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Royal Bastards and Mistresses: The Shadow Courts of Restoration England

BY

John Bays

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Royal Bastards and Mistresses: The Shadow Courts of Restoration England

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Undergraduate Honors Thesis
Eastern Illinois University

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Introduction: The Courtly Context of Royal Bastardy

Charles II returned to England in 1660 accompanied by a “natural son” from a mistress. And within a decade he had new mistresses and more natural or illegitimate children. This thesis attempts to look at the political and cultural roles of these royal mistresses and bastards at the Restoration court of Charles II. It also examines how Charles II used the mistresses and bastards and how some of them used the royal court to their own advantage. Rather than focusing on the personalities of this mistress or that son, however, this thesis focuses on their roles and functions in a courtly context.

The English Restoration Court was of course unique. Each royal court of early modern Europe differed as to ceremony, politics, and social practices. Even so, there were similar courtly roles and practices across Europe. We should start perhaps with a definition of a royal court. Simply put it was the area around and the people who attended upon the monarch, wherever that monarch might be. So one could have a court at a military front, or a court at the horseraces if that is where the monarch was. By the 17th century, however, European courts were largely associated with one palace. The court was the scene for diplomatic exchanges and receptions, as well as formal and informal meetings on domestic politics. Charles envisioned moving to new palaces in his 25-year reign at Greenwich or at Winchester, but it proved difficult to abandon the 1,500 rooms at Whitehall. Instead, numerous attempts were made to renovate and streamline the set of ramshackle buildings in Westminster for his use.¹

The “court” was also a set of positions, some ceremonial and others with specific roles, held by individuals, as well as an informal court of hangers-on, the courtiers. The set-up of Charles’s Whitehall reflects this dual use with a series of successive State and receiving rooms

¹ Simon Thurley, *Whitehall Palace: An Architectural History of the Royal Apartments, 1240-1690* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1999), 1-22.

leading to his Privy Chamber from one end, and, at the other, a Back Stairs, which allowed an informal, more private entrance for others. It was this court which the royal mistresses and his natural sons would enter and have to negotiate. Before examining how they did so, the nature of the Restoration court can be highlighted by comparing it with others across the continent. The French court of Louis XIV and the other Bourbons was highly ceremonial, regimented, and luxurious. The Austrian Hapsburg court, on the other hand, was smaller and less extravagant with a far more sober sense of fashion. Also, the French monarch was far more visible to courtiers than his more private Hapsburg counterpart. The courts also differed greatly in aesthetic splendor. No contemporary French noble and virtually no other monarch across Europe was able to build anything comparable to the palace of Versailles. Certainly, Charles's Whitehall was far less imposing, remaining basically a 16th-century noble palace with outbuildings except for the addition of the Banqueting Hall built by his father. The royal Hapsburg seat of Hofburg Palace wasn't even the most splendid palace in Vienna, let alone the whole of the Holy Roman Empire. The difference in court grandeur had largely to do with differing financial situations. The historian Jeroen Duindam estimates that the total Habsburg budget was normally only equivalent to 15-30 percent of the French budget.² The Princes of Orange in the Dutch republic played a very unique quasi-royal role as first citizens in a society without a monarch. Like many early modern royals, the Princes of Orange were great collectors of fine art. The court of the Princes of Orange also played a unique role for many years as the leading anti-Hapsburg power in Europe. The court of the House of Orange changed dramatically over time due to the shifting nature of

² Jeroen Duindam, "The Court of the Austrian Habsburgs, c. 1500-1750," in *The Princely Courts Of Europe: 1500-1750*, ed. John Adamson (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1999, 2000), 175-200.

the House's place in Dutch politics as Stadtholder.³ Clearly there were significant, visible differences between early modern princely courts.

Each early modern court was unique in its own right; however, all courts were similar in crucial ways. Most monarchs regularly went on stag or other royal hunts, as an ancient and “manly” practice, and thus re-constituting the court-out-of-doors.⁴ Also, most monarchs were great patrons of the arts.⁵ Courts acted as pinnacles of artistic expression (and patronage) within their realms, sponsoring the best painters, musicians, sculptors, and craftsmen of their time.⁶ For example, tapestries were expensive and rare, and courts often commissioned the best artisans to make grand tapestries.⁷ Another similarity that can be seen across the spectrum of early modern courts of the 17th and 18th centuries was the presence and importance of chivalric orders. Membership in these orders signified rank, importance, and often favoritism with the monarch. The names of these orders differed from court to court: the Order of the Garter in England, or the Order of the Golden Fleece in Hapsburg lands.⁸ Courts also employed similar officers. Specific household officers would be responsible for different aspects of the monarch's life and of the court itself. For example, most courts had a Master of the Horse, an historically ancient office with roots dating back to the Roman Empire.⁹ Even more important than roles and cultural practices, was the shared religiosity of courts. Courts not only acted as the center for religious allegiance within their realms, they also were centers of ceremonial religious practice. Religious ceremonies dominated the court calendar.¹⁰ Finally, The second crucial similarity all courts shared was the

³ Ibid., 121-125.

