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“Booke, go thy wayes”: The Publication, Reading, and Reception of James VI/I’s Early Poetic Works

Sebastiaan Verweij

ABSTRACT Sebastiaan Verweij presents an analysis of a survey of surviving copies of James VI/I’s *Essayes of a Prentise in the Divine Art of Poesie* (1584, 1585) and *His Maiesties Poeticall Exercises in Vacant Houres* (1591) in public collections. His survey has unearthed many more readers and owners of the king’s books than were previously known, making it possible to shore up previously tentative proposals about the cultural impact of these collections, not only in Scotland but also in England. He also transcribes and discusses in detail three previously unknown manuscript poems of praise to the king that survive in a copy of the 1584 *Essayes* now at Lambeth Palace Library, and via these poems offers a potential reassessment of the bibliographical makeup of this book. **KEYWORDS:** James VI/I; printing history; reception history; marginalia; manuscript poetry

☞ **SOMETIME DURING THE SECOND HALF OF 1584**, Thomas Vautrollier, the French Huguenot who had established his business in Edinburgh from the early 1580s, first as a bookseller and then as a printer, produced a small but important book of poetry and prose: James VI/I’s *The Essayes of a Prentise in the Divine Art of Poesie*.¹ Literary scholars and historians alike describe the publication of the *Essayes* as a momentous occasion in the personal, cultural, and political development of the young King James VI/I, who was, depending on the exact time of printing, either seventeen or eighteen years of age. The book had a definitive impact on the development of Scottish Jacobean courtly literature, and it also strongly influenced the literary culture of Scotland more generally. It has also been proposed, perhaps most tantalizingly by

1. On Vautrollier’s brief stint as a printer in Scotland, see R. Dickson and J. P. Edmond, *Annals of Scottish Printing: From the Beginning of the Art in 1507 to the Beginning of the Seventeenth Century* (Cambridge, 1890); cf. John Corbett, “The Prentise and the Printer: James VI and Thomas Vautrollier,” in *The Apparelling of Truth: Literature and Literary Culture in the Reign of James VI: A Festschrift for Roderick J. Lyall*, ed. Kevin J. McGinley and Nicola Royan (Newcastle upon Tyne, U.K., 2010), 80–93.

Steven May, that the *Essayes* had influence beyond Scotland's borders. May has taken issue with a widespread critical idea, the so-called stigma of print theory about late Tudor poets that was advanced and pithily summed up by J. W. Saunders: "gentlemen, then, shunned print."² The notion did not convince May, and so he countered with his postulate of the "stigma of verse": men of certain rank in sixteenth-century England affected not so much a disdain for the printing press as a more general unwillingness to be known to write poetry. By the later decades of the sixteenth century, this affectation had slowly started to erode, not least under the influence of what May regarded as "the most significant printing event of a literary nature": the publication of the *Essayes*. May argued that "this title staunchly advances the King's opposition to the widespread contempt in which poetry was held." Furthermore, "to term poesy a divine art worthy of the service of a royal apprentice strikes boldly at the detractors."³ This is a powerful and thought-provoking idea: James's royal authority, and the example he set in one small book of poems, influenced a more liberal attitude toward the printing and dissemination of late Elizabethan and Jacobean poetry as whole.

If May is correct, then this was no small achievement on the part of the king. However, May's idea has not (yet) gained much traction in English literary scholarship, perhaps because hard evidence has been somewhat lacking, or at least, English readers of the *Essayes* have received relatively short shrift, with one notable exception. That is Gabriel Harvey, whose response to the poetry of King James can be gathered from his copious annotations of both the *Essayes* and the book that followed it in 1591, *His Maiesties Poeticall Exercises in Vacant Houres*.⁴ Harvey's marginalia have long been on the critical agenda, and his reading is a thrilling example of pre-1603 cross-border intellectual engagement with the king's works. Moreover, Harvey's embeddedness within the English literary intelligentsia during the 1580s could be interpreted as a favorable omen of a somewhat wider early English interest in these Scottish books than has been assumed.

It is the purpose of this essay to present a newly gathered collection of evidence that fits somewhere between Harvey's single-reader response and May's claims of far-reaching indirect influence. Obviously, for James's poetry to have had any impact, it needed to be read, but only an incoherent picture of the production, circulation, and immediate reception history of the king's works has so far emerged.⁵ Whereas such a

2. J. W. Saunders, "The Stigma of Print: A Note on the Social Bases of Tudor Poetry," *Essays in Criticism* 1, no. 2 (1951): 140.

3. Steven W. May, "Tudor Aristocrats and the Mythical 'Stigma of Print,'" *Renaissance Papers* 10 (1980): 16.

4. Harvey's books are now at Magdalene College, Cambridge, Lect. 26. On the marginalia, see G. C. Moore-Smith, *Gabriel Harvey's Marginalia* (Stratford-upon-Avon, U.K., 1913); Eleanor Relle, "Some New Marginalia and Poems of Gabriel Harvey," *Review of English Studies* 23, no. 92, n.s. (1972): 401–16; Virginia Stern, *Gabriel Harvey: His Life, Marginalia and Library* (Oxford, 1979); and Jennifer Richards, "Gabriel Harvey, James VI, and the Politics of Reading Early Modern Poetry," *Huntington Library Quarterly* 71, no. 2 (2008): 303–21.

5. The most sustained bibliographical examination was undertaken by James Craigie, principal editor of the king's works: *The Poems of James VI. of Scotland*, ed. James Craigie, 2 vols. (Edinburgh, 1955–58).

history cannot be written in the space of a single essay, it is the purpose here to lay the foundations, first and foremost by means of analysis of a survey of every extant copy of the 1584 and 1585 *Essayes* (STC 14373 and 14374) and the 1591 *Exercises* (STC 14379). Through the electronic English Short Title Catalogue (ESTC) and subsequent research at the institutions it lists, I located forty-three surviving copies: thirteen of the 1584 *Essayes*, eleven of the 1585 *Essayes*, and nineteen of the 1591 *Exercises* (these numbers exclude books held “in private collections”).⁶

Some important findings have arisen from this survey. Firstly, it has supplied the names of more owners and readers of the king's books, both in England and Scotland, than were hitherto known. Whereas not all these can yet be positively identified, their existence argues for the wide circulation of these books; moreover, a consideration of the identifiable owners allows for new insights into the kinds of intellectual milieu in which the king's books were read. Secondly, the survey has uncovered concerted plans to distribute the books in England, albeit on a modest scale. Investigation of two special copies of the *Essayes* has revealed that the king or his supporters employed bibliographical strategies (customized bindings) when disseminating the book to two very esteemed English readers. Also, thirty copies of the book were immediately procured for distribution among some of England's leading press regulators, lawyers, and senior clergy, establishing that, by the time the *Exercises* were printed, James's activities as a writer were very closely watched in England. Thirdly and finally, the survey has unearthed a single copy of the *Essayes*, now at Lambeth Palace Library in London (henceforth LPL), that contains unique manuscript additions, not least three poems to the king. The first poem, “Joy of the harte, & Jewel of the eye,” commends James; the second, “If that a king hath fame by due desert,” bestows praise on the king's “worke” or poetic writings; and the third deals not with poetry in the abstract but rather with the physical book containing those works: “Booke, go thy wayes, and say that thou art blest.” This volume also contains various inscriptions of ownership and a record of purchase that help to reconstruct its trajectory from one owner to the next. The manuscript poems have not before been printed or commented upon, so they will be transcribed and fully discussed below.

