

**Getting the News and Getting Ahead:
Correspondence and News Culture in Early Stuart England**

by

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Abstract

In early seventeenth-century England, court politics and the spread of news were closely connected. Many outside of James I's inner political circle were deeply concerned with what was happening at the center of power. This preoccupation with court affairs and court politics was reflected in the news of the day, specifically in the epistolary correspondence of men looking to advance their own political careers. This project uses the letter collections of Sir John Chamberlain and several of his contemporaries to discuss how they gathered, sent, received, used, and understood the news of court. For Chamberlain and his correspondents, letters and epistolary exchange were a type of access and a means to gain favor. They used them to understand the intricacies of the Stuart court, and in doing so, they hoped to gather the knowledge and favor necessary to establish themselves in positions of political power.

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Introduction

In November 1602, letter-writer Sir John Chamberlain humbly described himself as a watcher of the king's inner circle, a "spectator of other men's fortunes and adventures."¹ Yet, to his correspondents, Chamberlain was much more than a mere spectator. He was an active and valued participant in the gathering and dissemination of court news in the early seventeenth century. His collection of letters, which spanned a total of thirty years and numbered over five hundred letters, meticulously recounted the news of the day—ranging from the activities of James' inner political circle, to word of international conflicts, and notices of notable births, marriages and deaths.

Using Chamberlain's letters as a lens into the news culture of the early seventeenth century, this project investigates Jacobean news culture, namely how news of court and court politics was gathered, sent, received, used and understood by the people who wrote—i.e. Chamberlain—and the people who received the news, particularly ambassadors stationed abroad. This examination of Chamberlain's correspondence reveals how people at a distance from court followed and used news of what was happening at the center of power. Ultimately, Chamberlain and his correspondents used their epistolary networks to discuss and spread the news of court, and in doing so they often utilized the language of access, favor and liberty in an attempt to understand and navigate the intricacies of Jacobean court politics.

First and foremost, this project engages with and contributes to the historiography of Jacobean news and political culture, particularly the discussion about the ties that existed

¹ N. E. McLure, ed. *The Letters of John Chamberlain*, 2 vols. (Philadelphia: American Philosophical Society, 1939), I, Sir John Chamberlain to Sir Dudley Carleton, November 19, 1602, 171.

between court politics and the spread of news in the early seventeenth century.² This project's examination of the epistolary correspondence of men outside the king's inner political circle reveals a preoccupation with court affairs that consumed the wider Jacobean public, and it provides evidence for the strong connection between what was going on at the center of Jacobean power and what was talked about in the news.³ The letters of Chamberlain and his contemporaries expose the intricate and elaborate nature of Jacobean court favor and a deep contemporary fixation on court politics. Their correspondence provides a unique and underexplored lens into the news of the day. Using this correspondence, this project seeks to understand not only what and how court affairs became news, but also why these men considered it news.

News culture and the circulation of news in the seventeenth century have attracted the attention of many historians in recent years. The work of these scholars focuses on the means by

² Richard Cust, "News and Politics in Early Seventeenth-Century England," *Past and Present* 112 (1986): 60-90 and Adam Fox, "Rumor, News and Popular Political Opinion in Elizabethan and Early Stuart England," *Historical Journal* 40, no. 3 (1997): 597-620 are two key works that engage in the discussion of the close ties between politics and the spread of news and news culture in the early seventeenth century.

³ Many historians have tried to view this connection through different avenues, and the following chapters engage with these supplemental threads. Some of these threads include the development of early modern diplomacy, the culture of diplomacy, and how access and favor functioned in the early modern court. Daniela Frigo, ed. *Politics and Diplomacy in Early Modern Italy: The Structure of Diplomatic Practice, 1450-1800* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000) and Douglas Biow, *Doctors, Ambassadors, Secretaries: Humanism and Professions in Renaissance Italy* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2002), though they discuss non-English diplomacy, are two recent works on early modern diplomacy and the role of ambassadors in its development. See also, C. H. Carter, "The Ambassadors of Early Modern Europe: Patterns of Diplomatic Representation in the Early Seventeenth Century," in *From the Renaissance to the Counter-Reformation*, ed. C. H. Carter (New York: Jonathan Cape, 1965). Robyn Adams and Rosanna Cox, eds. *Diplomacy in Early Modern Culture* (Houndmills: Palgrave, 2011), and Marika Keblusek and Badeloch Vera Noldus, eds. *Double Agents: Cultural and Political Brokerage in Early Modern Europe* (Boston: Brill, 2011) are both recent works on the social world of ambassadors abroad, specifically their roles as cultural agents. The work of Brian Weiser, David Starkey, Neil Cuddy, and Kevin Sharpe, namely Brian Weiser, *Charles II and the Politics of Access* (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2003); David Starkey, "Introduction" and "Intimacy and Innovation: The Rise of the Privy Chamber, 1485-1547," in *The English Court: From the Wars of the Roses to the Civil War*, ed. David Starkey (London: Longman Group, 1987); Neil Cuddy, "The Revival of the Entourage: the Bedchamber of James I, 1603-1625," in *The English Court: From the Wars of the Roses to the Civil War*, ed. David Starkey (London: Longman Group, 1987); and Kevin Sharpe, "The Image of Virtue: The Court and Household of Charles I, 1625-1642" in *The English Court: From the Wars of the Roses to the Civil War*, ed. David Starkey (London: Longman Group, 1987), have all contributed to the discussion of access and favor in the court of James I and Charles I, specifically the connections between politics and the organization of the court.

which news was transmitted, in manuscript form and in print, and the extent to which news was disseminated to the larger public.⁴ The volume of news was increasing in England in the seventeenth century, particularly the amount of information published about politics and court affairs.⁵ News separates and newsletters about court dealings began to circulate widely, and not just among elite circles. Over the course of the seventeenth century, more and more people outside of court had access to news of what was going on inside court.⁶ Historians have argued that this growing flow of news helped to shape the views of those who had access to it.⁷ News and news culture contribute to historical debates about the political awareness of the Jacobean public. They are also central to understanding the political consciousness of the early modern English population as it shows that a wide range of people outside the political center were engaged in the collection and dissemination of news.⁸

Central questions still remain about the nature of the Tudor-Stuart political nation, such as whom it involved. Adam Fox has defined this “political nation” as broadly made up of the “members of both houses of parliament, the governors of counties and towns, and the enfranchised classes in the constituencies.”⁹ It was the members of these social groups who had

⁴ Joad Raymond, “Introduction: Newspapers, Forgeries and Histories,” in *News, Newspapers and Society in Early Modern Britain*, ed. Joan Raymond (London: Frank Cass, 1999), 6. For more on news and rumor in seventeenth-century England see the full work *News, Newspapers and Society in Early Modern Britain*, ed. Joad Raymond (London: Frank Cass, 1999); Richard Cust, “News and Politics in Early Seventeenth-Century England,” *Past and Present* 112 (1986): 60-90; Adam Fox, “Rumor, News and Popular Political Opinion in Elizabethan and Early Stuart England,” *Historical Journal* 40, no. 3 (1997): 597-620; Alastair Bellany, *The Politics of Court Scandal in Early Modern England: News Culture and the Overbury Affair, 1603-1660* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002); *Political Culture and Cultural Politics in Early Modern England*, eds. Mark Kishlansky and Susan Amussen (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1995), Alastair Bellany, “The Embarrassment of Libels: Perceptions and Representations of Verse Libeling in Early Stuart England,” in *The Politics of the Public Sphere in Early Modern England*, eds. Peter Lake and Steven Pincus (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2007): 144-67; Adam Fox, “Ballads, Libels and Popular Ridicule in Jacobean England,” *Past and Present* 145 (1994): 47-83.

⁵ Richard Cust, “News and Politics in Early Seventeenth Century England,” *Past and Present* 112 (1986): 60; Adam Fox, “Rumor, News and Popular Political Opinion in Elizabethan and Early Stuart England,” *Historical Journal* 40, no. 3 (1997): 597.

⁶ Cust, “News and Politics in Early Seventeenth-Century England,” 61.

⁷ Fox, “Rumor, News and Popular Political Opinion,” 597.

⁸ Cust, 60-1.

⁹ Fox, 597.

access to a variety of political information, and it was the men of these groups who wrote and received the newsletters that reported the major events going on in London, especially the news of court. Though news published in both print and manuscript underwent considerable growth in this period, the most common method of communicating news was through word of mouth.¹⁰ People at all levels of society gathered and communicated information by the traditional methods of oral exchange through their own social networks. For this reason, virtually everyone had the chance to discuss current affairs. As Alastair Bellany's work on the Overbury scandal in the early seventeenth century has demonstrated, however, the people involved in the gathering and transmission of news were particularly concerned with what was going on at the political center—in other words, at court. Bellany shows that the news of court and parliament spread to the wider public and stirred the public imagination.¹¹ A wide range of people outside James' inner circle engaged in the discussion of this particular news, and as the explosion of the Overbury scandal revealed (an explosion that will be discussed in more detail in the third chapter), a wide variety of people were interested in what transpired at court, and they desired the news that would grant them this information. Men like John Chamberlain had access to information deemed valuable, and Chamberlain spent a large amount of his time communicating this news through his epistolary network.

Prior to the 1640s, the Privy Council strictly controlled the printing of domestic news in England.¹² Despite this restriction, a good deal of sensitive information about the crown and court found its way into wider circulation. This was largely due to the proliferation of private correspondence of men like Chamberlain, who sent letters to contacts across the continent—

¹⁰ Cust, 62.

¹¹ Alastair Bellany, *The Politics of Court Scandal in Early Modern England: News Culture and the Overbury Affair, 1603-1660* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002),

¹² Cust, 62.

information that was then spread even further through each correspondent's network. This type of information-heavy correspondence has come to be known as a newsletter. The Jacobean newsletters, which transmitted both domestic and foreign news to interested parties, originated from private correspondences. These newsletters were largely informal, where news of London was inserted within personal and business correspondence in letters to friends or relations.¹³ This sort of communication was the most common method for conveying written news in the early seventeenth century. Alongside these informal newsletters, however, there developed what Richard Cust calls the "pure newsletter," which were letters dedicated completely to news, both domestic and foreign.¹⁴ A market existed for these newsletters, and many people paid to have access to the kind of information they contained. These "pure newsletters" were the predecessors to the formal newsletters of the 1640s, and were in many cases being produced by well-connected men who had access to valuable information—men such as John Chamberlain.¹⁵

Within the wider discussion of early modern news and political culture lies the debate over the nature of early modern diplomacy and the roles Jacobean ambassadors played in its development. Chapter Two of this project engage significantly with these questions.¹⁶ Recently, focus within the history of diplomacy has shifted from the practices that made up European diplomatic relations to the social and material world of ambassadors abroad.¹⁷ According to historian Marika Keblusek, an ambassador's ability to perform a variety of diplomatic and

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Daniela Frigo, ed. *Politics and Diplomacy in Early Modern Italy: The Structure of Diplomatic Practice, 1450-1800* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000) and Douglas Biow, *Doctors, Ambassadors, Secretaries: Humanism and Professions in Renaissance Italy* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2002) are two of the most influential works on early modern European diplomacy.

¹⁷ For the material world of ambassadors, specifically their roles as cultural brokers see Robyn Adams and Rosanna Cox, eds. *Diplomacy in Early Modern Culture* (Houndmills: Palgrave, 2011); Marika Keblusek and Badeloch Vera Noldus, eds. *Double Agents: Cultural and Political Brokerage in Early Modern Europe* (Boston: Brill, 2011); Brinda Charry and Gitanjali Shahani, eds. *Emissaries in Early Modern Literature and Culture: Mediation, Transmission and Traffic, 1550-1700* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2009); Helen Jacobson, *Luxury and Power: The Material World of the Stuart Diplomat, 1600-1714* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012).

cultural roles became not only a necessity, but also an essential characteristic.¹⁸ In order to acquire these essential abilities, ambassadors stationed abroad needed to construct and maintain extensive correspondence networks that tied them to other ambassadors and influential men at home in London through information, favors and gifts. This project uses the letter collections of three principal Jacobean ambassadors, Sir Henry Wotton, Sir Dudley Carleton, and Sir Thomas Roe, to prove the existence of these correspondence networks, and underscore their importance to each man's political success. It was their creation and cultivation of patronage networks in particular that adds to the discussion of the development of early modern diplomacy, and it is the content of the information they shared within these networks that contributes to the literature on early modern news culture.

Finally, a discussion about early modern news and political culture cannot be complete without addressing the connection between access and favor in Jacobean politics. Many early modern historians have written extensively about access and favor in the Tudor and early Stuart courts.¹⁹ As the following chapters will demonstrate, many contributors to early seventeenth-century news culture centered their news around these concepts and tried to understand how they functioned within the early modern court. Within this historiography most have viewed access in what has been called a "binary manner."²⁰ To explain the relationship between politics and the organization of the court, they present a dual model, meaning contemporaries viewed kings and queens as being easy or difficult to gain access to. Writers like Chamberlain, however, were less concerned with the in's and out's of access, and more focused on how access changed at court

¹⁸ Marika Keblusek, "Introduction: Double Agents in Early Modern Europe," in *Double Agents: Cultural and Political Brokerage in Early Modern Europe*, eds. Marika Keblusek and Badeloch Vera Noldus (Boston: Brill, 2011), 3-4.

¹⁹ Brian Weiser, *Charles II and the Politics of Access* (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2003), and David Starkey's edited work, *The English Court: From the Wars of the Roses to the Civil War*, ed. David Starkey (London: Longman Group, 1987) are two influential works that discuss the role access and favor played in the organization of the late Tudor and Stuart courts.

²⁰ Weiser, 13.

and was applied to individuals over time. Chamberlain devoted a large amount of his time attempting to understand the intricacies of these concepts. His letters provide a window into the historiographical debate over access and court politics by pulling in the views of a broader contemporary audience.

Several different source collections constitute the primary sources used in this thesis: the edited letter collections of Sir John Chamberlain and Sir Henry Wotton, the edited collection of correspondence from Sir Dudley Carleton to John Chamberlain, the edited collection of letters and journal entries from Sir Thomas Roe during his embassy to India, and various individual letters found in *The Calendar of State Papers Domestic Series* from the reign of James I.²¹ The letters of John Chamberlain form the bulk of the primary source information for this project. Chamberlain wrote the majority of his letters to his long-time friend Dudley Carleton, but the collection of Carleton's corresponding letters to Chamberlain is small. As a result, when suitable, several of Carleton's letters contained in the state papers are used to round out his correspondence network, as well as Henry Wotton's and Thomas Roe's.

Each collection of letters is only what survives from each man's private correspondence. Though they have been meticulously organized in edited volumes, there is no way to know if some letters are missing or were not included in the printed collections. Though the information contained in each letter collection is extraordinarily detailed and rife with valuable information about Jacobean politics and culture, they represent the views of only four men—and one man in particular. The viewpoints and interests of these men, therefore, cannot claim to represent the

²¹ N. E. McLure, ed. *The Letters of John Chamberlain*, 2 vols. (Philadelphia: American Philosophical Society, 1939); Logan Pearsall Smith, ed. *The Life and Letters of Sir Henry Wotton* (2 vols. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1907); Maurice Lee Jr., ed. *Dudley Carleton to John Chamberlain 1603-1624* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1972); William Foster, ed. *The Embassy of Sir Thomas Roe to the Court of the Great Mogul, 1615-1619 I*, 2 vols. (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2010); *Calendar of State Papers, Domestic Series, of the Reign of James I. 1611-1618* (London: H. M. Stationery Office, 1858).

entirety of the Jacobean populace, especially the lower classes. They do provide historians, however, with a glimpse into the interests of those outside the highest political levels of society.

The first chapter illustrates how the letters of John Chamberlain—and the ways in which he gathered news and transmitted that news through his correspondence network—serve as a case study for how news and news culture functioned in early seventeenth-century England. By examining where Chamberlain gathered his news, from whom he received the news, and to whom he sent the news, we can begin to reconstruct Chamberlain's own network. From Chamberlain's letters and through the reconstruction of his epistolary network, we learn what types of news was considered important to his correspondents, namely news of a political nature. In other words, what was going on at the center of power. Additionally, we find that access to particular spaces—like St. Paul's Cathedral in London—and the creation of high political connections were essential to gathering court intelligence.

The second chapter uses the epistolary networks of English ambassadors to discuss how favor and access was cultivated and maintained. In the Jacobean era, diplomacy was a key component of James' foreign policy, and many men saw diplomatic service as a first step in advancing their own political careers. The correspondence of several Jacobean ambassadors reveals that emissaries faced many challenges during their time abroad. For instance, their physical distance from court meant it was difficult to lobby for favor with the king. To combat this challenge, ambassadors cultivated correspondence networks with influential men at home that could further their own political ambitions. While no two ambassador's networks were the same, they all reached upward and outward in search of information, patronage, and advantageous connections. Without the proper understanding, development, and use of these

networks, ambassadors could not hope to successfully navigate the intricacies of court favor, nor advance their own political careers.

The final chapter examines how Chamberlain used three early seventeenth century court scandals to understand the politics of court favor. Using Chamberlain's letters and his network of correspondents, this chapter works to understand how Chamberlain and his contemporaries perceived the concepts of access, favor, and liberty in the early seventeenth century.

Chamberlain's accounts of the Lake scandal, the Arabella Stuart scandal, and the Overbury scandal reveal that royal favor could be unpredictable, and—for nobles—liberty could subsist even in a space intended for its limitation. Chamberlain's observations of liberty and favor within the Tower do not fit the access binary typically touted by historians. More importantly, however, Chamberlain's representations of these court scandals illustrated key political lessons—lessons that Chamberlain communicated through his epistolary network.

Contemporaries like Chamberlain and his correspondents knew that there were no clear-cut rules for favor in James' court. Therefore, they paid exhaustive attention to court events, as these events provided political knowledge ambitious men needed to place themselves in positions of power.

Chapter One: News Master of St. Paul's: Sir John Chamberlain and News Culture in Early Stuart England

On March 7, 1626, Sir John Chamberlain wrote his last letter to his longtime friend, Sir Dudley Carleton. This letter marked the end of Chamberlain's thirty-year long correspondence with Carleton, as well as an end to his prolific career as a news writer. The letter was written a year after the death of King James I, and less than two years before Chamberlain himself died. The amount of information contained in Chamberlain's last letter, however, was as plentiful as in his first letter written to Carleton in 1597, despite Chamberlain's ailing health.

He began the letter by thanking Carleton for his continued correspondence, as it was a comfort to Chamberlain during his illness. Though Chamberlain had been sick in bed for two days, he shared with Carleton the latest news of parliament, saying they "talk much but do little."²² According to Chamberlain, the primary news from London centered on George Villiers, the duke of Buckingham and royal favorite who had managed to survive the death of his first king—James I—and entrench himself in the good graces of another—Charles I. Within this last letter, Chamberlain wrote to Carleton of the duke's summons to parliament, to answer which Buckingham "would not suffer to go in person, so that he sent an attorney with another lawyer to plead and justify his manner of proceeding."²³ The parliament was currently under the shadow of the failed expedition to Cadiz and many members of parliament placed the blame on Buckingham's head and called for his impeachment. Here, Chamberlain offered Carleton his

²² N. E. McLure, ed. *The Letters of John Chamberlain*, 2 vols. (Philadelphia: American Philosophical Society, 1939) II, Sir John Chamberlain to Sir Dudley Carleton, March 7, 1626, 629.

²³ *The Letters of John Chamberlain* II (Sir John Chamberlain to Sir Dudley Carleton, March 7, 1626), 629.

own opinion on the Buckingham matter, stating, “when all is done I think they will find want of good counsel and good conduct rather than of integrity and good meaning.”²⁴ Chamberlain posited that it was not an unusual occurrence for men “to undertake so much above their reach” as Buckingham had, and he believed the business would pass in due time.²⁵

Chamberlain wrote of much more than just the news of Buckingham. For example, Chamberlain continued his letter by describing the wedding of two servants thrown by the widowed countess of Exeter. According to Chamberlain, she “made a great feast for the marriage of two of her servants where the greatest part of the nobility of this town were invited.”²⁶ Next, Chamberlain reported that the queen and her ladies held a masque at Somerset House, which the queen herself participated in. Chamberlain wrote that he remembered a time where a queen involving herself in that kind of spectacle would have been considered strange, but now was commonplace. Chamberlain went on to tell Carleton that the Persian ambassador had an audience with the king after some delay, and the earl of Arundel was committed to the Tower for an unapproved marriage between his son and the duchess of Lennox’s daughter.²⁷ Chamberlain concluded his final letter by sharing that he sent letters weekly to Carleton’s wife, but realized that she would not reappear in London until Carleton’s own return. He wished Carleton well and signed himself, “Your Lordships most assuredly at command, John Chamberlain.”²⁸

This final letter is the last surviving one Chamberlain ever wrote to Carleton.²⁹ As the content of the letter indicated, the correspondence of Sir John Chamberlain covered a multitude of topics, and discussed a variety of London news—particularly news coming from court and

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Ibid., 630.

²⁷ Ibid., 631.

²⁸ Ibid., 632.

²⁹ Ibid., 632n.

parliament. Due to the sheer volume of letters and information contained within Chamberlain's collection of letters, his have become a well-known source for historians of the Jacobean period. Living in close proximity to court, Chamberlain had access to key spaces where information was exchanged. Over the course of his career, Chamberlain used his connections to gather intelligence, which he communicated to his contacts at home and abroad.

Sir John Chamberlain's letters revealed that access to particular spaces and the creation of sociable networks were essential for gathering court intelligence. In them, he discussed where he collected his information, provided the connections from which he received and sent his information, and occasionally offered his own commentary on certain pieces of news. The letter collection of John Chamberlain, then, can stand as exemplars of how Jacobean news culture functioned—the types of information his correspondents desired and how he collected and disseminated that information.

THE COLLECTION OF NEWS

Almost five hundred letters from Chamberlain survive from a thirty-year period, from 1597 to 1627.³⁰ Where did a man like Chamberlain obtain his news? During the early seventeenth century, London was a flurry of activity and it was there that Chamberlain gathered most of his information. During the time covered in his letters, Chamberlain lived at several different locations in London, never more than a few minutes' walk from St. Paul's Cathedral,

³⁰ Chamberlain's letters, all written after the age of forty-three, reveal almost nothing about his earlier life. The editor of Chamberlain's letter collection, Norman Egbert McClure, wrote that John Chamberlain was born in London, and it was where he lived his entire life. His father was an alderman and sheriff of London and his mother was the daughter of a wealthy alderman and ironmonger. Upon his father's death, Chamberlain—then only thirteen—was left a considerable sum of money and when he was sixteen he was able to attend Trinity College, Cambridge. How long Chamberlain remained at Cambridge is not known, and according to McClure, he left the university without obtaining a degree. Nowhere is there any indication that during the years following his time at Cambridge, Chamberlain had a profession, engaged in business, or held a public office. McClure asserted that he had probably inherited enough money from his father to travel if he wished, or live quietly in London, which he did for the last thirty years of his life. His will indicated that he was quite wealthy at the time of his death. Norman Egbert McClure, "Introduction," in *The Letters of John Chamberlain*, 2-5.

which was the center of the book trade and a general meeting place for all Londoners.³¹ In 1596 Chamberlain lived with his friend, Dr. William Gilbert, a prominent physician. The Gilbert house was near St. Peter's Parva on St. Peter's Hill, not more than two hundred yards from St. Paul's Cathedral. When Dr. Gilbert became Queen Elizabeth I's physician in 1601, Chamberlain continued to live on St. Peter's Hill. A few years later, he left the Gilbert house to live with his brother, Richard Chamberlain, in Aldermanbury, which was less than half a mile to St. Paul's.³² After his brother's death in 1624, Chamberlain continued to live in Aldermanbury, first as a householder and later as a lodger in the home of his nephew, Hugh Windham.³³ Chamberlain, then, spent the majority of his life—and certainly the period marked by his letters—in close physical proximity to St. Paul's Cathedral, where he went there almost daily to meet friends or to talk with other men like himself who sought the news of court.