⁴ Ibid., 168.

⁵ Ibid., 184.

⁶ Ibid., 106-137.

⁷ Ibid., 82.

⁸ Ibid., 304.

⁹ Ibid., 214-243.

¹⁰ Ibid., 8-31.

development of locational permanency during this time. It would be an exaggeration to say that courts developed completely permanent seats. Monarchs still undertook progresses and maintained several palaces. However, it is during the early modern period that courts begin to develop permanency. This development of a relatively permanent location reflects the early centralization of power in the court and is a crucial part of what we would consider to be an early modern state. It is also critical in allowing for the development of centralized patronage and the politics of access.¹¹ These developments are of utmost importance and therefore must be explained further.

All early modern courts were centers of power. In personal monarchies, the ruler might express or wield power in terms of ritual, ideology, or military or legal might. But the monarch also wielded patronage. And in every early modern court, patronage was power. Those with the power to dispense favors, financial grants, or positions held sway over would-be recipients. Early modern courts can be viewed as a web of patron-client relationships. The patron might grant a client a favor, grant, or position in reward for political or other support.¹² Historian Sharon Kettering shows how this system, in the French example, was inherently unstable. Courtiers could adhere to multiple patrons, and patrons themselves could be clients to more powerful patrons. This created a system in which opportunistic clients often “leapfrogged” to more powerful patrons higher on the social ladder. The relationships were not stagnant, and changed depending on who was in power at certain times.¹³ It can be argued that the early modern state tried to centralize these patronage networks, creating the first early modern states with quasi-official bureaucracies. In the French court during the reigns of Louis XIII and Louis XIV, state-

¹¹ Ibid., 10-11.

¹² Sharon Kettering, *Patrons, Brokers, and Clients in Seventeenth-Century France* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986), 1-13.

¹³ Ibid., 13-22.

building ministers like Armand-Jean du Plessis (Cardinal-Duke of Richelieu), Cardinal Jules Mazarin, and Jean-Baptiste Colbert built up centralized monarchical patronage networks to extend French royal influence into provincial parlements and estates.¹⁴ This coincided with and greatly contributed to a gradually weakening of great noble clientage networks. Independent noble military patronage came to an end during Louis XIV's reign, as did the practice of nobles traveling with large retinues. This, coupled with Louis' requirement for all of the nobility to live at Versailles, decreased the amount of regional patronage (and therefore power) that the nobility possessed.¹⁵ The historical sociologist Norbert Elias argues that Louis essentially created a "Gilded Cage" in which the nobility were trapped. According to this model, the nobility squabbled amongst themselves for the best roles in Louis' ceremonies, while any real power they had was essentially lost.¹⁶ Elias's argument is somewhat corroborated by the work Bourbon ministers Richelieu and Colbert did to centralize state patronage, but it credits them with too much success. Although the nobles' regional patronage was indeed weakened by state centralization, they did not simply become pets. Historian Jeroen Duindam argues against the idea of the "gilded cage," noting that the nobility still played a vital role in carrying out government measures and in the parlements of France.¹⁷ He also points out that the nobility essentially held a monopoly on top positions within the new centralized military, thereby making them somewhat of a "commanding cast" in French society.¹⁸ This "battle" between Elias and Duindam simply shows us that power through clientage and patronage was not an absolute or stagnant form of centralization. For the purposes of this thesis, the "gilded cage" of Versailles or

¹⁴ Ibid, 118.

¹⁵ Sharon Kettering, "The Decline of Great Noble Clientage during the Reign of Louis XIV," *Canadian Journal of History* 24, 2 (1989): 157-177.

¹⁶ Norbert Elias, *The Civilizing Process* (New York: Urizen Books, 1978), 222-248.

¹⁷ Jeroen Duindam, *Myths of Power: Norbert Elias and the early modern European court* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 1994), 45-46.

