

**The Speeches and Self-Fashioning of King James VI and I  
to the English Parliament, 1604-1624**

MEGAN MONDI

*Introduction*

Until recently, King James VI of Scotland and I of England suffered from an excessively unforgiving reputation: Sir Anthony Weldon's hostile accounts and the English Civil War that erupted less than two decades after his death led many historians to assume James was an incompetent monarch. These Traditional, or Whig, historians believe that constitutional conflict escalated from the moment James ascended the English throne. Pauline Croft explains the Whiggish logic concisely when she says that the "catastrophic fall of the Stuart dynasty by 1649 seemed more easily explicable if the first Stuart to occupy the English throne could be ridiculed as drunken, homosexual, timid, and duplicitous."<sup>1</sup> Revisionists, on the other hand, do not believe opposition between the Crown and Parliament was inherent. Because of revisionists' work during the last decades of the twentieth century, James is now more fully recognized and appreciated as "one of the most learned and intellectually curious men ever to sit on any throne."<sup>2</sup> With that understanding comes, or at least should come, another look at James's reign.

According to Kevin Sharpe, historians "have long cited James's speeches to his parliaments."<sup>3</sup> While it is true that historians have *cited* James's speeches, they have not actually scrutinized them. By contrast, his *Daemonologie* (1597), *The Trew Law of Free Monarchies* (1598), *Basilicon Doron* (1599), *A Counterblaste to Tobacco* (1604), as well as his other works

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<sup>1</sup> Pauline Croft, *King James* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), 4.

<sup>2</sup> Maurice Lee, Jr., *Great Britain's Solomon: James VI and I in His Three Kingdoms* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1990), 32; quoted in Michael B. Young, *King James and the History of Homosexuality* (New York: New York University Press, 2000), 9.

<sup>3</sup> Kevin Sharpe, "Reading James Writing: The Subjects of Royal Writings in Jacobean Britain," in *Royal Subjects: Essays on the Writings of James VI and I*, ed. Daniel Fischlin and Mark Fortier (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2002), 15.

on poetry, political theory, theology, and witchcraft, have received much attention of late. The recent publication of *Royal Subjects: Essays on the Writings of James VI and I* attests to the fact that historians are thoroughly analyzing his writings. While these writings have contributed to the historiographical debate, his speeches to the English Parliament have remained astoundingly neglected.

James sat through approximately 33 months of Parliament during his twenty-two year reign in England (r.1603-1625).<sup>4</sup> His first Parliament, which was also his longest, convened on 19 March 1604 and lasted through five sessions until 1610.<sup>5</sup> His second Parliament lasted only three months (5 April 1614 – 7 June 1614) and was dubbed the Addled Parliament because no new legislation was passed. James did not call another Parliament until 1621. The seven-year absence was England's longest since 1515.<sup>6</sup> The Parliament of 1621 lasted from 30 January to 18 December. James dissolved each of these Parliaments in anger—he was frustrated with Parliament for not granting him adequate supply and, in 1621, for meddling in foreign affairs and other matters he believed were not within their jurisdiction. His final Parliament, which he convened in 1624, lasted from 19 February to 29 May and was dissolved at the King's death on 27 March 1625.

By far the most sizeable audience James ever addressed was Parliament. 545 members—78 Lords and 467 commoners—assembled in 1604, and James added many to the peerage (and, thus, to the House of Lords) throughout his reign. Parliament was a large body, especially considering James's intense aversion to crowds. In addition to the MPs attending his speeches,

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<sup>4</sup> David L. Smith, *The Stuart Parliaments, 1603-1689* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 76.

<sup>5</sup> In Jacobean England the new year began at Easter, the so-called Old Style. I have converted all dates to New Style.

<sup>6</sup> Croft, *King James*, 111.

outsiders slipped into the openings of his first two Parliaments to catch a glimpse and hear the words of their king.<sup>7</sup>

MPs sat on uncomfortable wooden benches, and the King strained his voice to be heard: “I wish my voyce were soe loud or I could extend it soe much as you could all heare me,” he told them in 1621.<sup>8</sup> In addition to speaking without a microphone, he spoke without the assistance of a teleprompter. It is doubtful that the King read from any text at all, for MP Robert Bowyer recorded on 31 March 1607 that “the King commanded Sir F. B. [Francis Bacon] and Sir H. M. [Henry Montague] Recorder of London (for that they had at the time of the Speech taken Notes) that therefore they should now set it [James’s speech] downe... and bring the same to his Majesty who perused and perfected the said discourse, and gave Order for the printing of it.”<sup>9</sup> James must have taken great care in preparing his speeches and memorizing them for delivery.

I began my study of James’s speeches and speechmaking by collecting as many extant speeches as possible and creating a master list. James’s speeches were scattered throughout various primary and secondary sources. By consulting James’s *Workes*, Cobbett’s *Parliamentary History*, the *Journals of the House of Commons*, the *Journal of the House of Lords*, Foster’s *Proceedings in Parliament, 1610*, Jansson’s *Proceedings in Parliament, 1614*, *The Hastings Journal of the Parliament of 1621*, Kenyon’s *The Stuart Constitution*, Notestein’s *Commons Debates, 1621*, Tanner’s *Constitutional Documents of the Reign of James I*, and anthologies of James’s writings, I was able to acquire 36 of the King’s speeches to his four Parliaments. The exact number of speeches remains unknown, but because I collected all of the

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<sup>7</sup> Robert Zaller, *The Parliament of 1621: A Study in Constitutional Conflict* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1971), 31.

<sup>8</sup> Henry Hastings, *The Hastings Journal of the Parliament of 1621*, ed. Lady De Villiers, in *Camden Miscellany*, 3d series, vol. 83, no. 2 (London: Royal Historical Society, 1953), 24.

<sup>9</sup> Robert Bowyer, *The Parliamentary Diary of Robert Bowyer, 1606-1607*, ed. David Harris Willson (New York: Octagon Books, 1971), 253.

speeches referred to in the sources I consulted, I believe I have obtained nearly all of them.

James also sent innumerable royal letters and messages to Parliament, but I have focused my study exclusively on his orations, when Parliament was able to see the King and interpret his speech acts.

Whether or not James wrote his speeches himself remains unclear, but he was certainly not the sole author of his edicts. In a speech on 17 February 1621, James himself mentioned that he wrote *most* of his proclamations, but not all of them.<sup>10</sup> Curtis Perry and others believe that the “public persona of a monarch is produced collaboratively” and that James’s speechmaking was a cooperative effort.<sup>11</sup> Since he was not even the only author of his personal poems, then James was probably not the sole author of his speeches, either.<sup>12</sup> R.C. Munden concurs—he believes that the arguments James presented in a 1604 speech regarding an election dispute were not his own.<sup>13</sup>

Authorship aside, James decided which speeches would be published and distributed throughout his realm. According to the records of 29 May 1624, for example, James requested that “the Notes of...[his] Speech... be delivered to Mr. Solicitor again; and no Copies to be made of it, because not warranted.”<sup>14</sup> It seems as though James always intended his opening speeches to be published. They are much longer than most of his others and are more embellished with allusions and other signals of the king’s knowledge. James was especially proud of the speeches

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<sup>10</sup> Wallace Notestein, Frances Helen Relf, and Hartley Simpson, eds., *Commons Debates, 1621* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1935), 4:71.

<sup>11</sup> Curtis Perry, “‘If Proclamations Will Not Serve’: The Late Manuscript Poetry of James I and the Culture of Libel,” in Fischlin and Fortier, *Royal Subjects*, 212.

<sup>12</sup> Sharpe, “Reading James Writing,” 17.

<sup>13</sup> R. C. Munden, “James I and ‘the growth of mutual distrust’: King, Commons, and Reform, 1603-1604,” in *Faction and Parliament: Essays on Early Stuart History*, ed. Kevin Sharpe (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1978), 55.

<sup>14</sup> Edgar L. Erickson, ed., *Journals of the House of Commons* (New York: Readex Microprint Corporation, 1970), 1:798.

he delivered on 19 March 1604, 9 November 1605, 31 March 1607, and 21 March 1610, because those were the speeches he included in his *Workes* (1616).

What one finds when analyzing James's speeches to the English Parliament is an eloquent, articulate, sharp, diplomatic, and sagacious rhetorician who desired an amicable relationship with Parliament. The absolute monarch often shared his vast knowledge in the form of pedantic lectures, but he was willing to compromise. He utilized the political language of England to further his arguments. In retrospect, James can be appreciated more fully as a broadminded and peace-loving individual who was willing to go against the expectations of others. Throughout his speeches, James emphasized his positive attributes as he attempted to fashion a favorable image of himself. He was cognizant of the doubts the English had about his ability as a Scotsman to rule England and about other negative opinions of him, so he took extra care to depict himself as an authoritative paragon who was trustworthy and loyal to both crowns.

### *"A Few Giddie Heads"*

Historians' analyses of James's speeches are few and far between. It has consequently become possible for the naïve to be taken in, as James once wrote to the House of Commons, "with the curiositie of a few giddie heads."<sup>15</sup> James's speeches must be looked at collectively so that they can be placed in perspective. Nevertheless, various historians—ranging from David Harris Willson (the immoderate Whig) to Jenny Wormald (the radical revisionist)—have contributed to the historiographical debate with their opinions on James's speeches.

Perhaps no historian has damaged James's reputation more than David Harris Willson. In his classic Whig biography of James, published in 1956, Willson claimed that James made

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<sup>15</sup> William Cobbett, ed., *Parliamentary History of England: From the Norman Conquest in 1066, to the Year 1803* (New York: AMS, 1966), 1:1022.

“far too many speeches,” which “irritated them [the Commons] greatly.”<sup>16</sup> MPs were “frustrated by the inept meddling of the King, by his tantrums and complaints,” and by his “long scolding” speeches that often “lacked detail and sincerity.”<sup>17</sup> James’s opening speech to his last Parliament, Willson argued, was “weak and aimless,” and his “words were sheer hypocrisy.”<sup>18</sup>

Jenny Wormald, one of James’s biggest fans (second only, perhaps, to James himself) and certainly the most ardent revisionist, found James’s political and rhetorical skills to be self-evident. She argued that “James never lost his ability to produce the effective phrase” and noted that his later speeches “gave expression to...increasing tiredness and disillusion” with Parliament.<sup>19</sup> She conceded that his speeches to the English Parliament may “have sounded pompous, artificial, [and] even offensive,” but claimed that the English required such speeches from their king. “Only after 1603,” in her opinion, “did James embark on the lengthy rhetorical speeches... for they were not his natural style of dealing with either his supporters or opponents.”<sup>20</sup> Here, as elsewhere, Wormald’s argument is too apologetic, defensive, and unimaginative. In attempting to prove that James was unpretentious but sensitive to his subjects’ wishes, she failed to examine and analyze James as orator and performer, as I intend to do. What Wormald and other historians must recognize is that James was engaging in creative self-fashioning. Historians should acknowledge his theatricality as well as his continual and conscientious efforts to mold an image of himself for public consumption.

