some stability with the entrance of Philanax.

Once Philanax discovers the murder of Basilius, he takes charge, for he is Basilius's chief nobleman; although his government is better than the government of shepherds, it still devolves into oligarchy. Once Philanax sequesters all of the key players, the state is in a terrible condition. Sidney writes, "already was all the whole multitude fallen into confused and dangerous divisions" (*Arcadia* 766). Sidney continues with a critique of the type of Philanax's government: "There was a notable example how great dissipation monarchal governments are subject unto. For now their prince and guide had left them, they had not experience to rule, and had not whom to obey" (*Arcadia* 766). Sidney levels the same criticism against Arcadia as he did against Macedon when Euarchus was too young to rule. Oligarchical governments create too much confusion, and each of these governments exist in the absence of right, monarchal power. The lords even question whether or not to dissolve the monarchal system in which, according to Philanax, Arcadia had always existed.⁹

Importantly, Philanax has no ill motive; he intends to create a good government in Basilius's absence. Sidney writes, "There was no man that ever loved either his prince or anything pertaining to him with a truer zeal than Philanax did" (*Arcadia* 751). So Sidney's criticism of an oligarchical government does not necessarily denote a lack of good intentions. In this respect, Sidney may think of his grandfather Northumberland, for although Sidney loved and revered his grandfather's memory, he did not love the type of government running England in Edward's minority.

Sidney solves Arcadia's problem in the same way as he solved the Macedonian problem; he allows Euarchus to come forth and personally rule. Sidney writes, "The dangerous division of men's mind, the ruinous renting of all estates, had brought now Arcadia to feel the pangs of uttermost peril" (Sidney, *Arcadia* 783). At this moment, unlooked for, Euarchus appears. If England had had someone of such noble blood at the death of Edward, it might have averted the problems incumbent with deciding the accession of Jane or Mary, or if Edward had been able to grow to a man and produce natural issue, England might have had no need to determine the answer to this question. Unfortunately, however, England did not have the benefit of someone of noble blood to help guide the state, and Edward died without issue. When he presents Euarchus to the nobles, Philanax says, "I wish that, since among ourselves we cannot agree in so manifold partialities, we do put the ordering of all these things into [Euarchus's] hands, as well touching the obsequies of the king, the punishment of his death, as the marriage and crowning of our princesses" (Sidney, *Arcadia* 786). Sidney corrects the failures of the last succession crisis by allowing Euarchus to judge in the case. Because Euarchus possesses royal quality, he may judge the trial and decide the points of succession.

According to Robert Stillman, Basilius has created the power vacuum by allowing his personal desires to get in the way of his behavior as king, and this may be the lesson Sidney teaches for the next succession. Referring to the rebellion against Basilius, Stillman writes, "Again and again Sidney draws attention to the invasion of private passions into public affairs as the principal cause of the revolt" (801). Yet the revolt is not the only way in which this inversion of priorities manifests itself. Because of this very problem, Basilius has been hiding. Marcus Selden Goldman writes, "We shall ...

find that Sidney presents Basilius ... as a man who has divested himself of his rule through superstitious fear. ... No character of sense approves the king's resolution" (159). Because Basilius has long considered his personal interests above those of the state, he has not put in place the procedures to appropriately negotiate the difficulties attending his apparent death; the nobleman do not know whom to obey. Basilius has not fulfilled his function as a monarch. In other words, the power to weather the next succession crisis is, at least partially, in the hands of the current monarch. For Sidney, if England is to weather the next storm, the power, authority and dignity of the state must ever be before a prince's eyes. If it were not for the arrival of Euarchus, disaster might have befallen Arcadia, and if it had, much of the blame would belong to Basilius. Princes must behave like princes, not like private citizens.

Unlike the English succession crisis, Arcadia eventually recognizes, without bloodshed, Pamela, the daughter of the king, as sovereign lady. In Musidorus's tale, Sidney clearly shows the importance of preserving the royal bloodline, and this is something that Edward and his Council failed to do at his death. Sidney reverses this failure in Arcadia, for although some question the importance of continuing the kingdom, in the end they clearly decide to follow the ancient laws. Sidney writes, "a great number there were that would have the Princess Pamela presently to enjoy [the crown]; some, disdaining that she had (as it were) abandoned her own country, inclining more to Philoclea; and there wanted not of them which wished Gynecia were delivered and made regent till Pamela were worthily married" (*Arcadia* 767). However, by the time of her trial, there is no question as to Pamela's status in Arcadia; perhaps the arrival of Euarchus helped bring order to this confusion. During the trial, Philanax says, "And as for Pamela,

... the laws of Arcadia would not allow any judgment of her” (Sidney, *Arcadia* 807).

With the arrival of Euarchus, any question regarding her right to obtain the crown has faded away; Arcadia needed strong leadership to defend her right.

Following the principles in Musidorus’s story of kingly virtues, Pamela immediately takes on the mantle of authority and quality, and, by doing so, she shows that has the right to rule. When she becomes informed of her father’s death, she takes it in stride. She refuses to allow her “private passions” to overmatch “public affairs” (Stillman 801). Sidney writes, “But in the end, remembering how necessary it was for her not to lose herself in such an extremity, she strengthened her well-created heart and stoutly demanded Philanax what authority then they had to lay hands on her person, who being the undoubted heir, was then the lawful princess of that kingdom” (*Arcadia* 765). When Pyrocles and Musidorus established the rightful heirs on the throne of Phrygia and Pontus, the heir needed to have the requisite quality. Pamela shows that she has this quality.

As he did in other passages, Sidney does not criticize the rise of queens regnant; in this case, he departs from it, for in the end Pamela does not inherit the throne. In the case of Mary and Jane, one had to become queen of the realm; however, in the case of Arcadia, Pamela does not become queen, for her father still lives. Yet England could not have avoided the outcome of a queen regnant after Edward’s death, for its only two choices lay in Jane or Mary; Edward was not going to return from the dead. In the same way, once Elizabeth dies, England will have to make the transition to a new monarch. Because he writes fiction, Sidney can use the ploy of apparent resurrection, but sixteenth-century reality had no such measure.