Chamberlain's letters testified to his frequent visits to St. Paul's and to the exchange of news that took place there. From them we can begin to trace Chamberlain's news network as information was passed from person to person. In a 1602 letter to Sir Dudley Carleton, for example, Chamberlain complained of "a new devised order to shut the upper doors of Paul's in service time, whereby the old intercourse is clean changed, and the traffic of news much decayed."³⁴ Chamberlain apologized to his friend, citing the order as the reason for his unusually infrequent correspondence, since "which time here hath been a very dull and dead term, [and] I

³¹ McClure, "Introduction," in *The Letters of John Chamberlain*, 5. For more on St. Paul's Cathedral and its role in the spread of information see, W. J. T. Kirby, *Paul's Cross and the Culture of Persuasion in England, 1520-1640* (Boston: Brill, 2013); Wallace Notestein, *Four Worthies: John Chamberlain, Lady Anne Clifford, John Taylor, Oliver Heywood* (London: Cape, 1956); Robin S. Oggins, *Cathedrals* (New York: Sterling, 1996); Joad Raymond, *The Invention of the Newspaper: English Newsbooks, 161-1649* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996).

³² McClure, "Introduction," in *The Letters of John Chamberlain*, 5. All background information and knowledge of Chamberlain's location in London during the last thirty years of his life is taken from McClure's research outlined in the introduction to his edited volume of Chamberlain's letters.

³³ *Ibid.*

³⁴ *The Letters of John Chamberlain I* (Sir John Chamberlain to Sir Dudley Carleton, November 19, 1602), 171.

am quite out of the trade.”³⁵ The order, however, was soon revoked and Chamberlain wrote Carleton only a few months later that he had a proliferation of “news and secrets, especially as long as Paul’s is so furnished that it affords whatsoever is stirring in France, and I can gather there at first hand to serve you sufficiently.”³⁶ Much later, in 1618, Chamberlain thanked Carleton for certain papers that had accompanied his last letter, and stated that he would return the papers when he had thoroughly read them:

Which I have not done yet by reason of our lectures at Paul’s this term time, and after I once go out of doors in the morning, I seldom come home till late at night: You [Carleton] need not misdoubt the passing of them through my hands, for I keep not any company that cares for such matters...saving only Master Camden who makes a journey once a week the more into Paul’s to meet and show me such occurrences he has from Master Beecher and other out of France.³⁷

Here Chamberlain reassured Carleton that the information he shared would not pass into untrustworthy hands, as there was no one currently around Chamberlain who desired the information. His statement also presupposed that others would want that information. Additionally, this excerpt also reveals at least one link in Chamberlain’s news network in the mention of William Camden and his correspondent Master Beecher in France. Chamberlain and Camden met weekly at St. Paul’s to exchange information. Beecher and others in France sent information to Camden, who then related it Chamberlain, who relayed it to Carleton, who was stationed abroad in the United Provinces. Therefore, from this single paragraph, one can reconstructed a portion of Chamberlain’s news network. Here, information was transmitted through both written correspondence and sociable conversation.

Over the last thirty years of his life, Chamberlain seems to have become a kind of permanent fixture at St. Paul’s. Indeed, in 1620, he was appointed as a member of a commission

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ *The Letters of John Chamberlain I* (Sir John Chamberlain to Sir Dudley Carleton, February 11, 1603), 183-4.

³⁷ *The Letters of John Chamberlain II* (Sir John Chamberlain to Sir Dudley Carleton, February 14, 1618), 138.

to repair the cathedral. In another letter to Carleton, Chamberlain wrote, “What we have here is a great commission come forth for the business of Paul’s...and I am very unfit for such employment, and I know not how I came in unless it be for my love of the place.”³⁸ At St. Paul’s Cathedral Chamberlain was at the heart of London. He interacted with courtiers and servants, aldermen and apprentices, and chose to drink it all in and write it all down for his correspondents abroad. Chamberlain may have described himself as “a mere spectator of other men’s fortunes and adventures.”³⁹ However, though he considered himself a passive observer and not a participant in London’s politics, he was certainly an active, ardent participant in the collection and transmission of news and news culture.

As a frequenter of St. Paul’s and a wealthy member of London social circles, Chamberlain had many influential friends and acquaintances, among them some of the most prominent men in England: William Camden, historian and antiquarian; Sir Henry Savile, Provost of Eton; Sir Thomas Bodley, founder of the Bodleian Library; Sir Thomas Edmondes, diplomat and later Treasurer of the Royal Household; Oliver, third Lord St. John of Bletsoe; Lancelot Andrewes, later Bishop of Winchester; and Sir Ralph Winwood, diplomat and later Secretary of State, amongst many others.⁴⁰ It was with men like these that Chamberlain spent a majority of his time in London, and it was from men like these that Chamberlain received a considerable portion of his information.

While he spent the bulk of his days gathering news in St. Paul’s, Chamberlain also spent many of his summers at the homes of nobles in the country. He enjoyed the hospitality of his friends and made leisurely “progresses” from country house to country house. In 1602 Chamberlain wrote Carleton, “From Askot I met Master Lytton at Sir Henry Wallops...Thence

³⁸ *The Letters of John Chamberlain* II (Sir John Chamberlain to Sir Dudley Carleton, April 1, 1620), 299.

³⁹ *The Letters of John Chamberlain* I (Sir John Chamberlain to Sir Dudley Carleton, November 19, 1602), 171.

⁴⁰ McClure, “Introduction,” in *The Letters of John Chamberlain*, 8.

we came to Knebworth, and so into Bedfordshire to the Lady Pelhams, into Huntingdonshire to the Lord St. Johns and Sir Gervaise Cliftons, and into Cambridge to Sir Will.”⁴¹ In the country residences of elite friends, and surrounded by other aristocratic guests, Chamberlain listened to and gathered news of court. For example, at Harefield House in Middlesex in 1602, Chamberlain heard the news from fellow guests that “the king of Denmark’s brother is lately arrived in Muscovy to marry the Emperor’s daughter...[and] Master Gilpin [Councilor to the Council of the Estate in the Low Countries] is dead at the Hague. I cannot imagine who should succeed him, except one Wheeler, secretary to the merchants at Middleburg.”⁴² Much later, in 1615 when Carleton was stationed in Venice but hoped to return to The Hague, Chamberlain heard a piece of good news while at Rushton, the home of Sir Lewis Tresham in Northamptonshire:

From here I presume the King does not forget you, the rather for that Sir Henry Wotton is daily expected, and by a word or two I saw in his letter, I conceive you may have order to come away before he arrives, your stay being nothing necessary to present him that he is already so well acquainted with the place, and the affairs of the Low Countries more unfit and less able to endure a vacancy than Venice.⁴³

Chamberlain received the news about Carleton’s possible reassignment from a letter written by Sir Henry Wotton to a fellow visitor at Rushton. Though Chamberlain did not explicitly name the recipient of Wotton’s letter, he did reveal that he read Wotton’s words. From the information contained in Wotton’s letter, and information about the king he gleaned from his fellow Rushton residents, Chamberlain was able to convey to Carleton news of his possible transfer—the transfer that Carleton had been waiting for. Chamberlain’s news proved correct and Carleton was recalled from Venice in 1615 and reappointed to the United Provinces the following year.⁴⁴

⁴¹ *The Letters of John Chamberlain I* (Sir John Chamberlain to Sir Dudley Carleton, November 19, 1602), 172.

⁴² *The Letters of John Chamberlain I* (Sir John Chamberlain to Sir Dudley Carleton, October 2, 1602), 160.

⁴³ *The Letters of John Chamberlain I* (Sir John Chamberlain to Sir Dudley Carleton, August 24, 1615), 611-2.

⁴⁴ L. J. Reeve, “Carleton, Dudley, Viscount Dorchester,” in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), online edition, 2008.

Though the dissemination of news in this instance did not extend directly to Chamberlain, Carleton was still able to benefit from the information. This was exactly how news transmission worked in the seventeenth century—news was passed from person to person, often from people reading other people’s letters. Chamberlain’s letters, then, can allow one to trace the chain of news not only from his own personal network, but also from others.

THE TRANSMISSION OF NEWS

Having collected news, where did Chamberlain send his newsletters? How often was he writing? And, perhaps most importantly, to whom did he write and why? Chamberlain wrote the majority of his newsletters to his friend Sir Dudley Carleton. Chamberlain’s correspondence network, however, reached from London to the Continent, and he corresponded frequently with ambassadors stationed abroad.⁴⁵ Chamberlain wrote to Carleton, first during his post as ambassador to Venice and later during his time as ambassador to The Hague. He shared the news of court with Sir Ralph Winwood during Winwood’s time as an ambassador in the United Provinces, as well as with Sir Thomas Edmondes, ambassador to France and later the Brussels court. Chamberlain’s correspondence network reached from London, to France, to the United Provinces, to Brussels, and to the Italian states. The news of the English court and crown that he gathered was transmitted and disseminated to a variety of men in a variety of positions throughout the Jacobean world.

From Chamberlain’s surviving letter collections we can attempt to reconstruct not only the reach of his correspondence networks, but also the frequency of his news transmissions. The surviving letters of Chamberlain’s collection take up two full volumes and span a period of approximately thirty years. During his first full year of correspondence, beginning in late 1597

⁴⁵ This is a topic that will be discussed in more detail in chapter three.

and continuing into 1598, Chamberlain wrote thirteen letters to Sir Dudley Carleton. From 1603 to 1606, after the death of Elizabeth I and the succession of James I to the English throne—a pivotal period and one which was rife with exciting and valuable news—Chamberlain wrote over thirty letters to Carleton, who was then in the service of Henry Percy, ninth earl of Northumberland.⁴⁶

Considering the first decade of Chamberlain’s letter writing—the years 1597 to 1607—based on surviving letters, Chamberlain wrote on average ten letters a year. He wrote fourteen letters in 1606, the most in any year during this time period. In contrast, from 1604, only two letters from Chamberlain survived, one to Carleton and one to Sir Ralph Winwood, then ambassador to The Hague. To Winwood he wrote, “Here there is no manner of novelty or alteration since my last...I be like to send out an empty letter.”⁴⁷ The only news Chamberlain had to report was the sporting activities of the new king and the masques thrown for the season’s Christmas festivities. Though Chamberlain dutifully wrote down accounts of these events, he told Carleton and Winwood that the “news of the season is of little importance.”⁴⁸ Certainly, a new king on the throne of England and his activities after the coronation was considered news, but not the “right” kind of news, meaning it was void of any kind of critical political information the two ambassadors could use to their advantage.

The next decade of Chamberlain’s letters covered the years 1608-1618, and within this time Chamberlain wrote on average twenty-two letters a year—a considerable increase from his first ten years of correspondence. The first few years of this second decade followed a similar pattern as the first, with thirteen letters in 1608, nine in 1609, four in 1610, and ten in 1611. The

⁴⁶ All numerical values for Chamberlain’s letters are taken from McClure’s edited volume and *The Calendar of State Papers, Domestic Series of the Reign of James I* (London, 1858), vol. 8-11.

⁴⁷ *The Letters of John Chamberlain I* (Sir John Chamberlain to Sir Ralph Winwood, December 18, 1604), 198.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

year 1612, however, saw a significant jump in the volume of letters from Chamberlain to his correspondents abroad—twenty-seven letters that year. The following year—in 1613—Chamberlain wrote thirty-one letters. These two years marked the beginning of two significant court scandals, first the Arabella Stuart marriage scandal in 1612, and later the imprisonment of Sir Thomas Overbury, a prominent courtier, in the Tower of London in 1613. Both of these events—and the news and rumor surrounding them—will be discussed in more detail in the next chapter, but here they provide an explanation for the spike in Chamberlain’s correspondence. In other words, the more news and rumor surrounding the court, the more Chamberlain had to report.

During the final seven years of his correspondence, 1619-1626, Chamberlain wrote on average twenty-four letters annually. During the first few years the court was deeply embroiled in the Overbury scandal and the aftermath of the execution of Sir Walter Raleigh in 1618. Chamberlain’s letters reflected the volume of news to be spread. In 1619 and 1620—the two peak years of another court scandal involving Sir Thomas Lake, the current secretary of state—Chamberlain wrote thirty-two letters and twenty-seven letters, respectively. As these scandals began to die down, and Chamberlain’s health began to fail, the volume of letters steadily decreased, with fourteen surviving letters written in 1625, and only two letters in 1626. Chamberlain himself died in 1628.

It is clear that during his tenure as a letter writer, Chamberlain’s correspondence was frequent and the circulation of his news through his social network widespread. Not only were his letters frequently disseminated to his contacts, they were not brief in length. Virtually every letter written by Chamberlain extensively detailed minutiae of London news. He wrote frankly of all he saw and heard, detailing what he deemed to be of interest to his correspondents as men, as

intellectuals, and as aspiring participants of the Jacobean polity. It is here that we reach the final—and perhaps most important—question: if men like Chamberlain spent such an inordinate amount of time communicating the day’s news, exactly what type of information were they predominantly interested in? If people were particularly concerned with the events going on at the center of power, as the spikes in the volume of Chamberlain’s letters suggest, what type of news did Chamberlain’s correspondents desire most?

THE IMPORTANCE OF NEWS

The characterization of what could be considered “news” was often vague in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth century, and contemporaries typically saw a difference between domestic news and foreign news.⁴⁹ In a similar way, most drew a line between the news, gossip and rumor concerning the king and the doings of court, and the activities of those lower on the social ladder. The criminal acts of the baser orders, murders, and the arrests of witches were of interest, but they were more often the subject of ballads, pamphlets or broadsides.⁵⁰ News concerning those at the center of politics, however, was considered news of the utmost importance—regardless of its trustworthiness. As the annual numbers concerning the volume of Chamberlain’s letters suggest, Chamberlain and his correspondents viewed the news and rumor coming from court as the most significant. Though Chamberlain reported on the king’s progresses and the queen’s masques and plays, he characterized these tidbits of news as secondary to politics. It was news of court politics that Chamberlain’s correspondents desired most.

⁴⁹ Fritz Levy, “The Decorum of News,” in *News, Newspapers and Society in Early Modern Britain*, ed. Joad Raymond (London: Frank Cass, 1999), 17.

⁵⁰ Levy. 18.

Examining the format of Chamberlain's letters helps to illuminate what types of information he and his contacts valued most. Chamberlain began each of his letters to Carleton with a greeting, an inquiry into Carleton's well-being, and many times an apology for the amount of time he took to respond to Carleton's last message. For example, in November 1613, Chamberlain wrote, "My very good lord: Since my last unto you of the 25th of March I have not set pen to paper, though I hope now you are in good health."⁵¹ Five years later, in August of 1618, Chamberlain wrote again, "My very good lord: I hope this finds you well. I wrote this day sevenight [sic] by Harman the post and meant not to have written again until I should go out of town (about the middle of next week)."⁵² Another letter, this time from February 1621, followed a similar format: "My very good lord: I write upon the receipt of you letter of the 5th of this present and may this find you in good form."⁵³ Following his introduction, Chamberlain habitually moved directly into the most pressing news of the day. Most often, this included news of the court—recent political appointments or vacancies, scandals, the king's attitudes towards those at court, imprisonments, or new titles bestowed. For instance, in the letter from August 1618, Chamberlain followed his inquiry into Carleton's well-being with the news that "the two earls Leicester and Northampton were created with all the ceremony and solemnity on Sunday last at Salisbury."⁵⁴ Next, he told Carleton, "The Lady Compton is made Countess of Buckingham."⁵⁵ Chamberlain knew that Carleton, currently stationed in the United Provinces and desiring a return to London, would find such information of value as it would grant him insight into the current balance of power at court. The appointment of new titles to certain nobles

⁵¹ *The Letters of John Chamberlain* I (Sir John Chamberlain to Sir Dudley Carleton, April 29, 1613), 441.

⁵² *The Letters of John Chamberlain* II (Sir John Chamberlain to Sir Dudley Carleton, August 8, 1618), 162.

⁵³ *The Letters of John Chamberlain* II (Sir John Chamberlain to Sir Dudley Carleton, February 27, 1621), 346.

⁵⁴ *The Letters of John Chamberlain* I (Sir John Chamberlain to Sir Dudley Carleton, August 8, 1618), 163.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

by James was an indicator of the king's favor, and in turn, a marker of which members of court Carleton could use to jockey for his own advancement.

During the years in which the volume of Chamberlain's letters was at their highest, he spent the majority of each letter detailing the most pressing court news, most often scandals regarding courtiers and the shifts in James' favor. The scandals he followed over the course of months or years. In the same letter from November 1613 mentioned above, Chamberlain also recounted the news of both the Arabella Stuart scandal and the beginnings of the Overbury scandal. He wrote to Carleton, "The Lord Gray is lately restrained of his liberty in the Tower for having conference with one the Lady Arabella's women."⁵⁶ Next, Chamberlain recounted "he had not doubt that you [Carleton] have heard of Sir Thomas Overbury committing to the Tower the last week. The King has long had a desire to remove him from about Lord Rochester." During the most critical years of the Overbury scandal—namely 1613 with the imprisonment of Sir Thomas Overbury, and 1616-1618 with the arrest and imprisonment of Overbury's murderers, the earl and countess of Somerset—Chamberlain reported some aspect of news relating to the scandal in every surviving letter except for four. The same comparison can be made for the Lake scandal in 1618-1619, and the imprisonment and execution of Sir Walter Raleigh in 1618. Following the news of the countess of Buckingham's new title in 1618, Chamberlain told Carleton:

Sir Walter Raleigh was at Salisbury but had no audience either of King or council, by reason that he is so sick and weak...He came to town (they say) yester-night to his old habitation in the Tower, but not to his own lodging which was taken up a good while since by the count and countess of Somerset.⁵⁷

Here, Chamberlain made mention of both Raleigh current plight and the fact that the earl and countess of Somerset were still imprisoned in the Tower of London for their crimes against Sir

⁵⁶ *The Letters of John Chamberlain* I (Sir John Chamberlain to Sir Dudley Carleton, April 29, 1613), 443.

⁵⁷ *The Letters of John Chamberlain* II (Sir John Chamberlain to Sir Dudley Carleton, August 8, 1618), 163.

Thomas Overbury. Chamberlain's next section recounted similar news, as "Sir Walter Raleigh went to the Tower on Monday, having attempted the night before to make an escape and get overseas."⁵⁸ Of the surviving sixty-two letters from the years 1618 and 1619, only seven of them had no mention of either the Overbury scandal or news concerning Sir Walter Raleigh's fate. Chamberlain spent the remaining twenty-five letters detailing the news of each scandal to his friend stationed on the Continent.

The final remarks of Chamberlain's letters recounted news Chamberlain considered of interest, but not pertinent to politics or not necessarily useful to Carleton's political ambitions. This kind of news included deaths, births and marriages, news of Carleton's brother or sister, and small appointments with little political resonance. For instance, Chamberlain followed his news of the Somersets and Raleigh with the information that "your [Carleton's] brother is in town...and Mistress Vavasor is quick with child, though is like to be called into question for having two husbands now alive."⁵⁹ Finally, Chamberlain concluded each of his letters with "Your Lordships to command, John Chamberlain."

Virtually without fail, knowledge of the London political world functioned at the center of Chamberlain's letters. His accounts of political appointments, or the fall of large political figures, aided aspiring politicians like Carleton as the pursuit of news became a way for ambitious men to get noticed in the wider political arena. For many in the early seventeenth century, news became a new type of social marker—a way for men like Carleton to distinguish themselves from others attempting to jockey for office.⁶⁰ Chamberlain's information allowed Carleton to navigate the intricacies of court favor, granting him the information that he could use

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ Ibid., 164.

⁶⁰ Levy, 16-7.

to discern which connections at court would be the most advantageous to advancing his own career.

Chamberlain's letters themselves showed evidence of this focus on useful court information, as did Carleton's reciprocal correspondence. Additionally, one can see evidence of Chamberlain himself using his connections to help advance Carleton's political career. For instance, in 1617 Carleton sought Chamberlain's help in obtaining the provostship of Eton. In a letter to Chamberlain Carleton wrote, "You may remember how I have long had an eye upon the reversion of Eton...I pray you add your helping hand with Master Winwood, for between them two [Winwood and Carleton's father-in-law, Sir Henry Savile, the current provost of Eton] it might be easily compassed."⁶¹ Two weeks later, Carleton wrote again that he "acknowledged your [Chamberlain's] good advice and help which is my best assurance."⁶² Carleton desired political information and a position that could advance his career and Chamberlain spent a large portion of his time helping him obtain it. Shifts in power at the center were of supreme interest to Carleton, and he frequently thanked Chamberlain for his information as well as his continued influence with his contacts on Carleton's behalf.⁶³ As court politics and the intricacies of court power dominated the bulk of Chamberlain's letters, it is possibly that the same type of information dominated the news market as a whole. As Chamberlain made a name for himself as a marketer of court news, the content of his correspondence reflected these contemporary preoccupations.

Most historians—including the editor of Chamberlain's letter collection—agree that Chamberlain wrote and reported the news clearly, straightforwardly, and often with a detached,

⁶¹ *CSPD*, vol. 10 (Sir Dudley Carleton to Sir John Chamberlain; March 27, 1618), 69.

⁶² *CSPD*, vol. 10 (Sir Dudley Carleton to Sir John Chamberlain; April 8, 1618), 87.

⁶³ Carleton's desire for the provost of Eton, and Chamberlain's attempts to secure him the position, will be discussed in more detail in chapter three.

almost clinical nature. Further, though he placed his emphasis on politics, his letters covered a wide variety of information, even news some would consider inconsequential. For instance, in 1602 he told Carleton about a cuckoo that interrupted a sermon at Paul's Cross, writing "it came flying over the pulpit (a thing that I never saw not heard of before) and very lewdly called and cried out with open mouth."⁶⁴ In the same breath, Chamberlain wrote about the trial and execution of the earl of Essex and Sir Walter Raleigh, the death of Elizabeth I, and the brewing conflict with Spain.

Occasionally, however, Chamberlain did offer his opinion on the news of the day. He provided commentary on certain court scandals, predicting if and when they would blow over. While the duke of Buckingham was on trial in 1626, Chamberlain wrote Carleton that he thought the duke would not be found guilty, arguing that Villiers had "want of good counsel and good conduct" rather than malicious intent.⁶⁵ He gave his opinions on what he considered important news, and passed judgment on what he thought was trivial. Though Chamberlain's judgmental tone was less overt than some of his contemporary letter writers, he still took the time to express his opinions to Carleton—as a friend would to a fellow friend, and as an experienced advisor would to his charge.⁶⁶ Chamberlain's opinions and advice certainly played a key role in shaping Carleton's political career. At the same time, however, they also indicated that Chamberlain was not a mere spectator as he himself suggested, but an active participant in the news culture of his day.

⁶⁴ *The Letters of John Chamberlain* I (Sir John Chamberlain to Sir Dudley Carleton, November 4, 1602), 168.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 629.