¹⁸ Ibid, 42. See also, Ibid., 61-62.

any court did not automatically curtail the power of the noble courtier. Noble courtiers, and titled mistresses were nobility, could remain nodes in a patronage network and thus have power at the royal court as well.

Courts were also places where monarchs might deploy the power of ceremony. Ceremony gave monarchs a unique form of expressing and enhancing power. This power emanated from the ideology of the two bodies of the monarch, that the monarch has both his mortal and his political body. The flesh, blood, and bone of the monarch, is temporal and dies. The abstract political body of the monarch is eternal and quasi-divine. Religious ceremonies were meant to downplay the “physical body” and emphasize the eternal sovereign body. Ceremonies provided early modern monarchies with a means of self legitimization, while also enforcing the idea of the divine and eternal nature of kingship.¹⁹ This role of enforcing the idea and divine mystique of kingship was undoubtedly a key part of monarchical ceremony within the early modern period; however, ceremony also served other useful purposes.

Ceremonies could be used by monarchs to express pleasure or displeasure with certain individual courtiers. In his article “*Nothing but Ceremony, Queen Anne and the Limitations of Royal Ritual*” the historian Robert Bucholz discusses how Queen Anne in the early 18th century used ceremony as a tool to demonstrate her pleasure with this faction and or that individual, and did so be rewarding them with roles within court ceremonies.²⁰ Bucholz also describes how Queen Anne and her fellow Stuarts used ceremony to create what he called a “ceremonial dialogue” between subject and monarch. Ceremonies that were targeted to common people, meant to inspire loyalty, and legitimize the monarch’s place as God’s anointed. Bucholz

¹⁹ Abby E. Zanger, *Scenes from the Marriage of Louis XIV: Nuptial Fictions and the Making of Absolute Power* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1997), 4-13.

²⁰ R.O. Bucholz, “Nothing but Ceremony: Queen Anne and the Limitations of Royal Ritual,” *Journal of British Studies* 30, 3 (1991): 288-323, esp. 291.

describes several different ceremonies Anne used to create this dialogue between monarch and people, including proclamations, ascension anniversaries, and royal progresses. However, most important among these in terms of Late-Stuart Britain would be the ceremony of touching for the king's, or in this case, queen's evil. This was a ceremony conducted by English monarchs that entailed the sovereign touching those afflicted with scrofula. The idea was that the monarch's semi-divine touch had the power to cure the disease. Anne was the last English monarch to conduct the ceremony which she did in an attempt to connect with her "lesser subjects."²¹ Anne's predecessor, Charles II, also used ceremonial dialogue to reinforce his semi-divine power with his people. Charles was especially keen to emphasize ceremonial power given that he was returning to a country that had experienced a republic for eleven years, and which would give him very little political or economic might for the first years of his restoration.²² Historian Anna Keay estimates that Charles performed the touching ceremony on a staggering 100,000 people during his reign, that is, for about 2 percent of the overall population!²³

Charles also reinforced his rule through the power of access. Given that, in the early modern period, most patronage descended either directly or indirectly from the monarch, the person who had more access to the monarch, was the person who was more likely to receive and in turn bestow patronage. Historian Brian Weiser has noted how Charles II deployed the politics of access. At first, at the beginning of the Restoration or even before during his exile, Charles made himself very accessible to his subjects.²⁴ Open access, however, proved a temporary strategy, and later in his reign Charles would limit political access. He granted access only to

²¹ Ibid., 294-299.

²² Anna Keay, *The Magnificent Monarch: Charles II and the Ceremonies of Power* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2008), 111.

²³ Ibid., 118.

²⁴ Brian Weiser, *Charles II and the Politics of Access* (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2003), 3.

those who supported his agenda.²⁵ Regulation of access became one of Charles' most effective weapons in his political arsenal, especially during the Exclusion Crisis.²⁶ Another example of the power of restricted access can be seen in Charles's attempt to build a new royal residence at Winchester in 1682. The palace was never completed, but the primary reason for the king's intended move was because the monarch was no longer the sole focal point of social and political life in London. In part this can be seen as the result of the rising power of parliament. Charles wished to make this move in an attempt to make his court more exclusive and restrictive, thereby making access to it more valuable.²⁷ In the end of his reign, Charles allied himself strongly with the Tories and was successfully able to achieve a relatively smooth succession for his brother, the future James II.²⁸