However, Sidney does use Pamela to show certain similarities between both contenders during the last succession crisis. Sidney gives Pamela qualities similar to Jane, for in the English succession crisis, the aristocrats treated Jane like a pawn. Sidney's parents may have raised him with a sense of the injustice of this treatment. Duncan-Jones writes, "Recollections of Lady Jane Grey's dignity and composure while she was manipulated, and finally destroyed, as a political pawn whose personal feelings mattered little to the older people around her, may have contributed to some of the most powerful and original passages in the 'New' *Arcadia*" (6). Duncan-Jones refers to Pamela's imprisonment by Cecropia, yet if Sidney patterns some of Pamela's personality upon Jane, the similarity also reveals itself in the way in which the estates of Arcadia treat Pamela during her imprisonment.

In addition to the qualities of Jane, Sidney also gives Pamela qualities of Mary, for like Mary, Pamela boldly asserts her right even to the point of sending a letter to those conducting her trial. Regarding the life of Musidorus, Pamela writes, "If I be your princess, I command his preservation: if but a private person, then we are both to suffer. ... to conclude; in judging him, you judge me" (Sidney, *Arcadia* 828). Philanax has already said that she is not to be judged according to Arcadian laws, but Pamela attempts to take Musidorus under the wing of her sovereignty. This attempt to assert herself does not work, for Philanax suppresses Pamela's letter. This behavior is similar to Mary's assertion of her right to rule. Skidmore writes of Mary's communication with the Council, "Mourning her brother's passing, she made clear that the Crown was hers only. Her claim, backed by an Act of Parliament and her father's will was self-evident, and she asserts that her right to rule is self-evident" (266). Informing the Council that the entire

kingdom knows of her right to rule, Mary writes, “You know ... the realm and the whole world knoweth” (qtd. Skidmore 266). According to Mary, the entire kingdom knows that she is the rightful Queen of England. Although the Council responded to Mary’s claim; in the end, it did her no more good with the authorities of that Council than Pamela’s letter does with the nobles of Arcadia.

Sidney wants to avoid the type of bloody succession that engulfed England at the death of Edward VI. Being so many years younger than Elizabeth, he probably expected to be a part of whatever transpired, and, no doubt, he was acutely aware of the destruction an earlier crisis wrought on his family’s fortune. Unfortunately, for him, however, he died before Elizabeth. Sidney provides principles in *Arcadia* by which England can avoid future succession problems. Elizabeth needs to provide good and legal leadership whereby the people of England must know whom to obey. If Princes do not take charge, oligarchy reigns. Yet, this has a limit, for a monarch should not run over the existing laws and traditions of the state. Sidney shows a preference for the nearest in line of succession regardless of the behavior of the last monarch, but the successor must prove himself or herself a person of princely character. Sidney clearly supported James and with good reason, for James descended from Margaret Tudor, Henry eldest sister, and King James IV of Scotland (Fraser 81). Although Henry precluded the Stuarts in his will by preferring his young sister, Mary, this violates the principles Sidney teaches in *Arcadia* (Gardiner 78), for James descends from the elder daughter. By learning the lessons from Edward’s failed attempt at circumventing tradition and history, England can avoid another bloody crisis. In the end, England did have a smooth transition, and in part because it avoided the pitfalls of the previous crisis.

CHAPTER FOUR

The Kings' Two Albanys: A Reversal of *Gorboduc's* Albany in *King Lear*

Among the sources on which William Shakespeare based his *The History of King Lear*, he appears to have used *Gorboduc, or Ferrex and Porrex* by Thomas Norton and Thomas Sackville, the Earl of Dorset. In "The Influence of *Gorboduc* on *King Lear*," Barbara Heliodora Carneiro de Mendonça presents a word comparison of *Lear* with nine of Shakespeare's potential sources,¹ and Mendonça convincingly shows that several word groups from *Lear* appear either far more frequently in *Gorboduc* than in the other probable sources or exclusively to it. For instance, according to Mendonça, the words *treacherous*, *traitor*, *treachery*, and *treason* appear thirty-one times in *Gorboduc*, and twenty-four times in *Lear*, but these words never appear in the other eight potential sources (Mendonça 44). As these four words exemplify, Norton, Sackville, and Shakespeare are very interested in discussing the wrong response to authority. In both plays, the final scenes show the terrible aftermath of rebellion against the crown, and in each play, a Duke of Albany plays an important part in this moment of the drama. Using the most recent politically active Duke of Albany as a partial source, Sackville and Norton indicate the political threat that Scotland had become in the escalating succession crisis of Queen Elizabeth I's reign; however, by the time Shakespeare wrote *King Lear*, Sackville and Norton's political allusions in Albany were no longer appropriate, so as a foil to *Gorboduc's* Albany, Shakespeare reconstructs his Albany as hero, giving him traits that would appeal to King James I (VI of Scotland) politically and intellectually.

In *Gorboduc*, Sackville and Norton write about the king of Britain who decides to split his kingdom between his two sons, the princes Ferrex and Porrex. Unfortunately for Britain, as soon as Gorboduc completes the power transfer, Ferrex, the elder prince, begins to suspect that his younger brother will not be content with his half of the kingdom, and because of this, Ferrex fears that Porrex would conduct a war of aggression against him. In order to stay the threat of his younger brother, Ferrex begins stockpiling arms. When Porrex's intelligence informs him of this occurrence, Porrex naturally assumes that Ferrex plans an attack against him, so he launches a preemptive attack during the course of which Porrex kills Ferrex. Deeply grieved, Gorboduc recalls Porrex to his court, but before Gorboduc could decide his punishment, their wife and mother, Videna, kills Porrex. By the time the last act of the play begins, a popular uprising has killed both Gorboduc and Videna, and the nobles war against an uprising populace. After the nobles defeat the commoners, they must face a threat from outside Britain, for Fergus, the Duke of Albany, decides to seek the throne for himself. In regards to the fate of Britain, Sackville and Norton leave the play entirely inconclusive.