David L. Smith gave a more balanced appraisal of James in Parliament—he said that James revealed “his paradoxical blend of strengths and weaknesses, of wisdom and misjudgment” and had the capacity both “to defuse tension and controversy” and spark it “by his

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<sup>16</sup> David Harris Willson, *King James VI and I* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1956), 247.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, 247, 249, 417.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, 442.

<sup>19</sup> Jenny Wormald, “James VI and I,” in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, 2004 ed., 655.

<sup>20</sup> Jenny Wormald, “James VI and I: Two Kings or One?” *History* 68 (1983): 205.

own tactlessness.”<sup>21</sup> The fact that James spoke frequently to Parliament, Smith argued, indicates his awareness of Parliament’s multifaceted role. “His handling of Parliaments,” Smith concluded, “revealed the same basic resilience and good sense that, notwithstanding occasional moments of temper or tactlessness, characterized his conduct of government as a whole.”<sup>22</sup> Similarly, Daniel Fischlin and Mark Fortier observed that James’s prose style was “at once witty, observant, playful, learned, not afraid of ambiguity or equivocation, balanced between full-blown fustian, scholastic casuistry, and finely-honed rhetorical skills.”<sup>23</sup> These moderate historians have more sensible and balanced views about James’s speeches than do the extreme Whigs or revisionists.

Other recent historians have held more sensible opinions. Pauline Croft argued that the “royal rhetoric was splendid but often vapid,” although she gave the King credit for being “tactfully gradualist.”<sup>24</sup> Roger Lockyer drew attention to the fact that James “displayed a remarkable degree of restraint” in his speeches about the Union of the Scottish and English kingdoms.<sup>25</sup> Conrad Russell pointed to instances in James’s speeches where he was conciliatory and where his arguments were especially sound. Neil Rhodes, Jennifer Richards, and Joseph Marshall noticed that “James knew when to drop an argument, to change his tone or to adopt a different persona.”<sup>26</sup> Finally, J. P. Sommerville credited James with being “generally careful to tone down his grander theoretical claims for parliamentary consumption” for the purposes of

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<sup>21</sup> Smith, *Stuart Parliaments*, 101.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, 113.

<sup>23</sup> Daniel Fischlin and Mark Fortier, “‘Enregistrate Speech’: Stratagems of Monarchic Writing in the Work of James VI and I,” in Fischlin and Fortier, *Royal Subjects*, 43.

<sup>24</sup> Croft, *King James*, 59.

<sup>25</sup> Roger Lockyer, *James VI and I* (London: Longman, 1998), 59.

<sup>26</sup> Neil Rhodes, Jennifer Richards, and Joseph Marshall, eds., *King James VI and I: Selected Writings* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2003), 19.

encouraging Parliament's generosity.<sup>27</sup> James, he asserts, "was quite capable of stressing the kinder and gentler face of royal absolutism."<sup>28</sup>

These recent revisionist appraisals are more balanced and accurate than the assessments of the Traditionalists. In fact, revisionists have invalidated to a certain extent many of the Whigs' negative though sporadic assertions about James's speeches. Statements such as "James would not alter his ways" and Parliament "felt the full impact of his despotism" simply are not true.<sup>29</sup> At the same time, radical revisionists like Wormald have gone too far in whitewashing James. Putting James's speeches in perspective, then, requires an understanding of James that neither demonizes nor idolizes him.

Whatever the argument, previous summary judgments of James's speeches and James as speechmaker have been random and deficient—no one before me has subjected his speeches and speechmaking to a sustained, thorough, and systematic analysis. In the balance of this paper I will survey James's speeches in an original way and utilize various literary approaches to scrutinize the ways in which he fashioned himself to Parliament.

### **Twenty Years of Speechmaking**

A multi-faceted and meaningful analysis of James's speeches and speechmaking requires a preliminary description of the content and character of his speeches to the English Parliament. In the twenty years he delivered speeches to Parliament, from 1604 – 1624, he addressed a variety of issues, from the union of his two kingdoms to divine right theory to his need for money to the 30 Years' War. His speeches reveal that he was an enlightened monarch who for the most part constructed his speeches carefully.

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<sup>27</sup> Johann P. Sommerville, ed., *King James VI and I: Political Writings* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), xxiv.

<sup>28</sup> Johann P. Sommerville, "King James VI and I and John Selden: Two Voices on History and the Constitution," in Fischlin and Fortier, *Royal Subjects*, 313.

<sup>29</sup> Willson, *James VI and I*, 263, 253.



*James's First Parliament, 1604-1610*

The topic of the union of England and Scotland dominated James's first Parliament. After promising peace throughout his realm and thanking Parliament for receiving him as King of England, he spent a large portion of his first speeches articulating the benefits of an official union of the two kingdoms. The reasons for the Union seemed so obvious to James that anyone who disagreed was, he supposed, "blinded with Ignorance, or els transported with Malice."<sup>30</sup> He then proceeded to talk about religion, wishing "from [his] heart" that the Christian denominations "might meete in the midst" and persecution would end.<sup>31</sup> He concluded his first speech by saying that "his tongue should be ever the trew messenger of his heart" because "it becommeth a King...to use no other Eloquence than plainnesse and sinceritie."<sup>32</sup> On 21 April he emphasized his open-mindedness when he said, "I am so far from being wedded to any opinions of mine."<sup>33</sup> He then asked that Parliament appoint a commission to examine the best way to unite the realm. For the first of many times, James declared his desire to be responsive to the needs of his subjects.

Ben Jonson marked the momentous occasion of James's first speech with a panegyric in which Themis (the figure of Justice or Righteousness) suggested words to James and people "in shoales did swim / To heare" the speech.<sup>34</sup> By appealing to Olympic authority, Jonson both displaced and glorified James's words. Centuries later, Pauline Croft praised James's speech and credited him with exercising diplomacy. She pointed out that the King "asked only for a

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<sup>30</sup> Rhodes, Richards, and Marshall, *Selected Writings*, 297.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, 301.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, 306; *Ibid.*, 305.

<sup>33</sup> Cobbett, *Parliamentary History*, 1:1020.

<sup>34</sup> Ben Jonson, "A Panegyre, on the Happie Entrance of James, our Sovereigne, to His First High Session of Parliament in this His Kingdome, the 19. Of March, 1603," in *The Complete Poetry of Ben Jonson*, ed. William B. Hunter, Jr. (New York: W. W. Norton, 1963), lines 133-135, p. 345.

commission with powers to discuss the issues relating to the Union and to report to the next Parliament.... He did not spell out the legal and constitutional details of his vision, perhaps because he intended to be as flexible as possible.”<sup>35</sup> James asked simply for an “agreement in principle to the general idea,” which was a reasonable request.<sup>36</sup>

The tone of James’s speech at the prorogation of Parliament on 7 July was dramatically different from that of his first two speeches, the first of which was delivered less than four months previously. He was dismayed that no significant progress had been made with the Union or with subsidies. He chided Parliament for not hastening the Union: “I will not thank where I think no thanks due.... I am not such a stock as to praise fools,” he said.<sup>37</sup> After accusing MPs of being skeptical and jealous of him, and after advising Parliament to “use ...[its] liberty with more modesty in time to come,” he attempted to end his speech on a more positive note by saying that no king was more loving, thankful, or desirous to ease their burdens than he.<sup>38</sup> It is doubtful that this last sentence could have produced enough goodwill to distract Parliament from the reproachful spirit of the rest of his harangue. Whigs like to cite this speech as proof that James was unable to compromise or be diplomatic. Although James delivered this speech so early in his reign, it is an anomaly. The “honeymoon” was not necessarily over. Only during the Parliament of 1621, when England was on the verge of entering into the Thirty Years’ War, did James utter words to Parliament that resemble the hectoring words of this speech.

One speech that Whigs do *not* like to cite is the speech James delivered on 9 November, just days after the Gunpowder Plot had been discovered. Although the King gave himself more credit for discovering the plot than he probably deserves, his wisdom can be found throughout

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<sup>35</sup> Croft, *King James*, 59.

<sup>36</sup> Munden, “King, Commons, and Reform,” 63.

<sup>37</sup> J. P. Kenyon, ed. *The Stuart Constitution, 1603-1688: Documents and Commentary*, 2d ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1966), 40.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, 41-42.

the speech. He thanked God for delivering them all from death, and then he touchingly declared that had he died with his MPs, his “end should haue bene with the most Honourable and best company, and in that most Honourable and fittest place for a King to be in.”<sup>39</sup> Like the MPs, James wanted to see the perpetrators punished, but he remarked: “I would be sorie that any being innocent of this practise, either domesticall or forriane, should receiue blame or harme for the same.”<sup>40</sup> In other words, he rather unpopularity asked Parliament not to persecute all Catholics. After all, he explained, “many honest men, seduced with some errors of Popery, may yet remaine good and faithfull Subiects.”<sup>41</sup> James’s prudence with regard to religion was one of his major strengths as a ruler.

James opened the 1606 session of Parliament with a lengthy speech. In it, he used economic arguments to appeal yet again for the Union. James reassured his listeners that their rights as Englishmen would not be compromised. In fact, “he wished himself no longer alive, but dead, if his desires were not directed to the commonwealth of both kingdoms.”<sup>42</sup> He also requested that Parliament follow the agenda he had set for them (e.g., the Union and supply).

On 31 March 1607 James made a final appeal for the Union. He assured the MPs that Scotland would be the inferior partner. He also acquainted them with Parliamentary procedure in Scotland and relations between Scotland and France. Promising to be true to his word, he asked Parliament to “make a good Conclusion, avoyd all delayes, cut off all vaine questions, that... [he] may have his lawfull desire, and be not disgraced in his just endes.”<sup>43</sup> Croft judiciously noted that James “graciously apologized...for his error in assuming that the Union

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<sup>39</sup> Sommerville, *Political Writings*, 151.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, 152.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>42</sup> Cobbett, *Parliamentary History*, 1:1074.