6. One each of the three imprints has been digitized for *Early English Books Online (EEBO)* from the Huntington Library at San Marino. The collection of freely available digital images at the Folger Shakespeare Library (<http://luna.folger.edu>) contains reproductions of a few pages of their copy of the 1584 *Essayes* and its distinctive binding associated with William Cecil, Lord Burghley (see further below on this copy). Libraries and copies that I have consulted are: Beinecke Library, Yale University (1585, 1591); Bodleian Library, University of Oxford (1585, 2 x 1591); British Library (1584, 1585, 3 x 1591); Edinburgh University Library (1584, 1591); Glasgow University Library (1584, 1591); Houghton Library, Harvard University (1584, 1585, 1591); Lambeth Palace Library (1584, 1585, 1591); Magdalene College, Cambridge (1585, 1591); National Library of Scotland (3 x 1584, 2 x 1585, 2 x 1591); Pierpont Morgan Library (1585, 1591); St Andrews University Library (1585); and Trinity College, Cambridge (1584, 1591). I am further extremely grateful to Kate Ash for consulting a copy at John Rylands Library, University of Manchester (1584). I am also indebted to Ryan Hildebrand of the Harry Ransom Center, University of Texas at Austin (1584, 1591), to James Clements of King's College, Cambridge (1591), and to Betsy Walsh and LuEllen de Haven at the Folger Shakespeare Library (1584, 1591), for providing me with information about their holdings.

This essay will adopt a dual perspective: it will largely consider bibliographical data (publication history, circulation evidence by means of ownership inscriptions, and so forth), but it will also indulge in literary criticism, especially a reading of the three LPL poems, in order to make sense of these poems as a direct response to the king's verse and, moreover, as a potential solution to an unresolved bibliographical query. The remainder of this essay will be in three parts: the first will discuss the circumstances of production and targeted distribution of the *Essayes* and will also reveal a concerted English effort to obtain copies of the *Exercises*. The second part will address circulation more widely, by considering the owners and readers of the king's books that emerged from the survey, and the third part will address the LPL copy of the *Essayes*.



The Essayes of a Prentise in the Divine Art of Poesie as printed by Vautrollier was befittingly modest for a first-time author: it is a quarto book of 128 pages, measuring approximately 175 × 130 mm (many copies are now cropped). With regard to the two dates of publication (1584 and 1585), the king's editor James Craigie has demonstrated that "copies of the 1585 issue were largely made up of sheets printed for the issue of the previous year." Furthermore, in two 1585 copies (both at the National Library of Scotland), sigs. P1v–P2r were reset, and Craigie has also shown that very small corrections were continued to be made in the two issues, but despite such small revisions, the 1585 print does not constitute a new edition.⁷ James VI/I's majestic *Workes* in folio, which would eventually follow in 1616, would be in an entirely different league of luxury publication, but that book engaged in what Jane Rickard has called the "monumentalising" of a "universal king."⁸ *The Essayes* was, by contrast, James's first foray into print, but the book has nevertheless been described by Sandra Bell as "an official, formal and commanding publication."⁹ Bell is less clear, however, about whether this effect arises from bibliographical features or from literary content. If modest in scale, the book that Vautrollier produced does indicate a certain preoccupation with aesthetics, especially with the inclusion of a visually arresting shape poem in the form of a funeral urn (sigs. G2v–3r) and some small graphic illustrations: a small emblematic woodcut heading Thomas Hudson's sonnet of praise, "If *Martiall* deed, and practice of the pen" (sig. *iir); a few ornaments; and a group of five zodiacal signs preceding "The Vranie" (sigs. C2r, C4v). Perhaps other ways in which this volume speaks of comparative luxury are its relatively generous expanses of white space and the several blank pages between items (in some surviving copies, these blanks were removed by binders). Nothing is obviously crammed into the volume, and so paper costs were not a prime concern. The

7. Craigie, *Poems of James VI*, 1:lxxxii–lxxxiii.

8. Jane Rickard, *Authorship and Authority: The Writings of James VI and I* (Manchester, 2007), 138–73.

9. Sandra J. Bell, "Kingcraft and Poetry: James VI's Cultural Policy," in *Reading Monarchs Writing: The Poetry of Henry VIII, Mary Stuart, Elizabeth I, and James VI/I*, ed. Peter C. Herman (Tempe, Ariz., 2002), 162.

costs of production are also known, as Roderick Lyall has discovered in the Treasurer's Accounts for October 1584 the payment of £225 Scots and "ten crownis of drinksiluer for ye prenting of his maiesties buik."¹⁰

After the initial 1584 print run was completed, two copies of the *Essayes* were meticulously prepared to reach high-profile dedicatees, and these are now at the Folger Shakespeare Library and the National Library of Scotland.¹¹ Both these *Essayes* are identically bound in orange-stained vellum and decorated with a small centrally placed oval stamp with an arabesque pattern. The Folger copy is marked "W. LORD BURGHLEY" and the NLS copy "H. LORD HUNSDON," both in crude lettering. These names indicate William Cecil, Lord Burghley, and Henry Carey, first Baron Hunsdon, both powerful Elizabethan statesmen with immediate interests in Scotland. It is unlikely in the extreme that Burghley and Hunsdon caused their copies to be identically bound; rather, they must have been prepared in Scotland with the express purpose of presentation. Whether James, his printer, or both were directly involved in binding these books is not clear, since the king did not present them in person. Instead, accompanying Burghley's book was a letter of December 28, 1584 from James Stewart, Earl of Arran (ca. 1545–1596). From the early 1580s, James Stewart had risen meteorically in the king's favor. In league with the king's French cousin Esmé Stuart, Stewart had engineered the fall of the regent Morton and so effectively seized control of government, and he had won himself a series of positions: gentleman of the king's chamber, guardian of the king, captain of the king's guard, and, in 1581, Earl of Arran. By 1584, Stewart (then known as Arran) sought alliance with England and dealt frequently with Elizabeth's representatives, including Baron Hunsdon, the Scottish expert of the English Privy Council. In June 1584, Arran had met with Hunsdon outside the town of Berwick, apparently making a favorable impression on the English.¹²

In December 1584, when Arran sent Burghley the specially bound *Essayes*, Arran was at the zenith of his political career (which would, by 1585, very rapidly crumble at the hands of Patrick, master of Gray). In a witty line replete with alliteration and bibliographical puns, Arran wrote to Burghley that "I have heirwith Imparted to 3our *Lordship* his hienes first pruiif and prentissage in poesie." The book functioned, furthermore, as an indication of the king's "gude Inclinatioun [. . .] to do weill. I doubt not bot his nixt sall mak these fructis to seme abortif."¹³ Although it does not survive, a similar letter to Hunsdon may have accompanied his copy of the *Essayes*. Arran's cool

10. Roderick J. Lyall, "James VI and the Sixteenth-Century Cultural Crisis," in *The Reign of James VI*, ed. Julian Goodare and Michael Lynch (East Linton, U.K., 2000), 55.

11. The shelfmarks are STC 14373, Folger Shakespeare Library; and Bdg.s.741, National Library of Scotland. The latter copy is the one previously in the possession of the American book collector and dealer Dr. A. S. W. Rosenbach. Cf. Craigie, *Poems of James VI*, 1:xxviii.

12. On Arran and Hunsdon and their dealings, see *ODNB*, s.v. "Stewart, James, earl of Arran (c.1545–1596)," by Rosalind K. Marshall, last modified October 2006, <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/26481>; and s.v. "Carey, Henry, first Baron Hunsdon (1526–1596)," by Wallace T. MacCaffrey, last modified May 2013, <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/4649>.

13. Arran's letter survives among the Lansdowne manuscripts at the British Library and is quoted here from *Poems of Alexander Montgomerie, and Other Pieces from Laing MS. No. 447: Supplementary Volume*, ed. George Stevenson (Edinburgh, 1910), xlvi–xlvii.

praise of the king's "poesie" ("abortif," even as meant as a comparative compliment, is still verging on the dismissive) suggests that, already by December 1584, a second book of poems ("his nixt") was planned. Also, Arran's commentary on James's inclination "to do weill" is unlikely to have been in reference to the young king's fine grasp of Scottish prosody; rather, to Arran and presumably to Burghley, the *Essayes* was evidence, in one way or another, of a political trajectory not likely to collide with that of Elizabeth I and her councilors. Unfortunately, from here on the trail goes dead, and nothing is known about how Hunsdon and Burghley responded to the works of the Scottish poet-king, or whether they even read the books. It is similarly difficult to interpret the situation from the Scottish end, since it remains unclear if Arran acted independently or on royal command. Whatever the truth of this matter, only months after printing, these two specially bound *Essayes* had taken on a great deal of significance, and as objects instrumental in cross-border diplomacy, their political significance outweighed James's literary achievement.