In *Lear*, Shakespeare writes of a king who decides to split his kingdom three ways among his three daughters Regan, Goneril and Cordelia, but before he does so, he wants his daughters to pronounce their love for him. Both Regan and Goneril honor their father's request with glowing but ultimately false praise, but Cordelia decides to tell her father that she cannot quantify her love for him. Because Cordelia "cannot heave / [Her] heart into [her] mouth," Lear takes this as a grave insult, and immediately disowns her (*Lear* 1.83-84²). Because he sees Cordelia's virtue in her refusal, the king of France marries her without a dowry, and she leaves to become his queen consort. Throughout

the rest of the play, Lear's remaining daughters treat him less and less as a king, culminating in closing the door on him and forcing him to face a hurricane-force storm without protection. In the end, Cordelia arrives in Britain from France with an army intent on restoring Lear's kingdom to him. Unfortunately, the French lose the battle, and Edmund, an ally of the ungrateful daughters, orchestrates the death of Cordelia. Because of this final blow, Lear dies of a broken heart. At the end of the play, the Duke of Albany appears, undisputedly, to be highest ranking noble left.

In both *Gorboduc* and *Lear*, a war takes place between England and a foreign state. In *Gorboduc*, this occurs on the heels of a popular uprising that the lords have put down, but in *Lear*, the war actually exists to restore the rightful king to the throne.³ Nonetheless, during the course of both of these conflicts,⁴ acts of treason from within lead to the death of the kings. In *Lear*, Albany says to Edmund who orchestrated Lear's death, "I arrest thee / On capital treason" (*Lear* 24.80-81), and in *Gorboduc*, as the nobles counsel together of how to stop the popular uprising, Mandud asks, "Shall this their traitorous crime unpunished rest?" (*Gorboduc* 5.1.8). Shakespeare and Sackville and Norton associate the death of the king with treason from within, and both of these acts of treason occur within the framing of foreign invasion. In both of these plays, the Duke of Albany is a major component in the final act. In *Gorboduc*, he takes advantage of the treason and invades Britain, but in *Lear*, he stands against treason and holds the country together.

Although both *Gorboduc* and *Lear* share the characters of the dukes of Cornwall and Albany, Sackville and Norton did not originate these characters. Giving the story of King Lear, Geoffrey of Monmouth writes, "Straightway thereupon, by counsel of the

nobles of the realm, he giveth the twain sisters unto two Dukes, of Cornwall, to wit, and Albany” (46). Although Sackville and Norton base Albany on his quasi-historic counterpart, the contemporary title of Duke of Albany existed, so they situate this character in a position to recall Britain’s legendary past, but also the original audience would have thought of dukes of Albany from the recent past of whom they knew. Of course, in *Lear*, Shakespeare uses the same mechanism of dual contemporary and historic recall to fuel his allusions to Albany, but he directs them differently than Sackville and Norton.

In *Gorboduc*, as the nobles put down the rebellious commoners, Sackville and Norton create an almost identical situation as that with which the last politically active Duke of Albany had to contend, and by doing so, they paint their fictitious Albany as a reversal of the role that John Stewart, the Duke of Albany, played in Scottish politics of 1515. When *Gorboduc* premiered, the Dukedom of Albany was dormant and in union with the Scottish crown; within living memory, the last holder of the second creation, John Stewart, had been the regent of Scotland during the minority of King James V (Cokayne 83).⁵ According to Donald Gregory, after the death of King James IV, “Scotland [fell] into a state of great confusion. This was aggravated by the evils usually attendant upon the minority of a sovereign in these rude times, and from which the nation, in the present instance, did not soon recover” (114). Among these troubles, John Stewart faced rebellion in Scotland, and much like the noble lords in *Gorboduc*, he was forced to negotiate with them. Gregory writes, “it became necessary for [John Stewart] to give commission . . . to treat with the less violent of the rebels, and to promise them the Royal favour, and remission of their crimes, provided they engaged to carry themselves

in future [*sic*] as obedient subjects. ... This commission excepts the principal rebels” (116). In *Gorboduc*, as the council of nobles decide how to confront the uprising commoners, Clotyn, Mandud, and Gwenard argue that they should destroy the rebels. To this opinion, Albany gives his affirmation: “There can no punishment be thought too great / For this so greivous crime” (5.1.26-27). Contrary to his real life namesake, *Gorboduc*’s Albany desires to destroy the rebels; however, Eubulus suggests that the nobles should negotiate with them, and winning the rest of the nobles to his side, he said

Let us therefore use this present help:
Persuade by gentle speech and offer grace
With gift of pardon, save unto the chief;
And that upon condition that forthwith
They yield the captains of their enterprise
To bear such guerdon of their traitorous fact
As may be both due vengeance to themselves
And wholesome terror to posterity (5.1.85-92)

Eubulus’s speech could almost be a narrative of what John Stewart did in 1515, and for a while, it worked, but it was not long before James V’s subjects were again in “open rebellion” against his regent, John Stewart (Gregory 117). According to George Edward Cokayne, “After a profuse, weak, and inefficient regency of eight years, he finally quitted Scotland” (81). John Stewart’s regency was a failure.