<sup>43</sup> Rhodes, Richards, and Marshall, *Selected Writings*, 324.

would go through speedily.”<sup>44</sup> James had realized that such a change was not desirable to Parliament, and so he tried to explain his point of view more clearly and gently. He further attempted to resolve any misunderstandings on 2 May 1607.

James delivered what is now considered his most famous speech on 21 March 1610. It has attracted more attention than his other speeches because it was in this speech that he summarized his views on divine right monarchy. Speaking for over two hours, James asserted that the “State of MONARCHIE is the supremest thing vpon earth: For Kings are not onely GODS Lieutenants vpon earth, and sit vpon GODS throne, but euen by GOD himselfe they are called Gods.”<sup>45</sup> Although kings have absolute power, kings in settled kingdoms obey the laws. He warned Parliament that he would “not be content” if his power were disputed, but he promised to “euer be willing to make the reason appeare of all... [his] doings” and to obey the Common Law, which he preferred “euen before the very Iudiciall Law of Moyses.”<sup>46</sup> In this speech James also admitted to his lavish expenditures. Nevertheless, he concluded by requesting further supply.

Contrary to Sommerville’s interpretation, that the “speech dissolves into little more than pleasantries,” and Willson’s, that the speech offended many MPs, this was a very important and well-constructed speech that was well received.<sup>47</sup> Among other things, it proves that James was capable of using the political rhetoric of England and was politically savvy enough to use words carefully so as to appease all members of Parliament. Shortly before James delivered the speech, MPs had expressed their displeasure with the recent publication of John Cowell’s *The Interpreter*, a book that propounded absolutism. By saying that Cowell had erred by publishing

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<sup>44</sup> Croft, *King James*, 67.

<sup>45</sup> Sommerville, *Political Writings*, 181.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, 184-185.

<sup>47</sup> J. P. Sommerville, *Royalists and Patriots: Politics and Ideology in England, 1604-1640*, 2d ed. (London: Longman, 1999), 126; Willson, *James VI and I*, 264.

his political views, James meant that Cowell should not think critically about monarchs' powers, but Parliament easily could—and did—interpret the King's words to mean that he did not agree with Cowell's absolutist statements.<sup>48</sup> James never renounced his absolutist views in this speech. Rather, he judiciously and shrewdly “toned down some of his opinions for Parliament's consumption” in hopes that Parliament would approve the Great Contract, which would provide the Crown with a fixed annual grant in return for the King surrendering some of his rights over his subjects.<sup>49</sup>

In a letter to Sir Ralph Winwood, Sir John More wrote that James's speech “shewed great Learning, admirable Memory, and exceeding Piety, to the great Contentment of all Parties.”<sup>50</sup> Robert Bowyer reported: “His Majesty's speeches made us like the men of Emaus, go home with joy, asking one another what they heard, being astonished with an exceeding joy, never king appearing in more flames of fire than his Majesty in love and affection unto his subjects.”<sup>51</sup> Clearly, this speech furthered an amicable relationship between James and Parliament.

James's speech on 21 May 1610 took on a different tone. In it, he forewarned Parliament to “remember the principal errand [supply] which hath been lost or laid asleep so many weeks” and not to question his prerogative.<sup>52</sup> He reminded Parliament of its right to complain of any just grievance, but he also reminded them that “no act of parliament deludes the king of power to impose.”<sup>53</sup> He eerily foreshadowed civil war when he concluded by supposing that this division “one day will make us smart if it be not prevented.”<sup>54</sup>

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<sup>48</sup> Sommerville, *Royalists and Patriots*, 118.

<sup>49</sup> Sommerville, “King James VI and I and John Selden,” 296.

<sup>50</sup> Robert Ashton, ed., *James I by His Contemporaries: An Account of His Career and Character as Seen by Some of his Contemporaries* (London: Hutchinson, 1969), 67.

<sup>51</sup> Elizabeth Read Foster, ed., *Proceedings in Parliament, 1610* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1966), 1:55.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, 2:101.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, 2:103.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, 2:107.

Unsurprisingly, this speech was not well received. John Chamberlain noted that it was “so litle to theyre [Parliament’s] satisfaction, that...yt bred generally much discomfort; to see our monarchicall powre and regall prerogative strained so high and made so transcendent every way, that yf the practise shold follow the positions, we are not like to leave to our successors that freedome we received from our forefathers.”<sup>55</sup> The following day Thomas Wentworth told the Commons that “if, as the king supposed, it was sedition to debate the king’s prerogative, then ‘all of our law books are seditious, for they have ever done it.’”<sup>56</sup> The Commons resented James’s challenge to free speech, even though he had compromised by suggesting that he levy no more impositions (additional customs duties) without Parliament’s approval.<sup>57</sup>

Although his first Parliament ended on this rather negative note, the speeches James delivered during its nearly seven-year existence demonstrate his broadmindedness and wisdom. He was willing to discuss the Union with Parliament and compromise with them. He saw its economic and political advantages when few did. James also renounced religious persecution; he prudently resisted public pressure to lead an anti-Catholic campaign. His skills as a rhetorician are evident in his famous speech of 19 March 1610, where he spoke so diplomatically that even those who disagreed with his theory of absolutism could not find fault with his speech. Although his political ideology was different from that of many MPs’, he endeavored to work with rather than against them.

### *The Addled Parliament*

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<sup>55</sup> John Chamberlain, *The Letters of John Chamberlain*, ed. Norman Egbert McClure (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1979), 1:301.

<sup>56</sup> Sommerville, *Royalists and Patriots*, 153.

<sup>57</sup> Willson, *James VI and I*, 265.

James set out to make the parliament of 1614 “a parleamente of love.”<sup>58</sup> In his speech on 8 April he acknowledged that the last Parliament left both parties discontented. He expressed his hope that this one would “begine with concorde and love, and contynue so.”<sup>59</sup> He also expressed concern over “the great increase in Poperie” and asked that the laws already in place be executed.<sup>60</sup> After speaking briefly about his daughter’s marriage to Frederick V, Elector Palatinate (a sacrifice on his part, he said, for the “establishmente of religion and the comonewelthe”), he appealed for a relationship with Parliament based on trust.<sup>61</sup> He said that he had “chosene to relye on... good affectyones” instead of stretching his prerogative.<sup>62</sup> He concluded by ardently denying his involvement with undertakers (people who attempted to influence the elections to the 1614 Parliament).<sup>63</sup> His speech appears to have been well received. John Chamberlain noted, for example, that James “made a long and excellent speech” and “very fair promises” to Parliament.<sup>64</sup>

Three days later James addressed Parliament again. He reemphasized his “sinceritye and love” and declared his “intensyone to unburthen” his subjects of their “greefes.”<sup>65</sup> Again, he displayed his wisdom by saying that “persecushone was never a justefyed waye of establishinge relyeon.”<sup>66</sup> Still concerned about being associated with the undertakers, he asserted his innocence: “I nevere directely or indirectely dide prompte or hinder anye man in the free electyone.”<sup>67</sup> Because he had declared his love for and willingness to work with Parliament, he

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<sup>58</sup> Cobbett, *Parliamentary History*, 1:1153.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*, 1:1150.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*, 1:1151; Lockyer, *James VI and I*, 90.

<sup>62</sup> Cobbett, *Parliamentary History*, 1:1152.

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>64</sup> Thomas Birch, ed., *The Court and Times of James the First, Illustrated by Authentic and Confidential Letters from Various Public and Private Collections* (New York: AMS Press, 1973), 1:307.

<sup>65</sup> Cobbett, *Parliamentary History*, 1:1153, 1:1156.

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*, 1:1154.

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*, 1:1153.

reasoned that Parliament would be to blame if any future discord developed between him and Parliament. James dissolved Parliament less than two months later.

Although this Parliament also ended on bad terms, James deserves credit for emphasizing his love for and desire to work amicably with the MPs. Provided that they supply him with money, he was willing to listen to their grievances and make concessions. “The will of the king and the state cannot be disjoined,” he argued, “for the good of either must subsist together with the love of each.”<sup>68</sup> He offered concessions, but to no avail: Parliament continued to drag its feet without granting him subsidies, so James dissolved it.<sup>69</sup>

The first Parliament had failed over the Union and the attempt to give the Crown a permanent income through the Great Contract. The Parliament of 1614 had foundered on the issue of undertakers. It was so contentious and unsupportive that this Parliament has earned the epithet of the “Addled Parliament.” Roger Lockyer went so far as to call it “a dialogue of the deaf.”<sup>70</sup> But relations between James and Parliament became even more strained, as the issue of war in 1621 was added to perennial issues such as money and religion. James’s rhetorical skills were put to a more difficult test.

### *The Parliament of 1621*

The third Parliament convened in 1621. James’s son-in-law was embroiled in the 30 Years’ War, and James and his Privy Council called a Parliament in hopes of receiving money to build up England’s defenses. James was suffering so badly from arthritis that he had to be carried into Parliament to deliver his opening speech. Although he announced he did not wish to

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<sup>68</sup> Maija Jansson, ed., *Proceedings in parliament, 1614 (House of Commons)* (Philadelphia: American Philosophical Society, 1988), 44.

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*, 45.

<sup>70</sup> Lockyer, 91.



tire Parliament with long speeches, he spoke for over an hour.<sup>71</sup> Once again, he appealed for mutual understanding and love. He declared his preference for peace, but stated his intentions to prepare for war for the sake of his grandchildren. Outlining his conception of the role of Parliament, he told them their function was to grant him supply. In other words, raising money should be the MPs' primary (if not only) concern. Many MPs could not have appreciated his viewpoint.

Because of the impending Spanish Match between his son, Prince Charles, and the Spanish princess, James felt compelled throughout this session to reassure Parliament of his loyalty to the Protestant faith. Even while defending his religion, he prudently continued to prevent the persecution of Catholics: "as the foundation of our Church is not laid and simented with blood," he explained, "soe doe I hould it a great honour to our Religion that none is put to death for it."<sup>72</sup> He also repeatedly defended the Duke of Buckingham, his infamous favorite. On one occasion James demanded that Parliament punish Sir Henry Yelverton for slandering Buckingham.<sup>73</sup> Despite the King's best efforts, Parliament's contempt for Buckingham increased almost daily.