⁶⁶ For instance, the surviving letters of the Reverend Joseph Mead of Cambridge to his friend Sir Martin Stuteville display his religious and moral indignation at what he considered corruption at court. In his own newsletters, Mead dedicated much of his time relating news of arrests, imprisonments, and executions of religious recusants. He also questioned the queen's closeness with Catholics, and feared what it meant for the English state. *The Court and Times of Charles I* (London: H. M. Stationery Office, 1848).

CONCLUSION

The seventeenth century saw a considerable growth in the collection and dissemination of news, both formally in printed separates or newsletters, and informally in the private correspondence of news writers like John Chamberlain. While printed news became progressively more widespread in the Jacobean age, written letters remained the most common method for spreading news. These newsletters produced by men connected to certain spaces and inner political circles circulated through an individual's information network and often provided helpful information to correspondents abroad on the Continent. Chamberlain in particular, the "news-master" of St. Paul's, provided critical information to Sir Dudley Carleton during his time in Venice and at The Hague, information that was instrumental in the advancement of Carleton's own political career.

Chamberlain's network of correspondence, then, reveals much about how interested parties abroad were kept in touch with the public and political affairs of the day. Several key facets of Jacobean news culture can be found in the letter collections of men like Chamberlain—namely, the spaces where news was collected, the ways in which news was disseminated, and the type of news that was considered the most valuable. In this way, the letter collections of seventeenth-century news writers like Chamberlain serve as case studies for how Jacobean news culture functioned. It was these men who wrote and received the letters that reported the major events of London, and who—in doing so—participated in the political nation. Further, it was these men—men like Chamberlain—who formed the foundation for the development of a formalized system of news that would come to dominate news culture in the later seventeenth century and beyond.

Chapter Two: Networks of Favors: Jacobean Ambassadors and the Politics of Access, Favor and Influence

On February 25, 1613, Sir Henry Wotton, former English ambassador to Venice, wrote a lengthy letter to Sir Dudley Carleton, his successor in the Venetian Republic. Wotton, who had been removed from his position by King James I and now resided alone in London in much less financially comfortable circumstances, implored the younger, more successful Carleton to write to his patron and current secretary of state, Sir Ralph Winwood, on Wotton's behalf. Wotton hoped Carleton would "tell his Lordship that I am here in Westminster with few books about me...[and] my own poor thoughts," as fortune had deserted him thanks to the deaths of his two most influential patrons, Henry, Prince of Wales, and Robert Cecil, the earl of Salisbury.⁶⁷ Wotton implored Carleton to "remember mine own particulars in the midst of such public losses," and thanked him as a fellow ambassador, "ever resting much beholden to [him]."⁶⁸ Wotton hoped Carleton would intervene on his behalf and relay his plight to Sir Ralph Winwood, one of Carleton's own benefactors. Winwood was rumored to be next in line for secretary of state, and Wotton hoped that Carleton's connections with Winwood would aid him in securing another patron who would continue to help him advance his own political career.⁶⁹

Wotton's humble, piteous letter serves as a snapshot into both the social and financial difficulties English ambassadors often faced during and after their appointments abroad. While the previous chapter examined letter writing and the news culture of the early seventeenth

⁶⁷ Logan Pearsall Smith, ed. *The Life and Letters of Sir Henry Wotton*, 2 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1907) II, Sir Henry Wotton to Sir Dudley Carleton, February 25, 1613, 14.

⁶⁸ *The Life and Letters of Sir Henry Wotton* II (Henry Wotton to Dudley Carleton, February 25, 1613), 14.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 14n.

century, this chapter will look at the social networks formed through letter writing, and the ways in which these correspondence networks allowed their participants to cultivate and obtain favor. Unlike most of the aristocratic men and women discussed earlier, foreign ambassadors like Henry Wotton came from humbler origins. The correspondence of the three Jacobean ambassadors examined in this chapter—Sir Henry Wotton, Sir Dudley Carleton, and Sir Thomas Roe—all expressed their desire to shed their humble origins and rise through the political ranks into positions of influence. They sought what more established courtiers had: a position close to court that would allow them access to the seat of power as needed. These men hoped an embassy appointment abroad would be the first step in obtaining this access. The detailed correspondences of Wotton, Carleton, and Roe revealed the challenges they faced being stationed abroad in their pursuit of position and estate in England, and how they attempted to combat these challenges by cultivating information networks, drawing on the opportunities their diplomatic posts offered. When a change for position presented itself, each man put their connections into action, using their store of favors and obligation to mobilize support for their cause. The letters of Wotton, Carleton and Roe from their time as ambassadors reveal the importance Jacobean ambassadors placed on maintaining information networks and high-profile connections—and in the case of Wotton and Carleton, often competing with each other to do so. Each man consistently entreated his connections at home to support his cause as he jockeyed for favor with James.

Diplomatic appointment did not guarantee subsequent political success, and ambassadors often needed other ties to secure favor. An ambassador's location in a different country, and his physical absence from the English court, often meant that it was difficult for him to lobby for placement close to the king or some other desired domestic office. As their lower social and

political positions did not always warrant direct access to James, ambassadors needed to cultivate a variety of ties to court. In other words, they needed to cultivate patronage relationships with those who had the kind of influence they desired. Patronage relationships in the 17th century exhibited several key characteristics: such relationships were personal and emotional; and they involved two people of unequal social status. There was a superior, the patron, and an inferior, the client, who came together in a voluntary, reciprocal alliance in which the patron provided benefits and the client in return provided service and loyalty.⁷⁰ This “reciprocity of exchange” referred to both material benefits as well as intangible ones.⁷¹ As a result, diplomats were eager to secure their own advantageous relationships. Early modern patron-client relationships had another characteristic as well: they were enduring and continuous, often lasting until one member or the other died.⁷² Both Wotton’s relationships with Robert Cecil, earl of Salisbury and Prince Henry showed this endurance, as well as Carleton’s relationship with Sir Ralph Winwood, and his friendship and alliance with Sir John Chamberlain. Wotton and Carleton spent years fostering long-lasting relationships that they could utilize whenever new opportunities presented themselves.

During the reign of James I, Wotton, Carleton and Roe all held positions abroad as foreign ambassadors for England. Sir Henry Wotton served first as ambassador to the Venetian Republic beginning in 1604, was relocated for a single year to The Hague, and then was sent back to Venice where he remained until James removed him in 1619.⁷³ Sir Dudley Carleton served as Wotton’s replacement in Venice during Wotton’s year in the United Provinces (an

⁷⁰ Sharon Kettering, *Patrons, Brokers and Clients in Seventeenth-Century France* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986), 13. Though Kettering refers to brokerage and clientism in France, the same holds for England. For more on patron-client relationships in England see, Linda Levy Peck, *Court Patronage and Corruption in Early Stuart England* (London: Unwin Hyman, 1990).

⁷¹ Kettering, 16.

⁷² Kettering, 18.

⁷³ Smith, *The Life and Letters of Sir Henry Wotton I*, 45-7; 144-66.

appointment Carleton blatantly disliked—he was never fond of his time in Venice) before being reappointed to The Hague in 1616, which he much preferred.⁷⁴ In contrast, Sir Thomas Roe traveled the farthest from the English court, serving first as ambassador to the court of Jahangir in India in 1615, and later as ambassador to Constantinople in 1621.⁷⁵

While the duty of a diplomat required the official communication of intelligence through epistolary networks, in many ways, men like Wotton, Carleton and Roe used their networks to advance their own interests. The exchange of information was critical to fostering patronage relationships. Ambassadors used a “republic of letters” to build personal relationships with men who could further their careers. During their appointments abroad, ambassadors worked to foster advantageous contacts through the cultivation of friendship connections that could grant them information, and patronage connections that in turn could secure them influence. Each man’s network enabled Jacobean diplomats to gather invaluable political intelligence that they then used as leverage for favor and promotion. The letters of Wotton, Carleton and Roe revealed that the political success of an ambassador depended on the effective use of his intelligence network. Each man’s network contained many different connections, contacts, and links, which extended upward—to men positioned closer to the political center—and outward—to men in positions similar to their own—and were carefully and continuously cultivated throughout a diplomat’s career. Specifically, if an ambitious envoy had any hope of obtaining a prestigious political position back home, his best chance was to use the information and patronage relationships that his network represented to navigate the intricate politics of access at court. The extensive epistolary and brokerage connections fostered by the requirements of Jacobean diplomacy, then,

⁷⁴ Maurice Lee Jr., ed. *Dudley Carleton to John Chamberlain 1603-1624* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1972), 3-24.

⁷⁵ Michael Strachan, *Sir Thomas Roe, 1581-1644: A Life* (London: M. Russell, 1989), 56-7; 132.

became key instruments for the negotiation and achievement of political favor and power for men like Wotton, Carleton and Roe.

Though each man desired domestic appointment, each knew a position as an English diplomat could be the first step on the road to political power. In Carleton's own words, what he really wanted was "a competent estate at home, so that he could see his friends instead of having to write to them."⁷⁶ This preference for occupation and estate in England was one that his contemporary ambassadors shared, and one which grew stronger over the passing years. In 1624, Wotton commented to the duke of Buckingham that "after seventeen years of foreign service...[he] was still left hopeful of any possibility to subsist at home."⁷⁷ In 1619, at the end of his appointment to India, Roe promised, "to continue abroad until he may have some other of sort to whose care to surrender his charge."⁷⁸ The East India Company knew of his desire to return to London, however, and the court met to discuss "how to ease my Lord Ambassador."⁷⁹ Carleton expressed his similar frustrations at "being penned up away for so many years," though the only option for him and his fellow diplomats was to bide their time while fostering important connections they could put into action when the opportunity for promotion finally approached.⁸⁰

Diplomacy was at the center of Jacobean foreign policy. Jacobean ambassadors, too, were more thoroughly "professional" than in any previous period, meaning many of them acquired their training by officially serving under one of the secretaries of state, or most commonly, under a senior ambassador.⁸¹ Consequently, the Jacobean period offers a useful vantage point to study the cultural activities and social networks that comprised early modern

⁷⁶ *Dudley Carleton to John Chamberlain* (Venice, April 22, 1614), 165.

⁷⁷ *The Life and Letters of Sir Henry Wotton II* (Henry Wotton to the duke of Buckingham, January 1624), 284.

⁷⁸ *The Embassy of Sir Thomas Roe II, Court Minutes of the East India Company* (September 1619), 520.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*

⁸⁰ *Dudley Carleton to John Chamberlain* (Venice, April 22, 1614), 165.

⁸¹ Maurice Lee Jr., "Jacobean Diplomatic Service," *American Historical Review* 72, no. 4 (1967): 1264.

diplomatic practices.⁸² In comparison to Elizabeth I and her regime, James drastically increased the number of diplomats engaging in foreign and state negotiations.⁸³ Men like Wotton, Carleton and Roe staffed England's new embassies abroad—with some, Roe for example, going as far as Asia to further English diplomatic goals. Yet, though an ambassadorship was a significant and distinguished position, it did not carry the same esteem that it does in more modern times.⁸⁴ It was not an end in itself for these men. Most ambassadors—Wotton, Carleton and Roe included—hoped that an embassy position might serve as a steppingstone to a more prestigious position in London.⁸⁵

The study of early modern diplomacy has garnered significant recent historiographical attention.⁸⁶ Most recently, historians of early modern diplomacy have emphasized not only the institutions and practices that made up European diplomatic relations, but also the social and material world of ambassadors abroad, meaning their roles as cultural agents, their networks of friendship and competition, and the physical components of letter writing itself.⁸⁷ As scholarly attention has turned towards examining the many different roles an early modern emissary

⁸² Mark Netzloff, "The Ambassador's Household: Sir Henry Wotton, Domesticity, and Diplomatic Writing," in *Diplomacy and Early Modern Culture*, eds. Robyn Adams and Rosanna Cox (Houndmills: Palgrave, 2011), 156.

⁸³ *Ibid.*

⁸⁴ Lee Jr., "Jacobean Diplomatic Service," 1265-6.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 1266.

⁸⁶ See namely Daniela Frigo, ed. *Politics and Diplomacy in Early Modern Italy: The Structure of Diplomatic Practice, 1450-1800* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000) and Douglas Biow, *Doctors, Ambassadors, Secretaries: Humanism and Professions in Renaissance Italy* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2002).

⁸⁷ See Robyn Adams and Rosanna Cox, eds. *Diplomacy in Early Modern Culture* (Houndmills: Palgrave, 2011); Marika Keblusek and Badeloch Vera Noldus, eds. *Double Agents: Cultural and Political Brokerage in Early Modern Europe* (Boston: Brill, 2011); Brinda Charry and Gitanjali Shahani, eds. *Emissaries in Early Modern Literature and Culture: Mediation, Transmission and Traffic, 1550-1700* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2009); Helen Jacobson, *Luxury and Power: The Material World of the Stuart Diplomat, 1600-1714* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012).

occupied, we find that—for many historians—an ambassador’s versatility, his ability to perform a variety of diplomatic, intellectual and cultural roles, were his defining characteristic.⁸⁸

Most importantly, these historians have highlighted early modern ambassadors’ ability to construct and maintain the extensive networks that tied them to other ambassadors, men at home, and even to the monarch, through information, favors and gifts. This skill became a requirement for a foreign ambassador’s success abroad and at home in England.⁸⁹ Examining these networks allows one to explore the complex court politics of access and favor in Jacobean England.

Access, favor and proximity were central concerns to these men because they were the means to secure office. However, being an ambassador meant being far away from court. Ambassadors, therefore, depended on correspondents to keep them informed of the changing political situation at home. Consequently, awareness of the politics of favor and access, as well as the ability to navigate intelligence networks abroad, were central to Jacobean diplomatic practices.

Ambassadors like Henry Wotton, Dudley Carleton and Thomas Roe were all men from dignified families and all recruited to further James’ renewed diplomatic missions abroad. It was usual for James to select noble gentlemen or men from good families to serve as resident ambassadors, though most came from landed families of no great importance.⁹⁰ Some exceptions, like Wotton, came from “official” families with generations of government service.⁹¹ Others, like Roe, came from mercantile backgrounds and became diplomats because of their connections to trading companies. Additionally, these men, as a rule, had studied politics abroad—as Wotton had—or had served as apprentices or secretaries to an older ambassador—as

⁸⁸ Marika Keblusek, “Introduction: Double Agents in Early Modern Europe,” in *Double Agents: Cultural and Political Brokerage in Early Modern Europe*, eds. Marika Keblusek and Badeloch Vera Noldus (Boston: Brill, 2011), 3-4.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*

⁹⁰ Lee Jr. “Jacobean Diplomatic Service,” 1264.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*

Carleton had— sometime during their youth.⁹² The pay of a resident ambassador in the time of James I was around £3 a day, with £4 or £5 going to special ambassadors, and an ambassador was paid from the date of his appointment until his reception by the king upon his return. In addition to their regular salary, foreign emissaries were also given around £400 a year for special expenses, courtiers and secret service.⁹³ Sir Henry Wotton, for example, was given the sum of £730 from December 26, 1603—when he was officially appointed the ambassador to Venice—until the end of July, at the rate of five marks per day.⁹⁴ It was up to Wotton (and all other ambassadors), however, to pay for his house, food, servants, and the salaries of his staff. There was also no money officially allotted for travel or for the transport of goods. Though each ambassador was supposed to receive ample funds for their time abroad, the payment of these funds was extremely irregular and many of James’ ambassadors spent the majority of their appointment abroad in financial distress.⁹⁵

All diplomats were expected not only to maintain a correspondence network, but also to possess the boundless set of skills that made them a “perfect ambassador.”⁹⁶ Jacobean contemporaries agreed that the most important qualities an ambassador could possess were eloquence and learning.⁹⁷ An ideal diplomat should be well-educated and well-read (especially in the subjects of history and law), knowledgeable of foreign languages, and able to speak at length,

⁹² Ibid.; Smith, “Introduction,” in *The Life and Letters of Sir Henry Wotton*, 46.

⁹³ Ibid., 46.

⁹⁴ Ibid., 46n.

⁹⁵ Ibid., 47.

⁹⁶ Keblusek, “The Embassy of Art: Diplomats as Cultural Brokers,” in *Double Agents*, 16. Sir Thomas Roe proved to be an exception to the norm as his duties were first and foremost to the East India Company—not necessarily to James, as was the case with traditional royal ambassadors like Wotton and Carleton.

⁹⁷ Keblusek, 16. For more on the qualities and characteristics of ambassadors see, Jean Jules Jusserand, “The School for Ambassadors,” *The American Historical Review* 27 (1922): 426-64; Timothy Hampton, *Fictions of Embassy: Literature and Diplomacy in Early Modern Europe* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2009); and T. Hampton, “The Diplomatic Moment: Representing Negotiation in Early Modern Europe,” *Modern Language Quarterly* 67 (2006): 81-102.

but not pompously.⁹⁸ He should be good-looking, preferably with an aristocratic background, and the appropriate age—not so old that health issues might hinder him abroad, but not so young as to appear juvenile or unsophisticated amongst the men and women of the foreign courts.⁹⁹ In order to reflect the distinguished air expected of all ambassadors, their residences should exhibit rich furniture and works of art, with fine gold and silver cutlery and plates.¹⁰⁰

As these material items had to be procured and paid for through the ambassador's own salary, men like Wotton often incurred significant debt trying to project the proper outward image. This, combined with the unreliability of the Exchequer, meant that Jacobean ambassadors often encountered serious financial difficulties during their time abroad.¹⁰¹ Their tenuous monetary situations required them to cultivate patronage networks, finding wealthy, influential men that they could rely on for further financial assistance. Physical distance from the English court meant that an ambassador could not personally lobby for his own pay and promotion. Thus, these patronage networks were a critical component in keeping a foreign emissary afloat, and many ambassadors like Wotton, Carleton and Roe spent an exhaustive amount of time searching for, using and relying on the generosity of patrons.

NAVIGATING THE DIFFICULTIES OF DISTANCE

During the Jacobean period, obtaining the favor of the king was often contingent on having physical access to court. To advance one's individual policies, or to air one's individual grievances, personal contact with the monarch was crucial. Additionally, for a courtier or an

⁹⁸ Keblusek, 16.

⁹⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., See also Smith, "Introduction," in *The Life and Letters of Sir Henry Wotton*, 48.

¹⁰¹ Lee Jr., 1266.

ambassador, access to the king or queen was paramount to advancing one's social position.¹⁰²

The difficulties and challenges embodied in each ambassador's physical distance from court often meant not only an inability to air their grievances with the king, but also a perceived inability to remain in his mind and thus receive the benefits of his favor. Overcoming the distance from court became a—if not the—chief obstacle for a Jacobean emissary stationed on the Continent. Each ambassador discussed in this chapter came face-to-face with the difficulties of distance in one way or the other and used similar strategies to overcome it.

Born in 1568, Henry Wotton embodied many of the characteristics expected of a “perfect ambassador.” He was fifth in descent from Nicholas Wotton, Lord Mayor of London during the time of Henry V, and over the years the Wotton family had prospered and risen to various prestigious positions in service of the state.¹⁰³ In 1603, at the age of thirty-six, Wotton was appointed by James I to be the English ambassador to the Venetian Republic.¹⁰⁴ As Wotton's first prominent benefactor, the earl of Essex, had been executed two years previously, the newly appointed ambassador was in the market for a new patron. Ultimately he approached Robert Cecil, then secretary of state, only five months after reaching Venice.

During the time between Essex's death and Wotton's first letter to Robert Cecil, Wotton wrote to three different people, each of whom represented a different type of political or social connection. First, he wrote several letters to Edward Reynolds, secretary to the lord lieutenant of Ireland, who was stationed at court. Reynolds—like Wotton—had been employed in the service of Essex and had escaped the scandal with his life and his reputation. He was elected to

¹⁰² Brian Weiser, *Charles II and the Politics of Access* (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2003), 7.

¹⁰³ Smith, *The Life and Letters of Sir Henry Wotton*, 1. The young Henry Wotton studied at Oxford and then traveled abroad, studying foreign politics and languages in preparation for a career in public service. By 1595 he was appointed as one of the secretaries of Queen Elizabeth's favorite, Robert Devereux, second earl of Essex. He sailed with Essex on many expeditions and from him learned valuable information about politics and the court (though Wotton's fortunes looked dire for a period during Essex's fall and execution in 1601). See *The Life and Letters of Sir Henry Wotton*, 29-31.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, 46.

parliament in the year following Essex's death and had lent his friend Wotton a considerable sum of money while Wotton searched for a new patron. In 1601, Wotton wrote Reynolds, "the profession of your love is welcome unto me in this barren age of true friends. For that sum of money which I owe you...I will leave you satisfied."¹⁰⁵ Wotton also wrote to Isaac Casaubon, a prominent French scholar whose generosity and high social connections Wotton hoped to acquire.¹⁰⁶ Finally, Wotton wrote to Thomas Wilson, the Keeper of the Records—a man who had connections with Essex, but more importantly, was a close friend of Robert Cecil.¹⁰⁷ On March 26, 1602, Wotton wrote to Wilson from Venice, offering his services for procuring news.¹⁰⁸ In short, Wotton was inching his way closer to Cecil.

Mere months after this letter to Wilson—and five months after his arrival in Venice—Wotton wrote his first letter to Robert Cecil, offering him his services, and not only because Wotton was an ambassador and Cecil the secretary of state. Wotton asked Cecil to "pardon in me this troubling of you from abroad, but to humbly interpret the offer of my poor service."¹⁰⁹ As Cecil was secretary of state, it was Wotton's duty as an ambassador to communicate pertinent information to his contact in London, but it was presumably Wilson's influence that allowed Wotton to contact Cecil with the goal of establishing a more personal affiliation. While his letters to Cecil were within the purview of his professional responsibility, Wotton desired to establish a relationship with Cecil similar to his relationship with his former patron, Essex. These letters reflected Wotton's push for a new patron. While acknowledging the fraught relationship between Essex and Cecil, Wotton told the secretary of his plight after the death of Essex, and admitted:

¹⁰⁵ *The Life and Letters of Sir Henry Wotton* I (Henry Wotton to Edward Reynolds, Nov. 1601), 310.

¹⁰⁶ Smith, "Introduction," 11-12.

¹⁰⁷ *The Life and Letters of Sir Henry Wotton* I (Henry Wotton to Thomas Wilson, Feb. 5, 1603), 316n.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 316.

¹⁰⁹ *The Life and Letters of Sir Henry Wotton* I (Henry Wotton to Robert Cecil, May 23, 1603), 317.

Though between him and your Honor there was such public unkindness it were fit for me to apply myself unto your service...[and] if it may please your Honor to direct me unto your commandments...I do engage my own honesty, for my perpetual fidelity and observation towards you.¹¹⁰

Wotton's letters to Cecil, then, served two functions. They demonstrated to the secretary and James that he was fulfilling his role as an ambassador, while also offering his services as a client would to a patron. For Wotton, Robert Cecil was both a superior to whom he answered, and a benefactor to whom he ingratiated himself. From all accounts, Robert Cecil (made the earl of Salisbury in 1604), agreed to accept Wotton's service and the two men entered into a close relationship, which continued until Cecil's death in 1612.