However, contrary to the picture history gives to the last politically active Duke of Albany, Sackville and Norton reinvent him as a picture of strength, for in *Gorboduc*, while the lords are seeking peace with the rebels, Albany makes plans to take over the kingdom. Albany says,

If ever time to gain a kingdom here
Were offered man, now it is offered me.
The realm is reft both of their king and queen;
The offspring of the prince is slain and dead;
No issue now remains, the heir unknown

The people are in arms and mutinies;
The nobles, they are busied how to cease
These great rebellious tumults and uproars; (*Gorboduc* 5.1,132-139)

Gorboduc's Albany faces the same situation John Stewart faced, but Sackville and Norton reverse it, so instead of appearing weak as the regent did, *Gorboduc's* Albany becomes a powerful threat. As he recasts Albany from a weak leader to a strong threat, perhaps Sackville and Norton intended Albany to be a thinly veiled warning against the potential for Scottish aggression in the English affairs of state. At the time Sackville and Norton wrote *Gorboduc*, the linking of the crowns of England and Scotland was an ever-present possibility, and this may be the political threat they have in mind as they write the character of Albany. Writing in Elizabeth's reign without the benefit of a "certain" heir, Sackville and Norton make a political statement through Mandud's response to the threat from Albany:

Though we remain without a certain prince
To weld the realm or guide the wandering rule,
Yet now the common mother of us all,
.....
Cries unto us to help ourselves and her. (*Gorboduc* 5.2.96-102).

Succession was an important political issue, and through this speech Sackville and Norton clearly show their position: although succession is unclear, the British should not seek to enthrone a foreign prince.

At the time of *Gorboduc's* premier in December 1561, Sackville and Norton could have had two Anglo-Scottish political problems in his mind: the potential marriage of Lady Katherine Grey⁶ and Mary Queen of Scots's claim to the English throne. At the time Sackville and Norton wrote *Gorboduc*, Lady Grey was Elizabeth's heir as dictated by an act during King Henry VIII's reign (Weir *Elizabeth* 114). Because of her dynastic

importance, Grey's marriage was a consideration of state, and around 1559, two years before *Gorboduc's* premier, "came ... damning, and unfounded rumours that Katherine was going to marry the Earl of Arran with the intention of uniting the thrones of England and Scotland" (Weir *Elizabeth* 115). Perhaps Sackville and Norton were aware of this rumor, and they had this marriage in mind when they composed the figure of Albany. If so, Sackville and Norton sought to argue for a more suitable match for the heir presumptive. Jaecheol Kim writes, "Marie Axton and others have demonstrated that *Gorboduc* was produced in the heavily referential web of Elizabeth's marital politics, and that it represents the succession debates" (691). Certainly, as the play from beginning to end tackles succession problems, Sackville and Norton must have had Elizabeth's marriage in mind, but perhaps they thought of more than just Elizabeth. After all, when Arostus counsels that the sovereign should be "born within your native land," he speaks in response to the potential threat from a Scottish lord; equally plausibly, therefore, Sackville and Norton could have had Lady Grey's potential marriage in mind.

More likely than the marriage of Lady Grey, however, Sackville and Norton probably thought of the possibility of Stuart succession to the throne. Mary did have a claim to the English crown through her great-grandfather, King Henry VII. About Mary, Eva Scott writes, "In September [of 1561] the question of the Edinburgh treaty was reopened, and Mary declared herself ready to ratify it ... in formal recognition of her English heirship. Many of the English councilors were in favour of the agreement, but at no time and for no consideration whatever could the English queen bring herself to name her heir" (76). Three months later, *Gorboduc* premiered giving this argument:

.....his or hers upon whose name⁷
The people rest by mean of native line,

Or by the virtue of some former law,
Already made their title to advance.
Such one, my lords, let be your chosen king,
Such one so born within your native land;
Such one prefer; and in no wise admit
The heavy yoke of foreign governance (5.2.165-172).

In this passage, Arostus encourages the lords to resist Albany. If Arostus represents an argument on Sackville and Norton's part, whether due to flattery of Elizabeth's decision or to earnest conviction, they appear to agree with the prospect of refusing to recognize Mary. Rather than looking to bring someone from outside the nation, Sackville and Norton look for someone from "the native line," for Elizabeth was still young enough to bear children. Sackville and Norton's description of Albany applies to Mary as well: neither Mary nor Albany were "born within [the] native land," and as the sovereign lady of Scotland, Mary, like Albany, would submit England to "The heavy yoke of foreign governance."

Forty-five years later, Shakespeare wrote *King Lear* using at least one of the same source-texts, and two common characters: the most important being the Duke of Albany; critics have mused over Shakespeare's placid characterization of Albany in the beginning of the play and contrasted it with Albany's action later. Indeed, in the fourth scene, Goneril says to Albany,

This milky gentleness and course of yours,
Though I dislike not, yet under pardon
You're much more attasked for want of wisdom
Than praised for harmful mildness. (*Lear* 4.322-325)

At this point, despite Goneril's evil, her characterization of Albany does not seem incorrect. Yet, by the end of the play, Albany commands with authority. Stevenson accounts for this change: "on the symbolic level Albany represents first the soul of the

British people and ultimately the soul of humanity” (260). According to Leo Kirschbaum, the change in Albany exemplifies the alteration of a neutral character into good by the effect of witnessing the horribleness of evil (23). Kenneth Friedenreich, partially opposing Kirschbaum’s reading, argues that Albany represents the conservative order, and for Albany to begin to act, the societal constraints of the old order needed to begin deteriorating: “This is the order Lear himself unleashed by dividing his kingdom in the first place; the new order is one where bastards flourish, where punishment are swift and severe” (299).⁸ While any of these readings could be part of the reason that Shakespeare writes Albany this way, none of them take into account *Gorboduc* as a source text; even Friedenreich who briefly examines some of the other source-texts leaves out *Gorboduc*.