Aware of his subjects' concerns that he had intended to rule without a Parliament after 1614, James tried to assure MPs that he would have called them even if he were not in need of building up the military. "James," Robert Zaller observed, "had prepared his address with great care" and delivered it with "skillfull elision."<sup>74</sup> Zaller said it illustrates James's "sudden tempests of feeling, the alternation of cajolement and raillery, of candor and guile; the wit and

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<sup>71</sup> Willson, *James VI and I*, 417.

<sup>72</sup> Hastings, *Hastings Journal*, 24.

<sup>73</sup> Attorney General Yelverton had compared Buckingham to Hugh Spencer, a favorite of Edward II. Yelverton was eventually disgraced.

<sup>74</sup> Zaller, *Parliament of 1621*, 31, 33.

learning; the pungency, the sputter, [and] the force.”<sup>75</sup> This speech, too, was well received. The French ambassador Tillières described it as a beautiful, strong, and eloquent speech.<sup>76</sup>

Many of James’s contemporaries commented on the affection and respect the King and Parliament showed to each other. Reverend Joseph Mead wrote that James’s speech on 26 March was so pleasing to all in attendance that the King and various MPs “shed reciprocal tears.” Mead thought the day would become a holiday.<sup>77</sup> Thomas Belasyse remarked that James “used no pretext but was true and iust” in his speech on 2 June.<sup>78</sup> The Parliament of 1621 started out quite well, in large part because of James’s gracious speeches.

On 26 March James reiterated his concern for the public good and acknowledged Parliament to be the supreme court of justice in England. He flattered Parliament by saying “that the House of Commons at this time have shewed greater love, and used me with more respect in all their proceedings, than ever any House of Commons have heretofore done to mee.”<sup>79</sup> But James also revealed his impatience with the Commons’ dilatory proceedings. Pointing out “that time is precious,” he gave himself the office of “Baron-Tell-Clock” and begged them to consider “that all the time of the Parliament the busyness of my State lyes a bleeding.”<sup>80</sup> Unassumingly, he declared: “I hope you can bear me witness I have been willing and forward to do you all the good I may.”<sup>81</sup> He promised to yield to their grievances if they loosened their purse strings. In spite of all of James’s efforts, the harmony turned into discord, particularly after Parliament began to discuss the Spanish Match and foreign policy. James insisted that foreign policy was to be decided only by the monarch, so he angrily dissolved the Parliament.

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<sup>75</sup> *Ibid.*, 35.

<sup>76</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>77</sup> Birch, *Court and Times*, 2:245.

<sup>78</sup> Notestein, Relf, and Simpson, *Commons Debates*, 5:199.

<sup>79</sup> Rhodes, Richards, and Marshall, *Selected Writings*, 350.

<sup>80</sup> Notestein, Relf, and Simpson, *Commons Debates*, 2:304, 3:158.

<sup>81</sup> *Ibid.*, 2:305.

*The Prince's Parliament*

The Parliament of 1624 has been called the Prince's Parliament because Prince Charles (with the help of Buckingham) persuaded James to call a Parliament so that England could go to war with Spain. The failed Spanish Match left Charles embarrassed and vengeful. He maneuvered his father into planning for war against the King's own better judgment. James was in an awkward and strange position: he was no longer in control, but he still had his faculties and was capable of thinking independently. In his skillful opening speech, he declared, "never man, in a dry and sandy desert, where no water is, did thirst more in hot weather for drink, than I do now for a happy conclusion of this parl. I now hope, after the miscarriage of the last, that this may prove happy."<sup>82</sup> He asked Parliament for advice, which pleased the MPs and, as David L. Smith has noted, "defused the memory of 1621."<sup>83</sup> Although it did not commit the King to any action, his speech satisfied the country's warmongers.

Nowhere in James's speeches to his four Parliaments is his profound wisdom more apparent than in his declarations about war. With his unwavering preference for peace, James stood against the majority of his subjects, first by ending the war with Spain in 1604, and later by doing his best to prevent war at the end of his reign. Having adopted "*Beati pacifici* [Blessed are the peacemakers]" as his motto, he believed it was an "unchristian thing to seek that by blood which may be had by peace."<sup>84</sup> As poorly as James handled his personal finances, he understood more than his son what the "effusion of Christian blood" would really cost England, both corporeally and monetarily.<sup>85</sup> Consequently, he was firmly against declaring war or severing contacts with Spain without Parliament first committing the funds for it: "to enter into a war

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<sup>82</sup> Cobbett, *Parliamentary History*, 1:1376.

<sup>83</sup> Smith, *Stuart Parliaments*, 111.

<sup>84</sup> Young, *King James*, 78; Tanner, *Constitutional Documents*, 297.

<sup>85</sup> Cobbett, *Parliamentary History*, 1:1404.

without sufficient means to support it were to shew my teeth and do no more,” he told them.<sup>86</sup>

Conrad Russell has shown that James’s assessment—that six subsidies and twelve 15ths were required—was an underestimate, yet it was a closer estimate than any others put forth.<sup>87</sup>

By 1624 James was becoming increasingly self-conscious of his age. He wanted to put his finances in order before the end of his reign, and especially before a potential costly war with Spain. Parliament was aware of James’s large debts. Despite the King’s numerous assurances that the money he received would be used to prepare for war, Parliament (cognizant of his former profligacy and aversion to war) was worried that he would use the money for other purposes. They demanded that the money be appropriated.

Willson criticized James’s dealings with the Parliament of 1624. He argued that James had become feeble-minded and had begun to show signs of premature senility. “Business became more burdensome, decisions more difficult, fears more acute, [and] emotions more overpowering,” Willson wrote.<sup>88</sup> There is some evidence for this assessment. Chamberlain wrote to Sir Dudley Carleton that “divers speaches and aunswers from the King have ben so misunderstood, or so cloudie, that they have had need of interpretations and explanations.”<sup>89</sup> James undoubtedly remained ambiguous at times and vacillated. For example, he began by asking Parliament for advice, but he later told them that God was his ultimate counsellor and that he needed to keep a secret council of war. On the other hand, Willson failed to recognize that James wanted and needed to keep his options open. He did not want to commit to any one course of action during such a tumultuous time in foreign affairs. In fact, he did not really want to go to war at all. He was caught between his own foreign policy and that of Prince Charles and

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<sup>86</sup> Tanner, *Constitutional Documents*, 298.

<sup>87</sup> Conrad Russell, *Parliaments and English Politics, 1621-1629* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1979), 186.

<sup>88</sup> Willson, *King James VI and I*, 378.

<sup>89</sup> Chamberlain, *Letters*, 2:548.

Buckingham. The ambiguity that resulted was not because James had become incompetent, but because he was attempting to reconcile his son's foreign policy with his own.

James was at his most ambiguous when he spoke to Parliament on behalf of Lionel Cranfield, 1<sup>st</sup> Earl of Middlesex and Lord Treasurer, on 5 May. Middlesex had openly opposed the war with Spain and, consequently, the House of Commons (at the urging of Charles and Buckingham) impeached him for corruption. James reminded Parliament that any punishments they dole out "must ever be bounded in measure and moderation."<sup>90</sup> He spoke favorably about Middlesex and justified the Treasurer's actions. All "Treasurers, if they do good service to their masters, must be generally hated," he argued.<sup>91</sup> He ended his speech on an entirely different note, however. If "falshood and treachery" were to be found in any of his servants, he promised that his love for them would cease.<sup>92</sup> This speech, Chamberlain wrote, "was so ambiguous that yt might receve a contrarie construction."<sup>93</sup> James sent mixed signals because he knew how prudent it was for him not to obstruct an impeachment. Despite his awareness and appreciation of Middlesex's loyal service to the Crown, he could not openly oppose Charles and Buckingham. Furthermore, by allowing Parliament to attack his ministers rather than himself, the King avoided direct criticism and retained Parliament's favor.<sup>94</sup> These processes of thought and behaviors, though intelligible considering the circumstances, left MPs scratching their heads.

Although James's speeches in 1624 were more ambiguous and contradictory than heretofore, they were nevertheless carefully constructed. In fact, James thought his speech on 26 March was the best received of all the speeches he delivered to Parliament.<sup>95</sup> James's wisdom

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<sup>90</sup> *Journal of the House of Lords* (London: n.p., 1767), 2:1218.

<sup>91</sup> *Ibid.*, 2:1219.

<sup>92</sup> *Ibid.*, 2:1220.

<sup>93</sup> Chamberlain, *Letters*, 2:559.

<sup>94</sup> Smith, *Stuart Parliaments*, 115.

<sup>95</sup> Robert E. Ruigh, ed., *The Parliament of 1621: Politics and Foreign Policy* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1971), 23.

and thoughtfulness remains apparent in his arguments and hesitations about going to war, but his insights have been dismissed because of the somewhat incoherent ways he expressed himself, as the circumstances forced him to promote a foreign policy he personally did not support. He attempted to appease his son, his favorite, and his own conscience, but by doing so he ended up acting senile.

When one reads James's speeches chronologically, one finds that James evolved as a speechmaker. His earlier speeches were lofty and beset with political theory, scholarship, and assumptions that Parliament would acquiesce to his policies. Conversely, his later speeches were founded on reason and persuasion. He also appeared more at ease on the English throne. To pull at the MPs' heartstrings and, hence, purse strings, he became more colloquial and pragmatic. In his opening speech in 1621, for example, he expressed his discontent with the political situation in Bohemia by saying he was not content to see crowns tossed "up and down...like tennis balls."<sup>96</sup> He modified his delivery to appease his audience.

Throughout his twenty years of delivering speeches to Parliament, James demonstrated his ability to turn a phrase and organize his speeches. James was an opinionated, articulate, and intelligent individual. Although his words jarred Parliament at times, his March 1610 speech proves he was diplomatic and capable of ingratiating himself with Parliament. When one reads James's speeches, it becomes clear that he was forward thinking and deeply desirous of an amicable relationship with Parliament. James was capable of adapting and capitulating (particularly about the Union) when money was at stake.

James was aware of his many attributes and considered himself to be a most competent monarch, but he was less cognizant of the fact that his fervent belief in divine right monarchy and his self-confidence led him to be impatient, imperious, pompous, and pontificating at times.