Without a doubt, Wotton's most important and influential patron was Cecil. During his time as ambassador to Venice, however, his letters revealed his successful cultivation of connections that extended both upward to patrons and laterally to his social and political equals. Wotton's correspondence with all of these men—Robert Cecil, and Henry, Prince of Wales, as well as Sir Dudley Carleton and Sir Thomas Edmondes (ambassador to the Brussels court)—was preoccupied with gathering news and lobbying for assistance and favor.¹¹¹ From Cecil and Prince Henry, Wotton consistently asked for more funds. Writing to Cecil in 1606, Wotton sent his “Lordship very humble thanks for the expediting of [his] extraordinary allowances at £200 a quarter”—the £200 was money paid to Wotton by Cecil for intelligence and other letters of importance.¹¹² Yet, despite the earl's recent generosity, in the same letter Wotton implored him to send even more financial assistance as “the remembrance of that 1000 marks (which I owe at home, and can possibly never pay out of my present receipts) doth so clog my spirit and

¹¹⁰ Ibid., 317-18.

¹¹¹ M. Greengrass, “Edmondes, Sir Thomas,” in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), online edition 2008.

¹¹² *The Life and Letters of Sir Henry Wotton I* (Henry Wotton to the Earl of Salisbury, May, 26, 1606), 351. Unfortunately, the surviving letters are unclear over whether or not the £200 paid to Wotton from Cecil was part of his official income or additional income granted for outstanding services rendered.

conscience.”¹¹³ To Prince Henry he wrote, “How graciously it pleased him to receive that unworthy present...and withal how carefully and kindly your Highness inquired of the state of things here.”¹¹⁴ What that present was, Wotton did not say, but his gratitude to Henry suggested that it was something of worth. Thus, the expenses of Wotton’s embassy and the inability to personally solicit more funds from the king meant he relied heavily on Cecil and the prince to assist him. When James ended Wotton’s appointment in Venice suddenly in 1610, Wotton spent the next six years continuously lobbying for finances and for another patron to take up his cause.¹¹⁵

The difficulties encountered by Wotton during his post as an ambassador were not uncommon (though the deaths of Robert Cecil and the prince of Wales in such close succession caused him especial difficulty), and the troubles plaguing other ambassadors mirrored those documented in Wotton’s letters. Sir Dudley Carleton’s experiences in particular resembled those of Sir Henry Wotton. Also from a gentrified family with significant social connections, Carleton similarly saw diplomatic service as a way to advance his fortunes.¹¹⁶ Carleton’s role as the controller of the household to Henry Percy, ninth earl of Northumberland, brought him to the fringes of court, and secured him connections to men who could help advance his ambitions,

¹¹³ Ibid.

¹¹⁴ *The Life and Letters of Sir Henry Wotton I* (Henry Wotton to Henry, Prince of Wales, April, 24, 1608), 426.

¹¹⁵ In 1610 a Catholic writer, who opposed Wotton’s efforts to further the Protestant cause in the Italian states, published a statement Wotton had made concerning the true role of an ambassador. According to this source, Wotton had previously stated that an ambassador was nothing more than “an honest man sent to lie abroad for the good of his country.” Wotton’s assessment that an ambassador’s role was to “lie abroad” discredited James and made many question the motives of English diplomatic policy. James was angered by Wotton’s words and recalled him from his position in Venice. Wotton spent the next six years in London lobbying at court and accepting temporary positions until he could regain his post and reputations (he was made an ambassador again in 1616). For more details concerning Wotton’s indiscretion see Smith, “Introduction,” *The Life and Letters of Sir Henry Wotton I*, 49-50; Mark Netzloff, “The Ambassador’s Household,” in *Diplomacy and Early Modern Culture* (Houndmills: Palgrave, 2011), 160.

¹¹⁶ Lee Jr., “Introduction,” in *Dudley Carleton to John Chamberlain, 1603-1624*, 4-6. In 1595 he served in the employ of Sir Anthony Mildmay, then the ambassador to France, and later in the service of Sir Thomas Parry, Mildmay’s successor. From these employments Carleton became knowledgeable about politics and sharpened the skills that would eventually aid him in his own role as an ambassador. He was also elected to Parliament in 1604.

including serving as secretary to several ambassadors. Thanks to his new friends, he was appointed as Henry Wotton's replacement in Venice in 1610.¹¹⁷ During his time as ambassador to Venice, Carleton's correspondence reflected a desire for promotion, and he made constant pleas for money and influence at court. The majority of his surviving letters were written to family friend Sir John Chamberlain, who kept him informed of the goings-on in London and news of potential political openings. Carleton took care to cultivate his relationship with Chamberlain, as well as others even higher in the political ranks like Sir Ralph Winwood. Though Chamberlain was not necessarily a wealthy patron like Cecil was to Wotton, he still had elite connections in London and used these connections to help advance his young friend's career.

Carleton did not enjoy his years as ambassador to Venice, though it was considered a prestigious posting. He never mastered the Italian language as thoroughly as he wished, and he considered the post trivial and dull. He also took an intense dislike to his predecessor, Henry Wotton, whom he and Chamberlain habitually referred to as *Fabritio*, or "father of lies."¹¹⁸ Carleton was appalled that the king and powerful members of court saw Wotton as his equal. As Carleton was constantly seeking promotion, he had Chamberlain keep him up to date with news of Wotton and his patrons, fearing that the *Fabritio*'s wealthy benefactors would secure him the position—as provost of Eton—that Carleton himself wanted. For example, in April 1612, Carleton asked Chamberlain for news of who would take Robert Cecil's place as Lord High Treasurer, as the earl was ill and many thought his death was imminent. Chamberlain responded with news of the earl of Salisbury's recovery, but also gave names of possible successors. Carleton, "having received [Chamberlain's] news of the 11th of the last, thanked [him] very

¹¹⁷ Ibid., 8-13.

¹¹⁸ Ibid., 13. Within Carleton and Chamberlain's lengthy correspondence, no other people get such names.

much for the confirmation of my lord treasurer's recovery, as well as for the benefit the world enjoys by him as for prevention of such as were so ready to divide his spoils."¹¹⁹ He continued saying, "Those two you named to me are indeed suggested, but I would be glad to know the rest that were no less in their own conceits, and for that you write of Fabritio."¹²⁰ Carleton feared that Salisbury himself would recommend Wotton for his position, and many knew Wotton was more than ready to take up the post upon his patron's death.¹²¹

Carleton's dissatisfaction with his position in Venice meant that his letters to Chamberlain frequently lamented his plight and implored his older friend to use his connections to gather news of possible promotion. Carleton also complained to Chamberlain of the triviality of writing his reports to London. He claimed it was tiring and unproductive unless he wrote to those he could count on for reciprocal support.¹²² Yet, by 1614, Carleton wrote Chamberlain that he was finally hopeful that he could be reassigned to a better post (ambassadors could normally expect to be reassigned after about four years).¹²³ He disliked the difficulties his position abroad brought him, and he wrote Chamberlain, "when you have any idle talk with him [Sir Ralph Winwood, the newly appointed secretary of state], I pray you remember Eton College, which my predecessor here had my late lord treasurer's word to do his best to procure for him when it fell."¹²⁴ Carleton's father-in-law was the former provost of Eton and Carleton hoped to succeed him, though he was worried Wotton's patrons would secure the position for Wotton first.¹²⁵ Though Carleton was not granted the position of provost of Eton—and neither was Wotton—

¹¹⁹ *Dudley Carleton to John Chamberlain, 1603-1624* (Venice, April 3, 1612), 125.

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*

¹²¹ *Ibid.*, 127n.

¹²² Lee Jr., "The Jacobean Diplomatic Service," 1266.

¹²³ Lee Jr., "Introduction," in *Dudley Carleton to John Chamberlain, 1603-1624*, 15.

¹²⁴ *Dudley Carleton to John Chamberlain* (Venice, April 22, 1614), 165.

¹²⁵ Lee Jr., "Introduction," in *Dudley Carleton to John Chamberlain, 1603-1624*, 15.

Carleton was made ambassador to The Hague in the United Provinces in 1616.¹²⁶ For Carleton, this new position—though it still held many of the problems of distance that he faced in Venice—excited him as it was closer to London and promised the possibility of further advancement. It was the post most recently vacated by Sir Ralph Winwood, the newly appointed secretary of state.

While Sir Henry Wotton and Sir Dudley Carleton's positions away from court brought them face to face with similar obstacles, Sir Thomas Roe's experience as an ambassador was in many ways different. The only son of a wealthy landowner, Roe came from the appropriate background for a man looking to employ himself in diplomatic service.¹²⁷ Yet, while Wotton and Carleton were appointed to embassies fairly close to home, Roe's tenure as a diplomat was spent first in India, at the court of the Great Mogul, Jahangir, and then in Constantinople, at the Ottoman court—though after Constantinople he did later serve closer to home as ambassador-extraordinary in Hamburg.¹²⁸ In October 1614, with the approval of King James, Roe accepted an invitation from the East India Company to be the first English ambassador to India.¹²⁹

Roe's position at the Mughal court was a unique one for an English diplomat. While traditional emissaries like Wotton and Carleton operated under direct orders from their king, Roe was expected to balance the expectations of not only James, but the East India Company as

¹²⁶ It was a post previously held by Sir Ralph Winwood.

¹²⁷ Michael Strachan, "Roe, Sir Thomas," in *ODNB*. Roe also attended Oxford, though left after four years without a degree and enrolled as a student in the Middle Temple, completing a fashionable gentleman's education course. After inheriting a third of his father's estate in 1601, he was appointed as an esquire of Elizabeth I, and upon the accession of James I, he joined the households of Prince Henry and Princess Elizabeth. For a more complete study of the life and diplomatic career of Sir Thomas Roe see Michael Strachan, *Sir Thomas Roe, 1581-1644: A Life* (Salisbury: Mitchell Russell, 1989) and Michael Brown, *Itinerant Ambassador: The Life of Sir Thomas Roe* (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 1970).

¹²⁸ Strachan, "Roe, Sir Thomas," in *ODNB*.

¹²⁹ *Ibid*.

well.¹³⁰ While at the court of the Great Mogul, Roe had to rely on interpreters, as the English language was virtually unknown in India.¹³¹ He did not speak the Persian language of the Indian court, nor did he know the customs that governed Jahangir's court politics. Roe's opinion of his post in India was not favorable. In 1616 he wrote Lord George Carew:

I shall be glad to do your Lordship service in England; for this is the dullest, basest place that I ever saw, and maketh me weary of speaking of it. Therefore, if you be also weary of reading, I am glad...And so, with all respect and little ceremony, I hope to return to do you better services. In the meantime to live a miserable life, though with abundance and state enough; yet I want the conversation and presence of those friends I love and honor.¹³²

Roe's own ambitions was for a return to London, and he found it exceedingly difficult to navigate the needs of his two masters at home—James and the EIC—as well as the customs of a foreign king.¹³³ When Roe arrived at Ajmer, the favorite residence of Jahangir, he was summoned and required to present himself to Prince Parwiz, Jahangir's second son. After passing through a road with armed guards, Roe entered into the inner court where the prince resided. A guard escorted him and “an officer came and brought [him] word that he must touch the ground with his head, and [his] hat off.” Roe reported that he answered, “I came in honor to see the Prince and was free from the custom of servants.”¹³⁴ Roe's recounting of this first meeting with the prince recorded his anger at being relegated to what he saw as the social position of a servant, and he “demanded license to come up and stand by him [Parwiz]...desiring no more privilege than the ambassadors such Princes had, to whom [he] held himself equal.”¹³⁵ Though uttering these demands in a foreign court could be dangerous, Roe insisted that his

¹³⁰ Rupali Mishra, “Diplomacy at the Edge: Split Interests in the Roe Embassy to the Mughal Court,” *Journal of British Studies* vol. 53, 1 (January 2014): 6.

¹³¹ Strachan, “Roe, Sir Thomas,” in *ODNB*.

¹³² *The Embassy of Sir Thomas Roe, 1615-1619 I* (Thomas Roe to Lord Carew, January 17, 1615), 113-4.

¹³³ Mishra, “Diplomacy at the Edge,” 6.

¹³⁴ William Foster, ed. *The Embassy of Sir Thomas Roe to the Court of the Great Mogul, 1615-1619 I*, 2 vols, (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2010), November 18, 1615, 92.

¹³⁵ *The Embassy of Sir Thomas Roe, 1615-1619 I* (November 18, 1615), 92.

position as a foreign emissary be respected.¹³⁶ The English embassy at the Mughal court, however, was marginal to both the Mughal and English courts. While the United Provinces and the Italian states were important English allies, Roe's position in India was not essential to James' diplomatic mission. Thus, Roe had to jockey even harder for respect and influence back at home.

During his embassy in India, Roe had close, physical access to Jahangir and his sons, and thus was often able to speak to the emperor and personally express the needs of his embassy. Roe reported that his presentation of gifts to Jahangir—the principal way to obtain privileges at the Mughal court, according to Roe—was well received, and eventually Roe recounted that he and Jahangir solidified an agreeable relationship with one another.¹³⁷ At the same time, however, Roe was constantly trying to meet the demands of James and the EIC. While ambassadors like Wotton and Carleton simultaneously served their king and lobbied for their own interests and promotion, Roe's attentions were split three ways. Roe's experiences with obtaining access, garnering favor, and advancing his own goals, were much more complicated than the experiences of his contemporary ambassadors.

All three men—Roe, Wotton and Carleton—had to lobby for favor while being physically distant from court. Essentially, it was the ability to establish and maintain information networks that allowed them to overcome this distance. As the real reward for ambassadors resided in their ability to make connections and collect favors, their correspondence was preoccupied with these efforts. Within all of the surviving letters, we see how each man attempted to use their diplomatic information network to their own advantage.

¹³⁶ Though Roe wrote that his position as an ambassador might have been disrespected when he first arrived in India, he might have also misunderstood the traditional procedures of the Mughal court. *The Embassy of Sir Thomas Roe, 1615-1619 I* (November 18, 1615), 92.

¹³⁷ Strachan, *Sir Thomas Roe: A Life*, 145.

CREATING INFORMATION NETWORKS

Beginning in the late sixteenth century and extending into the Jacobean period, the English crown frequently relied on private and unofficial information networks to supply intelligence about both domestic and foreign matters. Built upon patronage relationships, these networks were maintained by the transmission of news through epistolary correspondence between influential men at home and abroad.¹³⁸ During the reign of James I, these networks became a key component of diplomatic service. Attempting to offset the financial and social difficulties that accompanied their posts abroad, ambassadors used these diplomatic information networks to establish identities for themselves as marketers of information, and in this way, they were able to obtain small forms of political agency.¹³⁹ In addition to using their diplomatic correspondence as a formalized means of conveying news, ambassadors like Wotton, Carleton and Roe attempted to communicate information that would ensure their value as reporters and help encourage patrons to grant them money, favor, and influence in return.

As Wotton's letter from the beginning of this chapter demonstrated, the fallout from the loss of one's patrons could be quick and harsh. Though he and Sir Dudley Carleton's relationship with one another was tense at best, Wotton's fall from favor and loss of patronage meant he needed Carleton's influence, regardless of personal feeling. Thus, foreign ambassadors depended upon several types of connections within their network. First, upon the connections of favor that extended directly to the center, or to the monarch, who granted foreign appointments and to whom an ambassador owed their duty and loyalty. Second, the connections that extended upward and outward, connections that depended "upon the grace and breadth of men greater than them,

¹³⁸ Robyn Adams, "A Most Secret Service: William Herle and the Circulation of Intelligence," *Diplomacy and Early Modern Culture*, Robyn Adams and Rosanna Cox, eds. (Houndmills: Palgrave, 2011), 63.

¹³⁹ Netzloff, "The Ambassador's Household," *Diplomacy and Early Modern Culture*, 157-9.

[the ambassadors].”¹⁴⁰ These patronage contacts were critical for cultivating and maintaining favor and influence with those in the highest positions at court, as well as the king. The loss of these influential patronage connections often spelled disaster for those men benefitting from them, as Wotton’s financial and social plight after the deaths of his patrons in 1612 demonstrated. Finally, foreign ambassadors also depended upon connections complementary to patronage, or those connections that extended outward to others who could provide information and perhaps even further influence but not outright favor or money. Wotton’s letter to Carleton, in a way his social and political equal, provided an example of these lateral connections. Ambassadors could create and utilize connections within their network to petition for support—as evidenced by Wotton and Carleton’s relationship—or just exchange vital information that could help advance their interests—as evidenced by the relationship between Carleton and his mentor Sir John Chamberlain.

As mentioned in the previous chapter, Dudley Carleton and John Chamberlain corresponded regularly for over thirty years. Carleton, beginning as an ambitious young man with the desire to advance his political position, considered Chamberlain a trusted advisor. Over the course of their correspondence, Chamberlain’s advice and information helped Carleton successfully navigate the complex politics of court.¹⁴¹ By examining the information contained in Chamberlain’s letters to Carleton while Carleton was posted outside of England—and vice versa—we can glean the type of information Carleton in particular (and possibly foreign ambassadors in general) valued and desired. News of political promotions and appointments in England were a consistent feature of Chamberlain’s letters. For example, on January 6, 1616, Chamberlain wrote Carleton that the English at The Hague would prefer Carleton there as

¹⁴⁰ *The Life and Letters of Sir Henry Wotton* II (Sir Henry Wotton to Sir Dudley Carleton, February 25, 1613), 15.

¹⁴¹ N. E. McLure, ed. “Introduction” to *The Letters of John Chamberlain* I, 10-13.

ambassador, rather than Wotton, “who is not affable, always busy, but dispatching little.”¹⁴² Not only this, but Carleton himself often inquired about such news, and such content was also featured in Wotton’s letters to his own patrons, as well as in Roe’s.¹⁴³ If a foreign ambassador like Carleton or Wotton received information that James was looking to fill new, higher positions at court, he could utilize his patronage contacts to ask for recommendations. For example, in 1615, Wotton desired to stay on as ambassador to The Hague and wrote a letter to Sir Ralph Winwood commenting, “if the King our gracious master shall determine the continuance of me in his service here [Holland], please express that I desire this post above all else.”¹⁴⁴ Information communicated through both lateral connections and patronage connections was a way ambassadors could jockey for favor and promotion despite their position abroad. News from sources like Chamberlain, then, was critical to an ambitious ambassador’s success.

Wotton, Carleton and Roe all had their respective patrons. As we have seen already, Wotton wrote primarily to Robert Cecil, the earl of Salisbury, and Henry, Prince of Wales, as well as men like Thomas Edmondes, ambassador to the Brussels court, and even Dudley Carleton for a time. Carleton’s information was obtained largely through his correspondence with John Chamberlain, but he also had a close relationship with Ralph Winwood, a relationship that spanned Winwood’s tenure as a fellow ambassador and his three years as secretary of state.

¹⁴² *The Letters of John Chamberlain* I (John Chamberlain to Dudley Carleton, January 6, 1616), 357; and *CSPD*, vol. 9, 270. Chamberlain’s information was correct, and Carleton was appointed as ambassador to The Hague that same year.

¹⁴³ For example, in September 1615, Carleton wrote to Chamberlain, “I understand now that Sir Henry Wotton is revoked out of Holland, though certain of these grave senators, hearing of my expectation and desire to be gone, have wished me to set my heart at rest for this winter” (Lee Jr., *Dudley Carleton to John Chamberlain*, September 8/18, 1615, 188). Carleton was referring to the news that Wotton was slated to succeed Carleton in Venice after Wotton’s special mission in the United Provinces was over. Carleton desired to leave Venice for The Hague and was hopeful that Wotton would in fact vacate the position like it was rumored. In a December 1615 letter, Chamberlain discussed Carleton’s chances of being appointed to The Hague, adding, “but the worst I gather is that Sir Henry Wotton would build his tabernacle where he is, and labors to put off his extraordinaryship in the United Provinces for an ordinary place” (*The Letters of John Chamberlain* I, John Chamberlain to Dudley Carleton, December 22, 1615, I, 355).

¹⁴⁴ *The Life and Letters of Sir Henry Wotton* I (Henry Wotton to Sir Ralph Winwood, December 17, 1615), 62.

It was Chamberlain's information, however, which allowed Carleton to cultivate this advantageous patronage relationship. Roe's communication was addressed principally to the East India Company, though he altered the tone and subject of his letters to his patrons back in London, understanding the interests of both his patrons and the EIC and tailoring his information accordingly.¹⁴⁵

Each man desired advancement and a more comfortable position in London. The nature of their correspondence reflected these desires, and, not surprisingly, a preoccupation with gathering information that could ensure that promotion. Chamberlain kept Carleton up to date on political news at home, supplying him with talk of new appointments or rumors on who would succeed whom. In June 1615, for example, Carleton expressed his thanks to Chamberlain for "the continuance of his friendship by the good offices you give with Mr. Secretary [Winwood], with whom I must acknowledge you did first sow the seeds of that favor he had always showed me, which you have since cultivated on all occasions."¹⁴⁶ Wotton sent similar thanks to Sir Robert Naunton in 1619:

That you meant me, at such distance from your sight in place, and from your memory in merit, so great an honor, was a nobler piece of love than I shall ever be able to acknowledge with due thankfulness. And yet it is more, both in itself, and in mine own feeling of it, that you are pleased in your last unto me, to express some solicitousness about the satisfying of me why I missed it. For both which I humbly beseech you to receive the private profession of myself to be ever yours.¹⁴⁷

When Sir Thomas Lake was forced to resign his position as secretary of state, Naunton appeared to have lobbied at court to have Wotton appointed as his successor, but to no avail.¹⁴⁸ Wotton

¹⁴⁵ Mishra, 26.

¹⁴⁶ *Dudley Carleton to John Chamberlain* (June 6/16-11/21, 1615), 181.

¹⁴⁷ *The Life and Letters of Sir Henry Wotton II* (Henry Wotton to Robert Naunton, March 11, 1619), 166.

¹⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 166n.

thanked Naunton both for his efforts and for his explanation as to why he had failed to secure him the appointment.

To be successful, an ambassador's information networks had to extend not only inward to patrons at court, but also outward to friends stationed at home and abroad. The larger one's network, the simpler it was to navigate the difficulties of distance and the politics of access and collect favor.

CURRYING FAVOR

In the early seventeenth century, some of the most important functions of a king were the showing of favor and giving of rewards to his subjects. In association with the perceptions of a monarch's divine nature, contemporaries believed that it was James' duty to extend his benevolence to his subjects.¹⁴⁹ The granting of favor was a key component of the reciprocal relationship between a king and his people, and thus an expectation of kingship. James' rewarding of his inner political circle, i.e. his patronage, reinforced the bonds of duty that connected a monarch and his nobles.¹⁵⁰ By frequently showing or withholding his favor, James made court patronage an important instrument of political control. In addition, the volatile nature of royal favor—something that was within James' prerogative to give or take away at will, and which numerous contemporary examples showed him willing and able to do—ensured that royal officials like ambassadors made it their business to understand the politics of favor at court. A key part of an ambassador's success was tied to his ability to create and maintain a network of

¹⁴⁹ Linda Levy Peck, *Court Patronage and Corruption in Early Stuart England* (London: Unwin Hyman, 1990), 13-14. For more on the networks of patronage and corruption in the Stuart court see Linda Levy Peck, *Consuming Splendor: Society and Culture in Seventeenth-Century England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005) and *Northampton, Patronage and Policy at the Court of James I* (London: Allen Unwin, 1982).

¹⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 14.

favor and information, and no connection within his network was as central as a direct connection with his monarch.