In addition to any other reason Shakespeare may have had, by allowing Albany to move from an inactive to an active character, Shakespeare creates *Lear*’s Albany as a foil for *Gorboduc*’s Albany. Until after the royal family is slain, Sackville and Norton entirely exclude Albany from the action of *Gorboduc*. Albany does not make an appearance until the fifth act. Only with the absence of royal power does the noble villain hatch his plot of treachery to usurp power. *Gorboduc*’s Albany asks himself, “Is not my strength in power above the best / Of all these lords now left in Britain land?” (5.1.156-157). Correlative to this in *Lear*, after Cornwall’s death, Albany begins to take a more aggressive approach. At that point, *Lear*’s Albany is the highest ranking noble left in the play, so he must act. The status of both dukes of Albany requires them to act at this moment in their play, but although *Gorboduc*’s Albany acts with great hubris, Shakespeare thrusts his Albany into this position seemingly against his will. Indeed,

Lear's Albany shows no ambition. Friedenreich writes, "Albany as a character cuts a paltry figure in the first act" (298), but he becomes a different person at the beginning of the fifth act. As Peter Mortenson observes, "Albany's emergence as *de facto* regent brings with it his use of the regal 'we' commencing his first speech of the scene" (220). In order to effectively create a foil of *Gorboduc*'s Albany, Shakespeare needed to create the same dramatic elements of a suddenly powerful Albany bursting onto the stage. Unlike *Gorboduc*'s Albany, however, Shakespeare writes Albany as a force for good rather than a force of continued strife. Rather than introducing the character in the final act of the play as Sackville and Norton did, Shakespeare achieves this effect by subordinating Albany for the first four acts.

English politics had changed dramatically in the intervening years between the respective premiers of *Gorboduc* and *Lear*. After the death of King James V, his infant daughter, Mary, Queen of Scots, became queen regnant of Scotland. After she reached her majority and took her seat of power, she fell deeply in love with Henry Stuart, Lord Darnley. Because of the queen's affection, Darnley began to receive titles from her hand. According to Antonia Fraser, "On the day in May on which he was created earl of Ross, he drew his dagger on the wretched justice clerk who brought him the message, because he was not also made duke of Albany as he had expected" (*Mary* 228).⁹ He did not have long to wait, however, for "On 22 July [1565] Darnley was at last given the coveted title of duke of Albany" (Fraser *Mary* 230)¹⁰. After Darnley was murdered in February 1567, the title of Duke of Albany passed to his infant son, later James VI & I, so when James ascended the English throne, the title of Duke of Albany united with the English crown. John W. Draper writes, "Heraldry in the seventeenth century was much too practical and

widely known a subject for Shakespeare's audience – at least the courtly part of it – not to guess at this relationship" (182). When Sackville and Norton wrote Albany as a villain into *Gorboduc*, the title was purely Scottish and united with a foreign crown, but by the time Shakespeare writes *Lear*, the title had become associated with the English king.

Because it was no longer appropriate to have a Scottish lord, bearing one of the king's noble titles, bent on the conquest of England, Shakespeare takes this Scottish character from *Gorboduc* and turns him into a hero. Rather than a villain engaged in a war of aggression against Britain, *Lear's* Albany, as the husband of Goneril, legitimately (that is with Lear's consent) controls half of Lear's kingdom. When the problems between Lear and Goneril escalate, Albany happens upon this conflict and declares to Lear, "My lord, I am guiltless as I am ignorant" (*Lear* 4.264).¹¹ Certainly Shakespeare did not give him a flattering line here; nonetheless, through it, Shakespeare emphasizes Albany's innocent goodness, and Albany continues in this goodness for the rest of the play. Warren Stevenson writes, "A closer examination of the play will reveal that Shakespeare consistently portrays Albany in terms of whiteness which includes all the colors – a pattern of imagery with strong symbolic overtones" such as "bloodless passivity and redemptive wholeness" (261). Unlike *Gorboduc's* Albany, who sought to control a kingdom when the commoners killed the king, *Lear's* Albany gives the kingdom back to Lear shortly before his death. Albany says, "we will resign / During the life of this old majesty / To him our absolute power;" (*Lear* 24.293-295). *Lear's* Albany would unite the country in peace rather than wage war with the sword, and Albany's political and intellectual underpinnings likely appealed to James VI & I.

At the end of *Lear* Albany, undisputedly, is the highest ranking nobleman left in the kingdom, so in essence, Albany links two kingdoms (or perhaps one fragmented kingdom). Contrary to *Gorboduc*'s Albany, who attempts to unite a similarly fractured state with war, *Lear*'s Albany does so by peace. By doing this, Shakespeare seem to endear himself to James VI & I's desire to establish a union between Scotland and England. Alan Stewart writes, "James's priority in the 1604 Parliament ... was to bring his two kingdoms of England and Scotland into a Union" (209). Since the first recorded performance of *Lear* occurred in December 1606, Shakespeare could clearly have had James's desire for union in mind.¹² Although James wanted a Union codified in law, a personal union¹³ between Scotland and England already existed, and James uses the *de facto* nature of the already existing union as one of his arguments. Comparing the personal union to a marriage James said,

What God hath conjoined then, let no man separate. I am the husband, and all the whole isle is my lawful wife; I am the head, and it is my body; I am the shepherd, and it is my flock. I hope therefore that no man will be so unreasonable as to think I that am a Christian King under the Gospel, should be a polygamist and husband to two wives" (qtd. in Stewart 209).

For James, in recognizing the union by law, Parliament would merely recognize what already existed in fact.

Rather than using Albany as a political statement of support for Union, Shakespeare may have merely meant to suggest the *de facto* nature of James VI & I's personal union. James says, "Hath not God first united these two kingdoms both in language, religion, and similitude of manners? Yea, hath he not made us all in one island, compassed with one sea." (qtd. in Stewart 209) Although James believes Union already exists, he wants Parliament to confirm it under the law; in essence, he wants them to

catch up with God, for God has already united these countries. Albany functions in his quasi-sovereign role in a similarly *de facto* way. After Edmund betrays his father to Cornwall for the crime of treason, Cornwall says, “True or false, it hath made thee Earl of Gloucester” (12.15). Later, after Cornwall is dead, Albany calls into question the legitimacy of this creation by calling Edmund a “Half-blooded fellow,” reminding him of his status as a bastard and implying that bastards cannot inherit (24.78). This occurred in Cornwall's half of the kingdom, but Albany, as the last man standing, uses a *de facto* authority to question Cornwall's creation. In another example of *de facto* authority outweighing legalities, after Albany returns Lear's authority to him, Albany continues to exercise this royal authority. Albany says that he returns to Edgar and Kent

..... your rights,
 With boot and such additions as your honours
 Have more than merited. All friends shall taste
 The wages of their virtue, and all foes
 The cup of their deservings (*Lear* 24.294-299)

Although he just gave royal authority back to Lear, Albany continues to exercise it; he does not do this out of hubris or ambition, but because he must: Albany alone is in a position to exercise regal authority. Lear is in no condition to restore titles, give rewards or mete out punishment, so at this point in the play, Shakespeare subordinates *de jure* to the *de facto* law. James's arguments for unification partially rest on this *de facto* logic, and Shakespeare may have been playing on this principle in the character of Albany.