As has been shown, power in the court can be exercised in three general ways. The patron client system allowed for was chaotic, but gave monarchs a strong means of centralization. Power through ceremony gave the monarchs a unique means to assert their perceived quasi-divine place as God's anointed, and also gave them a unique means of communicating and aspiring loyalty in their subjects through ceremonial dialogue. Finally, the ability to regulate access allowed monarchs to express favor and displeasure and proved a valuable resource to those who possessed it. Each of these facets of royal or courtly power—patronage, ceremony, and access, are aspects not only of monarch's political lives, but also that of their courtiers. This thesis examines the multiple facets of power at a royal court, by examining in particular the roles of royal mistresses and the resulting offspring. This might seem counter-intuitive. If we want to know about power at court, surely we should examine the monarch. But the new historians of the

²⁵ Ibid., 4-5.

²⁶ Ibid., 37-45.

²⁷ Ibid., 48-50.

²⁸ Ibid., 86-87.

English court—Buchholz, Weiser, and Keay—emphasize the roles of the courtiers, that studying the court is to study a large group of people, not just the monarch. Also, access and patronage suggest that monarchs reinforced their position by giving out status, funds, and access to their supporters. This means that they gave out power. Sexual mistresses might seem to be solely “used.” But they also were able to survive by manipulating power on their own. No Stuart bastard succeeded to the throne. But the political power of Charles II’s eldest son, James Scott, duke of Monmouth was real enough. And his younger sons also manipulated the system in order to survive. Furthermore, examining this small group—this thesis focuses on three mistresses and six of Charles’s natural sons—allows us to see in miniature how Charles’s court worked in patronage and in ceremony. In this way, this thesis is an example of the wider issue of the early modern European court..

Charles II’s mistresses and bastards, this thesis argues, were both part of the royal court, and, to the extent they had followers and offered patronage of their own, were at the center of a constellation of mini- or shadow courts. To show how they operated in both official and unofficial or shadow courts, this thesis uses official monarchical grants and titles, contemporary courtier’s accounts, other sources, to show how the mistresses and their children used their position of access to build their own political cabals and advance their own political goals. Then, by using diarists who attended court, we can see the mistresses and their natural sons in action, whether the day-to-day reality of their courtly “power” matched the official grants and titles.. The conclusion [will bring together these arguments] and discuss potential future areas of study for Restoration Court historians and early modern historians in general.

Chapter 1: The Royal Mistresses and Children: The Official Record

This chapter draws from records of official offices granted from Charles and land/pensions granted from Charles to portray the formal positions of the mistresses and royal bastards at the court of Charles II. More specifically, which mistresses were in power when and what positions did they and their children hold? After all, a royal mistress's access to the king gave her a great deal of access.²⁹ Knowing these positions gives us a chronological basis on which to place the more nuanced power workings at court during the Restoration court. This chapter is organized chronologically according to when each mistress came into favor with Charles II. Under each mistress is listed the appointments of her individual children by Charles. By looking at the official titles, offices, and grants given to the mistresses and children, we can gain an understanding as to when they were in power and a general starting point to analyzing just how great their influence really was. We can compare this portrait of formal recognition with representations of informal power held by the mistresses and bastards in the succeeding chapter.

One woman who was certainly a royal mistress, but who never entered the Court at Whitehall or any other royal court in England, was Lucy Walter. Lucy died before the Restoration, but she had a son with the future King Charles while he was in exile. Their son and political interest in what had or had not been the secret marital status of Lucy and the monarch would prove of utmost importance to court opposition during the Exclusion Crisis. This later interest warrants a brief analysis of her relation with Charles II before the 1660 Restoration. Lucy, born in 1630, had a brief affair with a parliamentarian military officer before turning to the exiled royalist camp in the Netherlands. Lucy used her connections to meet the exiled Charles and then, according to some accounts, used her charm to seduce him when they were both 18.

²⁹ Charles Carlton, *Royal Mistresses* (London: Routledge, 1991), 2-10.