The two specially bound *Essayes* were not the only copies to have received aesthetic embellishment after printing. Several other copies feature the addition by hand, in brown ink, of carefully ruled page borders and extensive underlining of titles, explicits, and page signatures. This practice is uniform across copies, suggesting that it was likely executed either in the printing shop or elsewhere in Scotland (with or without James's knowledge) before the books were sold or otherwise dispersed. Both Hunsdon's and Burghley's copies were subjected to this treatment; further books so treated are now at the British Library, Glasgow University Library, and Lambeth Palace Library.¹⁴ It is not uncommon for printed books to be marked in this way, but the systematic treatment of a significant percentage of extant copies (5 out of 13) is nevertheless of interest. It is possible that these borders, functioning to frame text blocks, were added for the aesthetic enhancement of the king's book, or for the simple reason that the king desired page borders and Vautrollier could not print them. Alternatively, they may have been intended to conjure up the experience of reading a manuscript book (in which pages were often ruled to ensure the even distribution of text on the page). Perhaps they were added in order to personalize an otherwise mechanically produced text, once more for the purpose of presentation. Whatever the reason, this treatment, as well as Burghley's and Hunsdon's presentation copies, indicates just how much attention was lavished on the physical production of the *Essayes* before these books reached their readers.

There is no indication that the 1591 *Exercises* were similarly prepared in order to impress influential Englishmen. Indeed, if anything, sustained efforts to get copies to England were instigated not by Scottish courtiers or the king but by interested Englishmen who had discovered the king had printed a second book of poetry, "his nixt," announced by Arran in 1584 but not actually realized until seven years later. This concern is documented in a note that was entered into the register of the Company of Stationers of London on June 17, 1591, regarding multiple copies of a list of six titles, all

14. Shelfmarks G.11273, British Library; Cn.3.1, Glasgow University Library; and [ZZ]1584.19, Lambeth Palace Library.

“bookes which camme out of Scotland.”¹⁵ These books had been acquired by the Englishman John Norton in Edinburgh and sent on to Norton’s uncle in London, the bookseller William Norton. All books in this dispatch were printed by Waldegrave and explicitly dealt with matters of religion, with the exception of one title, thirty copies of which had been procured: “*Poemes of the kinge of Scottes his makinge*.” Given the date, this doubtlessly denoted the *Exercises*. Upon arrival in London, all these books were parceled out by the direction of John Whitgift, archbishop of Canterbury, and copies of the *Exercises* were sent, first to George Bishop, master of the Stationers Company, second “to master paul” (ten copies), third to “master Doctor Stanhope the .17 of June in his own chamber at the D[octors] Commons” (one copy), with the rest of the books “left remayning” at Stationers Hall, in the care of the “newe wardens [. . .] master Conneway and master Allen.” Arber has suggested that “master paul” may have been Sir George Paule, the ecclesiastical administrator and biographer of Archbishop Whitgift, who around 1591 held a post in the diocese of Ely.¹⁶ The other named recipient, “Doctor Stanhope,” was Sir Edward Stanhope, a wealthy civil lawyer, chancellor to the diocese of London, member of several committees that oversaw press regulation, and (in)famous for his prosecution of Puritans and Catholics alike. There is no evidence today suggesting what became of those thirty books after they were delivered to their various assessors, but the marked English scrutiny of James’s poetry by English press regulators, booksellers, legal professionals, and senior clergy betokens an intense interest: not, we may assume, in the Scottish king’s poetic ability, but in the religious sensibilities of his text and perhaps even in the controversial or subversive potential of the poetic contents.¹⁷



The above section has begun to paint a picture of English reactions to and readerships of James’s poetry, and this picture can be further developed by reference to the new ownership data that has emerged from the survey (including Scottish and English owners and readers). Besides Burghley and Hunsdon, only a few early owners of James’s poetry have previously received comment. Roderick Lyall, for instance, interested in “[cultural] relations between England and Scotland,” has noted “a good deal of evidence that at least the published [that is, printed] poetry of the Scottish king attracted some English interest.” Yet, Lyall only named Gabriel Harvey, Burghley, Hunsdon, and Sir John Harington, and commented that “no comprehensive study has

15. *A Transcript of the Registers of the Company of Stationers of London: 1554–1640*, ed. Edward Arber, vol. 2 (London, 1875), 38; cf. F. S. Ferguson, “Relations between London and Edinburgh Printers and Stationers (–1640),” *The Library* 8, no. 2 (1927): 154–55.

16. Arber erroneously identified him as “Sir John Paul” in his note to the entry in the Register, but the first name of Whitgift’s biographer was George.

17. The poem most likely to have raised serious concern was “Lepanto,” in praise of the Catholic Don John’s victory over the Turks at the Battle of Lepanto. See further Daniel Fischlin, “‘Like a Mercenary Poet’: The Politics and Poetics of James VI’s Lepanto,” in *Older Scots Literature*, ed. Sally Mapstone (Edinburgh, 2005), 540–59.

yet been made of the distribution in Elizabethan England of books printed in Scotland.”¹⁸ For this reason alone, it is worth presenting the handful of additional named owners discovered through the survey (and to consider afresh the few owners that had already been discovered by Craigie).

A copy of the 1584 *Essayes* was in possession of the Scottish poet William Drummond of Hawthornden. Drummond’s book is full of doodles and pen trials and includes an epigrammatic verse that circulated in manuscript more extensively: “Friends souldieris weman in yair pryme / ar lyk to dogis in hunting tyme / occasione waris and buetie gone / freinds souldiers weman heir ar non.” A more obscure owner inscribed another 1584 copy of the *Essayes*, in rather illegible fashion, perhaps “Ex Libris W Ricardi.”¹⁹ Already noted by Craigie was another later owner of a 1584 copy, the English physician Joseph Letherland (1699–1764), as well as a 1585 copy of the *Essayes* that was in the hands of the English book collector and notary public Humphrey Dyson no later than 1611.²⁰ Another 1585 *Essayes* was, by 1609, in the possession of “G Strachanus,” perhaps George Strachan, one of Scotland’s earliest orientalisists.²¹ Strachan spent most of the early 1600s abroad as a missionary working for the Scottish Catholic cause, during which time he mastered Persian and Arabic and amassed a collection of oriental manuscripts. If indeed this *Essayes* belonged to Strachan and 1609 signifies the year in which he obtained it, then he must have been sent the book from Scotland or bought it abroad: on account of his Roman faith, James VI/I had declared him a traitor before 1604, and he never again set foot in his homeland. Another 1585 *Essayes*, bound with more printed Jacobean material, was inscribed as follows: “Liber Bibliothecae Bodliana ex dono Gualter: Stonehouse in artibus Magister et Coll. Magdalanensis Socij Sept. 8^o. A^o Gratia 1621.”²² This was likely the Walter Stonehouse who gained his master of arts in 1619, was ordained in May 1621 and became a preacher, and evidently presented some of his books to the Bodleian Library that fall. He became famous for his garden at Darfield in Yorkshire and is thought to have owned a manuscript of *Piers Plowman*. Another owner or borrower of the king’s *Essayes* can be surmised, although his copy no longer survives: namely, the Scot John Maxwell, whose commonplace book contains the dedicatory sonnet from Alexander Montgomerie to the king, which Maxwell probably copied from the 1584 or 1585 printing.²³

18. Roderick J. Lyall, “‘Thrie Truear Hairts’: Alexander Montgomerie, Henry Constable, Henry Keir and Cultural Politics in Renaissance Britain,” *Innes Review* 54, no. 2 (2003): 188.