James VI & I had a penchant for intellectual debate, and Shakespeare recrafts Albany to appeal to the intellectualism that James valued. Alan Stewart writes about James's debate with a leading Jesuit: “The encounter turned into a marathon five-hour scholarly exchange. ... At the end, the two men praised each other graciously and

generously, with [Father James] Gordon [the Jesuit] conceding that no man ‘use his arguments better nor quote the Scriptures and other authorities more effectively’ than James” (96). James’s interest in intellectual pursuits did not consist of theology alone; he was very interested in the theory of kingship, and he was an important expositor on the theory of divine right kingship. In another change in the characterization of Albany, Shakespeare gives him a greater degree of respect for the king than his counterpart in *Gorboduc* enjoys.

In the last scene of *Lear*, the tragedies correspond to James VI & I’s view that a bad king alters a nation. Fraser writes, “[James’s] propositions concerning the divine origins of a King’s authority were far-reaching indeed. Even a bad King, he argued, had his inalienable rights over the people, on the grounds that he had been sent by God to punish the people” (*James* 67). Although the text is inconclusive on Lear’s use of his authority over the greater part of his reign, in the end he abrogates his authority; because he does not fulfill his responsibility to his kingdom, he is a bad king. Following James’s theory of divine kingship, the characters in the play are being punished. Of course, *Lear* takes place in a pre-Christian era, but, regardless, the final portion of the play takes on an eschatological tone. Kent asks, “Is this the promised end?” and Edgar responds, “Or image of that horror?” (*Lear* 24.259). About Kent’s question, Stanley Wells writes, “A suggestive phrase which Edgar takes to refer to the end of the world, the Day of Judgement, and which could also refer to the outcome of the events set in train by Lear’s abdication” (*Shakespeare Oxford* 270). Of course, Wells’s two possible interpretations here are not mutually exclusive, and taking into account James’s political theory, they may be mutually inclusive in *Lear*.

Seemingly in response to Kent and Edgar's questions, Albany says, "Fall and cease" (*Lear* 24.260); many read this as an additional dark musing responding in the same vein as Kent and Edgar's dark questions;¹⁴ however, Michael Warren argues that this is an imperative issued by Albany because Lear has entered the room. Warren writes, "The verb 'fall' occurs on nine occasions in Shakespeare in contexts of obvious reverence, submission or prayer" (178), and "in other instances, however, the verb 'fall' is explicitly associated with kneeling" (179). Warren argues that Albany commands the company, including Edgar and Kent, to kneel before Lear. Warren writes,

Albany's speech is not a peculiarly phrased invocation to the heavens but a simple command to kneel in silence, expressed economically in two imperatives. When Lear enters howling with Cordelia in his arms, Kent and Edgar exclaim vainly before the horror they perceive. By contrast, Albany responds by asking for a reverent silence. ... Albany is also, I suggest, commanding that they kneel before their rightful king. (179)

If one adopts Warren's reading, this scene in general, and Albany in particular, become powerful examples of James VI & I's divine right theory. By abrogating his duty as a king, and therefore being a bad king, Lear brought unbearable sorrow to his kingdom, so much so that two of his subjects ask if the end of the world has come, yet in that painful moment, Albany, Lear's *de facto* regent, demands that they show Lear the obeisance that he is due as their sovereign lord.

Gorboduc's Albany and *Lear's* Albany differ in their response to their respective king's deaths. Far from being interested in the dignity of kingship, *Gorboduc's* Albany seems either pleased or neutral at the death of the Gorboduc, for it enables him to seek the kingship. *Gorboduc's* Albany says,

If victors of the field we may depart,
Ours is the scepter then of Great Britain;
If slain amid the plain this body lie,

Mine enemies yet shall not deny me this,
But that I died giving the noble charge
To hazard life for conquest of a crown (5.1.160-165)

The death of Gorboduc fills Albany with ambition. Clearly he wants to live, but if he dies in his quest, he takes comfort in the fact that the pursuit of the crown will be a noble reason for which to die. He even expects that his enemies will praise him for the ambition. This Albany has no sense of the tragedy of the moment – of the terrible consequences of the bad decisions of kings. Clearly, his response to kingship is far different from that of *Lear's* Albany, for *Gorboduc's* Albany is entirely deaf to the tone of tragedy. He can only hear his own ambition and greed.

In contrast, Shakespeare constructs Albany with an intentional lack of ambition, for after the death of Lear, far from seeking a crown, Albany does not want it when he is the only one truly qualified to take it. After Lear dies, in the Quarto version he tries to give his authority away. Albany says to Kent and Edgar, “Friends of my soul, you twain / Rule in this kingdom, and gored state sustain” (*Lear* 24.314-315). The tragedy has become too powerful for Albany to want to rule any longer.¹⁵ Edgar says nothing in response, but Kent implies that he is going to follow Lear into death. Exemplifying the high degree of loyalty that he feels towards Lear, Albany says,

The weight of this sad time we must obey,
Speak what we feel, not what we ought to say
The oldest have borne most. We that are young
Shall never see so much, or live so long (*Lear* 24.318-321)

With his lord dead, Albany no longer wants to rule, or live, yet the voice of an obedient subject still comes out in his speech: he must act because duty demands it. Directly after the death of Lear, Albany says, “Our present business / Is to general woe” (*Lear* 24.313-314). The sorrow of the moment, the tragedy before them, gives an imperative to their

action, and the imperative is to grieve. This is a far more intellectual response than *Gorboduc's* Albany whose imperative is only to act rashly and selfishly, not to think or feel. But *Lear's* Albany commands them to obey the consequences of Lear's tragic reign, that is, to grieve; in order to grieve one must think and consider. *Lear's* Albany presents a picture of a man far more interested in the contemplative life than *Gorboduc's* Albany.