To be chosen for royal positions, or to gain promotion, a courtier needed the patronage of James, or someone close to him. Thus correspondence between an ambassador and the monarch showed especial deference and attempts to curry favor. During his tenure as ambassador to Venice and The Hague (as well as during his two breaks in London, in 1612–16 and 1619–21), Henry Wotton wrote over forty letters to the king.¹⁵¹ In his first, written in 1606, shortly after his arrival in Venice, Wotton ingratiated himself to James, thanking him for his appointment and for a previous letter. In that letter, James had implored Wotton “to know that you serve a Prince that can both judge of merit, and make demonstrations thereof when time shall serve...but know that we read not any foreign dispatches, from any of our ministers, with better contention.”¹⁵² Wotton responded, writing:

I have received those most dear and most inestimable lines wherewith it pleased your Majesty to overcheer the heart of your poor servant in a foreign land... which, I acknowledge, and feel myself bound to render up again unto your Majesty all that, which out of your infinite grace, hath been attributed unto me. For the long preservation of our dear Lord and Sovereign, we prostrate ourselves at your royal feet.¹⁵³

This letter was the first in a series of correspondence between Wotton and James, with Wotton’s shrewd motives always apparent in the tone of his language.¹⁵⁴ Wotton consistently wrote with the deference expected of a royal servant and worked tirelessly to ensure James’ favor, even when his future looked bleak and James’ tone shifted from laudatory to hostile, as it did in 1610 after Wotton’s recall.

¹⁵¹ Smith, *The Life and Letters of Sir Henry Wotton* (2 vols.).

¹⁵² “Letters from King James I to Sir Henry Wotton and others,” in *Archaeologia: Or Miscellaneous Tracts Relating to Antiquity*, Vol. XL, Part II (London: The Society of Antiquaries, 1866), 257.

¹⁵³ *The Life and Letters of Sir Henry Wotton* I (Henry Wotton to James I, September 1, 1606), 360.

¹⁵⁴ All letters from James to Wotton are contained in *Archaeologia* (London: The Society of Antiquaries, 1866).

Given that royal favor could only be curried from abroad through correspondence, Carleton and Roe wrote similar letters to James. During his four years as ambassador to India, Roe wrote two letters to his king. After Roe's appointment to the court of the Great Mogul in 1614, James instructed him to "be careful in the presentation of your honor and dignity...and next, that you use all the means you can to advance the trade of the East India Company and to procure them all the commodities of safety and profit that you may."¹⁵⁵ Roe responded with a letter to his king a month later, stating:

That I have the honor to be called your Majesties ambassador me thinks requires out of the nature of the place, at least emboldens me, to send your Majesty these humble lines...[and] I humbly desire your Majesty to believe I would despise 100 lives to your humble service, which seeing my pilgrimage interrupts, I will in my daily vows and meditations to Almighty God supplicate a long, glorious and happy reign among your subjects...[and] you may reign forever in the Kingdom of Eternity.¹⁵⁶

Here Roe, like Wotton, wrote James with the respect and reverence that was expected from a diplomat in the king's service. Both Roe and Wotton alluded to the divine nature of James' position, humbling themselves, as only loyal, deferential men would garner the king's favor.

Patronage and favor were not only central to the political life of ambassadors, but also reflected in the language in which they wrote. Men like Wotton and Carleton were careful to characterize themselves as humble servants of the king, diligently performing their duties overseas with patience and loyalty. Yet, as we have seen, these "humble servants" often encountered many difficulties during their time abroad, difficulties which were not communicated directly to James. Instead, they turned to other patrons in their networks. Each ambassador cultivated numerous patrons. While the connection to royal favor was continuously

¹⁵⁵ *The Embassy of Sir Thomas Roe* II ("The King's Instructions to Roe," December 29, 1614), 552.

¹⁵⁶ *The Embassy of Sir Thomas Roe* I (Thomas Roe to the King's Majesty, January 29, 1615), 120-2.

maintained, when it came to currying favor, men like Wotton, Carleton and Roe often turned to advantageous patron-client connections to further press their cause. These connections saved the king from being inundated with incessant demands, and provided both the patrons and the clients with their own advantages.¹⁵⁷ Patrons became the focus of petitions for favor, providing an indirect route to the king, and ambassadors became brokers of news and culture.

All foreign emissaries with desires for advancement, Wotton, Carleton and Roe cultivated personal networks that played on the intricate workings of patronage, brokerage and clientism. Much of their energy was taken up with gathering information about trends in court favor. Patronage connections extended from the court, the royal household and council, to the localities, and diplomats abroad needed a way to access each.¹⁵⁸ They utilized what historians have called the “republic of letters” to build personal, epistolary relationships with men they believed held the power to further their careers.¹⁵⁹ This “republic of letters” was a network based upon obligation and forged through ambassador agency—emissaries like Wotton, Carleton and Roe would exchange news, art, and ideas for reciprocal favors. Essentially, within these patronage networks—which extended upward and outward—foreign ambassadors acted as brokers whose actions were compensated occasionally with money, but most often in terms of personal favors and mutual advantages.¹⁶⁰ For instance, after the death of his two most influential patrons, Wotton wrote to the king’s new favorite, George Villiers, then the Marquis of Buckingham. Accompanying his letter to Buckingham, Wotton sent two boxes of presents from Venice, telling Villiers:

I know your Lordship cannot want presents of the best kind from all countries, if you would be but pleased to betray your desire, for your favor is worthy to be

¹⁵⁷ Peck, *Court Patronage and Corruption*, 49.

¹⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 48.

¹⁵⁹ Keblusek, “Introduction,” *Double Agents*, 4.

¹⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

studied, both because you are powerful, and because in the common judgment (of which we hear that sound, that are far off) you employ your power nobly...and therefore, I have taken the boldness, in a ship newly departed from this harbor, to send your Lordship two boxes of poor things...wherein my end is plain, only to excite your Lordship with this little taste, to command me further in whatsoever may better please you.¹⁶¹

Despite Wotton's characterization of his gifts as "poor things," his presentation of Venetian gifts and his promise to "acquaint your Lordship with local notes of importance," or information, was agreeably received and Wotton was successful at gaining the patronage of a rising star in James' court.¹⁶² For instance, thanks primarily to Buckingham's influence, the king awarded Wotton the long-awaited provostship of Eton in July 1624.¹⁶³

Wotton, Carleton and Roe forged their identities as specialists in the exchange of intelligence. The gathering and sharing of news through patronage networks was a means of establishing a lasting relationship with a patron, solidifying their roles as reporters and effectively ensuring their patrons would respond reciprocally with favors. Wotton and Carleton wrote weekly letters to multiple colleagues and patrons, gathering and passing on intelligence they believed would ingratiate themselves to James' inner political circle. In his first full year in the Venetian Republic—one in which he spent much of his time cultivating patronage networks—Wotton wrote almost forty letters to his patrons and contemporaries, twenty-seven of those to his most important patron at the time, Robert Cecil, earl of Salisbury. In these letters Wotton communicated news of the Venetian court, the interception of foreign letters, the arrests and executions of spies, rumors of plots at court, the deaths of notable Venetians, news of the Jesuits and the pope, and rumors of religious war. In return, Wotton asked Salisbury for financial

¹⁶¹ *The Life and Letters of Sir Henry Wotton II* (Henry Wotton to the Marquis of Buckingham, May 16, 1621), 211-12.

¹⁶² *Ibid.*, 211.

¹⁶³ A. J. Loomie, "Wotton, Sir Henry," in *ODNB*.

aid and for personal suits, “wherein [he] beseeched his Lordship’s favor to the King on his behalf.”¹⁶⁴

Salisbury’s role as the secretary of state meant that Wotton would have corresponded frequently with him regardless of their patron-client relationship: it was a key responsibility of his job to do so. There was always more to their correspondence than the requirements of office, however. The establishment of their correspondence, treated above, showed how Wotton’s personal circumstances and earlier patronage connections colored his relationship with Cecil. Additionally, Wotton’s letters to Salisbury during his time away from an embassy position revealed that their connection continued to be not only professional, but personal as well. In 1611, after his removal from Venice, Wotton wrote over ten letters to Salisbury. As Wotton was no longer a public servant, his continuing correspondence with Salisbury was the result of the hope that their personal patron-client relationship could place him back in favor with James. If not for Salisbury’s death in 1612, their personal correspondence would have undoubtedly continued.¹⁶⁵

While Wotton’s letters to Salisbury during his time in Venice functioned as both patronage letters and as part of his duty as an ambassador, his network extended far beyond the earl. In 1608 Wotton successfully established a patronage relationship with the prince of Wales. Wotton desperately hoped his ties with Prince Henry would grant him great potential for advancement, and he took it upon himself to write to the prince news of Venice and information he thought Henry might value. From 1608 to 1609, Wotton wrote six letters to prince Henry, and

¹⁶⁴ *The Life and Letters of Sir Henry Wotton* I (Henry Wotton to the Earl of Salisbury, September 22, 1606), 363.

¹⁶⁵ Pauline Croft, “Cecil, Robert, first earl of Salisbury,” in *ODNB*.

four to the prince's close confidant, Sir David Murray.¹⁶⁶ In one letter Wotton told Murray that he had "sent you equal portions of our Venetian commodity [or, Venetian treacle, a compound of drugs] You may use it safely when you have need of it, for it is of the very best...and wherein I must beseech your favor to the Prince in my behalf."¹⁶⁷ In other words, Wotton cultivated the prince by cultivating the people around him.

Wotton's connections extended beyond Cecil, the king, and the prince. Sir Henry Wotton established connections with Sir Thomas Edmondes, the ambassador to Brussels; and James Cecil, Viscount Cranborne, the earl of Salisbury's son. After the earl of Salisbury and Prince Henry's deaths in 1612, Wotton worked even harder to expand his network, possibly to compensate for the loss of those two, writing to William Herbert, third earl of Pembroke, a courtier and patron of the arts; Robert Carr, Viscount Rochester and favorite of James; Sir Dudley Carleton; Sir Edward Bacon, a prominent politician; and Sir Ralph Winwood, the new secretary of state.¹⁶⁸ Wotton wrote furiously in an attempt to create new connections both horizontally and vertically, hoping that these new additions to his network could grant him the ties needed to obtain a new diplomatic position and the patrons necessary to continue to advance his political ambitions. Based on the surviving letters, on average Wotton sent approximately 25 letters in any given year, letters that reached from London to the United Provinces to Brussels and to France, and to men in positions ranging from ambassador to secretary of state.¹⁶⁹

Sir Dudley Carleton, too, wrote frequently to his patrons and contemporaries. During his time in Venice and The Hague, Carleton wrote to Robert Carr, James' favorite; Henry Percy, the

¹⁶⁶ Sir David Murray was a Gentleman of the Bedchamber to Prince Henry and Wotton wrote him several times to ask him to petition his master for certain favors. *The Life and Letters of Sir Henry Wotton I* (Henry Wotton to Sir David Murray, April, 24, 1608), 427.

¹⁶⁷ *The Life and Letters of Sir Henry Wotton I* (Henry Wotton to Sir David Murray, April, 24, 1608), 427.

¹⁶⁸ *The Life and Letters of Sir Henry Wotton I-II* (1608-1613).

¹⁶⁹ Letters averaged from both employed and unemployed years: 1608-1609; 1609-1610; 1610-1611; 1611-1612; 1612-1613. *The Life and Letters of Sir Henry Wotton I*, 411-508; II, 1-36.

earl of Northumberland; Sir William Killigrew, a courtier and member of Robert Carr's inner circle; Sir Walter Cope, an influential member of parliament; Ralph Winwood, secretary of state, and Sir Henry Wotton, his predecessor in Venice. Carleton wrote to men he thought could provide insight into the networks of favor and those he thought could further his goals at court. His letters were delivered to men all over England and the Continent, from France to the Italian states to his post at The Hague. From his surviving correspondence, Carleton wrote on average sixteen letters annually to an average of seven different men.¹⁷⁰ Additionally, between the years 1611 to 1618, over eighty letters he received have survived, almost half of those from Chamberlain, and the rest from fellow diplomats, politicians at home, and nobles helping to advance his career.¹⁷¹

Carleton provides the best example of an ambassador cultivating complementary patronage connections through correspondence, demonstrating this through his correspondence with his friend, John Chamberlain. Wotton also took the time to write to other men in positions lateral to his (six letters to Sir Thomas Edmondson, ambassador to the court of Brussels, in one year), but the majority of Carleton's surviving letters are those he exchanged with Chamberlain. As Chamberlain was in a position to assist Carleton in advancing his political career, their correspondence was a constant exchange of information Chamberlain deemed pertinent to Carleton's success as an ambassador and future politician. Rather than a patron-client relationship, Carleton and Chamberlain fostered a sociable relationship, where Chamberlain freely gave information with only Carleton's gratitude and letters in return. During the first year of Carleton's appointment in Venice in 1610, fifteen letters from Carleton to Chamberlain survive. In the course of the same year, Chamberlain wrote Carleton thirty-four letters detailing

¹⁷⁰ Numbers taken from *The Calendar of State Papers, Domestic Series* (vols. IX-XI), averaged from the years 1611-1625.

¹⁷¹ *Ibid.*, vol. IX.

the news of court, the goings-on in London, and news of domestic and international politics.¹⁷²

Carleton's responses to Chamberlain's frequent correspondence testified to the invaluable nature of Chamberlain's information. In response to a letter of significant importance, Carleton wrote:

What you [Chamberlain] have written in the two last letters has touched my own particular, you being upon the first heat of unexpected news, and may it be not necessary to be participated to other friends (which you will judge as you see occasion). I shall be content all may rest with yourself.¹⁷³

In this example, Chamberlain communicated news of James' anger at hearing Wotton's quip that all ambassadors were sent to lie abroad for their king. After hearing of James' displeasure, Chamberlain told Carleton that Wotton was "down in the wind, and his business begins to quail."¹⁷⁴ Chamberlain knew this news would be useful to Carleton, who was hoping to advance his position following the earl of Salisbury's death. Though Carleton would not receive his desired promotion until 1625, it was undeniably Chamberlain's advice and information—and Carleton's successful use of this information to garner favor through his own patronage networks—that eventually helped ensure his rise to prominence.

In contrast to Carleton and Wotton, however, Roe's location in India placed him at a disadvantage in the gathering and communication of intelligence. While his contemporary ambassadors on the Continent were able to receive and communicate weekly dispatches, as an ambassador stationed in the East Indies, Roe had to contend with annual correspondence at most.¹⁷⁵ During his time in India (1615-19), Roe sent letters to the East India Company; Sir Thomas Smythe, the first governor of the East India Company; Sir Ralph Winwood; William Robbins, an EIC factor and an English resident at Isfahan; Sir George Carew, an administrator

¹⁷² *The Letters of John Chamberlain* I, 303-400.

¹⁷³ *Dudley Carleton to John Chamberlain, 1603-1624* (Dudley Carleton to John Chamberlain, Venice, December 14, 1612), 136.

¹⁷⁴ *The Letters of John Chamberlain* I (John Chamberlain to Dudley Carleton, November 4, 1612), 387.

¹⁷⁵ Mishra, 15.

and diplomat; and Henry Wriothesley, the earl of Southampton, a courtier and literary patron. Roe's network extended from India to London, but he knew that he could not keep his patrons up to date on the political affairs of the Mughal court as often as other ambassadors on the Continent could. Even when he was able to send letters back to London, he worried that the information they detailed would not be of value to his correspondents. In a letter to Lord Carew, Roe apologized for the information conveying in his previous letter, arguing, "I sent your Lordship a journal till my arrival in Brampore, a city of houses made of mud, where one of the king's sons keeps his court. I had need to write an apology for it, there being nothing of worth, nothing memorable."¹⁷⁶ Though he characterized his information as unimportant, however, Roe also knew that he had to communicate what he could back to his patrons in London. In the same letter Roe told Carew, "I had rather trust your nobleness, then trouble you with excuses; and so descend to an more universal description of the state and the customs of the land."¹⁷⁷ Concurrently, Roe used his patronage connections to send information on trade, the Mughal political system, the customs of the court, the character of Jahangir and his sons, and details about the geography of India in general.¹⁷⁸ He hoped that this exchange of intelligence, despite its lack of frequency, would garner favor and grant him connections back home.

While the trade of information was one key component of an ambassador's status, as a broker an ambassador could—and often did—operate as a foreign agent for their patrons, not only in the brokerage of intelligence, but also in the brokerage of material goods. Art, and art collecting specifically, was an essential tool in the foreign ambassador's arsenal. Along with the "republic of letters," art collecting became a way for emissaries to act as cultural agents.¹⁷⁹ As

¹⁷⁶ *The Embassy of Sir Thomas Roe I* (Thomas Roe to Lord Carew, January 17, 1615[-16]), 110.

¹⁷⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁷⁸ Mishra, 16.

¹⁷⁹ Keblusek, "The Embassy of Art," *Double Agents*, 15.

versatility was supposed to be one of the defining characteristics of an early modern ambassador, Wotton, Carleton and Roe utilized not only a network of intelligence, but also a network of commodities—the brokering, trade and gifting of art and material goods—to curry favor and gain prominence. In this way, they took on more commercial roles in their patron-client relationships.

Several historians have examined the roles played by Wotton, Carleton, and Roe in the development of early modern art collecting.¹⁸⁰ All three men used their positions abroad to locate and purchase works of art, antiquities, and jewels that they then shipped to their patrons in London, hoping to use their collecting abilities as a stepping-stone to political advancement. Historians use the phrase “cultural diplomacy” to describe the importance of art as a diplomatic tool in the early modern period.¹⁸¹ Within the Jacobean period specifically, the exchange of expensive and elaborate gifts between ambassador and patron became another way to strengthen patronage ties. As the English ambassadors in Venice, Sir Henry Wotton and Sir Dudley Carleton helped to fashion the Stuart taste for seventeenth-century Italian High Renaissance art.¹⁸²

Wotton was one of the first Jacobean ambassadors to truly appreciate and take advantage of the ways art and art collecting could influence the diplomatic process.¹⁸³ While in Venice, Wotton took the time to locate and buy pieces he knew he could present to his patrons back in London, effectively gaining their support. It was Wotton who was largely responsible for the

¹⁸⁰ For a brief historiography of these English ambassadors and their connections to art collecting, see Maria Keblusek, “The Embassy of Art: Diplomats as Cultural Brokers,” in *Double Agents*, ed. Maria Keblusek and Badeloch Vera Noldus (Boston: Brill, 2011); Robert Hill, “Art and Patronage: Sir Henry Wotton and the Venetian Embassy, 1604-1624,” in *Double Agents*, ed. Maria Keblusek and Badeloch Vera Noldus (Boston: Brill, 2011); Robert Hill, “Ambassadors and Art Collecting in Early Stuart Britain: The Parallel Careers of William Trumbull and Sir Dudley Carleton, 1609-1625,” *Journal of the History of Collections* 15, no. 2 (2003): 211-28.

¹⁸¹ Keblusek, “The Embassy of Art,” in *Double Agents*, 16.

¹⁸² Peck, *Consuming Splendor*, 174.

¹⁸³ Hill, “Art and Patronage,” in *Double Agents*, 28.

assemblage of the early, sizeable art collections of both Robert Cecil and Prince Henry. The paintings he sent to Salisbury in the early years of the seventeenth century were some of the first pieces of Venetian art to reach England.¹⁸⁴ One of Wotton's most discussed pieces was a portrait of Salisbury that the ambassador had copied in the form of a mosaic in 1608. In the early spring of that year, the earl had sent Wotton a portrait of himself, and in an answering letter, Wotton responded, writing, "I must give your Lordship humble thanks, apart from the rest of my great obligations, for your picture wherewith it had pleased you to honor me, which I now expect here within a few days, having been long since shipped from thence."¹⁸⁵ Once it arrived, Wotton promised he "shall be bold to put it in another material."¹⁸⁶ He also asked:

Your Lordship (if it might so please him) to send me your coat armor in the true colors, with the mantling and the crest; for I have thought that being done here in mosaic, it may afterwards be very fitly placed in front of your buildings over the portal, wherein shall be observed here such breadth and height as you will direct.¹⁸⁷

At the time, the earl was building his new residence, Hatfield House, with the home's impressive fireplace being the "portal" Wotton referred to. The mosaic piece Wotton had made for his patron was built into the wall of Hatfield House, and hangs over the fireplace in the library to this day.¹⁸⁸ The place of honor Wotton's gift held—and still holds—was a testament to the value Salisbury placed upon the painting. When the mosaic was completed in 1609, Wotton wrote the earl that it was "the best present [he] could ever conceive for his Lord, in humble acknowledgement of [his] great obligations towards your own noble person and memory."¹⁸⁹

¹⁸⁴ Ibid.

¹⁸⁵ *The Life and Letters of Sir Henry Wotton I* (Henry Wotton to the Earl of Salisbury, April 4, 1608), 419.

¹⁸⁶ Ibid. The material he refers to is the mosaic.

¹⁸⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸⁸ Ibid., 419n.

¹⁸⁹ *The Life and Letters of Sir Henry Wotton I* (Henry Wotton to the Earl of Salisbury, April 24, 1609), 452.

The earl's thanks at receiving the piece would have been a great source of satisfaction for Wotton who had worked at length to cultivate a close relationship with Salisbury.

Several of the art pieces Wotton sent Salisbury in 1608 also appeared to have made it into the private collection of Prince Henry. While viewing Salisbury's Venetian collection in his new home, the prince expressed his admiration. In response, the earl felt obliged to present him with one or two of the paintings.¹⁹⁰ Wotton, hearing of this, began to send his prince pieces of Venetian art as well, creating a new, and increasingly advantageous patronage connection—though this connection was eventually severed by the prince's death. Clearly, Wotton was adept at utilizing his location in Italy and knowledge of Italian art to foster relationships with influential political men back in London. In fact, it was Wotton's timely gift of paintings to the new duke of Buckingham in 1624 that helped restore his fortunes after the disgrace of being removed from office.¹⁹¹ Though Wotton was the first ambassador to understand the role that the presentation of art could play in promoting his career, it was an example that his contemporaries Carleton and Roe would also follow.

During his own tenure as ambassador to the Venetian Republic, Sir Dudley Carleton spent an inordinate amount of time collecting important works of art and fine antiquities to curry favor and solidify his patronage networks. Like Wotton, Carleton's patronage networks were often in flux as patrons died or fell from favor themselves. While in Venice, Carleton began sending paintings and a large collection of antique marbles to Robert Carr, the earl of Somerset, the king's young favorite. Yet, Carr's involvement in the Overbury scandal and his imprisonment in the Tower of London ended Carleton's hopes for a new and popular patron.¹⁹²

¹⁹⁰ Hill, "Art and Patronage," in *Double Agents*, 34-5.

¹⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 54.

¹⁹² Robert Hill, "Ambassadors and Art Collecting in Early Stuart England: The Parallel Careers of William Trumbull and Sir Dudley Carleton," *Journal of the History of Collections* 15, no. 2 (2003): 221.

In fact, when Carr fell from prominence in 1615, Carleton quickly claimed that his relationship with the earl was nothing more than professional, and he now required payment for the pictures and sculptures he had procured.¹⁹³ Carleton also spent time currying favor with Ralph Winwood, the secretary of state, though Winwood was not an avid collector and Carleton had to navigate his favor with the secretary through regular epistolary correspondence. Carleton did send several antiquities to Anne of Denmark, James' queen, in an effort to gain the king's favor. In 1617, Edward Sherburn wrote that, "Mr. Woodward has presented to the Queen the clock sent to her by Carleton" in front of the king, the queen, and all of her ladies.¹⁹⁴ Thus, Carleton attempted to extend his network to the queen through the presentation of antiquities.