19. Drummond’s copy is now De.2.57, Edinburgh University Library; that from the library of W Ricardi is H.29.c.17, National Library of Scotland.

20. The Letherland copy is Cn.3.1, Glasgow University Library; I have not traced the Dyson copy. For both these copies, see Craigie, *Poems of James VI*, 1:lxviii.

21. The G Strachanus copy is C.34.g.3, British Library. On Strachan, see further David McRoberts, “George Strachan of the Mearns, An Early Scottish Orientalist,” *Innes Review* 3, no. 2 (1952): 110–28.

22. The Walter Stonehouse copy is 40 L.66(1) Art., Bodleian Library, University of Oxford.

23. John Maxwell, commonplace book, MS Laing III.467, fol. [21]r, Edinburgh University Library. Cf. Priscilla Bawcutt, “The Commonplace Book of John Maxwell,” in *A Day Estivall: Essays on the Music, Poetry and History of Scotland and England, & Poems Previously Unpublished*, ed. Alisoun Gardner-Medwin and Janet Hadley Williams (Aberdeen, 1990), 60.

One of the most intriguing associations with a 1584 copy of the *Essayes* arises from the inscription of “Elyzabeth Cary,” the first woman to have left her name in a copy of the king’s poems.²⁴ It cannot quite be determined who she was, but several English literary women by this name immediately present themselves as potential owners. Some can be ruled out on paleographical evidence, such as Elizabeth Cary (née Tanfield), Lady Falkland (1585–1639), the first woman to print an early modern play. Specimens of Lady Falkland’s mature hand survive in her correspondence, and of its more youthful variety in her autograph translation from Ortellius, “The Mirror of the World,” where she signed her name “E Tanfelde.”²⁵ Two further contestants are more promising: Elizabeth Carey (née Spencer), Lady Hunsdon (1552–1618), and her daughter Elizabeth (Bess) Carey Berkeley, later Lady Chamberlain (1576–1635). Certainly, for either of those women to have owned and read the king’s poems would come as no surprise: the Hunsdon presentation copy described above belonged to Lady Hunsdon’s father-in-law, Henry Carey, and Lady Hunsdon was herself a noted patroness of the arts, for instance of Edmund Spenser. Bess Carey Berkeley was similarly noted for her bookishness and education, and as Katherine Duncan-Jones discovered, she also translated two of Petrarch’s sonnets.²⁶ Both women also moved in intellectual circles where James’s poetry was read, as suggested by the fact that they were both addressed and eulogized in print by Thomas Nashe, who famously engaged in a pamphlet war with the most active annotator of James’s poetry, Gabriel Harvey.²⁷ Still, paleographical evidence remains inconclusive. Elizabeth Carey, Lady Hunsdon signed her name “Elyza: Hunsdon” after her husband, George Carey, became the second Baron Hunsdon upon his father’s death in 1596, but she was “Elizabeth Carey” since her marriage in 1574. The daughter may have signed her name “Cary” until her marriage to Sir Thomas Berkeley in February 1596, after which she signed it “Eliza: Berkeley.” The signature in the *Essayes* is not a perfect match with the mature hands of either mother or daughter, but given its uncertain and somewhat juvenile character, it could just possibly have been inscribed by a young Bess Carey (who, at the time the *Essayes* were printed, was just eight years of age).²⁸ Further research will be necessary to establish ownership more securely, not least since Ernest Strathmann has noted that “there were at least eight ‘Elizabeth Careys’ prominent enough to appear in records of

24. The Cary signature appears in PFORZ 528 PFZ, sig. P2r, Harry Ransom Center, University of Texas at Austin.

25. The Ortellius translation is MS Dep. d. 817, Bodleian Library. Her later signature, “E Falkland,” is reproduced in *Elizabeth Cary Lady Falkland: Life and Letters*, ed. Heather Wolfe (Tempe, Ariz., 2001), figs. 1 and 2, 244–45.

26. Katherine Duncan-Jones, “Bess Carey’s Petrarch: Newly Discovered Elizabethan Sonnets,” *Review of English Studies* 50, no. 199, n.s. (1999): 304–19.

27. The relationship between Nashe and the Careys is discussed by Duncan-Jones, “Bess Carey’s Petrarch.” For the Nashe-Harvey quarrel, see *The Works of Thomas Nashe*, ed. R. B. McKerrow, 5 vols. (London, 1910), 5:65–110.

28. I am extremely grateful to Katherine Duncan-Jones, who alerted me to the survival of the signatures and who generously shared her research with me. I am grateful to David Smith, Berkeley Castle Archivist, for allowing me to quote from the documents in question: GL4/2/5-6 and GL3/4/2-4, Berkeley Castle Archives, Gloucester, U.K.

one kind or another.”²⁹ Nonetheless, with the name of “Elyzabeth Cary” comes the first Englishwoman’s expression of interest in the king’s poems.

Moving on to the *Exercises* of 1591, there is a copy with which we are on much firmer ground: one at Pierpont Morgan Library signed by “Ben: Ionson” and containing his motto, “tanquam Explorator.”³⁰ Jonson’s association with the Jacobean court is mostly conceived of in relation to his masques, written during James’s English rule, but it is not the least unlikely that the poet and playwright acquired the king’s *Exercises* in the 1590s. Another *Exercises* was inscribed by not only “Antoni Barclay” (possibly a Scot) but also by “Robert Malam” and “Anthony Twate,” who appear throughout the volume, always together. Further names in this copy include “Joseph Duckesbery” and “Fran Bowyer.” The date of “Marche 1596,” inscribed on a blank verso page, suggests that this copy circulated among these Englishmen not long after printing. A final copy of the *Exercises* does not survive today, but was recorded in a late sixteenth-century manuscript catalogue of the library of the Scottish Melville family at Monimail.³¹

Before we progress to the third section, a little more remains to be said about Gabriel Harvey’s books. Eleanor Relle has observed that Harvey bought the *Essayes* “some time after March 1585” with funds obtained from a friend, Bartholomew Clark.³² He did not record where he bought the book, but presumably it was in Cambridge or in London. What deserves more consideration is the fact that Harvey had developed excellent relations with Thomas Vautrollier, the printer of the *Essayes*, and as Andrew Hadfield asserts, “Harvey’s link to Vautrollier provided him with knowledge of Scottish politics and culture.”³³ Andrew Pettegree has shown that Vautrollier had strong connections with the Scottish book trade at least since 1577, when he printed two books for the Edinburgh bookseller Andrew Charteris; moreover, “by 1580 [Vautrollier] was systematically engaged in the book trade in Edinburgh.”³⁴ The apparently warm welcome Vautrollier received when he set up his business in the Scottish capital was helped by the fact that he carried with him a letter from Daniel Rogers, the Anglo-Dutch diplomat and clerk of the English Privy Council. That letter was addressed to George Buchanan, then royal tutor, thanking him for a copy of Buchanan’s *De Iure Regni* and asking for several more so that Rogers could share them with his friends for discussion.³⁵ Rogers provided a major connection between leading Continental humanists like Janus Dousa and Justius Lipsius and, for instance, Philip Sidney and his circle, of which Harvey also formed a part.³⁶ These networks can be

29. Ernest A. Strathmann, “Lady Carey and Spenser,” *English Literary History* 2, no. 1 (1935): 39n28.

30. PML 6218, Pierpont Morgan Library, New York; see David McPherson, “Ben Jonson’s Library and Marginalia: An Annotated Catalogue,” *Studies in Philology* 71, no. 5 (1974): 55–56.

31. The Barclay et al. copy is Ih J231 591, Beinecke Library; the Melville library catalog is MS GD26/6/124, National Archives of Scotland.

32. Relle, “New Marginalia,” 402.

33. Andrew Hadfield, *Edmund Spenser: A Life* (Oxford, 2012), 96.

34. ODNB, s.v. “Vautrollier, Thomas (d. 1587),” by Andrew Pettegree, last modified 2004, <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/28158>.