Gorboduc ends without concluding whether or not Albany takes over Britain, but Shakespeare answers this question in the affirmative. Even as Shakespeare writes, the Duke of Albany sits on the English throne. But contrary to the menacing image Sackville and Norton give, Shakespeare changes Albany's treachery into goodness. *Gorboduc's* Albany uses others' treason and regicide to seek his selfish ends, but *Lear's* Albany excises treason and restores the monarchy to the rightful king for as long as he lasts. At the end of *Lear*, Albany becomes a paragon of the same philosophical theory of kingship and intellectualism that became associated with James VI & I's public image.

Shakespeare takes the negative qualities of *Gorboduc*, a play that emphasizes the threat Scotland posed, and recasts them into something good. By doing so he looked forward to a new era of Anglo-Scottish relations, and while the Union between these two countries has not always worked perfectly, more than four hundred years later, they are still united under a single sovereign lady, and the Scottish Peerage of Albany is still connected to the British throne.

Notes

Chapter One

¹In this list, I count Jane, for she was proclaimed Queen of England in several areas of the realm, including London.

²Gina Hens-Piazza writes that Michael McCanles used this term two years earlier than Greenblatt in 1980 (5).

³I cannot tell the earnestness with which Kermode criticizes New Historicism, for he writes, “The talk was written when I was feeling mild irritation about certain excesses of ‘the New Historicism’ and meant to have a little fun at its expense. Some of my hearers were apparently disconcerted by my procedures” (342). In this disclaimer, Kermode seems to suggest both a lack of complete seriousness in his criticism, yet a retention of the claim that New Historicists have “excesses” in their use of anecdotes.

Chapter Two

¹All references to and quotes from the *Speculum Principis* pertain to David R. Carlson’s translation of the Latin text.

²Skelton speaks in the plural, and partially because of this some critics believe that Skelton wrote the *Speculum* for both Arthur and Henry (Ridley 16; Pollet 21). However, Skelton’s use of plural may be a bow to convention, for others think that he tutored only Henry (Nelson 64).

³See Heiserman 74, and Pollet 41.

⁴Of course, possibly, the *Speculum* had nothing to do with Henry’s creation of Skelton as *orator regius*, but because Skelton’s motivation was probably advancement, and he did receive advancement, I am inclined to believe that the *Speculum* was a welcome reminder to Henry of his old tutor.

⁵I completely disagree with Pollard and others who hold the view that poor behavior means that he could not have been a good teacher. While Skelton may have written ribald poetry during his time tutoring Henry, I contend that this is entirely separate from his pedagogical methods with his student. Today (and I see no reason why it could not be so then), many people have personal lives that are far different from their professional personas.

⁶Ironically, the first part of this stanza says,
So many cloisters closed,

And priests at large loosed,
Being so evil disposed
Saw I never.

If Skelton had lived a few more years, he would have seen his “sovereign lord the King” increase rather than decrease that evil.

⁷For example:

So few good policies
In Townes and cities
For keeping blind hosteries,
Saw I never.

or

It is great pity that every day
So many bribers go by the way,
And so many extortioners in each country,
Saw I never.

⁸While the latter is after Skelton’s death, it is still important to establish a life-long habit of reading: something, no doubt, Skelton meant to instill with his imperatives in the *Speculum*.

⁹Wolsey was not the only example of this unusual preferment. Alison Weir writes, “The older nobility were disparaging and resentful of those whom the Duke of Norfolk scathingly termed ‘new men,’ men such as Charles Brandon and Thomas Cromwell, whose titles and lands were bestowed by the King as rewards for good service” (*Henry* 101).

¹⁰Greg Walker argues that Skelton did not receive political power with his creation as *orator regius*. Walker writes,

Was he not, one might be tempted to suggest, the official poetic mouthpiece of the Crown and the broadcaster of its opinions to the world; as it were, the King’s Champion in the literary lists? ... In fact, ... any analysis of the King’s Orator’s career seems to reveal surprisingly few occasions on which the king gave him leave to speak on his behalf. (35)

¹¹On Skelton’s use of Scripture in “Tongues,” Arthur F. Kinney writes,

If Wolsey is to look up the references spelled out in the epitaph and rubrics, he will find only a reception of the poem itself: and this means that to deny the poem is to deny the Scriptures. Either way, through ignorance (by refusing to acknowledge the biblical passages) or by knowledge of the Scriptures, Wolsey is declared guilty of bad faith. (128)

I suggest, of course, that this is not the only way in which Skelton has argued Wolsey into a corner; his subtle references of schooling the king also serve as a reminder of the king’s affection for his old tutor, and they serve as a warning against too harshly attacking Skelton’s “school.”

¹²Although incorrect, Skelton would deride him for being the son of a butcher. He was actually “[t]he son of an Ipswich grazier and wool merchant” (Weir *Henry* 87).

¹³Skelton will later employ the same pun in *Colin Clout*: “A priest without a letter” (258).

¹⁴In *The King’s Cardinal: The Rise and Fall of Thomas Wolsey*, (159-172), Peter Gwyn also lays out a convincing case that Wolsey may have been less involved with the duke’s death than scholarship has usually claimed, but as Skelton clearly felt that Wolsey had interfered too much in the affairs of state and as there was an anti-Wolsey faction, the “traditional” point-of-view is more valid for ascertaining Skelton’s motivation in his writing.

¹⁵Excepting Wolsey, Bernard’s examples are from bishops appointed after this period, but Skelton appears to be attacking the same sort of abuses at the times in which he writes *Colin Clout*.