Carleton also contributed to the art collections of the duke of Buckingham and the earl of Arundel during his time at The Hague. Carleton's appointment as vice-chamberlain of the household for Buckingham in 1625 was a direct result of his gift of a marble gateway that was to be incorporated into the façade of the duke's new residence, York House.¹⁹⁵ In a 1624 letter, Carleton expressed that "he would be glad to present his Grace with his marble gate and chimney piece, if he admires the design, and the opportunity is fitting."¹⁹⁶ Over the years, Carleton had sent Buckingham gifts of paintings and marbles, which had the effect of keeping him in the forefront of the duke's mind. Carleton's cultivation of this patronage network paid off and Buckingham's support elevated him first to Vice-Chancellor and eventually to secretary of state.¹⁹⁷

¹⁹³ Peck, *Consuming Splendor*, 175.

¹⁹⁴ *Calendar of State Papers, Domestic Series, of the Reign of James I. 1611-1618* (London, 1858), vol. 9 (Edward Sherburn to Sir Dudley Carleton, July 24, 1617), 477.

¹⁹⁵ Hill, "Ambassadors and Art Collecting in Early Stuart England: The Parallel Careers of William Trumbull and Sir Dudley Carleton," *Journal of the History of Collections* 15, no. 2 (2003): 222.

¹⁹⁶ *CSPD*, vol. 11 (Dudley Carleton to ?, October 24, 1624), 360-1.

¹⁹⁷ Hill, "Ambassadors and Art Collecting," *JHC* (2003): 222.

Sir Thomas Roe also followed in the footsteps of his fellow ambassadors, particularly in cultivating a patronage relationship with the duke of Buckingham. In January 1627, while serving as ambassador to Constantinople, Roe sent one of his servants to Greece and the Greek islands to locate works of art and marble statues for the duke. Roe's agent was successful and "bought many pieces that...he left with the Greeks until his return to make a full collection."¹⁹⁸ During his embassy to India the decade before, Roe also collected several exotic presents that he presented to James upon his return. Some of these gifts included "two antelopes, a strange and beautiful kind of red deer, a rich tent, rare carpets, certain umbrellas and such like trinkets from the Great Mogul."¹⁹⁹ Though Roe's gifts were certainly the most exotic of the ambassadors studied here, his dual role as a political and cultural broker, as we have seen, was not unique. The involvement of Roe, along with Wotton and Carleton, in "cultural diplomacy" demonstrates the complex set of responsibilities and activities an ambassador was supposed to perform, and needed to perform, to curry favor with their superiors. While regular correspondence was a necessary function of the job, as well as a key component of patronage, gift-giving could effectively further one's patronage efforts. As the offering and acceptance of gifts had long been a part of the early modern patronage system, Jacobean diplomats were required to wear multiple hats. The brokerage of art and foreign goods was a way an ambassador could keep himself in the forefront of their patron's mind and ensure a reciprocal sense of indebtedness. Yet, while the presentation of gifts might increase the chance for promotion, it was not an automatic guarantor of advancement. For this reason, men like Wotton, Carleton and Roe worked tirelessly to establish as many networks of correspondence as they could possibly maintain. For the best

¹⁹⁸ *CSPD*, vol. 12 (Sir Thomas Roe to Buckingham, January 15, 1627), 329.

¹⁹⁹ *The Letters of John Chamberlain* II (Chamberlain to Carleton, October 2, 1619), 164.

chance at advancing one's career, an ambassador needed to understand and utilize several types of information and patronage networks.

CONCLUSION

All three of the Jacobean ambassadors examined here encountered similar difficulties and followed similar paths to counteract those difficulties during their time abroad. While no two men's networks were the same, the ways in which each man reached outward and upward in search of information, patronage, and connection showed similarities. Wotton, Carleton and Roe all communicated with men in similar postings. Through these lateral correspondence networks, each emissary was able to establish social ties that gave them access to a wide variety of information they could then pass on to their patrons in the hopes of currying favor. Sociable connections, for example such as Carleton's correspondence with men like John Chamberlain, were key. The information Chamberlain so frequently gave his protégé was invaluable in aiding Carleton in his own development of patronage relationships and in furthering his political career. Wotton's sociable connections were not as strong, nor was he as successful as Carleton, possibly as a consequence. In order to successfully navigate politics back home, one needed not only strong patronage relationships, but strong sociable relationships as well. Within the "republic of letters," the more information one had access to, the more indispensable one was to his patrons. Carleton's ultimate political success was evidence of the need for a multifaceted correspondence network.

With the politics of favor and influence at home so critical to understanding and successfully navigating one's role as an ambassador, patronage connections became an integral component of the diplomatic process. Wotton, Carleton and Roe all worked to foster

relationships within and beyond their own social ranking, relationships they believed could further their own political ambitions. Lateral correspondence connections were critical to developing a successful diplomatic information network; and the information gathered from friends and equals was then communicated upward through the network's patronage channels. When the brokerage of intelligence was not enough, however, ambassadors attempted to supplement their indispensability through cultural endeavors. The Jacobean ambassador worked to acquire a complex and heterogeneous set of skills and activities to keep themselves in the mind and favor of those in power. It was these relationships, and the circulation of news, art, and goods within them, that was of critical importance to diplomats abroad—it was how they navigated the distance from court that was inherent in an ambassadorial posting.

Without the proper understanding, development, and use of their networks, ambassadors like Wotton, Carleton and Roe could not hope to succeed in the Jacobean court, nor successfully navigate the intricacies of political favor. As the complex networks of Wotton, Carleton and Roe demonstrated, favor could be negotiated and obtained through many different channels, but each of which required consistent care and cultivation. In this way, the multiple epistolary and brokerage channels contained within a singular diplomatic network highlighted the dense, elaborate nature of Jacobean favor.

Chapter Three: Close Prisoners? Representations of Access and Liberty in the Tower of London, 1590-1620

On February 25, 1601, Robert Devereux, the second earl of Essex, was executed at age thirty-five in the Tower of London.²⁰⁰ The death of Essex, who was one of Queen Elizabeth I's long-time favorites, marked the end of his tumultuous political career, which was characterized by intense highs and dismal lows in his never-ending quest to remain in favor. People followed his fall from political power with avid interest. Sir John Chamberlain's letters to Sir Dudley Carleton, for example, detailed the highs and lows of Essex's career over the course of years.

Chamberlain's account of Essex's fall paid especial attention to words and concepts like favor and disfavor, access and liberty. In August of 1598, for example, two and a half years before Essex's stay and execution in the Tower, Chamberlain wrote Carleton that Essex had attended the funeral of the Lord Treasurer, William Cecil, Lord Burghley, despite the fact that Essex was out of favor and not welcome. The number of aristocratic mourners topped five hundred, including Essex who, as Chamberlain noted, "For his own disfavours carried the heaviest countenance of the company."²⁰¹ According to Chamberlain, after the service he retired to Wansted, "where they say he means to settle, seeing he cannot be received in court, though he had relented much and sought by divers means to recover his hold, but the Queen says he had played long upon her, and she means to play a while upon him."²⁰² Yet just two months later, in

²⁰⁰ N. E. McLure, ed. *The Letters of John Chamberlain*, 2 vols. (Philadelphia: American Philosophical Society, 1939) I, Sir John Chamberlain to Sir Dudley Carleton, February 24, 1601, 120.

²⁰¹ *The Letters of John Chamberlain* I (Chamberlain to Sir Dudley Carleton, August 30, 1598), 41.

²⁰² *Ibid.*

October of 1598, the earl of Essex “is in court in good terms as he ever was.”²⁰³ However, by late 1599 he was in trouble again. He was committed to the custody of the Lord Keeper of the Tower of London, and yet, while under restraint, Chamberlain recounted that he was allowed liberty of his lodgings in the Devlin Tower, which was renamed the Devereux Tower in his memory in 1601. Essex’s tower consisted of two stories with a kitchen and vaulted roof, with passageways leading to nearby buildings, including Flint Tower, which had access to the Chapel of St. Peter. Essex had the freedom to roam all.²⁰⁴ Further, he had still retained enough favor to gain an audience with the queen where “he behaved himself so wisely and so humbly confessing his errors with tears, and saying the tears of his heart had quenched all sparkles of pride within him, that it...no doubt would procure her Majesties further favor towards him.”²⁰⁵ His plea had been successful, and in May 1600 he was allowed to return to his own house under minimal restraint.²⁰⁶ In only a year, however, Essex’s remaining favor with Elizabeth had vanished and he was arraigned at Westminster on charges of treason.²⁰⁷ Chamberlain’s account of the trial noted that Essex “prostrate[d] himself at her Majesties feet, and there manifest such matters against his enemies as should make them odious and remove them from about her person, and recall him to her former favor.”²⁰⁸ Despite his desperate plea, the queen found him guilty of treason and sentenced him to die by decapitation on Tower Green. Thus, Robert Devereux, favorite of the Elizabethan court, had finally failed to claw his way back up the political ladder of favor.

Chamberlain’s account of Essex and his time in the Tower demonstrated that as he understood it, royal favor could be unpredictable and liberty could exist even in a space intended

²⁰³ *The Letters of John Chamberlain I* (Chamberlain to Carleton, October 3, 1598), 46.

²⁰⁴ George Younghusband, ed. *The Tower of London* (London: Herbert Jenkins, 1924), 43-44; *Letters of Chamberlain I* (Chamberlain to Carleton, Feb. 22, 1600), 86.

²⁰⁵ *The Letters of John Chamberlain I* (Chamberlain to Carleton, June 13, 1600), 97.

²⁰⁶ *The Letters of John Chamberlain I* (Chamberlain to Carleton, Feb. 22, 1600), 86n.

²⁰⁷ *The Letters of John Chamberlain I* (Chamberlain to Carleton, Feb. 24, 1601), 119.

²⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 120.

for its limitation. Often in his letters to Carleton, Chamberlain's perceptions of access, favor and liberty took center stage. An awareness of access, imprisonment and favor were critical to understanding the continuous interworking of court politics and power, and those looking to plant themselves within the monarch's favor had to understand its intricacies to be able to take advantage of them. Chamberlain and Carleton understood this basic truth, and, as a result, Chamberlain's accounts of court scandals and noble imprisonments were not just entertaining stories, but important political information. This chapter examines the court scandals which Chamberlain reported to Carleton. Three scandals are discussed; these include the events surrounding the imprisonment of Sir Thomas Lake and his family, the imprisonment of Lady Arabella Stuart, and the arrest and imprisonment of Robert Carr and Frances Howard, the earl and countess of Somerset. All three took place in the early years of the seventeenth century, and all involve noble men and women imprisoned in the Tower of London. Though the circumstances of each case were different, the language Chamberlain used to recount the cases to Carleton was the same. In his telling of each scandal, Chamberlain highlighted the concepts of access, favor and liberty because they communicated a political message. Each represented a lesson about James and about his favor. These three scandals form a case study of one type of political knowledge that would have been of interest to men looking to advance their own political careers. Chamberlain's conceptions and representations of access and favor, then, became a lens into Jacobean court politics, and more importantly, a way for ambitious men of the time to make sense of court politics.

Understanding how contemporary observers constructed the political significance of court affairs—like Essex's fall and imprisonment—allows historians to understand a scandal's political meaning or to evaluate a court's politics. Chamberlain's letters provide a window into

this larger contemporary audience. His accounts of court scandals and imprisonments revealed his overarching concern with concepts like access to the monarch, as well as the never-ending quest for royal favor in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. As the example of the earl of Essex demonstrated, the ability to remain in favor allowed nobles to exercise a certain amount of power within the court and within early modern politics. Further, personal contact with the monarch was crucial to advancing individual policies and to airing individual grievances. Access to the king or queen for a courtier ultimately became paramount to demonstrating political power, influencing public policy, and securing one's social prominence.²⁰⁹ Conversely, the loss of favor meant the loss of access and the loss of political authority. Essex's failure to regain Elizabeth's favor in 1601 spelled the end to his access at court, his political career and eventually his life. With royal favor came power, and consequently, those connected to the politics of court were particularly attuned to the matter of access.

Many early modern historians—Brian Weiser, David Starkey, Pam Wright, Neil Cuddy, Kevin Sharpe, and Judith Richards to name a few—have written extensively about access and favor in the Tudor and early Stuart courts.²¹⁰ Within this historiography most have viewed access in what has been called a “binary manner.”²¹¹ To explain the relationship between politics and the organization of the court, they argue for a kind of duality, meaning contemporaries viewed kings and queens as being easy or difficult to gain access to. Or, as David Starkey argued, rulers

²⁰⁹ Brian Weiser, *Charles II and the Politics of Access* (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2003), 7.

²¹⁰ Weiser, *Charles II and the Politics of Access*; David Starkey, “Introduction” and “Intimacy and Innovation: The Rise of the Privy Chamber, 1485-1547;” Pam Wright, “A Change in Direction: The Ramifications of a Female Household, 1558-1603;” Neil Cuddy, “The Revival of the Entourage: the Bedchamber of James I, 1603-1625;” and Kevin Sharpe, “The Image of Virtue: The Court and Household of Charles I, 1625-1642,” in *The English Court: From the Wars of the Roses to the Civil War*, ed. David Starkey (London: Longman Group, 1987); Judith Richards, “His Nowe Majesty and the English Monarchy: The Kingship of Charles I before 1640,” *Past and Present*, 113 (November, 1986): 70-96.

²¹¹ Weiser, 13.

either practiced the politics of participation or distance.²¹² Monarchical personalities of one type or the other employed the symbolism of the monarchy differently. Distant monarchs set strict rules concerning private access, while participatory monarchs filled their private chambers with men or women they considered favorites.²¹³ Though only Brian Weiser has suggested that the ability to come into contact with a king, in his case Charles II, was a more complicated phenomenon, he too utilized this binary model for access.²¹⁴

Chamberlain's understanding of access, however, was less concerned with the binary of in and out. Instead, his representations of access and favor focused on how they were changed and negotiated according to individuals. In James' court, the question was not whether the king was easy or difficult to gain access to, but how that access was obtained and maintained over time. For Chamberlain, there were gradations of access to be perceived and understood—gradations that complicate the traditional access binary. Within the Tower of London especially, access *to* prisoners—and more importantly, the access *of* prisoners, i.e. the liberties enjoyed by prisoners—functioned in more complicated ways than the overly simple binary model of “permitted” or “restricted.” Each noble's imprisonment in the Tower provided a lesson to Chamberlain and Carleton about the best way to attain not only access to James, but also his favor.

Each scandal discussed in this chapter involved the Tower of London, and spectators like Chamberlain often used the Tower as a framework for their stories. The Tower of London, as the premier prison for nobles and high profile prisoners in the early modern period, was of particular interest to men like Chamberlain and Carleton. These men used imprisonment in the Tower as a way to understand the complicated concept of access, specifically how it might subsist even in a

²¹² Starkey, “Introduction,” in *The English Court*, 7-9.

²¹³ Starkey, 8-9; Weiser, 8.

²¹⁴ Weiser, 13-14.

place reserved for its curtailment. The questions of access and favor so intrigued those involved in court life because physical proximity to the king or queen often meant the apex of political power. Thus, the political policies influenced by current court favorites were newsworthy. Knowledge about a monarch's favor or favorites was critical to those looking to plant themselves solidly within the court's ever-changing political structure. Foreign ambassadors looking to maintain their positions and curry the king's continued favor, for example, and those nobles on the peripheries of court life looking to utilize knowledge about court politics for their own personal advantage, could all benefit from the type of content communicated through correspondence abroad. The news and court gossip they exchanged were not simply amusing goings on, but tools to aid the recipient's ability to navigate court. For Chamberlain and Carleton specifically, knowledge of favor, liberty, and imprisonment were central to understanding court politics, and as such, featured prominently in their correspondence.

Chamberlain's narratives frequently described a prisoner's experiences in the Tower of London using the terms "access" and "liberty." What did these concepts mean in this context? It is true that an individual's imprisonment in the Tower severely reduced—often completely eliminated that individual's physical access of a prisoner to the monarch. Yet imprisonment—though it often denoted the restriction of access to court—did not necessarily mean a prisoner lost access to all spaces, particularly spaces within the Tower itself. Liberty of the Tower was available to a select few. Access to court and one's liberty within the Tower were not necessarily interchangeable concepts. However, like physical access to the king or queen at court, a noble's ability to be granted "liberty of the Tower" was grounded in his or her ability to retain some level of favor with their monarch. Within the late Tudor and early Stuart court, the point of access was to establish a boundary, drawing a clear line between those in favor who could cross it and those

who could not.²¹⁵ This boundary was clearly marked within the physical spaces of court, meaning access to the monarch's Privy Chamber and beyond, but it also manifested in certain spaces outside of court. An individual's liberty in the Tower—permission given by the monarch to cross the traditional boundaries set for prisoners—was a type of access because it was still a public signifier of monarchical favor. Simplified, the history of the English court is the history of access, but perhaps more importantly what access connoted, i.e. favor. Royal favor allowed nobles to freely traverse the spatial limitations set for almost all others, both within the spaces of court, but also within the spaces of the Tower. Consequently, the concepts of access and liberty were inescapably linked.

By the time of the earl of Essex's imprisonment in 1601, the Tower of London had long been a formidable English institution. Built by William the Conqueror in the eleventh century, the Tower became the first royal prison in England, and remained the leading space for the incarceration of nobles and high profile prisoners throughout the early modern period.²¹⁶ Built to hold the monarch's enemies, the Tower in the time of the later Tudors and the early Stuarts was well-established and made up of a multitude of rooms and cells in which to keep people deemed enemies of the state. Each noble imprisoned within the Tower underwent—more or less—the same process upon his or her arrival. While imprisonment in the Tower limited all rights, those who were able to afford it—or those who remained somewhat within the monarch's favor—retained or could purchase some privileges. Each high-ranking prisoner paid heavy fees, as well as provided the money to pay for their food and furnishings.²¹⁷ For instance, during his imprisonment in 1592, Sir Walter Raleigh paid around £200 a year for food; and all

²¹⁵ Starkey, "Introduction," *The English Court*, 4.

²¹⁶ Norval Morris and David Rothman, eds. *The Oxford History of the Prison: The Practice of Punishment in Western Society* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), 33.

²¹⁷ William H. Dixon, ed. *Her Majesty's Tower*, 2 vols. (London: Cassell, 1901) I, 47-8.

furnishings—in his case chairs, tables, books, plates, and silverware—were all paid for by himself, at his own cost. Porters and servants were also made available to him, but those too were men and women who lived on salaries paid by Raleigh’s own estate.²¹⁸

Accounts of prisoner movements between towers are often difficult to pin down, though this was not the chief concern for most court observers like Chamberlain. Chamberlain rarely recorded where each noble was specifically imprisoned within the Tower, possibly due to limited knowledge of its physical layout, or limited interest in these specifics. More than particular physical locations, however, was the prisoners’ abilities to move freely within the Tower with “liberty.” The limits or freedoms of prisoners like Essex and Raleigh was what concerned men like Chamberlain because they directly reflected each prisoner’s remaining political status. Chamberlain’s accounts of each noble’s movements within the Tower communicated the message that in many ways the individual imprisoned still retained some favor with the king or queen. This, rather than an individual’s location in the Tower, was more prominent—and much more vital—to those communicating information outside of London. For Chamberlain, the fact that a noble still retained the king’s favor despite his or her imprisonment meant that his or her story contained important political information. For men like Carleton, following the information contained in Chamberlain’s telling of these stories, or scandals, provided a way to understand the intricacies of favor at the Jacobean court.

THE LAKE AFFAIR

The late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries saw several high profile court scandals and imprisonments that provided similar political lessons, including the Lake affair. As such, this period provides historians with ample opportunities to explore how Chamberlain understood and

²¹⁸ Ibid., 48-9.

reported the complicated relationship between the loss of favor and the curtailment of access. The case of the 1619 imprisonment of Sir Thomas Lake, his wife Lady Mary Lake, and their daughter Lady Anne Ros, wife of William Cecil, Lord Ros, for their slander of another influential noblewoman illustrated a straightforward relationship between access, favor and cooperation with the crown. Along with Chamberlain, a variety of high-profile members of court reported the Lake case in correspondence. For Chamberlain, and for Carleton, however, the Lake affair offered perhaps the most simple of political messages: one's cooperation with the crown was often an efficient way to retain and maintain favor.

Sir Thomas Lake had long been a prominent member of court before his imprisonment. He was a member of Parliament, as well as a member of James I's Privy Council. In 1616, after being passed over several times, Lake was finally appointed secretary of state.²¹⁹ However, only a year after Lake's appointment, he fell from favor. Chamberlain stated that, "Sir Thomas Lake and his [have] fallen into a labyrinth, whence they know not how to get out of."²²⁰ Chamberlain was referring to the imprisonment of Lake and his family by James I following a scandal concerning Lady Lake and Lady Ros' accusations against the young countess of Exeter. In late 1617, Lady Ros and her mother publicly charged the countess of Exeter with carrying on an incestuous relationship with her step-grandson, Lord Ros, and with the attempted poisoning of Lady Anne Ros.²²¹ The rumor and scandal circulating around the Lakes and Exeters was "so foul that an open law proceeding [was] needed," with the earl of Exeter "demanding justice against

²¹⁹ Roger Lockyer, "Lake, Sir Thomas," in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), online edition, 2008.

²²⁰ *The Letters of John Chamberlain II* (Chamberlain to Carleton, Feb. 28, 1618), 145.

²²¹ *The Letters of John Chamberlain II*, 92-3, 145-55, 220-222; Alastair Bellany, "Cecil, Anne (Lady Ros)," in *ODNB*.

such foul accusations.”²²² Finally, in 1618, The Exeter family appealed to James and brought the Lakes in front of the Star Chamber. From there, the investigation dragged on for another year.

Letters recounting the trial placed the blame firmly on the Lakes. One observer noted that, during the court proceedings, the “Countess of Exeter [was] scarcely questioned, all believing her clear...and the King pronounce[d] the letter, said to be from the Countess, begging pardon for the design (the poison plot), a counterfeit.”²²³ According to another writer, in a speech to the Star Chamber, James “spoke long and well, comparing Lake to Adam, Lady Lake to Eve, and Lady Ros to the serpent.”²²⁴ Chamberlain reported that Lady Ros was committed to the Tower first for “refusing to answer certain questions at the council table...[and] she is described and pointed out to be a very pert Lady, and is said to domineer as much over her mother, as her mother doth over some others.”²²⁵ Further, one correspondent of Carleton’s wrote that, “Lord Ros, in Rome, laughs at his wife’s quarrels,” refusing to come to her aid, or even return to London, despite the fact that “Lady Anne Ros...begged Ros to fetch her away.”²²⁶ In a letter to King James, Lord Ros stipulated that he would “not allow Lady Ros’ title to save her from any severity, she being a base creature, a dishonor to her grandfather’s house, and not worthy to wipe the shoes of the Countess of Exeter, whom she has wronged.” Thus, her non-cooperation with the court and the crown, as well as widespread aversion to her perceived troublesome temperament, earned her a place in the Tower, and limited liberty within it.

In the end, the crown charged the Lakes with slandering the countess and the Exeters, and of forging evidence to corroborate their charges. James found that “in this foul practice, Lady

²²² *Calendar of State Papers, Domestic Series, of the Reign of James I. 1611-1618* (London: H. M. Stationery Office, 1858), vol. 9 (Sir Gerard Herbert to Sir Dudley Carleton, February 23, 1618), 523; *Letters of Chamberlain II* (Chamberlain to Carleton, Feb. 28, 1618), 145.

²²³ *CSPD*, vol. 9 (Geo. Gerard to Carleton, March 6, 1618), 525.

²²⁴ *CSPD*, vol. 10 (Sir Thomas Wynn to Carleton, Feb, 13, 1619), 14.