35. Dickson and Edmond, *Annals of Scottish Printing*, 380.

36. On the relationship between Rogers, Buchanan, and Harvey, see further Richards, “Gabriel Harvey, James VI,” 308.

further expanded, since the Scottish print historians Dickson and Edmond recorded that James VI/I was already a customer of Vautrollier before the latter set up shop in Edinburgh: several entries in the Treasurer's Accounts record payments made to Vautrollier "for buikis resavit be Mr. Peter Young, his hienes Preceptor, to his Maiesties awin use be his hienes special comand."³⁷ The connections between Harvey and Vautrollier, and the wider intellectual and bookish cross-border networks in which both men operated, certainly explain how Harvey was ideally placed to receive news of the publication of the *Essayes* and to obtain an early copy.

The survey has provided an array of named owners, which demonstrates a range of audience that is considerably more extensive than has been appreciated. Some of these owners (Harvey, Jonson, perhaps Carey) were major literary figures or patrons in their own right. Furthermore, Harvey's copies and the *Essayes* owned by Stonehouse place the king's books within English academic circles at Oxford and Cambridge. Whereas some owners or dedicatees were clearly political players (Burghley, Hunsdon, and the group of English assessors that took delivery of the thirty *Exercises*), others, including Harvey, read James for his poetic acumen and for his articulation of a newly conceived literary renaissance for Scotland. This agenda found expression most directly in a text that is often viewed as the central point of the *Essayes*: "Ane short treatise, contening some revlis and cautelis to be obseruit and eschewit in Scottis Poesie." These "Reulis and Cautelis" (literally, "rules and cautions/directions," or in modern parlance, the "dos and don'ts" of poetic practice) take the form of a prosodic and rhetorical manual directing the future practitioners of Scottish "poesie." Yet the Englishman Harvey responded with zeal, deeming the "Reulis and Cautelis" as "the excellentest rules, & finest Art, that A King could learne, or teach, in his Kingdom. / The more remarkable, how worthy the pen, & industrie of a King. / How much better, then owr Gascoignes Notes of instruction for English Verse, & Ryme."³⁸ Unfortunately, Harvey's explicit response to James's prose and poetry is unique; most of the above-noted owners or annotators penned little more than their names into their volumes. It must then be conceded that there are still large interpretative gaps between the bibliographical facts of ownership and literary response as more expansively conceived—and both of these should weigh equally in any assessment of the influence of the king's works. Nonetheless, the above-mentioned owners and readers do speak favorably of the extent to which the *Essayes* and the *Exercises* circulated in Scotland and in England.



This brings us to the copy of the *Essayes* now at Lambeth Palace Library: a book that will bring together the various strands of evidence so far discussed relating not only to ownership and manuscript annotation but also to production.³⁹ This is a copy that circulated in England and that contains direct reflections on the poetic contents of the

37. Dickson and Edmond, *Annals of Scottish Printing*, 380.

38. Relle, "New Marginalia," 405.

39. [ZZ]1584.19, Lambeth Palace Library, London.

book, by means of the three manuscript poems. The LPL catalogue has noted the presence of “manuscript additions,” but these are not further specified. In order of appearance, the book contains the following inscriptions: 1) on the first surviving flyleaf (following two stubs, the conjugates of which show at the back of the book), the initials “H M” and “Henry Middleton His booke”; 2) on the top margin of the title page, “Naunton J”; 3) immediately below the imprint, “Emptus Edinburgi pretium xv^s viij^d 15^o Calend. 7^{bres} 1588.”⁴⁰ Also, 4) on sigs. *iir to *iiir, the printed initials of the authors of adulatory sonnets are expanded to full names, and finally, 5) three poems are written among the printed adulatory poems to the king.

Establishing a chronology for these inscriptions is not straightforward. The hand of “Henry Middleton” retains secretary *e* but otherwise features some round italic letter forms more common in the seventeenth century than in the sixteenth. The note of purchase is written in an italic hand somewhat more spiky than the other inscriptions, so this individual was likely not responsible for those. The inscription “Naunton J,” the expanded initials, and the three poems, however, are all written in relatively uniform italic scripts that are more difficult to differentiate. Nevertheless, it seems probable that whoever inscribed the poems also expanded the initials. Two characteristic letter forms are shared between these hands: the *s* with its long lobe descending below the baseline in “Hudson” (sig. *iiv) appears matched with the *s* in, for example, “sweetest” or “showe” (sig. A2r), and the long diagonally sloping tail of the *y* in “Mongomery” (sig. *iiiir) appears matched with the same letter in “eye” or “dye” (sig. A1r). On the slim evidence of the short inscription “Naunton J,” this hand did not inscribe the poems and expand the initials, since its majuscule *N* does not match the style of any of the majuscule letters consisting of minims in the poems.

In sum, then, one scribe recorded the purchase, a second wrote three poems and expanded the initials, a third marked the name “Naunton,” and a fourth “Henry Middleton.” In terms of the names, the most that can be surmised about “Naunton” is that it was either the inscriber’s family name, or, less likely, a reference to Naunton in Gloucestershire. For “Henry Middleton,” it is certainly tempting to postulate any of the better-known Henry Middletons who might have taken a professional interest in the book, such as the London printer and bookseller (ca. 1546–1587). As renter warden and under-warden for the Stationers’ Company, Middleton had strong associations with the same men who would come to orchestrate the distribution of thirty copies of the *Exercises* (see above). However, Middleton died before the LPL *Essayes* was bought in Edinburgh in 1588 (although this does not in principle rule him out as an owner, if we allow for the possibility that the inscription records a resale). Unfortunately “Henry Middleton” is too common a name to be certain, and this book owner could have been a relative of any of other literary-minded Middleton families, such as the writer and poet Christopher Middleton (d. 1628), the pamphleteer William Middleton (d. 1613), the Welsh author William Middleton (1550–1596?) who wrote a treatise of prosody for Welsh poetry, or indeed the playwright Thomas Middleton (d. 1627).

40. The price of purchase is smudged, the “v” of “xv” being only half discernable. This is still the most likely reading, however a smaller amount over 10s. might also be possible.

Unless a match is found on the basis of the hand, his exact identity will not be discovered. Both “Naunton” and “Middleton” add, however, to the number of known owners of the *Essayes* with English names.

The LPL volume was bought, as the inscription reveals, in Edinburgh on September 15, 1588, for the price of 15s. 8d., presumably in pounds Scots.⁴¹ Vautrollier had in 1585 returned to London, where he died in 1587, so it could not have been bought from him. Evidently, then, at least some stock of the *Essayes* remained on sale elsewhere in Edinburgh. Between 1580 and 1590, fifteen to twenty-five booksellers were active in Edinburgh (including printers and binders), and any of these could conceivably have sold the volume, either new or secondhand. At 15s. 8d., the book was certainly very expensive. The average book price in the Scottish capital in the 1580s, based on the 1585 testament and inventory of bookseller Robert Gurlaw, was around 2s. 8d.⁴² To give an individual example, Thomas Arrowsmith, servant to a Henry Bowes, bought in Edinburgh in March 1597/8 his copy of David Lindsay's *Squire Meldrum* for 30 “Skottis” pence, or 2s. 6d.⁴³ It is tempting to speculate what might have driven up the price of this copy of the *Essayes*: perhaps scarcity, the knowledge of royal authorship, or even the presence of a series of manuscript poems. Unfortunately, the inscription records neither the motivation for purchase nor the buyer's name.