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<sup>96</sup> Notestein, Relf, and Simpson, *Commons Debates*, 2:10.

Moreover, by continually asking the tightfisted Parliament for money, he was setting himself up for failure. Evidence exists, then, for nearly all of the analyses cited earlier. In the balance of this paper, I will provide the subtler, more sophisticated and imaginative examination of James as speechmaker that has been lacking.

### **James's Self-Fashioning**

In *Basilicon Doron* (1599), his treatise on government, James observed, “a King is as one set on a stage, whose smallest actions and gestures, all the people gazingly doe behold.”

Although “a King be neuer so præcise in the discharging of his Office, the people, who seeth but the outward part, will euer iudge of the substance.”<sup>97</sup> He explained at length:

Kings being publike persons, by reason of their office and authority, are as it were set (as it was said of old) vpon a publike stage, in the sight of all the people; where all the beholders eyes are attentiuely bent to looke and pry in the least circumstance of their secretest drifts: Which should make the Kings the more carefull not to harbour the secretest thoughts in their minde.<sup>98</sup>

James repeated this view in his famous speech of 21 March 1610 when he said: “Kings Actions (euen in the secretest places) are as the actions of those that are set vpon the Stages.”<sup>99</sup> This idea of a king being on display and performing seems to have preyed on his mind. He was perpetually self-conscious of his words and actions. Because he was an actor on a stage, James was able to don a persona and fashion an image of himself for others to see. As a foreigner from Scotland with a disreputable personal life (historians have long documented “the drinking, gambling, ... sexual antics.... [and] sleaze” of his court), it was to his advantage if he could fashion a positive image of himself as the Philosopher King or as *Rex Pacificus*, King of Peace.<sup>100</sup> One of the best chances for him to shape his image and shore up his reputation was

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<sup>97</sup> Sommerville, *Political Writings*, 49.

<sup>98</sup> *Ibid.*, 4.

<sup>99</sup> *Ibid.*, 184.

<sup>100</sup> S. J. Houston, *James I*, 2d ed. (London: Longman, 1995), 111.

when he delivered speeches to Parliament. Each speech he delivered presented an opportunity to make a good impression.

Stephen Greenblatt, a literary theorist, explained that the concept of self-fashioning resulted from “an increased self-consciousness about the fashioning of human identity as a manipulable, artful process” in early modern England.<sup>101</sup> First and foremost, self-fashioning requires some kind of textual or dramatic language, a vehicle through which one defines oneself. Spoken language is interpreted by each audience member and, hence, is publicly significant. Individual speech acts are scrutinized, making every person a Sidney or Donne in his or her own way. People are poets articulating themselves to a particular audience in a particular place and time. James was cognizant of this process. He understood that his words, like those of other early modern poets, would be interpreted and that his performances would be judged.

Self-fashioning also involves a comparison between the self-fashioned and a threatening, chaotic, or negative Other.<sup>102</sup> The self-fashioned defines himself or herself in large part by standing in opposition to the alien Other. For James, the Other varied from fanatical Catholics to warmongers to evil kings. Using carefully constructed language, the King often defined himself in opposition to the Other. On 8 April 1614, for example, James told Parliament: “I will meete you oftene in this kynd [Parliament] to shewe myself contrarye to all tyrants, who love not advisynge with their subjectes, but hate parleamentes; but moste I desyre to meete with you when I mighte aske you nothings, but that we mighte conferre together freelye.”<sup>103</sup> By presenting himself in contrast to tyrants who dislike parliaments, James fashioned himself as a benevolent King who loves and respects Parliament.

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<sup>101</sup> Stephen Greenblatt, *Renaissance Self-Fashioning: From More to Shakespeare* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980), 2.

<sup>102</sup> *Ibid.*, 9.

<sup>103</sup> Cobbett, *Parliamentary History*, 1:1157.



Greenblatt explained that people in positions of great power, such as monarchs, “have the means to enforce their elaborate, theatrical ceremonies of pride.”<sup>104</sup> A consequence of this theatricality is that those in power become particularly self-reflexive and self-estranged as they attempt to fulfill the roles they have created for themselves. In other words, rather than asking, “What do I think?” James asked himself, “What would *James* think?”<sup>105</sup> James felt constant pressure to look at himself with the eyes of a stranger so that he could uphold and market his image to others while in public.

Jonathan Goldberg, another literary scholar, delved into James’s metaphor of the king as actor on a stage and explained its slipperiness. On the one hand, James could play whatever role he chose while on public display. Although the king played his chosen part carefully, his audience was still free to misinterpret his words and actions.<sup>106</sup> James, then, was “a divided king, convinced on the one hand of his integrity, on the other of a disparity between ‘outward appearance’ and ‘inward intention’.... [He] both [believed] and [disbelieved] in the transparency of his show.”<sup>107</sup> His challenge was to present himself favorably to his subjects and impress them while preventing them from misinterpreting him or prying into his “secretest drifts”.

Much of what has been said about James’s self-fashioning in his writings applies to his speeches. Daniel Fischlin and Mark Fortier argued that James accumulated a “vast and inexorable repertoire of devices by which absolute power could make itself known.”<sup>108</sup> Whenever possible, they explained, James used his words to demonstrate his intimate relationship with God. His writings also “display a sophisticated, self-reflexive recognition of

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<sup>104</sup> Greenblatt, *Self-Fashioning*, 14.

<sup>105</sup> *Ibid.*, 31.

<sup>106</sup> Jonathan Goldberg, *James I and the Politics of Literature: Jonson, Shakespeare, Donne, and Their Contemporaries* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1989), 114.

<sup>107</sup> *Ibid.*, 114-115.

<sup>108</sup> Fischlin and Fortier, “‘Enregistrate Speech,’” 44.

the power of the word.”<sup>109</sup> James, they concluded, “was a complex character, whose literariness was a symptom of a carefully staged public persona as well as a means to shape the private motivations that gave way to public discourse.”<sup>110</sup>

James was acutely aware of his presence on the public stage in Parliament and attempted to fashion himself while delivering speeches. He painstakingly strove to present himself as an authoritative, wise, and pious intellectual paragon who was loyal to the English and worthy of sitting on the English throne. He attempted to fashion his subjects’ minds to match his.

#### *Mentis Mundus Jacobi* (James’s Intellectual World)

As one of the most highly educated and scholarly monarchs ever to sit upon the English throne, James had a thorough knowledge of the Bible, political and religious theory, the Classics, poetics, mythology, and history. He believed it was one of his chief duties to educate and enlighten his subjects. It was especially important for him to emphasize the breadth of his knowledge during his first few years in England as he attempted to prove his intelligence and gentility in a country generally hostile to his native Scotland. Consequently, he attempted to fashion himself as “Britain’s Solomon,” a strong, authoritative scholar of religion, politics, and English common law. To carefully construct his mental world for others and to parade his knowledge, he rounded out his speeches with many Latin phrases and allusions.

Latin tags were commonly used among the well-educated in Jacobean England. For example, “*Mart. licet toto nunc Helicone frui* [We may now enjoy full draughts of Helicon]” is the epigraph to Ben Jonson’s panegyric on James’s first speech to Parliament.<sup>111</sup> James’s use of Latin phrases displays both his knowledge of the Latin language and his familiarity with the

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<sup>109</sup> Ibid., 46.

<sup>110</sup> Ibid., 43.

<sup>111</sup> Jonson, “Panegyre,” 341.

Vulgate. He began his speech of 21 March 1610 by quoting from Proverbs in Latin. James was familiar enough with the Latin language to engage in wordplay at opportune moments. He told Parliament, “*Cor Regis is in manu Domini* [The king’s heart is in the hand of the Lord],” and then declared, “So wil I now set *Cor Regis in oculis populi* [The king’s heart in the eyes of the people].”<sup>112</sup> Here and elsewhere James hoped to impress Parliament and reinforce his image as an intellectual.

James alluded to everything in his speeches—from the Bible to mythology to history. His speeches are filled with allusions, a vast majority of which are Biblical. He quoted the Bible with ease and used his exegesis to support his contentions. James’s audience would have understood his many indirect references. In his opening speech alone, for example, he alluded to King David, Rehoboam, and Jesus: he hoped to be as successful in peace as David was in war, announced that he does not wish to increase his subjects’ burdens and divide his realm as Rehoboam did, and declared himself to be a Christ-like shepherd of his sheep (subjects). In addition, he quoted from the Psalms, Luke, and St. Paul. He concluded by quoting Ezekias, King of Judah, to assure his people that he is God’s regent in England: “*the Thrones that you sit on are Gods, and neither yours nor mine,*” he affirmed.<sup>113</sup> On 5 April 1614, shortly after the death of his son, Henry, he told Parliament that God has given him “afflycyones of Jobe, so hathe he gevene me the patyense”—he hoped to emphasize his sufferings and perseverance so as to win the respect of the MPs.<sup>114</sup>

Throughout his speeches to Parliament, James drew upon Old Testament figures that embody loyalty, love, power, and wisdom. He wanted to be perceived as pious and associated with to Biblical persons. At James’s funeral, Bishop John Williams said that “never...two Kings

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<sup>112</sup> Sommerville, *Political Writings*, 179. Proverbs 21:1.

<sup>113</sup> Rhodes, Richards, and Marshall, *Selected Writings*, 302.

<sup>114</sup> Cobbett, *Parliamentary History*, 1:1151.

more fully parallell'd amongst themselves, and better distinguished from all other Kings besides themselves” than James and King Solomon. Williams cited many comparisons between the two monarchs, proving that at least some of James’s subjects bought into James’s self-fashioning as England’s Solomon.<sup>115</sup> He thus succeeded in using the Bible and Biblical allusions to his advantage.

James also alluded to classical mythology in his speeches. For example, he warned Parliament on 18 November 1605 not to “soar... so near the sun with... wings of wax” as Icarus did by challenging his authority; God would punish them for slander, he argued.<sup>116</sup> In 1610 he explained that God tortures ministers who exceed their limitations “like Tantalus,” and in 1607 he said that the Union would bring about peace and, hence, close the gates of the Roman temple of Janus.<sup>117</sup> While answering Parliament’s remonstrance on 13 March 1624, James asserted that he had not yet declared an opinion about England’s treaties with Spain. If he had settled on an opinion, he would have made it known and acted upon it: “When Jupiter speaks, he uses to join his thunder to it; and a king should not speak, except he maintain it by action,” he explained.<sup>118</sup> Such allusions harkened back to Roman civilization and the *Pax Romana*. His mythological allusions conjured up evocative images as he clarified his intentions and supported his contentions. As a peace-loving monarch who was trying to create a *Pax Britannia*, these allusions were especially significant.