²²⁵ *The Letters of John Chamberlain II* (Chamberlain to Carleton, Feb. 28, 1618), 145.

²²⁶ *CSPD*, vol. 9 (William, Lord Ros, to King James I, June 1, 1618), 543.

Lake was the author, Lady Ros the actor, and Sir Thomas Lake the tool.”²²⁷ Many witnessed Secretary Lake “on his knees before the King plead[ing] for the honor of his house, [but] his Majesty was displeased with him a little while ago, for sending a petition...in favor of a recusant.”²²⁸ Sir Thomas Lake had power within the court, but—in James’ eyes—had wasted his favor trying to save the unnamed Catholic. Thus, he did not have enough favor left to rescue himself or his family from his family’s behavior, or from a king’s contingent disgruntlement. James handed down the verdict against the Lakes on February 13, 1619, fining Sir Thomas Lake and his wife £5,000 each and Lady Ros 10,000 marks, with “imprisonment in the Tower for life.”²²⁹ This life sentence, however, was complex. Sir Thomas Lake, though clearly implicated in the scandal and imprisoned along with his wife and daughter, still retained a relative amount of favor thanks to his high position at court and close personal relationship to James. In fact, he had “more libertie in the Towre than he had by the mediation of his brother, the bishop of Bath and Wells, who takes his misfortune to heart.”²³⁰

Lake’s defense of the Catholic had incurred the king’s displeasure before his family’s scandal was dragged into the public eye, yet he still remained a powerful member of court. Moreover, though his physical access to the court and the king was ultimately curtailed by his imprisonment, he still retained financial liberty. James allowed Lake continued control over his and his family’s estates even after his sentence sent him to the Tower, presumably for life. With these continued liberties, he was protected from further slander and litigation brought upon him and his family by Lord Ros, his daughter’s estranged husband, who she had married only two

²²⁷ *CSPD*, vol. 10 (Chamberlain to Carleton, Feb. 13, 1619), 13.

²²⁸ *CSPD*, vol. 9 (Sir Edward Harwood to Carleton, Feb. 23, 1618), 523.

²²⁹ *CSPD*, vol. 10 (Sir William Smith to Carleton, Feb. 13, 1619), 13; Bellany, “Cecil, Anne (Lady Ros)” in *ODNB*; Alastair Bellany, *The Politics of Court Scandal in Early Modern England: News, Culture and the Overbury Affair, 1603-1660* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 252-4.

²³⁰ *The Letters of John Chamberlain II* (Chamberlain to Carleton, April 24, 1619), 233.

years previously in 1616.²³¹ Two months after Lord Ros' marriage, he was selected as an ambassador to Spain, and in the weeks before he left, Sir Thomas and Lady Lake pressured Ros into signing over his estates. He agreed to this financial arrangement through both political pressure from Lake and personal threats by his wife and mother-in-law—both Lady Ros and Lady Lake threatening to reveal Ros as sexually impotent, a charge that could have led to a humiliating nullification of the marriage.²³² In August of 1617, amidst threats of disgrace and rumors of unpaid debts, Lord Ros secretly fled the country. In a 1618 letter to King James, Lord Ros protested James' decision to allow Sir Thomas Lake to have continued control over the Ros' estates. He accused Lake of using “diabolical devices to ruin his credit, and force him to pawn his land to him [Lake].”²³³ Ros begged James to “pardon his leaving England unlicensed, and going to Rome, he being driven there by despair; and will permit him to remain abroad to digest his injuries, and allow his estates to be managed by his grandfather [the earl of Exeter] in his absence, not by Sir Thomas Lake.”²³⁴ Ros demanded a trial in the Star Chamber to remedy his problem with Lake, but “Lady Lake threatened any lawyer who appeared for him [Ros] with her husband's great influence with the King.”²³⁵ Lord Ros' litigation against Sir Thomas Lake was summarily squashed due in part to Lake's continued financial liberty, as well as his continued influence with the king, despite the fact that he was still imprisoned. Clearly, there were multiple levels of liberty and favor at play. Though there may have been a straightforward relationship between the curtailment of physical access and imprisonment, for Lake, incarceration did not necessarily require a curtailment of all liberties.

²³¹ Alastair Bellany, “Cecil, William, sixteenth Baron Ros,” in *ODNB*.

²³² *Ibid.*

²³³ *CSPD*, vol. 9 (William, Lord Ros, to King James I, June 1, 1618), 543.

²³⁴ *Ibid.*

²³⁵ *Ibid.*

Lake, though he had complete liberty of the Tower, was “restrained from the company of his wife and daughter,” while his “secretary and his solicitor [were] allowed access to him.”²³⁶ At the same time, both Lady Lake and Lady Ros were committed as close prisoners, forbidden access to each other and to other parts of the Tower—the consequences of their refusal “to answer to interrogations of the crown.”²³⁷ Additionally, Lady Lake was placed even further away from her husband “to a worse lodging for some cross behavior of her own.”²³⁸ Though all three Lakes were imprisoned for the same crime, the levels of their involvement in the scandal, perceived culpability, and amount of favor they had with the king varied. As a result, their levels of liberty within the Tower operated on different points of the access continuum. It was only when Lady Lake and Lady Ros decided to cooperate with the crown that they were allowed more physical liberty. By the summer of 1619, both Lady Lake and Lady Ros had made motions to formally cooperate with the crown. In June 1619, “the King allowed Lady Ros and Lady Lake to sign a submission and recognition [of the falsity of their accusations] to the Countess of Exeter.” As a result, “Sir Thomas Lake and his Lady still lie close in the Tower, but now together...and the Lady Ros too hath some more freedom, yet grows impatient of restraint.”²³⁹ According to Chamberlain, without respect to her mother or father, Anne decided to go to the king and “tell all she knows, and so to purchase her liberty the sooner.”²⁴⁰ In May she met with James and “laid open the whole platform of their villainy,” placing the blame for the slander on her mother and father, and “since this confession [Sir Thomas Lake] is restrained more than he was, and his brother the bishop forbidden to come to him,” and the “Lady Lake confined more closely than

²³⁶ *The Letters of John Chamberlain II* (Chamberlain to Carleton, Feb. 20, 1619), 216; Maurice Lee, ed. *Dudley Carleton to John Chamberlain, 1603-1624* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1970), 134.

²³⁷ *CSPD*, vol. 10 (Sir Edward Harwood to Carleton, March 6, 1619), 20-21.

²³⁸ *The Letters of John Chamberlain II* (Chamberlain to Carleton, April 24, 1619), 233.

²³⁹ *The Letters of John Chamberlain II* (Chamberlain to Carleton, March 19, 1619), 221.

²⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 221-3; *Dudley Carleton to John Chamberlain*, 222-4.

ever.”²⁴¹ After confessing her crime, Anne was given liberty of the Tower and released the following month in late June 1619. Lady Lake, thanks to her daughter’s accusations against her, was not released until the following year after submitting her formal confession to the Star Chamber. Thomas Lake, on the other hand, was released in July 1619 for unspecified health reasons.²⁴² Though he continued to profess his innocence, in order to avoid returning to the Tower he submitted his formal confession to James and the Star Chamber, in which he admitted that “the judgment there given upon him to be most just for his gross credulity, indulgence and ignorance.”²⁴³

For many writers, the popular narrative of the Lake scandal highlighted serious gendered fears that underscored early modern political and social life. Lady Anne Ros and her mother’s attempts to implicate the Countess of Exeter in a poison plot (and its disastrous results) illuminated deep-seated issues concerning women’s potential to undermine the established patriarchal system. Poisoning in the early modern period was popularly represented as an innately craven form of murder, often associated with women’s attempts to murder men.²⁴⁴ Poisoning, then, was often connected to perceived threats to the hierarchical and patriarchal order by the subservient gender of society. Accordingly, if let unchecked, poisoning, and with it women, could destabilize the harmonious order of society.²⁴⁵ Lady Anne Ros invoked and manipulated these popularly accepted stereotypes to make her case against the countess of Exeter

²⁴¹ *The Letters of John Chamberlain II* (Chamberlain to Carleton, May 8, 1619), 235; *CSPD*, vol. 10 (Thomas Locke to Carleton, June 19, 1619), 4.

²⁴² *CSPD*, vol. 10 (Chamberlain to Carleton, July 31, 1619), 68.

²⁴³ *The Letters of John Chamberlain II* (Chamberlain to Carleton, Jan, 22, 1620), 284; Roger Lockyer, “Lake, Sir Thomas” in *ODNB*.

²⁴⁴ Bellany, *The Politics of Court Scandal*, 144.

²⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 146; David Lindley, *The Trials of Frances Howard: Fact and Fiction at the Court of King James* (London: Routledge, 1993), 178; Laura Gowing, *Domestic Dangers: Women, Words and Sex in Early Modern London* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996); Cynthia Herrup, *A House in Gross Disorder: Sex, Law and the 2nd Earl of Castlehaven* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999); Susan Dwyer Amussen, *An Ordered Society: Gender and Class in Early Modern England* (London: Blackwell Press, 1988).

as persuasive as possible. However, as we have seen, this tactic backfired, and it was Lady Ros and not the countess who was publically labeled as a devious wife—as a woman who embodied all the fears the early modern public associated with the female gender. Though the countess of Exeter was the one publically accused of having an incestuous affair, it was the Lady Anne Ros who was regarded and ridiculed as a shrew. Though her husband was openly unfaithful, accounts of the case placed blame on Anne, with the countess and Lord Ros garnering only sympathy within the surviving narrative. As this narrative illustrated, Lady Ros was the serpent in the Garden of Eden and her mother Eve. Thus, gender was central not only to maintenance of order in the court, but also to the widespread understanding of this particular case.

For Chamberlain, however, the Lake case granted insight into the complicated nature of liberty, favor and imprisonment. While each prisoner was convicted and sentenced to the Tower, the curtailment of their access while incarcerated was not absolute. Each Lake enjoyed a relative amount of liberty within the Tower depending on their cooperation with the crown. In this case, an individual had the power to purchase his liberty—and even his freedom—simply by agreeing to admit guilt. A subsequent refusal to cooperate with the king was punished with restriction of access and liberty. To Chamberlain, the main message of the Lake affair was that one's cooperation with the monarch, rather than guilt or innocence, was what determined one's access and liberty. However, though the relationship between cooperation and physical access was relatively straightforward, liberty itself was far more complex. As Sir Thomas Lake himself demonstrated, and Chamberlain highlighted, liberty represented a much more convoluted concept than a simplistic binary of access or no access. Though one's physical access could be curtailed, those like Sir Thomas Lake who retained some semblance of royal favor could still wield power over men like Lord Ros through continued financial liberties.

If we look at Chamberlain's construction of the Lake scandal alone, his account obscured some concepts, while highlighting others. Chamberlain communicated a rather straightforward account of the Lake scandal, devoid of the rumors of poison, witchcraft, and popery plots that characterized the more colorful narratives of the scandal presented by some of Carleton's other correspondents. In contrast to the other contemporary observers, Chamberlain's letters showed a unique viewpoint. He navigated through the salacious to focus on the political implications of the scandal. For Chamberlain, the negative gendered connotations associated with Lady Anne Ros and Lady Lake obscured the case's larger domestic political concerns. Chamberlain's only mention of Lady Ros' perceived rebellious behavior existed in her refusal to answer interrogations, which in turn limited her liberty of the Tower. He described her as a "very pert lady," but this mention was the only instance of gendered language he used to describe Lady Anne Ros. In comparison, if one were to focus on the narrative constructed by the other seven writers who discussed the affair, gendered language and gendered fears revealed themselves as a central interest in the entire scandal.

Instead, Chamberlain emphasized Sir Thomas Lake's ultimate fall from favor, avoiding the minutiae of the trial, and focused on how Lake and his family's movements within the Tower reflected their continued or discontinued favor with the king. For him—and for Carleton—the remaining relationship between the highly placed secretary of state (Lake) and the king, and what this meant for power dynamics at court, was vital. For Chamberlain, monarchial favor within these power dynamics was consistently fueled by cooperation or noncooperation, and in this particular case there was a straightforward relationship between cooperation with the crown and liberty within the Tower. Other contemporary observers writing about the Lake case placed emphasis on social issues—i.e. gender and the maintenance of the social order among the king's

inner political circle. Yet, Chamberlain's narrative stressed not social questions, but the potential political ramifications the Lake imprisonment posed for court politics. Thus, the political meaning of the Lake scandal held different implications for different observers. Chamberlain's narrative allows us to explore—with the clarity only a case study affords—the complicated nature of liberty and the impact the case had on contemporary perceptions of the court and the monarch. When writing to Carleton, Chamberlain made the Lake case about the reciprocal relationship between cooperation and liberty. This relationship was the political lesson to be taken from the Lakes' experiences. However, a case with an international dimension, such as the Arabella Stuart case, had different political consequences.

THE ARABELLA STUART SCANDAL

The Arabella Stuart scandal emphasized the convoluted gradations of access at play in the Jacobean court. For Chamberlain, this scandal revealed that one's liberty and favor with the king was contingent on one's political position both domestically and internationally. Dynastic threats to James' crown were met with hostility and the restriction of one's access. Non-threats were often granted the freedoms of liberty regardless of their behavior.

Lady Arabella Stuart, the daughter of Charles Stuart, the earl of Lennox, and his wife Elizabeth, became a lady in waiting to Elizabeth I in 1588.²⁴⁶ Lady Arabella's father, Charles Stuart, was the son of Lady Margaret Douglas, granddaughter of King Henry VII and Matthew Stuart, earl of Lennox, a descendant of King James II of Scotland.²⁴⁷ Thus, their children and grandchildren, who included the Lady Arabella, had legitimate claims to both the throne of England and Scotland. Though Queen Elizabeth was still embroiled in marriage negotiations in

²⁴⁶ Rosalind K. Marshall, "Stuart, Lady Arabella" in *ODNB*.

²⁴⁷ Sara Jane Steen, ed. *The Letters of Lady Arabella Stuart* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), 11-14.

1575 when Arabella was born, she was already forty-two and rapidly approaching the age where producing an heir would be difficult, if not physically impossible. Elizabeth, then, faced with the prospect of no heir of her body and potentially dangerous threats to her throne, had no reason to be pleased about her distant cousin's birth. When Arabella reached the age of thirteen, she traveled to the English court, where she was kept close by. When the queen witnessed her chatting too familiarly with the court favorite, the earl of Essex, however, Lady Arabella was sent home in disgrace, where she remained until Elizabeth's death.

With the accession of her first cousin, James I, to the English throne, Lady Arabella's position dramatically improved and she returned to court at the age of twenty-eight.²⁴⁸ When she realized the king was not going to grant her a husband—an issue that was also present during her service under Elizabeth—she began the search for an advantageous match on her own. In 1609 Lady Arabella was summoned before the Privy Council after rumors circulated that she was contemplating marriage to Stephen Bogdan, claimant to the principality of Moldavia. While in Venice, Bogdan had spread the news of his engagement to the Lady Arabella, despite the fact that he was already married to a Venetian woman. The news of this rumor enraged James, who was fearful that a marriage to Arabella could make Bogdan a claimant to the English throne, or bolster Arabella's own claim.²⁴⁹ In response to the rumors that the Lady Arabella was about to depart overseas, she “was placed under guard for several days,” but she was eventually released and “set at liberty,”²⁵⁰ Arabella seems to have convinced the king of the falsity of the rumors, because he released her at once after her examination. James was moved by the Lady Arabella's

²⁴⁸ Ibid.; G. P. V. Akrigg, *Jacobean Pageant, or The Court of James I* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1962), 113-15; Steen, *The Letters of Lady Arabella Stuart*, 11.

²⁴⁹ Logan Pearsall Smith, ed. *The Life and Letters of Sir Henry Wotton*, 2 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1907), 414; *The Letters of John Chamberlain I*, 292; 438.

²⁵⁰ *Calendar of State Papers and Manuscripts Relating to English Affairs, Existing in the Archives and Collections of Venice, and in Other Libraries of Northern Italy*, vol. 11, 1607-1610 (London, 1904), Marc Antonio Correr, Venetian Ambassador in England, to the Doge and Senate (Jan. 8, 1610), 405.

petition for support, “for long had she been living in great melancholy, both on the account of the little esteem in which she [was] held, and because her income [was] insufficient; she [was] engaged in many pursuits to recover her patrimony.”²⁵¹ He pardoned her “with the assurance that he had no objections to her marriage with any subject of his.”²⁵² By the early months of 1610, the “Lady Arabellas business [was] ended, and she [was] restored to her former place and grace; the King gave her a cupboard of plate better than 200 pounds for a New Years gift and 1000 marks to pay her debts.”²⁵³

After her release, the thirty-four year old Arabella finally obtained James’ permission to marry.²⁵⁴ She chose the Oxford scholar William Seymour, and in the early morning hours of June 22, 1610, with what she argued was James’ blessing, the Lady Arabella and Seymour were secretly married. Arabella’s new husband was still considered a strong claimant to the English throne, despite the fact that Elizabeth had declared the marriage between his grandmother, Lady Catherine Grey, and his grandfather, the earl of Hertford, illegitimate.²⁵⁵ Unlike Seymour’s grandparents, Arabella and William made sure several attendants stood witness at their ceremony, enough to ensure the legitimacy of their marriage would not be challenged.²⁵⁶ When James heard of the clandestine marriage—a union of two powerful families that could seriously threaten his own position on the throne—he sent Seymour to the Tower of London, while Lady Arabella was held prisoner in Lambeth at the home of Sir Thomas Parry, an administrator and member of the Privy Council.²⁵⁷ James eventually ordered her banished to the north, but before she was due to leave, she pleaded with the Crown to delay her voyage, as “she was so weak that

²⁵¹ *CSPV*, vol. 11 (Correr to the Doge and Senate, Jan. 8, 1610), 405.

²⁵² *The Letters of John Chamberlain I* (Chamberlain to Carleton, Dec. 30, 1609), 292.

²⁵³ *The Letters of John Chamberlain I* (Chamberlain to Sir Ralph Winwood, Jan. 13, 1610), 294.

²⁵⁴ Sara Jayne Steen, “The Crime of Marriage: Arabella Stuart and the Duchess of Malfi,” *The Sixteenth Century Journal* 22, no. 1 (Spring 1991): 63.

²⁵⁵ Steen, *The Letters of Arabella Stuart*, 29.

²⁵⁶ Steen, “The Crime of Marriage,” 64.

²⁵⁷ P. R. Seddon, “Parry, Sir Thomas,” in *ODNB*.

it would occasion her death to be removed any further. She asked delay to recover her strength, which she could do the sooner if not continually molested.”²⁵⁸ James acquiesced to her plea and delayed her journey. Lady Arabella then disguised herself as a man, escaped from Lambeth house and boarded a ship to France, where she was “retaken at sea near Calais, and is prisoner in the Tower.”²⁵⁹ While imprisoned, the Lady Arabella refused to admit her guilt. As a result of her headstrong attitude, and refusal to cooperate with a king who had once shown her mercy, Arabella was “likewise kept more close [in prison], being they say cracked in the brain”—this referring to her frequent hunger strikes and the debilitating illness that was only exacerbated by her refusal to eat.²⁶⁰

Arabella remained a close prisoner throughout the entirety of her tenure in the Tower; this due in part to her persistent refusal to cooperate with the crown, but more importantly, because any liberty of her physical self threatened the existing regime. Arabella and William Seymour’s marriage stood up in court, with enough witnesses at the ceremony and the consummation to ensure James could not legally annul their union.²⁶¹ Thus, any liberties granted to her during her imprisonment, specifically leave to visit her husband imprisoned nearby, could result in a child and complicate James and his line’s claims to the English throne. Physical liberty for Arabella was dangerous, and therefore was nonexistent during her time in the Tower. Even though her incarceration was characterized by blatant insolence towards the crown, no amount of cooperation could have negated her threat. Thus, thanks to the dynastic politics involved, the Arabella Stuart case illustrated a much more complicated relationship between the crown, liberty and prisoners than the simple cooperation-liberty, noncooperation-restriction of liberty binary.

²⁵⁸ *CSPD*, vol. 9 (Lady Arabella Seymour to the Council, March 14, 1611), 16.

²⁵⁹ *CSPD*, vol. 9 (Lady Dorothy Cope to Carleton, June 24, 1611), 48; Marshall, “Stuart, Lady Arabella” in *ODNB*; Akripp, *Jacobean Pageant*, 114-24.

²⁶⁰ *The Letters of John Chamberlain I* (Chamberlain to Carleton, April 29, 1613), 443.

²⁶¹ Steen, “The Crime of Marriage,” 64-5.

Additionally, Chamberlain's observations on the experience of the countess of Shrewsbury, also implicated in the Arabella scandal and imprisoned, also complicated the relationship between liberty and cooperation.

Mary, wife of Gilbert Talbot, the seventh earl of Shrewsbury, was imprisoned in the Tower in 1610 for acquiescing to the marriage of her niece, the Lady Arabella Stuart.²⁶² Like Lady Arabella, the Countess of Shrewsbury refused to exhibit penitence for her knowledge of the clandestine marriage and spent five years in the Tower. Yet, despite her consistent noncooperation with the crown, and unlike the Lady Arabella, her imprisonment experience was characterized by liberties one would not expect for someone so deliberately stubborn. If her example was taken at face value, it seems to suggest a curious addendum to the typical straightforward relationship between cooperation and liberty as exhibited in the Lake case. The countess of Shrewsbury remained stubbornly and publically loyal to her niece throughout her imprisonment in the Tower. In 1612 John Chamberlain noted that, "The Lady Shrewsbury is still in the Tower rather upon willfulness, than with any great matter she is charged withal: only the King is resolute that she shall answer to certain interrogations, and she is as obstinate to make none, nor to be examined."²⁶³ When she was finally brought before the council, her rebelliousness continued:

Her contempt towards the King and that table was laid open and much aggravated for her refusing to answer, and scornful terms used towards some at her first convening. She persisting still in the same course, which example might prove of dangerous consequence: to all which she replied nothing but the privilege of her person and nobility, and a rash vow which she could not violate; whereupon she was sent back to the Tower.²⁶⁴

²⁶² *The Letters of John Chamberlain* I (Chamberlain to Carleton, Feb. 12, 1612), 334.

²⁶³ *Ibid.*

²⁶⁴ *The Letters of John Chamberlain* I (Chamberlain to Carleton, July 2, 1612), 364.

Despite extensive evidence of her continued insolence towards James and the court, it is interesting that the countess, while “she hath been long in the Tower, had the liberty of the place, and sometime leave to attend her Lord in his sickness.”²⁶⁵ Her lord, the earl of Shrewsbury, even “requested shutters for the windows, boards before the doors, and repair of a hole in the roof of the rooms where his wife was lodged,” repairs that were granted.²⁶⁶ Her refusal to cooperate resulted in the continued limitation of her freedom and access to the outside world, but not within the Tower of London itself. After Arabella Stuart’s death in 1615, and with it the end of her potential threat to the English throne, the countess of Shrewsbury was released from the Tower—despite her unfailingly loyalty to her niece’s choices. A few years later, in 1618, she was called to testify to the rumors that her niece had secretly given birth to a child, which would potentially endanger James’ claims to the throne. The countess refused to testify against her already deceased niece, saying she had promised an oath not to speak against her relation. She also “refused to swear the Oath of Allegiance” to the king.²⁶⁷ For her insolence, she was returned to the Tower, where she remained until 1623—though this time too, she occupied the “best lodgings.”²⁶⁸ A few years later, when the Lieutenant of the Tower went in search of “apartments where Sir Walter Raleigh might sleep,” he found that the “Countess of Shrewsbury and the Earl of Northumberland [had] all the best rooms in the place.”²⁶⁹

Chamberlain’s narrative of the Countess of Shrewsbury’s liberties within the Tower rejected the simplistic cooperation versus noncooperation binary of the Lake case. Unlike her niece, the countess did not pose any significant threat to James or the regime. Her sentence and

²⁶⁵ *The Letters of John Chamberlain I* (Chamberlain to Carleton, Jan. 28, 1613), 410.