Perhaps before any of these owners laid hands on the volume, the most important additions to it were made by a scribe who must have enjoyed close familiarity with the Scottish court—close enough to know who wrote many of the dedicatory poems. Prefacing the *Essayes* and James's own works are a series of eight poems of praise. The final three of these are explicitly signed: *De huius Libri Auctore* by Hercules Rollock, and the final two Latin poems, “Acrosticon” and “Epigramma,” by “Pa. Ad. Ep. Sanct,” or Patrick Adamson, archbishop of St. Andrews. The first five dedicatory poems, all sonnets, are signed only with printed initials: “T. H.,” “R. H.,” “M. W.,” “M. W. F.,” and “A. M.” The author (or scribe) of the manuscript poems to James was sufficiently knowledgeable about James's literary coterie at court to expand four out of the five sets to full names: “T. H. udson,” “R. H. udson,” “M. W. F. ouler,” and “A. M. ongomery.” This annotator left the fifth set of initials untouched, “M. W.,” the author of the adulatory sonnet “The mightie Father of the *Muses* nyne” (sig. * iiii). In fact, whoever wrote this poem is unknown today, and was perhaps equally obscure in James's day and age. Modern literary critics long ago identified the other four adulatory poets with the benefit of hindsight; a contemporary Scottish or English reader of the *Essayes*, however, would have to have been fairly intimate with the Jacobean literary scene.

41. The devaluation of Scots against English pounds from the middle of the sixteenth century is helpfully summarized as follows: “in 1560 the English pound was worth about £4 10s. Scots; by 1603 the English pound was worth £12 Scots”; Amy L. Juhala, “An Advantageous Alliance: Edinburgh and the Court of James VI,” in *Sixteenth-Century Scotland: Essays in Honour of Michael Lynch*, ed. Julian Goodare and Alasdair A. MacDonald (Leiden, 2008), 340n19.

42. Alastair J. Mann, *The Scottish Book Trade, 1500-1720: Print Commerce and Print Control in Early Modern Scotland* (East Linton, U.K., 2000), graph 10, 220.

43. Noted in Priscilla Bawcutt, “Crossing the Border: Scottish Poetry and English Readers in the Sixteenth Century,” in *The Rose and the Thistle: Essays on the Culture of Late Medieval and Renaissance Scotland*, ed. Sally Mapstone and Juliet Wood (East Linton, U.K., 1998), 63.

The first of the LPL poetic additions is transcribed immediately below the “Acrosticon” of Patrick Adamson (sig. A1r), on which it was obviously modeled. The scribe made good use of the manuscript text-block rules that had been added to this copy (see above), as the left line afforded an easy means to separate the first letters of each line of the poem, in order to highlight the acrostic. The second poem was written on the blank page (sig. A2r) facing Adamson’s “Epigramma,” and the third on the blank page (sig. A2v) facing the start of the book proper, where features James’s “ane qudrain of alexandrin verse.” The following is a diplomatic transcription of all three poems:

[1]

Joy of the harte, & Jewel of the eye,
 A boue the reach of reasons highest sense,
 C round by the loue where life can neuer dye,
 O nly the height of humaine excellence,
 B lest wth the blessings of a blisshed harte,
 V nmatched mind in majesty vnknownen,
 S uch is the Phoenix of his Finest art
 S weet in the sense of sacred humo^r shoven,
 Ex ceeding all in all that may exceed
 T ry'd by the touch of value most divine,
 V ertue herself doth on his fancyes feed,
 S uch is this king in this concept of myne.

[2]

If that a king hath fame by due desart,
 Of all those fruicts that make a famous king
 In vertue, honor, valure, learning, art
 And heauenly sence, whence sweetest humors spring:
 Then let me looke, not on the ancient writt
 Of aged yeares that lived long agoe,
 But on the worke of that most Sacred Witt
 That doth the World a heauenly wonder showe.
 Let all the Godds vouchsafe him worthy grace
 And heauen and earth afford him happy fame,
 Let Angells loue provide his Muse a place,
 Where she may sitt, and honor such a name.
 As by desert doth make all Muses singe
 Blest be the verse whose autor is a kinge.

[3]

Booke, go thy wayes, and say that thou art blest,
 In that a king hath geuen thee his conceit,

Bidd wisdome seeke where greater witt may rest,
 Then in the mind where all the Muses wayte.
 Let all the Godds be wittness of my thought,
 I say no more but that of right I must,
 The Poets art what Prince hath euer taught,
 Tyll he that now hath hitt the humo^r iust?
 Looke on his lines, and learning hath her loue,
 Vertue will liue in honors excellence,
 Where grace diuine wth glory will approue,
 The perfytt summe of this apparent sence.
 That shewes the heauens wher highest Muses sing,
 The Phoenix poëms of a Phoenix king.

In order to assess why these poems were penned in the printed book, it will be necessary to read them more carefully, to see how the poems respond to some of the poetic preoccupations of the *Essayes*. In bibliographical terms, it may be possible to associate the manuscript poems with a lacuna in the printed text that was eventually filled up with something else. In thematic terms, the manuscript poems highlight some of the political backdrop that has been alluded to above, in relation to the demise of Esmé Stuart, the king's cousin and court favorite, and the subject of one of the poems that was printed in the *Essayes*.

In short, poem 1 takes its governing acrostic, JACOBVS SEXTVS, from Adamson's printed poem in Latin on the same page, and it primarily consists of a series of stock compliments. It pays homage to the king's divine coronation, "Cround by the loue where life can neuer dye," and strings along a series of adulatory superlatives. If we consider the three poems as a coherent group, the first introduces an image of the king as "Phoenix" and rather self-consciously draws attention to James's role not as man or monarch but as a "concept," or literary figure. Poem 2 considers the various "fruits" of royal "fame"—"vertue, honor, valure, learning, art"—and adds to these another specific to James VI/I, namely his "verse," which on account of its royal genesis is extraordinarily "blest." That "verse" is then, in poem 3, given physical shape as a "Booke," namely, the printed *Essayes* itself. There is also a clear continuity between the three verses, with key words of the final lines featuring as the opening gambit of the next ("this king" between poems 1 and 2, and "blest" between poems 2 and 3, both sonnets), loosely mimicking the daisy-chained structure of, for example, a sonnet corona (poem 1, on account of its acrostic, is a couplet short of a true sonnet). The conceit of poem 1 also returns in poem 3: "Booke, go thy wayes, and say that thou art blest, / In that a king hath geuen thee his *conceit*" (emphasis mine). Poem 3 notes the king's "greater witt" and offers an implicit pun ("let all the Godds be *wittness*"), thus echoing the rhyming pair of poem 2, "writt" / "Witt." All three poems also celebrate the king's sense: he is "Aboue the reach of reasons highest sense" and "Sweet in the sense of sacred humo^r" in poem 1. Apart from "vertue, honor, valure, learning, art,"

poem 2 commends the king's "heauenly sence," and poem 3 repeats that in James's poetry the reader will find "The perfytt summe of this apparent sence." "Sence," of course, denotes the king's *ratio*, as evident from his poetry and his "poets art," or the "Reulis and Cautelis."

All three poems anticipate the contents of the *Essayes*. In his own prefatory sonnet sequence, James implored the mythological gods and the "*Muses*" (in Sonnet 11) for evocative powers, in order to "Let Readers think [...]"

that they do heare
Your voyces all into my verse resound.
And that your vertewis singular and seir
May wholly all in them be also found.
(sig. B4v)

Poem 1, entering into dialogue with James's wishes, reverses the sentiment: no longer are James's poems reflective of "vertewis" of others, but "Vertue herself doth on his [James's] fancyes feed." James's poems have become "*Parnassis* flowing fountaine fyne" (as it is put in Sonnet 11, sig. B4v), rather than simply borrowing from it. The three added poems, in essence, grant the king his wish, so anxiously articulated in his twelve prefatory sonnets to the *Essayes*, to temporarily suspend readerly disbelief. Those twelve poems are obsessed with moving and persuading the reader. James's sentiment was so recognizable as to elicit a marginal response from Gabriel Harvey, who concurred that the art of persuasion was "the singular wish of euery one, that effectith to be an excellent writer, jn prose, or verse."⁴⁴ The wish was readily granted by the author of the three LPL poems. The praise expressed in poem 2 can be seen to respond to James, who is seeking to represent faithfully the entire miracle of creation: the works of "*Ioue*" (Sonnet 1), the "shyning Carte" of Apollo (Sonnet 2), the four seasons (Sonnets 3–6), the "*Oceans* force" (Sonnet 7), and "the swimming sort" or sea creatures (Sonnet 8). Where James across a series of sonnets itemizes the natural world, poem 2 bundles this imagery together and confirms that "the worke of that most Sacred Witt" (that is, the king's writings) "doth the World a heauenly wonder showe."