James occasionally drew upon history—both recent English history and ancient history—to bolster his arguments. He recalled the Wars of the Roses in his first speech to Parliament, reminding the MPs that he was “justly and lineally descended” from both the Houses of

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<sup>115</sup> Ashton, *Contemporaries*, 19.

<sup>116</sup> Cobbett, *Parliamentary History*, 1:1072.

<sup>117</sup> Sommerville, *Political Writings*, 188; Rhodes, Richards, and Marshall, *Selected Writings*, 323.

<sup>118</sup> Cobbett, *Parliamentary History*, 1:1396.

Lancaster and York.<sup>119</sup> He instructed Parliament to praise God for their deliverance from the Gunpowder Plot in 1605 just as Scipio told his tribunes to give thanks for their deliverance from Hannibal.<sup>120</sup> He alluded to Cicero and compared Elizabeth's victories for England to Caesar's victories for Rome.<sup>121</sup> As he supported Parliament's censure of John Cowell, he reasoned that "*Alexander* the great, for all his learning, ... [should] neuer haue thought himselfe a god."<sup>122</sup> Since James was known to have encouraged sycophancy at his court and subscribed to divine right theory, he may have attempted to use this instance to fashion a more acceptable image of himself.

James's allusions reveal much about the sources he drew upon for insight. They also reveal he was a very learned man who had a vast bank of knowledge. James's main authority was the Bible. He believed Solomon to be "the wisest king and man that ever was," and he egotistically compared himself to the Biblical king on multiple occasions.<sup>123</sup> In addition to drawing heavily upon the teachings of the Bible, James often turned to Virgil, Lucan, and other Romans. He quoted Lucan to thank his subjects during his first speech, for example. When he was at a loss for words after the revelation of the Gunpowder Plot, he quoted Virgil: "*Vox faucibus hæret* [my voice sticks in my throat]," he said.<sup>124</sup> James subscribed to the historian Tacitus's belief that "*In corruptissima Republica plurimæ leges* [in the worst commonwealths are the most laws]" and repeatedly encouraged Parliament not to waste their time (and his) by debating and making new laws.<sup>125</sup> James's repeated use of these allusions reveals that he

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<sup>119</sup> Rhodes, Richards, and Marshall, *Selected Writings*, 295.

<sup>120</sup> Sommerville, *Political Writings*, 151.

<sup>121</sup> Jansson, *Proceedings*, 44, 141.

<sup>122</sup> Sommerville, *Political Writings*, 180.

<sup>123</sup> Notestein, Relf, and Simpson, *Commons Debates*, 2:2.

<sup>124</sup> Rhodes, Richards, and Marshall, *Selected Writings*, 304; Sommerville, *Political Writings*, 149.

<sup>125</sup> Rhodes, Richards, and Marshall, *Selected Writings*, 302.

considered himself to be on the same plane as the great monarchs and that he wanted MPs to know that they were in the presence of greatness.

James's allusions and Latin phrases add much to his speeches, yet they diminished in number throughout the years. By the end of his reign, he had firmly established himself as King of England; he had ample opportunities to put his knowledge on display. Additionally, James may have reduced the number of allusions because he was aware of the fact that Parliament did not appreciate the length of his orations. In 1614 he said, "I meane to... hastene our busenes," and at the opening of the 1621 Parliament he declared, "I never mean to weary myself nor you with such tedious discourses as I have done heretofore."<sup>126</sup> It was prudent of James to attempt to shorten the length of his speeches. MPs such as Sir Ralph Winwood commented on the length of the King's speeches. In his diary Winwood wrote, "the King's Majesty used an Eloquent and very long Speech, which continued an houre and a halfe."<sup>127</sup> Although Winwood appreciated the content and presentation of the speech, he did not appreciate its length. James learned to cut back on the number of allusions he skillfully wove into his speeches, but his speeches remained quite long, as he could never refrain fully from instructing Parliament. Although he could do away with many allusions, it was still his duty to enlighten his subjects. He continued to fashion himself as the learned and wise ruler.

### *James's Figurative Language*

James was by no means the only monarch who fashioned himself to his subjects. Elizabeth had secured the throne by fashioning herself as England's chaste wife and mother. Whether or not she was truly a virgin, she coquettishly emphasized her virginity. When

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<sup>126</sup> Cobbett, *Parliamentary History*, 1:1156; Notestein, Relf, and Simpson, *Commons Debates*, 2:2.

<sup>127</sup> Ashton, *Contemporaries*, 66.

Parliament and her Privy Council prompted her to marry, she pointed to her coronation ring and replied, “I am already bound unto an husband, which is the kingdom of England.”<sup>128</sup> Just as Jesus is married to the Church, Elizabeth was married to England. In her famous Golden Speech to Parliament on 30 November 1601, Elizabeth shrewdly stated that the love of her people meant more to her than any earthly treasure. She touchingly declared, “though you have had and may have many princes more mighty and wise sitting in this seat, yet you never had or shall have any that will be more careful and loving.”<sup>129</sup> She concluded by asking that all members of Parliament kiss her hand before returning to their homes. Elizabeth used the mother and wife metaphors to her advantage, and she encouraged her subjects to view her as an almost superhuman monarch.

James employed similar images and metaphors to secure his subjects’ goodwill and, consequently, the crown. The King echoed Elizabeth’s words in his 21 March 1610 speech when he said, “the hearts and riches of the people, are the Kings greatest treasure.”<sup>130</sup> He presented himself as a father to his subjects. Under “the Law of Nature” he had the right and duty to exercise “*Patriam potestatem* [fatherly power],” which included the power of life and death over his subjects.<sup>131</sup> Moreover, he believed it was his duty to provide Parliament with appropriate “fatherly admonitions” and praise.<sup>132</sup> By comparing himself to a didactic father, James also gave himself the authority to discipline his subjects. Just as “a Father may dispose of his Inheritance to his children, at his pleasure...banish out of his presence...or restore them in fauour againe,” he explained as he illustrated his divinely-sanctioned powers, so “may the King

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<sup>128</sup> Leah S. Marcus, Janel Mueller, and Mary Beth Rose, *Elizabeth I: Collected Works* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 59.

<sup>129</sup> *Ibid.*, 340.

<sup>130</sup> Sommerville, *Political Writings*, 195.

<sup>131</sup> *Ibid.*, 182.

<sup>132</sup> Cobbett, *Parliamentary History*, 1:1504.

deale with his Subjects.”<sup>133</sup> This metaphor assisted James in emphasizing his love for his people as well as his authority. He further emulated Elizabeth in 1621, when he professed his “fatherly love,” and in 1624, when he called himself “a king, who ever was, and still will be the father of” England.<sup>134</sup>

Although he utilized this parental image to fashion himself as a loving monarch, it also worked against him. Various MPs and historians believed he was being condescending. MP Thomas Belasyse reported in his diary that the King said the Commons’ reasons for protesting an adjournment were “but childishe.”<sup>135</sup> Samuel R. Gardiner, among other prominent historians, believed that James scolded “them...in...[a] flippant strain” on more than one occasion and that this faulty approach significantly contributed to the discord between the King and Parliament.<sup>136</sup>

James was more successful in presenting himself as his subjects’ husband. Sid Ray argued that “it was good political spin to compare rulers and subjects to husbands and wives. Marriage, after all, was considered to be an idyllic and natural state, a consummation of God’s wishes” and the foundation of social order.<sup>137</sup> The marriage analogy enabled James to domesticate his political power and present himself as a monarch devoted to his people. It “is a very fit similitude for a king and his people to be likened to a husband and wife,” he explained on 19 February 1624:

for, even as Christ, in whose throne I sit in this part of the earth, is the husband to the church and the church his spouse, so I likewise desire to be your husband, and you should be my spouse; and, therefore, as it is the husband’s part to cherish his wife, to entreat her kindly, to reconcile himself towards her, and procure her love by all means, so it is my part to do the like to my people.<sup>138</sup>

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<sup>133</sup> Sommerville, *Political Writings*, 182.

<sup>134</sup> Notestein, Relf, and Simpson, *Commons Debates*, 3:155; Cobbett, *Parliamentary History*, 1:1504.

<sup>135</sup> Notestein, Relf, and Simpson, *Commons Debates*, 5:199.

<sup>136</sup> Samuel R. Gardiner, *History of England from the Accession of James I to the Outbreak of the Civil War, 1603-1642* (London: Longmans, Greene, and Co., 1883), 1:191.

<sup>137</sup> Sid Ray, *Holy Estates: Marriage and Monarchy in Shakespeare and His Contemporaries* (Selinsgrove: Susquehanna University Press, 2004), 16.

<sup>138</sup> Cobbett, *Parliamentary History*, 1:1373.



Likening himself to Christ at a time when England was on the brink of war with Spain, James attempted to increase his power over his subjects and prove his love, loyalty, and willingness to make sacrifices for them.

When he was not as desperate for subsidies as he was in 1624, James employed the marriage metaphor to justify his absolute and patriarchal authority. Wives were considered the inferior, weaker parties in marriages—they had no power to reproach their husbands and were expected to be subservient. In his opening speech to Parliament in 1604, James matter-of-factly asserted, “What God hath conjoyned then, let no man separate. I am the Husband, and all the whole Isle is my lawfull Wife....”<sup>139</sup> In other words, it was his subjects’ wifely duty to advance the Union and save him from being “a Polygamist and husband to two wives.”<sup>140</sup> Parliament nevertheless opposed the Union, thereby “annulling” the marriage analogy in this context. The King finally admitted defeat in 1610.

Although James made use of the familial tropes, he used them less successfully than his predecessor did. These metaphors worked well for Elizabeth because it was fitting for women to speak of love and because she actually *was* single and could be devoted to England. The only constant and true love in her life was England, and she sacrificed herself for her subjects by remaining chaste. James, on the other hand, was a married male who most certainly was not celibate. Rather than invoking ideal images of husbands and wives, he invoked domestic, patriarchal, and realistic ones that were uninviting to Parliament. Moreover, his subjects already considered him effeminate because of his sexual orientation and promiscuity, relative religious tolerance, and preference for peace. They wanted a macho King James who spoke of and

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<sup>139</sup> Rhodes, Richards, and Marshall, *Selected Writings*, 297.