²⁶⁶ *CSPD*, vol. 9 (Earl of Shrewsbury to the Earl of Salisbury, Oct. 9, 1611), 80.

²⁶⁷ *CSPD*, vol. 9 (Sir Robert Naunton to Carleton, August 15, 1618), 565.

²⁶⁸ David N. Durant, *Arabella Stuart: A Rival to the Queen* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicholson London, 1978), 209.

²⁶⁹ *CSPD*, vol. 9 (Sir Thomas Wilson to Secretary Naunton, Sept. 12, 1618), 569.

imprisonment was, in a sense, performative—for appearances. James and the court could not ignore her involvement in the secret marriage of Arabella and Seymour, but just because she was sent to the Tower did not mean she necessarily lost all royal favor. If we point to Arabella as the central issue in the scandal—as Chamberlain does—then the countess’ liberties during her imprisonment made sense. The surviving narrative concerning the Arabella scandal plainly illuminated this concept. Within the Chamberlain and other contemporary narratives—in this instance, five other individuals writing about the case’s circumstances—what was at stake was the danger both the Lady Arabella’s marriage and her physical person held for James and his crown. Unlike the Lake case which garnered only domestic attention, word of the Lady Arabella’s marriage and her imprisonment reached all the way to the Italy. For Chamberlain, as his interests were grounded in communicating political news, his narrative of the Arabella Stuart case emphasized its political implications. While the majority of contemporary accounts highlighted the Lady Arabella’s escape from Lambeth house and her subsequent capture, illuminating the drama of the scandal, Chamberlain focused critically on Arabella’s restricted movements within the Tower, and the countess of Shrewsbury’s relative liberty. Here, Chamberlain emphasized that the Lady Arabella was kept close prisoner throughout the duration of her imprisonment, as she represented the largest threat to James. Arabella was not granted liberty of the Tower because both her movements and communications could potentially endanger the current monarch’s power. Additionally, her noncooperation with the crown was met with punishment. In contrast, as Chamberlain emphasized, the countess of Shrewsbury experienced relative freedom within the Tower as she herself did not represent a serious threat to the throne. Though her involvement in her niece’s marriage resulted in her imprisonment, she was not a political danger; thus, not even persistent noncooperation with the crown threatened

her liberty within the Tower. Once the Lady Arabella was dead, and the threat to James and his line was eliminated, the countess was released without resentment. In this case, a different kind of power dynamic was at play. While Chamberlain (in contrast to his contemporaries) used the Lake scandal to comment on potentially shifting power relations at court, his account of the Arabella scandal emphasized the dangers the existing authority faced in the wake of a perilous threat to royal succession. For Chamberlain, in the context of a scandal with international implications, James' favor required much more than simple cooperation with the crown. Here, liberty was weighed on a spectrum of danger, not necessarily favor.

THE OVERBURY SCANDAL

The Overbury scandal involved the murder of Sir Thomas Overbury and the imprisonment of his accused murderers, Robert Carr, earl of Somerset, and his wife, Frances Howard. The social and political anxieties that played out within the Lake and the Arabella Stuart scandals also played out within this episode, which also took place in the early years of James I's reign. The Overbury scandal garnered both domestic and international attention. For Chamberlain, aspects of this scandal reiterated the reciprocal relationship between cooperation with the crown and liberty. However, like the countess of Shrewsbury's case, the Overbury scandal also demonstrated that one's social and political position at court played a large role in determining favor. Through Chamberlain's representations, we see that those outside of James' intimate circle had to achieve liberty through cooperation with the crown. Those nobles already high in the king's favor, however, had an easier time retaining liberty during their imprisonment.

During the early years of James' reign, Sir Thomas Overbury had enjoyed significant power at court, due in part to his close relationship with the king's current favorite, Robert Carr,

Viscount Rochester. As an experienced courtier, Overbury acted as a mentor to Carr as the young man attempted to navigate the intricacies of court life. As the king's favorite, Carr played an intermediary role in the routine brokering and pursuit of royal patronage and favor at court, and as a seasoned courtier himself, Overbury gave advice and direction, and the two men's relationship was one in which Carr depended on Overbury's intelligence and experience.²⁷⁰ In fact, when Thomas Overbury was knighted at Greenwich in June 1608, it was presumably at Carr's request.²⁷¹ Yet, in 1612, Carr and Overbury's relationship began to sour. During his first three years as James' favorite, Carr had been content to use James' affection and translate it into money, power and prestige.²⁷² In the beginning months of 1611, however, he took his first steps towards more active political participation.

Approximately the same year, presumably around 1611 or 1612, Carr had begun a secret romantic relationship with the earl of Suffolk's daughter, Frances Howard, who was married—though unhappily—to Robert Devereux, third earl of Essex. Though Overbury had initially aided Carr in his romantic pursuit of the countess, penning love letters for him, as the two lovers' relationship became more serious, Overbury became wary. Carr's ties to the countess of Exeter threatened to pull Overbury into the political circle of her father's family, the Howards. If conflict at court erupted, this would pit Overbury and Carr against Essex and his powerful allies at court. Fear over potentially angering Essex and his allies caused Overbury to attempt to end the relationship between Carr and Frances Howard, which only served to further antagonize the two lovers, as well as James.²⁷³

²⁷⁰ John Considine, "Overbury, Sir Thomas," in *ODNB*.

²⁷¹ Bellany, *The Politics of Court Scandal*, 35.

²⁷² Bellany, "Carr, Robert, earl of Somerset," in *ODNB*.

²⁷³ Bellany, "Carr, Robert, earl of Somerset," in *ODNB*; Bellany, *The Politics of Court Scandal*, 35-50.

The king was ready to remove Overbury from court, and in 1613 enacted a plan to do so. James had become jealous and exasperated over Overbury's continued influence over his favorite, Carr, and "had long had a desire to remove him [Overbury] from about the Lord Rochester [Carr]."²⁷⁴ In April 1613, James offered Overbury an embassy abroad, "or his choice to be employed either in France or in Muscovy, upon which places [he] had new projects."²⁷⁵ Thinking he had Carr's support, Overbury "excused himself as incapable of such places for divers wants and specially of language...and stood stiffly upon it that he was not willing to forsake his country."²⁷⁶ Overbury's refusal enraged James and he was thrown in the Tower and "kept in prison on pretense of the king's wrath."²⁷⁷ Overbury's sudden arrest and imprisonment provoked much comment among the public, and many wondered whether his fall indicated a reversal of Carr's fortunes as well. James quickly denied this, however, and reportedly told the Privy Council that he "still did not take more delight in [Carr's] company and conversation than any man's living."²⁷⁸ In fact, a few weeks after Overbury's imprisonment, the countess of Exeter sued for an annulment of her marriage to the earl of Essex, citing sexual impotency. Her request was granted and she and Carr married in a lavish ceremony, the "King bearing the expense of the wedding."²⁷⁹

More important to Chamberlain and Carleton, however, was the death of Sir Thomas Overbury in the Tower, and the resulting scandal that ensued, which centered around the newly married earl and countess of Somerset, Robert Carr and Frances Howard. Only ten days before Frances Howard's petition for the nullity of her first marriage was granted, Sir Thomas Overbury

²⁷⁴ *The Letters of John Chamberlain* I (Chamberlain to Carleton, April 29, 1613), 443.

²⁷⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 444.

²⁷⁷ *CSPD*, vol. 9 (Sir John Lidcott to ?, May ?, 1613), 184.

²⁷⁸ *The Letters of John Chamberlain* I (Chamberlain to Carleton, April 29, 1613), 444.

²⁷⁹ *The Letters of John Chamberlain* I (Chamberlain to Carleton, Nov. 25, 1613), 487.

died while still imprisoned in the Tower. He was found “dead in bed at the Tower [and] Sir John Lidcott his brother-in-law begged his body but was refused.”²⁸⁰ The “manner of his death [was] not known, but the corpse was very offensive.”²⁸¹ It was not until September 1615 that the particulars of Sir Thomas Overbury’s death began to take shape and leak out to the public. In October of that same year, James appointed a commission to look into the matter.²⁸² Eventually, Overbury’s keeper in the Tower, Richard Weston, confessed that he had been involved in a plot to murder Overbury with a poisoned enema. The testimony of Sir Gervase Elwes, lieutenant of the Tower, implicated not only Weston but also the courtier Sir Thomas Monson, a Howard client, and Anne Turner, a close confidante of the countess of Somerset.²⁸³ During Weston’s examination, he admitted that, “Mrs Turner told him Lady Somerset would reward him if he would give Overbury what she had sent him [the poison].”²⁸⁴ The subsequent interrogations of Weston, Turner, and Monson directly implicated the earl and countess of Somerset as the instigators of the plot to murder Overbury, and they were brought to trial in 1615. According to the prosecution’s chain of events, it was alleged that Overbury was poisoned slowly and painfully over the course of the summer of 1613. Potions and powders, disguised as medicine, had been taken to his cell, along with poisoned pies and jellies, to finish him off. When this failed, some alleged that an apothecary’s assistant had been bribed to kill him with a poisoned enema.²⁸⁵

During the latter months of 1615 several of the Somersets' alleged accomplices were tried and executed for Overbury's murder, and many of the trials featured damning evidence against

²⁸⁰ *CSPD*, vol. 9 (Sir Ralph Winwood to Carleton, Sept. 28, 1613), 200.

²⁸¹ *The Letters of John Chamberlain I* (Chamberlain to Carleton, Oct. 14, 1613), 478.

²⁸² *CSPV*, vol. 14 (Antonio Foscarini and Gregorio Barbarigo, Venetian Ambassadors in England, to the Doge and Senate, Oct. 30, 1615), 53.

²⁸³ Bellany, “Carr, Robert, earl of Somerset,” in *ODNB*; Bellany, *The Politics of Court Scandal*, 55-6.

²⁸⁴ *CSPD*, vol. 9 (Examination of Richard Weston, Sept. 28, 1615), 310.

²⁸⁵ Bellany, *The Politics of Court Scandal*, 55-6.

the earl and countess. The Somersets were eventually indicted for complicity in the murder of Sir Thomas Overbury in January 1616. Over the course of their trial, the countess herself even confessed her guilt in court, admitting “to having had recourse to witchcraft in order to obtain the love of [Carr], the bronze statue made for this purpose having been found.”²⁸⁶ On April 6, 1616, Chamberlain wrote that “the Lady Somerset was committed to the Tower upon so short warning that she had scant leisure to shed a few tears over her little daughter at the parting.” Her husband followed not long after. According to the Venetian ambassador:

Thus the man who in the course of no more than eight years and at the age of twenty-six had won the highest dignities of these kingdoms, with a property of about three millions of gold, will have lost all in a moment, as well as the king’s favor, to which he owed all of these benefits.²⁸⁷

As the Venetian ambassador so eloquently stated, in the weeks following their imprisonment, the Somersets’ future looked bleak, and many thought they would be executed for their crimes. Yet, as the weeks passed, it became clear that James would not carry out their sentence. Despite guilty verdicts and a public consensus that Carr’s favor had run out—discussed in length both domestically and internationally—the Somersets’ experiences within the Tower perhaps suggested that their favor with the king had not been entirely eliminated.

For Chamberlain, the experiences of Frances Howard and Robert Carr communicated two important political messages concerning favor. In terms of cooperation with the crown, both the earl and countess of Somerset followed different paths: the countess confessed her guilt in court and pleaded for mercy, while the earl:

Stood still upon his innocence, and could hardly be brought to refer himself to the king’s mercy, upon which terms he stands still, and having leave to write the king, had only required that his judgment of hanging should be changed to heading, and

²⁸⁶ *CSPV*, vol. 14 (Antonio Foscarini and Gregorio Barbarigo, Venetian Ambassadors in England, to the Doge and Senate, Nov. 13, 1615), 61.

²⁸⁷ *CSPV*, vol. 14 (Antonio Foscarini and Gregorio Barbarigo, Venetian Ambassadors in England, to the Doge and Senate, Nov. 7, 1615), 58-9.

that his daughter should have his lands. He had been much urged and fair offered to confess the offense both before his arraignment and since, but stands firm in denial.²⁸⁸

Like the countess of Shrewsbury, Carr consistently refused to admit his guilt and exhibited insolence towards the king and the court. Examined separately from the writings of other contemporary observers (including international observers)—who again emphasized the salacious gossip surrounding the trial—Chamberlain’s account of the Somersets’ imprisonment revealed not Carr’s fall from favor, as the majority of observers suggested, but the subtle continuation of his (and his wife’s) favor and access with the king throughout the tenure of their incarceration.

By July 1616, Chamberlain began to note signs of improvement in the Somersets’ fortunes, particularly Carr’s. His coat of arms were not torn down during the Order of the Garter ceremonies at Windsor, and he successfully negotiated full liberty of the Tower, with “Henrickson and his wife had the fortune to see him with his Garter and George about his neck walking and talking with the earl of Northumberland, and he and his lady saluting the window.”²⁸⁹ Chamberlain wrote Carleton repeatedly that, “The earl and his Lady continued to have the full liberty of the Tower, and converse freely together both by day and night.”²⁹⁰ By April 1618, the earl of Somerset “lived plentifully in the Tower where he builds and translates his lodging, which he may the better do if he have 3000li land allotted and assured him of late as the speech goes.”²⁹¹ Though he had lost his jewels and lands upon his conviction, in late 1616

²⁸⁸ *The Letters of John Chamberlain II* (Chamberlain to Carleton, June 8, 1616), 6.

²⁸⁹ *The Letters of John Chamberlain II* (Chamberlain to Carleton, July 20, 1616), 16.

²⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 19.

²⁹¹ *The Letters of John Chamberlain II* (Chamberlain to Carleton, April 10, 1618), 156.

and early in 1617, the king had agreed to a financial arrangement that granted him £4000 a year and restored the barony of Winwick, worth about £900 annually in rents.²⁹²

Like her husband, Frances Howard enjoyed considerable liberty during her time in the Tower, though, unlike her husband and like Lady Anne Ros and Lady Mary Lake, her confession was needed before liberty to be obtained. As Anne Ros' case five years later showed, France Howard's involvement in the Overbury scandal had severe social consequences even more serious than those suffered by her husband. She too was labeled a shrew and a witch, and called a whore who seduced and manipulated her two husbands. Public perceptions of the countess of Somerset were all but flattering, yet, from the perspective of the king, we do not see the same kind of animosity as was shown towards Lady Ros and Lady Lake.²⁹³ Not only was the countess (like the countess of Shrewsbury) a highly placed member of court, she was the daughter of a member of the powerful Howard family and the wife of the king's favorite. Perhaps more importantly, she also confessed to her crimes and exhibited penitence to the king and the court. After her petition to James for mercy, and a formal, signed confession of her guilt in Overbury's murder, Frances Howard was granted a full pardon by James (though she remained imprisoned in the Tower with her husband). Her cooperation with the crown, like Lady Ros and Lady Lake's cooperation, rectified her earlier subversive behavior. As a result, she was granted full liberty of the Tower, and further, "the Lady Knolls and some other friends have had access to the Lady [Howard] divers times since her conviction, and carried her young daughter to her twice or thrice."²⁹⁴ In July 1616, Chamberlain recounted to Carleton that, "The Lady's pardon was signed

²⁹² Bellany, "Carr, Robert, earl of Somerset," in *ODNB*.

²⁹³ For more on public perceptions of Frances Howard during the Essex nullity and the Overbury scandal see David Lindley, *The Trials of Frances Howard: Fact and Fiction at the Court of King James I* (London: Routledge, 1993) and Alastair Bellany, *The Politics of Court Scandal in Early Modern England: News, Culture and the Overbury Affair, 1603-1660* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002).

²⁹⁴ *The Letters of John Chamberlain II* (Chamberlain to Carleton, June 8, 1616), 6.

the other week...the special reasons for it were for the great and long service of her father, family and friends, her own penitence, and voluntary confession.”²⁹⁵

For Chamberlain, the Overbury scandal provided two important political lessons. Like the Lakes, the case of Frances Howard demonstrated that one’s cooperation with the crown—submitted through a formal confession to the king—was needed before liberty could be attained and favor restored. For those outside of James’ intimate circle of favorites and friends—as Carleton was—Chamberlain’s account of Frances Howard’s imprisonment provided key political information: if one wanted to remain in the king’s favor and maintain that favor, one had to cooperate with the crown’s demands. On the other hand, once an individual obtained a position close to the king—either a noble with a weighty title or a personal favorite—the ability to retain the favor that often accompanied that position was much simpler. As Chamberlain’s account of Robert Carr’s imprisonment illustrated, an individual’s crimes had to be punished, but liberty was not necessarily eliminated. Though this kind of political knowledge may not have been immediately applicable to an aspiring politician like Carleton, it was valuable knowledge to store for the future.

CONCLUSION

For correspondents like Chamberlain attempting to figure out the rules of access and favor—and for men like Carleton attempting to understand and navigate their intricacies—a simplistic formula for access would not have sufficed. These men knew there were no clear-cut rules for favor, and thus, they paid exhaustive attention to the specific circumstances of each individual case. To Chamberlain, these three scandals demonstrated the fact that the king’s favor was a fragile thing, and for most, strict cooperation with the crown was the principal way to

²⁹⁵ *The Letters of John Chamberlain* II (Chamberlain to Carleton, July 20, 1616), 16.

obtain and maintain that favor. When favor rested on the personal temperament of the monarch, cooperation was one clear avenue in achieving liberty. The deference embodied in cooperation, and in the humble admission of one's guilt (as the Lake and Frances Howard examples demonstrated), was a way to gain the mercy of a king. In the end, favor and access were the prerogatives of the monarch. For ambitious men like Carleton, this was an important piece of political knowledge to learn.

Chamberlain's accounts of Robert Carr and the countess of Shrewsbury's experiences, however, suggest that there were multiple levels to cooperation. For some, insubordination was not necessarily an indicator of an individual's liberty within the Tower. Formal acts of subordination were effective avenues towards obtaining liberty, but personal liking was also at play. This was also an important political lesson. As Chamberlain and his contemporary correspondents recounted, James described Lady Anne Ros as a "serpent in the Garden of Eden."²⁹⁶ Additionally, the king spoke "long and well" about the domineering nature of Lady Ros and her mother, both the authors and the tools in this "foul practice."²⁹⁷ They and the countess of Somerset were "monstrous" women; thus, only formal cooperation with the crown could rectify their subversive behavior.²⁹⁸ Sir Thomas Lake, as a close advisor and friend of James, retained remnants of the king's favor; though, he too had to submit a formal confession of guilt to ask for forgiveness for the actions of his wife and daughter. In contrast, James described the countess of Shrewsbury as an "esteemed lady."²⁹⁹ Though her involvement with her niece's marriage meant her imprisonment in the Tower, she never truly lost personal favor with the king.

²⁹⁶ *CSPD*, vol. 10 (Sir Thomas Wynn to Carleton, Feb, 13, 1619), 14.

²⁹⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁹⁸ *Ibid.*

²⁹⁹ *The Letters of John Chamberlain I* (Chamberlain to Carleton, Jan. 28, 1613), 410.

The same can be said for Robert Carr, the king's young favorite. The dissemination of favor was a personal privilege of the king or queen, one that was frequently given or taken away at will.

Court politics consisted of multiple avenues of favor and multiple levels of liberty, even in the most unexpected of places. The ways in which Chamberlain recounted these scandals to Carleton revealed the various gradations of favor and access, and each man's preoccupation with these ideas. For those attempting to learn the nature of these concepts and advance their own interests (as Carleton desired), the Lake, Arabella Stuart, and Overbury scandals provided fundamental insight into the relationships between court politics and power. Chamberlain's observations provided Carleton and his contemporaries with a certain type of political knowledge that was invaluable to advancing one's political career. Without the possession of the knowledge and information Chamberlain's accounts supplied, men like Carleton could not have successfully placed themselves within the inner circle of James' court. Through Chamberlain's letters, the experiences of the Lakes, Arabella Stuart, the countess of Shrewsbury, and the Somersets cease to be merely stories and instead become prized political information. Chamberlain's conceptions of these high-profile scandals and imprisonment experiences, then, become the framework through which access and favor can be viewed. Though complex, access and favor were essential political tools, and the frequency within which late sixteenth and early seventeenth century contemporaries like Chamberlain communicated and circulated news of these concepts underscored their political impact and importance.

Conclusion

John Chamberlain and men like him were deeply concerned with the news of court events and politics. They gathered, sent, and discussed the latest happenings in letters they sent across their epistolary networks. The information contained in the epistolary networks that Chamberlain and his contacts formed illustrated a contemporary preoccupation with what was going on at the center of Jacobean power. These men who operated outside of the king's inner political circle spent considerable time deciphering the intricacies of the court and James' favor. They needed to do this if they wanted any chance of placing themselves in the king's inner circle, or achieve any position of political power. Letters like Chamberlain's provided a key source of political knowledge to contemporaries attempting to navigate Jacobean politics.

Using the letters of John Chamberlain as a case study for how news and news culture functioned in early seventeenth-century England, the first chapter examined the ways in which he collected and communicated the news of court through his correspondence network. Reconstructing Chamberlain's epistolary network from his surviving letters revealed what kind of news was considered important—news of court and court politics—and who desired this news—aspiring politicians stationed away from court. Additionally, the letters showed that Chamberlain's access to certain physical spaces—like St. Paul's Cathedral in London and the country homes of nobles—was a key component of gathering the kind of news his correspondents abroad desired.

The second chapter considered the English ambassadors stationed abroad who were part of Chamberlain's correspondence network. That chapter argued that an examination of the letter collections of several Jacobean diplomats revealed their efforts to cultivate powerful men in London. By creating and maintaining connections with these influential men, ambitious diplomats like Sir Dudley Carleton were able to overcome the difficulties that accompanied being stationed away from court. Their networks were not identical, but many ambassadors reached upward and outward in search of patronage, information and favor. Without the successful development and use of these epistolary networks, these men could not hope to advance their own political careers.

Finally, the third chapter argued that Chamberlain and his correspondents not only focused on events at court, but also used court events as case studies to understand the intricacies of court politics and favor. Chamberlain and his contacts abroad knew that there were no simple rules for favor in James' court; therefore, they paid specific attention to the ways in which favor and access was negotiated and maintained by certain individuals. Chamberlain used the language of access, favor, and liberty in his accounts of three early seventeenth-century scandals to develop key political lessons for his correspondents, the ambitious men seeking to obtain positions of political power.

Studying early seventeenth century letter writers and their correspondence networks contributes to the larger debate on early modern news culture and political culture. These letters provide evidence for the strong connection between court events and the news that was circulated and discussed by the wider Jacobean public. Chamberlain's letters in particular revealed that many people outside of James' inner political circle were interested in what was going on at the center of power, and saw it as a tool for their own

advancement. Chamberlain and his contacts abroad spent an inordinate amount of time collecting and spreading the news of court, and an equal amount of time trying to understand its complexities. The examination of Chamberlain and his epistolary network reveals who contributed to the news, who received and used the news, and what the news was about.

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