Of these three poems, by far the most interesting is "Booke, go thy wayes." The conceit, of simultaneous *excusatio* (a modesty topos) and apostrophe, is at least as old as Ovid's *Tristia* (1.1) and was popularized in English by Chaucer's famous address to his *Troilus and Criseyde*: "Go, litel book, go, litel myne tragedye."⁴⁵ Because of Chaucer's many followers and imitators, the conceit had become a commonplace by the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries: examples occur in the works of Lydgate, Hoccleve, Skelton, and Spenser, with well-known Scottish examples in works by James I and William Dunbar.⁴⁶ Such poems were all products of a rhetorically constructed

44. Relle, "New Marginalia," 402.

45. *The Riverside Chaucer*, ed. Larry D. Benson (Oxford, 1987), 584 (bk. 5, line 1786).

46. On the device, see further R. J. Schoeck, "'Go Little Book': A Conceit from Chaucer to William Meredith," *Notes and Queries* 197, no. 17 (1952): 370–72.

anxiety on the part of authors for the fate of their books and poems in strangers' hands, and they were not customarily composed by external well-wishers. However, the complete lack of excusatory stance in poem 3 rules out the king as author and establishes that, together with poems 1 and 2, these were the work of a courtier or other well-wisher to the king, composed in the spirit of the other printed poems of praise among which they survive. "Booke, go thy wayes" makes much of the fact that James VI/I was the first "Prince" to teach "the Poets art," and the *Essayes* are characterized in the closing line as "The Phoenix poems of a Phoenix king." This is an evocative phrase, brimming with meaning and potential contemporary topicality. Most obviously, it focuses the attention on the poem in the *Essayes* entitled "Ane Metaphoricall invention of a tragedie called Phoenix." This is a work that is usually understood in reference to the downfall of royal favorite Esmé Stuart, the French cousin of the king who arrived at court in 1579 and who, it seems, awakened in the king a hunger for poetry and Continental courtly sophistication. Esmé Stuart was soon elevated, first to Earl and then to Duke of Lennox. He allied himself to Francis Stewart, Earl of Arran (who presented Hunsdon and Burghley with their presentation copies), but this relationship quickly soured, turning initial friendship into bitter rivalry. Esmé Stuart's Scottish career was short lived: deeply suspicious of his suspected Catholicism (despite his apparent conversion to Protestantism), a covenant of ultra-Protestant lords under the banner of William Ruthven, Earl of Gowrie, in 1582 incarcerated the king and expelled Lennox from Scotland. The poem "Phoenix" dramatizes Lennox's rise and fall—"How I lament my *Phoenix* rare"—from the "rare stranger foules" arrival "into this land, a stranger heir vnkend," to his torture and expulsion by "rauening fowls," and finally his inevitable rebirth. As the last stanza of "Phoenix" claims, the bird's rising from his ashes even effects a generic revolution: "my tragedie a comike end will haue."⁴⁷

Poem 3's "Phoenix poems" can therefore be explained as a reference to this piece, but the epithet of "Phoenix king" still deserves some thought. Even though the moniker did not stick to James, by the mid-1580s it was still appropriate in a number of ways. In a series of gradual steps between 1579 and 1585, James's personal rule had risen from the ashes of nearly two decades of factional regencies. The young king could also be said to have been reborn since his release from Gowrie's house arrest. Finally, James's "Phoenix poems" could be regarded as having sprung from the ashes of earlier poetry by Stewart monarchs, like his forebear James I (probable author of the *Kingis Quair*) and also his mother, Mary, Queen of Scots. Sarah Dunnigan and others have argued that, following the disastrous controversies over the Marian "casket sonnets," a renewed Jacobean poetics had to explicitly disassociate itself from this failed model of monarchical writing, to be purposefully reconceived, and, importantly, to be Protestantized.⁴⁸

47. On this poem, see further, e.g., David M. Bergeron, *King James & Letters of Homoerotic Desire* (Iowa City, 1999), 32–64; Simon Wortham, "'Pairt of My Taill Is Yet Untolde': James VI and I, the Phoenix, and the Royal Gift," in *Royal Subjects: Essays on the Writings of James VI and I*, ed. Daniel Fischlin and Mark Fortier (Detroit, 2002), 182–204; and Sarah M. Dunnigan, *Eros and Poetry at the Courts of Mary Queen of Scots and James VI* (Basingstoke, U.K., 2002), 97–104.

48. Dunnigan, *Eros and Poetry*.

A final point of interest is that the epithet “Phoenix king” simultaneously points forward to the “Phoenix” poem and disassociates that work from Esmé Stuart; it is the king himself, not Lennox, who figures as the self-immolating and eternally “reuiuing” mythical bird. This may appear an odd move, since James’s acrostic play in the prefatory poem to the tragedy “Phoenix” itself (“ESME STEWART DWIKE”) was designed not to leave interpretation of his “Metaphoricall invention” to chance. In fact, one contemporary reader disregarded James’s intentions, and that was Gabriel Harvey. Commenting on his annotations of the *Essayes*, Eleanor Relle has suggested that

it has always been attractive to identify the Phoenix as Mary, Queen of Scots, even though the poem was written some years before she was executed. What Harvey made of it when he read it for the first time, two years before the execution, is doubtful; but at some point, presumably in or after 1587, he wrote at the top of [sig.] Iiv, where the death of the Phoenix is described, “The Queen executed,” and on the following page, where the new Phoenix appears, “The young King her sonne, of most royall hope.”⁴⁹

Both to the author of “Booke, go thy wayes” and to Harvey, by 1587 the symbol of the phoenix was appropriated for a particular Scotticized mythology, with James himself in the title role. In the case of Gabriel Harvey, it may be argued that, for a reader removed from the actualities of the Scottish court, Mary, Queen of Scots would be a more acutely present figure than Lennox. The author of the three LPL poems that evoke “the Phoenix of his Finest art” does not, ultimately, close off any interpretation, but the prefatory poems do immediately yoke together, in any reader’s mind, the figure of James and the epithet “Phoenix,” thus implicitly challenging, or at least widening, the royally authorized interpretation of this political fable.

This close reading of the three LPL poems has been undertaken for a reason. As suggested in the introduction above, the *Essayes* contains something of a bibliographical anomaly: an extract from Pliny the Elder’s description of the mythical phoenix, taken from his *Naturalis Historia* (bk. 20, chap. 2; sig. P4r–v). Its inclusion is presented as an afterthought by the king, for he said about the fragment that “I have insert for the filling out of thir vacand pageis, the verie wordis of *Plinius* vpon the *Phoenix*, as followis.” Concluding the fragment, the king coyly admits that “*I helped my self also in my Tragedie thairof, with the Phoenix of Lactantius Firmianus, with Gesnerus de Auibus, & dyuers vthers, bot I haue onely insert thir foresaid words of Plinius, Because I follow him maist in my Tragedie. Fareweill.*” By this casual demonstration of his acquaintance with these authorities of natural history, the classical Pliny, early Christian Lactantius, as well as the sixteenth-century Conrad Gesner, James saves the scholar of *quellenforschung* the trouble of further research. We also know that at least some of these works were procured for James not long before the *Essayes* was published. Peter Young, who compiled the king’s library inventory between 1577 and 1583, registered that