<sup>140</sup> *Ibid.*

actively engaged in war rather than a Queen James who spoke of love and peace. For these reasons, this imagery was not as effective for James.

James employed another domestic image: the King as England's gardener. On more than one occasion he compared Parliament to a garden that needed tending. When he spoke to Parliament on 2 May 1607, he wanted to reassure them that he had no intentions of reiterating all his arguments for the Union. He told them, "I shall do but the part of a good gardener, to prune, and dress, and take away the weeds and brambles, that may hinder the springing and budding of this good plant [his advice]."<sup>141</sup> On 17 February 1621 he asserted that there "hath beene noe slacknes neither in pruneing nor plantinge nor rooteinge out the weedes that may hinder the growthe" of true religion.<sup>142</sup> Rather than fashioning himself as a nurturer, he fashioned himself as one who diligently cuts back, designs, and controls. This metaphor was also more masculine because men in early modern England were the ones who gardened.

His simile is not original, however. For example, the gardener of Shakespeare's *Richard II* (1595) says, "O, what pity is it / That he [Richard] had not so trimm'd and dress'd his land / As we this garden!"<sup>143</sup> Even so, James presented himself as an exemplar of order by using this domestic simile. As God gardened Eden, so James tends to his "sea-walled garden," this "demi-paradise...[and] blessed plot" that is Great Britain.<sup>144</sup> A wild, overrun England was James's "Other," and the King took it upon himself to tame and rearrange it.

James also made frequent use of the traditional metaphor in which the monarch is the head of a body and his or her subjects are its other parts.<sup>145</sup> "I am the Head, and it [Great

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<sup>141</sup> Cobbett, *Parliamentary History*, 1:1115.

<sup>142</sup> Notestein, Relf, and Simpson, *Commons Debates*, 4:71.

<sup>143</sup> Shakespeare, William, *King Richard II*, ed. Peter Ure (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1956), 3.4.55-57, p. 121, 2.1.42-49, pp. 50-53.

<sup>144</sup> *Ibid.*, 3.4.43, p. 120.

<sup>145</sup> Rhodes, Richards, and Marshall, *Selected Writings*, 297 n8.

Britain] is my Body; I am the Shepherd, and it is my flocke,” he proclaimed in 1604.<sup>146</sup> “The Head is the King, the Body are the members of the Parliament.... subdiuided into two parts; The Vpper and Lower House,” he continued in 1605.<sup>147</sup> He articulated his belief more fully on 30 January 1621, when he said a “parliament in general is a thing compounded of a head and a body; the head is the monarch that calleth it.... [and] all [parliaments] are nothing else but the head that calls the body together.”<sup>148</sup> This trope functioned to uphold the idea of the king as intellectually and socially superior to his people.

With this superiority came particular prerogatives for the head that cannot be amended by the body, James argued. “Kings are compared to the head of this Microcosme of the body of man,” James declared. He extended his metaphor by explaining that “the head hath the power of directing all the members of the body to that vse which the iudgement in the head thinkes most conuenient. It may apply sharpe cures, or cut off corrupt members, let blood in what proportion it thinkes fit, and as the body may spare, but yet is all this power ordeined by God.”<sup>149</sup> Here, James avowed that God placed him at the head (both literally and figuratively) of the English government to make the proper decisions for the country; he believed his powers included being able to amputate or isolate certain members of his court, Parliament, or populace for the good of the whole. Although they did not always produce the intended results, the metaphors and analogies helped James to fashion an image of himself as a watchful, wise, powerful, and pious monarch. By defining himself in many different ways, he painted a more dynamic portrait of himself for his subjects to admire.

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<sup>146</sup> *Ibid.*, 297.

<sup>147</sup> Sommerville, *Political Writings*, 155.

<sup>148</sup> Notestein, Relf, and Simpson, *Commons Debates*, 2:3. See also Foster, *Proceedings*, 2:104-106. “But to take from the body and give to the head is proper, for the body cannot be sustained without the head.... The supply of the king is the good of the people, and there is no more division between the king and the people than between the head and the body.”

<sup>149</sup> Sommerville, *Political Writings*, 182.

James's analogies are undoubtedly evocative, and his use of them is impressive to modern historians, but were they effective in the seventeenth century? J. P. Sommerville argued, "there is little evidence that early Stuart writers placed any particular weight on arguments by analogy": they merely *illustrated* ideas with analogy.<sup>150</sup> He believed their "political thought was essentially historical thought" based on facts and similarities.<sup>151</sup> E. M. W. Tillyard's traditional view stands in stark contrast to Sommerville's. In his seminal work, *The Elizabethan World Picture*, Tillyard asserted that "correspondences" carried real persuasive power. Elizabethans, he argued, "[hovered] between equivalence and metaphor" as they struggled to tame their early modern world.<sup>152</sup> While keeping main concepts intact, they interpreted the details to find order and make connections with things they were already familiar with. "The great mathematical equivalence and the temporary metaphorical one" were "simultaneously created," Tillyard concluded.<sup>153</sup> However, James's England was different from Elizabeth's: 25 years after James's death the body politic would literally cut off the head of state. It is entirely possible, then, that the metaphorical language of James was becoming antiquated and, as Sommerville suggested, a mere illustration rather than a direct correspondence.

### *Inside the Crystal Mirror*

Of all the figurative language that James employed in his speeches, none stands out more than the crystal mirror. Several times he began or concluded his speeches by expressing his wish "that there were a Christall window in...[his] brest, wherein all ... people might see the secretest

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<sup>150</sup> Sommerville, *Royalists and Patriots*, 53.

<sup>151</sup> *Ibid.*, 52.

<sup>152</sup> E. M. W. Tillyard, *The Elizabethan World Picture* (New York: Macmillan Company, 1944), 99-100.

<sup>153</sup> *Ibid.*, 100.

thoughts of...[his] heart.”<sup>154</sup> This “great and rare Present, which is a faire and Christall Mirror” of his heart and mind was not a reflective mirror in which Parliament could see their own faces, but transparent so that they could have the unique opportunity to see the heart of their King.<sup>155</sup> James fervently wanted his subjects to perceive him as genuine and true to his word. He wanted to build good rapport with Parliament. Once a relationship of mutual trust could be formed, he believed, Parliament would not hesitate to grant him his subsidies.

The mirror—a novel technological marvel—was a central image or metaphor in Jacobean England.<sup>156</sup> To get his mother to listen to her conscience, for example, Hamlet told Gertrude, “You go not till I set you up a glass / Where you may see the inmost part of you.”<sup>157</sup> But mirrors were not only considered reflective surfaces for self-contemplation: mirror images could be moral paragons that were supposed to have a didactic or inspirational effect on those who looked at them. The monarch was to be one such paragon. Other mirrors were people who had characteristics to be avoided rather than emulated. Mirrors such as the mirror in *A Mirror for Magistrates* (1559), which served as a guide for administrators, and the mirror James speaks of, reflected outward as well as back to the reflected.

James and his contemporaries believed that mirrors could expose the truth by revealing things unseen by the naked eye. “The most obvious value of the mirror,” Herbert Grabes elucidated, “is the opportunity it affords one to inspect one’s external appearance and, if necessary, to correct or improve it.”<sup>158</sup> The idea of a monarch as a mirror for his or her subjects had circulated in England for about four centuries before James ascended the throne.<sup>159</sup>

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<sup>154</sup> Sommerville, *Political Writings*, 153.

<sup>155</sup> *Ibid.*, 179.

<sup>156</sup> Herbert Grabes, *The Mutable Glass: Mirror-Imagery in Titles and Texts of the Middle Ages and English Renaissance*, trans. Gordon Collier (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), 3.

<sup>157</sup> William Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, ed. Harold Jenkins (London: Methuen & Co., 1982), 3.4.18-19, p. 319.

<sup>158</sup> Grabes, *Mutable Glass*, 136.

<sup>159</sup> *Ibid.*, 79

Especially since he perceived himself to be perpetually on a stage, James considered himself to be reflecting outward as a model of magnanimity, nobility, wisdom, and justice. He and others believed he reflected God because he occupied God's throne on earth. That being the case, subjects could imitate him while striving to be more pleasing to God. In this sense, the mirror was "not taken as an image of the present, as is the case with the literal mirror, but rather as" a mirror in a reflecting telescope, which projected "an image of what is to come" or what could be.<sup>160</sup>

When James spoke of a crystal mirror to Parliament, however, he was usually expressing his belief in his own transparency. The "more the people know the reason of my doings," he explained on 21 May 1610, "'twill be the more for my honor."<sup>161</sup> He attempted to fashion himself as an honorable monarch who made his intentions known. But Parliament did not always accept the mirror that James presented to them. When Parliament doubted James's promise to not go over their heads by issuing proclamations, he disappointedly responded, "I once delivered a mirroure of my heart And it was trodden under foote."<sup>162</sup> Earlier, on 31 January 1621, he said that some members, "through a spice of envy have made all my speech heretofore turn like spittle against the wind upon mine own face."<sup>163</sup> He could neither fathom why Parliament thought he was being crooked nor why they were distorting the meaning behind his words. Consequently, James believed they were wronging him and his mirror. In the conclusion of his speech to Parliament on 21 March 1610, he attempted to persuade MPs to treat his mirror with great care:

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<sup>160</sup> Ibid., 62.

<sup>161</sup> Foster, *Proceedings*, 2:105.

<sup>162</sup> Notestein, Relf, and Simpson, *Commons Debates*, 4:71-72.

<sup>163</sup> Ibid., 2:2.

Yee know that principally by three wayes yee may wrong a Mirrour. First, I pray you, looke not vpon my Mirrour with a false light: which yee doe, if ye mistake, or misvnderstand my Speach, and so alter the sence thereof.

But secondly, I pray you beware [not] to soile it with a foule breath, and vncleane hands: I meane, that yee peruert not my words by any corrupt affections, turning them to an ill meaning, like one, who when hee heares the tolling of a Bell, fancies to himselfe, that it speakes those words which are most in his minde.