¹⁶Henderson explains in a footnote that this means that they become priests (Skelton 257).

¹⁸Excepting the dedication at the end of *A Replication*.

Chapter Three

¹All references to *The Countess of Pembroke’s Arcadia* are to the version edited by Maurice Evans.

²Because it was Musidorus whom the king of Phrygia actually hated, Musidorus arranged a prisoner swap whereby the king would possess Musidorus, and Pyrocles would go free. Not willing to endure the death of his friend, Pyrocles returned and posed as Musidorus’s executioner; at the moment that Musidorus was to die, they fought the Phrygian forces together.

³According to Katherine Duncan-Jones, Sir Philip would have witnessed one of these events when he was a child. Professor Duncan-Jones writes, “This vision of his monarch in all her power and glory cannot have failed to impress the eleven-year-old Sidney, who later showed himself acutely aware of the close connexion between visual display and effective government” (35).

⁴Although outside the argument of this paper, conceivably, Sidney could have in mind the ascension of Lady Jane Grey, who was descended from King Henry VIII’s sister Mary, for, here, the King of Pontus’s sister inherits the throne. If this is what he has in mind, it throws more light on the fact that Pyrocles requires her to marry, for Lady Jane had to marry Sir Philip’s uncle in order to create an heir to fulfill the requirements of King Edward VI’s Devise.

⁵Although rather marred during the succession crisis, Sir Philip already possessed a remarkable pedigree on his mother's side. According to Professor Duncan-Jones, "Sidney was trained from boyhood to consider 'that my chiefest honour is to be a Dudley'" (44; partially qtd. Sidney).

⁶For instance, in March of 1575, Hubert Languet wrote to Sidney, "I see that your people have begun to have some suspicions about your religion, since you are on more comfortable terms with the Venetians than is usual with those who profess a religion different from yours" (Sidney, *Correspondence* 404).

⁷About the decision to endorse or not to endorse the Devises, Chris Skidmore writes, "Conferring together, however, [the judges] considered 'the danger of treason' in overturning the legal succession too great and two days later explained their refusal to the council" (251). The council and king did not react kindly to this response, and King Edward VI "demanded that his cousin Jane be his heir, and that the judges upon their allegiance draw up the letters patent of his will. Those standing near huddled around the judges, menacing that to refuse would be treason" (Skidmore 252).

⁸A footnote in the *Correspondence* says, "Sidney is clearly referring to the English succession here" (920).

⁹Philanax refers to the "ancient laws of Arcadia" (Sidney, *Arcadia* 765) in reference to Pamela's succession because she is a woman. If Arcadia has had ancient laws governing the succession of female princes, they must have been a monarchy for a long, long time.

Chapter Four

¹Barbara Heliadora Carneiro de Mendonça compares *Gorboduc*, *King Lear*, Holinshed's writings, *Histories of the Kings of Britain*, *Gesta Romanorum*, *The Faerie Queene*, *Queen Cordila*, *Lamentable Song*, and the *Arcadia*.

²Unless otherwise noted in a parenthetical citation, all references to *Lear* are to the Oxford World's Classics edition.

³Nina Taunton and Valerie Hart observe that the Q1 text stresses the foreign invasion, whereas the F text places more emphasis on the potential civil war between Cornwall and Albany.

⁴In the case of *Gorboduc*, the commoners kill the king, but the chaos that ensues ends up being a prelude to Albany's attack; thus, I think it can be viewed as part of the same conflagration; in the case of *Lear*, the king dies at the end of the conflict.

⁵At the time of *Gorboduc*'s premier, King James V had given to his second son, Arthur, the third and most recent creation of the Duke of Albany in 1541, but "he d[ie]d

eight days after his baptism” (Cokayne 82). George Edward Cokayne calls into question whether or not the third creation actually existed.

⁶Some scholars spell her name Catherine and some Katherine. I have followed Allison Weir (*Elizabeth* 41).

⁷A note in Regent’s edition of *Gorboduc* on line 165: “L.H. Courtney ... interprets the phrase as a covert argument for the justice of the claim of Lady Catherine Grey.”

⁸I am partial to this and Peter Mortenson’s nearly identical reading of Albany. However, I think Kenneth Friedenreich goes too far in dismissing Leo Kirschbaum’s opinion of Albany as a savior at the end of the play. In my opinion, Friedenreich and Kirschbaum’s readings give the most compelling reasons for Albany’s choosing to remain on the side of the evil characters during the conflict with France. As a representative of the old order, he would never be able to side with an invading force against his native country.

⁹According to Cokayne, Darnley was given the “charter of the lands of Albany,” but not the dukedom on May 25; perhaps this contributed to his expectation of the dukedom (82).

¹⁰Cokayne gives the date as July 20 (82).

¹¹In the Folio, Albany succeeds “My lord, I am guiltless as I am ignorant” with “Of what hath moved you so” (1.4.243; Pearson edition). Because the Quarto edition gives no object of his guiltlessness and ignorance, it seems to connote a generalization of character. By giving the succeeding line, the Folio seems to strengthen Albany’s character.

¹²The date that Shakespeare wrote *Lear* is a matter of some contention, but because the controversy over Union spanned four years from 1604-1607, any of the dates put forth for *Lear* would be acceptable under this reading (Tauton 698).

¹³Tim Harris records a grand illustration of James’s personal union: “James began his progress on 15 March. When he reached the border on 13 May, he got off his horse, lay on the ground, and proclaimed that here was the union of Scotland and England in his own person” (178).

¹⁴For instance, Stanley Wells writes, “Fall and cease may be taken as a plea for *Lear* to be granted the peace of death, or for the world to disintegrate and cease to be” (Shakespeare Oxford 271).

¹⁵Giving an alternate reading, Wells writes, “It is not clear whether Albany is inviting Kent and Edgar to share the rule with him (perhaps as members of his council), or to resume their feudal roles” (Shakespeare Oxford 274).

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