49. Relle, “New Marginalia,” 404.

“Mr George Hackett” (who was, apparently, “Conservator of the Privileges of the Scots in Flanders”) “brocht hame” copies of “Plinius gallice en deux volume” as well as “Gesneri de animalibus lib. 1 et 4us. Desunt 2 et 3.” The missing volumes of Gesner were later procured for the king by Young from the archbishop of Glasgow (“que j’ay depuis eu de leuesque de Glasgow”).⁵⁰ These book acquisitions betray James’s active interest in natural history, which in turn might explain his keen citations. Yet it is difficult to judge the tone of these scholarly acknowledgments. Modern critics are certainly suspicious: David Bergeron reads James’s note “as simultaneously accurate and disingenuous.” To Bergeron, for whom James’s teenage infatuation and intimacy with Esmé Stuart is the first of three defining homosocial relationships in the king’s life, the fragment “strongly suggests that James sees [the tragedy ‘Phoenix’] as central to everything in this collection.” Thus the close of the *Essayes* delivers the reader back to its thematic center, by means of a bibliographical trick.⁵¹

Perhaps the king was speaking the truth, and he was indeed forced to furnish Vautrollier with extra copy at the last minute, and perhaps Pliny was still at hand, perched on the royal writing desk. However, now that new poems of praise to the king have surfaced, another scenario can be proffered. It is not in principle unlikely that whoever composed the three LPL manuscript poems found himself on the king’s wish list for dedicatory submissions, but that he (or she) somehow missed the print deadline. As a result, Vautrollier may have been forced to set type without the requested poems, and hence found himself short of one leaf of material at the end of the book. Such a theory is conjectural at best: the *Essayes* contains ample blank pages, and the printer could have chosen to move material around for more economical distribution. This theory also crucially depends on whether the initial signature (marked with an asterisk) was printed before or after the main run. Customarily, initial signatures were printed last, in which case all type would likely have been distributed before the preliminary poems were set (this procedure would also have enabled James to circulate early proofs to his adulatory poets). The *Essayes* is slightly more complicated in that the vernacular poems of praise appear on the preliminary signature, but the Latin verses of Patrick Adamson on sig. A1r–v, commence on the first quire of the main text. Perhaps Adamson’s works were certainly to be included, while James or his printer had yet to decide about the remainder of the poems. It is the case that James had his pick of a series of dedicatory poems for the *Essayes*, not all of which were finally printed. This is evident from Alexander Montgomerie’s sonnet “Can goldin *Titan* shyning bright at morne,” which prefaces the *Essayes* among the offerings of the Hudsons, Fowler, and “M. W.” In the authoritative Ker manuscript of Montgomerie’s poetry, “Can goldin *Titan*” is the third in a four-sonnet sequence, jointly entitled “In prais of the Kings Vranie.”⁵² Lyall has noted that these four poems (like the LPL series) display “elaborate

50. G. F. Warner, “The Library of James VI., 1573–1583: From a Manuscript in the Hand of Peter Young, His Tutor,” in *Miscellany of the Scottish History Society*, vol. 1 (Edinburgh, 1893), xxxix.

51. Bergeron, *King James*, 58–59.

52. MS De.3.70, Edinburgh University Library; see Alexander Montgomerie, *Poems*, ed. David J. Parkinson, 2 vols. (Edinburgh, 2000), 1:106–7.

rheterical patterning,”⁵³ neatly linking phrases and conceits to work up to Montgomerie’s conclusion that James is, as the poet put it, the “Quintessesnt of kings.” Montgomerie’s carefully crafted effect was largely lost to the *Essayes*, however, by the suppression of three of those four sonnets. Indeed, nothing in “Can goldin *Titan*” explicitly praises the “Uranie,” perhaps because in the *Essayes*, that poem was already singled out for praise by an earlier adulatory sonnet, that by the unidentified “M. W.”: “*Vranie* should teach this Prince most rare” (sig. *iii). That Montgomerie’s four sonnets were composed with the *Essayes* in mind is suggested by the fourth sonnet in the Ker manuscript, which points forward to “the Phoenix with her fedrum fair”—but that poem was not selected for inclusion. Montgomerie’s sequence suggests deliberation on the part of James, and perhaps of his printer, as to which adulatory sonnets would finally come to introduce the *Essayes* (and it is possible that considerations of space played a part here, if Vautrollier was reluctant to fill an entire second preliminary quire).

Whether or not the LPL poems were ever intended to be printed, it is notable that they would have brought the volume full circle: poem 3 especially, which celebrates “the Phoenix poëms of a Phoenix king,” structurally mirrors the phoenix-related item at the back of the book—and both of these point toward James’s tragic fable. Furthermore, it would be reasonable to assume that especially poem 3, “Booke, go thy wayes,” was not written to grace the pages of a single book; rather, it was conceived to “bless” an entire print run.

A final hypothesis relating to the LPL poems arises from the fact that all their rhyme words and diction would be acceptable to a southern English speaker. Therefore, they may have been composed by an Englishman. When James had the *Exercises* printed in 1591, the very first poem of praise was written not by a Scottish courtier but by Henry Constable.⁵⁴ The explicit foregrounding of Constable’s poem (the topic of which is “Fame”) underscored the reach of James’s poetry and his ambition to address an English audience. It is not beyond reason, then, that James adopted a similar publication strategy for the *Essayes*, but that he was thwarted in his purpose.



This essay commenced with Steven May’s provocative suggestions regarding the potential influence of the poetry and books of King James, not only upon his Scottish subjects but also upon his southern neighbors. A range of new evidence of a two-way and cross-border cultural traffic that could come to support this idea has now come to light, not least the efforts by Arran to promote the *Essayes* to two English recipients

53. Roderick J. Lyall, *Alexander Montgomerie: Poetry, Politics and Cultural Change in Jacobean Scotland* (Tempe, Ariz., 2005), 103–4. “Quintessesnt” seems to be Montgomerie’s coinage.

54. On Constable, see further Lyall, “Thrie Truear Hairts”; also cf. Deirdre Serjeantson, “English Bards and Scotch Poetics: Scotland’s Literary Influence and Sixteenth-Century English Religious Verse,” in *Literature and the Scottish Reformation*, ed. Crawford Gribben and David George Mullan (Farnham, U.K., 2009), 161–89.

and John Norton's procurement of thirty copies of the *Exercises* for a range of English readers and regulators—both actions ensuring that at least some copies were available in England almost immediately after printing. The various newly discovered readers and owners of extant copies have also contributed to a picture of the circulation of the king's books. And turning the clock further back, to the moments of the production and design of the *Essayes*, if the idea that the three LPL poems were indeed composed by an Englishman could be substantiated, then it is possible that a publication strategy similar to the *Exercises* (with its prominent sonnet of praise by Constable) also informed the *Essayes*.

More explicit connections still need to be made between the publications of King James and their English readers on the one hand, and these books and their English collaborators on the other, but related advances in scholarship can also assist here. One example is an essay by Deirdre Serjeantson that argues for the significance of a previously unexplained and largely overlooked sonnet of praise to James VI/I that was also printed in the *Exercises*, alongside that of Constable, and penned by Henrie Lok. Serjeantson has shown that Lok was an employee of the same Burghley who took receipt of the *Essayes* from Arran, and furthermore, that Lok operated as a messenger between England and the Scottish nobleman Francis Stewart, Earl of Bothwell. Lok's role as a messenger and his familiarity with the Scottish court is, to Serjeantson, crucial evidence of the "traffic of texts across the border," and this allows her to make a case for the impact of a Scottish religious poetics upon "the emerging aesthetic of English devotional writing": a claim of similar interest and potential to that of May.⁵⁵ Serjeantson's work offers another piece of evidence for the supposition that the *Essayes* had a profound impact; we should therefore not underestimate the influence of this printed book of poetry specifically and Scottish literary poetics more generally on developments in English poetry. Importantly, at the wellspring of such a Scottish poetics lay "the Phoenix poems of a Phoenix king."

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55. Serjeantson, "English Bards," 165.