And lastly, (which is worst of all) beware [not] to let it fall or breake; (for glasse is brittle) which ye doe, if ye lightly esteeme it, and by contemning it, conforme not your selues to my perswasions.<sup>164</sup>

James instructed them to look at his words head on and with clean hearts and minds, for honest men with no personal agendas could not mistake him. James, then, believed his words should be accepted at face value and that the mirror should be understood and appreciated as a royal gift.

The King realized the value of knowing his *subjects'* true intentions as well. In one of his last speeches to Parliament, as he pleaded for goodwill and open communication, James reversed the metaphor he had been using for so many years and asked *them* to be “true glasses and mirrors” so that they could “yield the true reflections and representations” of their thoughts and hearts.<sup>165</sup> He was having difficulty ascertaining their opinions and wanted them to be as straightforward as he claimed to be. Miscommunication, he believed, was retarding Parliament in granting him subsidies; crystal mirrors on both sides were necessary for a successful relationship with Parliament.

Whether or not Parliament and James's subjects gazed into the crystal mirror, “Great Britaines Sorrow,” an anonymous work written after the King's death, reveals that his subjects were at least listening to his words and paraphrasing them. The document declared that James was:

*The Iemme and Iewel of Great Britaines Throne,  
Our Wife, Beloued, Prudent, Salomon,  
The Scourge of Antichrift, whofe Tongue and Penne*

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<sup>164</sup> Sommerville, *Political Writings*, 203.

<sup>165</sup> Cobbett, *Parliamentary History*, 1:1376.

Hath beene inspir'd by *God*, admir'd by *Men*  
 .....  
 He was the *Paragon*, and *Patterne* too.<sup>166</sup>

The concept of James wielding a crystal mirror as the “Paragon and Pattern” was certainly a powerful one.

By continually evoking the mirror, James detracted from the fact that he was performing and projecting an image of himself. He wanted to look as natural as possible. As Greenblatt suggested, James had the ability to enforce his “elaborate, theatrical ceremonies of pride” by being an actor on a stage.<sup>167</sup> But in the very act of doing so, he betrayed the artificiality of the image. Although the mirror is offering a reflection of James’s body, that reflection remains but an image and not reality.

### *Body Image*

James was determined to depict himself as a regal, honest, and benevolent monarch. He self-fashioned himself literally in his speech on 5 April 1614: “my integretye is like the whitnes of my roabe, my purety like the mettle of golde in my crowne, my firmnes and clearnes like the presious stones I weare, and my affectyones naturalle like the rednes of my harte,” he blazoned.<sup>168</sup> He used glistening attire in an effort to construct an image of himself.

It made perfect sense to James that he call attention to his body. His body connected Scotland to England—the Union was “made in...[his] blood.”<sup>169</sup> He also referred to his body when he called to mind “the blessings which God hath in my Person bestowed upon” England, particularly the blessing of peace.<sup>170</sup> With “the Peace in my Person,” he explained, “is now

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<sup>166</sup> “Great Britaines Sorrow For the Death of Her Late Deceafed All-Beloved Soueraigne Lord King James...” (n.p., n.d.), n.p.

<sup>167</sup> Greenblatt, *Self-Fashioning*, 14.

<sup>168</sup> Cobbett, *Parliamentary History*, 1:1150.

<sup>169</sup> Rhodes, Richards, and Marshall, *Selected Writings*, 295.

<sup>170</sup> *Ibid.*, 294.



amitie kept,” both with Scotland and Spain.<sup>171</sup> James was the embodiment of peace, and he, with his body uniting multiple kingdoms, was integral to keeping England at peace. Just as Jesus Christ was the Prince of Peace, so James was *Rex Pacificus*. He was a vessel for God on earth. The King’s body was not his own—it was a space where the divine intersected with the human.

Divine vessel or no, James perpetually strove to dispel rumors about himself, maintain his image and reputation, and be accepted and loved by his English subjects. Ever wanting to be viewed correctly, James kept his ear to the ground for rumors about himself and took every opportunity to dispel them. For example, Sir Edward Coke and others had attempted to prevent legal cases from gravitating out of the common law court and towards the more royal, prerogative courts by drafting writs that became known as prohibitions. “I am not ignorant that I haue bene thought to be an enemie to all *Prohibitions*,” James declared in 1610.<sup>172</sup> He then set about convincing the MPs that he “was neuer against *Prohibitions* of this nature, nor the trew vse of them, which is indeed to keepe euery Riuer within his owne banks.”<sup>173</sup> James was especially preoccupied with rumors of undertakers. He repeatedly tried to reassure Parliament that he was not involved in rigging the elections. In 1614 he also corrected the rumor that he intended to rule without a Parliament.<sup>174</sup> One hope of James that runs through all Parliaments is that “rumores of discontente betweene...[him] and...[his] people shall be taken away.”<sup>175</sup> Dispelling rumors was yet another way that James attempted to fashion himself.

Neither James nor his contemporaries looked well upon slander. False or malicious statements about a monarch were treasonous, and slanderers were to be punished severely. In Shakespeare’s *Measure for Measure* (1604), Lucio slanders the Duke. As punishment, Lucio is

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<sup>171</sup> Ibid.

<sup>172</sup> Sommerville, *Political Writings*, 187.

<sup>173</sup> Ibid.

<sup>174</sup> Jansson, *Proceedings*, 44.

<sup>175</sup> Cobbett, *Parliamentary History*, 1:1157.

forced to marry a prostitute, whipped, and then hanged. The Duke astutely comments that such falsehoods are inevitable: “No might nor greatness in mortality / Can censure scape,” he says.<sup>176</sup> Rumors and slander come with being a monarch, but James felt (and the Duke would agree) that such statements are a result of “envy...folly, or mistaking.”<sup>177</sup> James complained that “never king suffered more by ill tongues than” he did, “and...for no cause.”<sup>178</sup> He wanted to rid his kingdom of slander to prove to himself and others that he was loved.

Maintaining his image and reputation was of utmost importance to James. He wanted to convince his subjects as well as those abroad of his legitimacy and competency as England’s ruler. In fact, one reason why he was so adamant that the Union pass is because he was worried that other monarchs would think him weak if Parliament did not do as he wished. All “eyes are... fixed upon the conclusion of this Action,” he reminded them pleadingly.<sup>179</sup> He worried he would be disgraced if they did not advance the Union. Almost from the start of his reign, James made countless appeals for assistance in showing the world how much England adored him and what a good relationship he had with his Parliament.

### **James the Rhetorician**

After having examined the content and character of James’s speeches and the extent to which he fashioned himself in his oeuvre, I have arrived at certain conclusions about his rhetorical skills and devices. A thorough analysis of James’s speeches proves what a good speaker he was. He capitalized on colorful imagery and metaphors to express who he was and wanted to be as England’s king. His speeches are well-outlined—he often presented an outline of his speech during the introduction to avoid confusion—but James was also capable of

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<sup>176</sup> William Shakespeare, *Measure for Measure*, ed. Jonathan Crewe (New York: Penguin, 2000), 3.2.176-177, p. 64.

<sup>177</sup> *Ibid.*, 3.2.132, p. 62.

<sup>178</sup> Cobbett, *Parliamentary History*, 1:1410.

<sup>179</sup> Rhodes, Richards, and Marshall, *Selected Writings*, 311.

speaking extemporaneously. In his opening speech, for example, he skillfully integrated the words Lord Durham uttered earlier in the day.

James was also mindful of Parliament's reactions during and after his speeches; he modified his speeches accordingly. For example, he paused during his speech on 21 March 1610 because he noticed that many MPs were taking notes. Worried about being misunderstood, he stopped and said: "because I see many writing and noting, I will craue your pardons, to holde you a little longer by speaking the more distinctly, for feare of mistaking."<sup>180</sup> On a few occasions he followed up a speech in Parliament by addressing them again a few days later. When he was aware of objections in Parliament to something he was in favor of—the Union in particular—he would address Parliament and offer sound counter arguments. He appealed to MPs' emotions as well as to reason in hopes of fostering a good relationship with them.

James was considerably attuned to the feedback Parliament provided him. When he realized Parliament did not appreciate his lectures on political theory, his speeches became less theoretical and more colloquial, rational, and diplomatic. The James who ended his 4 May 1621 speech with a Scottish proverb would never have done so in 1604. James, as Wormald argued, learned to adapt his style of speech, but he toned them *down* rather than fluffing them up. Even though his speechmaking improved, his speeches remained long, and Parliament may have found them to be tedious and pontificating. Indeed, he tended to lecture Parliament. Nowhere is his pedantry more apparent than on 31 January 1621, when he attempted to explain to the MPs how the English political system works.<sup>181</sup> There were ways, then, in which his speeches were counterproductive, but in retrospect historians can respect James's prudence and wisdom,

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<sup>180</sup> Sommerville, *Political Writings*, 190.

<sup>181</sup> Notestein, Relf, and Simpson, 2:1-13.

particularly with regards to religion and war. His commitment to peace and religious toleration is certainly admirable.

More than anything else, James's speeches reveal the pains he took to gain the approval and respect of the English. Though confident in his own worth, he needed the money and support to accomplish his aims. He wanted their approval, so he attempted to fashion himself in such a way that would be pleasing to them and to God. In particular, he wanted to be perceived as England's Solomon, a scholarly, wise, pious, and loving king. He undoubtedly *sounded* like Solomon: Bishop Williams said the King's words and eloquence were "rare and excellent in the highest degree.... Those Speeches of his in the Parliament," he concluded, "do prove him to be the most powerful Speaker that ever swayed the Scepter of this Kingdom."<sup>182</sup> To gauge how far James succeeded in fashioning himself—how much Parliament actually bought into his words—requires more study in scattered and elusive sources that I have not had time to pursue. Nevertheless, it is certain that James spent a great deal of time and energy fashioning himself.

Because James's reputation is improving and because his speeches have been astonishingly overlooked, I set out to examine them in a new and more meaningful way. I painstakingly collected and cataloged James's speeches, and I accumulated both historical and contemporary opinions about them. I analyzed them and determined that the moderate accounts of the King's speeches and speechmaking are the accurate ones. By applying Greenblatt's concept of self-fashioning and bringing my insights on literary theory to bear—particularly through my analysis of James's *Crystal Mirror* and his figurative language—I have breathed new life into these historical texts.

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<sup>182</sup> Ashton, *Contemporaries*, 20.