However, the relationship between the two would prove to be fleeting. Lucy became pregnant with a son by Charles in July 1648. Even before James was born in the following April, Lucy tried to claim publicly that she had been married to Charles. Not surprisingly, Charles denied these rumors.³⁰ Charles departed later in 1649 for Jersey, and Lucy was left to support herself, and her son, the future Duke of Monmouth. Charles returned in 1652, but he made it clear to Lucy that he had no desire to continue their relationship. Lucy refused to accept this, and, after four years of scandal, Lucy was essentially bribed and sent to live in England. She was discovered by the republican government, imprisoned in the Tower, and sent back to the Netherlands. Here she used her son, Monmouth, to gain leverage over Charles. After a botched attempt on the part of Charles' men to kidnap Lucy and Charles' son and the public relations fiasco that followed, Lucy was persuaded to surrender Monmouth to one of Charles' tutors in March 1658. Later that year, she died of venereal disease in Paris. Ultimately, her relationship with Charles was itself an incredibly short affair (1648-49).³¹ She was also far from Charles' only mistress while in exile. Charles fathered a daughter with Elizabeth Killigrew in 1651 named Charlotte Fitzroy and a son with Catherine Pegge named Charles Fitzcharles in 1657.³² Fitzcharles had a minor career as a courtier and soldier, and eventually was ennobled earl of Plymouth in July 1675. Plymouth dabbled in politics and also served in the Dutch army in an attempt to project himself as a Protestant soldier. He eventually died of dysentery on campaign in October 1680 while fighting with English forces against the Moors.³³

³⁰ Ibid., 64.

³¹ Robin Clifton, "Walter, Lucy (1630?-1658)," *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography [ODNB]* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004; online edn, Oct 2006) <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/28639>.

³² Carlton, *Royal Mistresses*, 64.

³³ John Callow, "Fitzcharles, Charles, earl of Plymouth (c.1657-1680)," *ODNB*, <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/9540>

The brevity Charles' relationship with Lucy and the existence of several other mistresses does not diminish Lucy's significance. The relationship produced rumors of marriage that would persist and become politically significant during the latter part of Charles' reign. The brief relationship also produced James Scott, Duke of Monmouth, the eldest of the King's bastard children, and probably his most dearly loved, but who would also become a thorn in Charles's side during the Exclusion Crisis.³⁴

Monmouth, the firstborn of Charles' bastard children, would have been important even without his many appointments and grants. In 1662, Scott was knighted in 1662 and was granted a valuable monopoly on the export of drapery in the same year. By the end of 1663, his father Charles had created him the title of Baron Scott of Tindale, Earl of Doncaster, Duke of Monmouth, Duke of Buccleuch, Earl of Dalkeith, and he succeeded to the title of Lord Scott of Whitchester and Eskdale in Scotland. Charles also made Monmouth a Knight of the Garter on April 22, 1663. In 1666, he was made captain of a troop of horse. Charles made Monmouth captain of his majesty's own troop of guards in 1668. In 1672, Monmouth was sent by his father to command the British auxiliaries sent to aid the French against the Dutch and was also made Lord High Chamberlain of Scotland for life. The following year, Charles appointed him commissioner for executing the office of Lord High Admiral. In 1674, Charles made Monmouth Master of the Horse and chancellor of the University of Cambridge. Later that year, he was appointed as the commissioner by his father to conclude a treaty with Sweden. In 1678, Charles made Monmouth Captain General of all land forces in England, Wales, and Berwick, and the following year was made Captain General of all land forces in Scotland. In 1678, Monmouth was also sent to command the British forces in Flanders. On June 22, 1679, Monmouth won a decisive victory at the Battle of Bothwell Bridge.

³⁴ Clifton, "Walter, Lucy,".

Charles, then, gave titles and grants to his natural son by his dead mistress almost from the moment he landed on English soil. By the end of the 1660s, he advanced Monmouth on his military career. And in the 1670s, he gave Monmouth a series of high posts, although only one, Master of the Horse, gave him a prominent place at court. Indeed, many of his positions took him to France, the Netherlands, Scotland, and other foreign lands. But Monmouth's favor with his father and role at court ended about 1680. During the succession crisis, Whig opposition centered around Monmouth. After his father's death, Monmouth led a rebellion against his uncle, James II. Rebels declared Monmouth king at Taunton on 20 June 1685 and Monmouth's rebel army was defeated two weeks later by royalist forces. His half brother, the Duke of Grafton, commanded the royalist forces opposing Monmouth. Monmouth was captured and executed, thus ending the political career of the most famous of Charles bastard children.³⁵

Even before the Restoration, while Monmouth was still an infant, Barbara Palmer, future Duchess of Cleveland, became the first of Charles' "political" mistresses in 1660 while Charles was still in exile. Charles gave her the title Countess of Castlemaine in December 1661.³⁶ She received the title after she had already given birth to Anne Lennard who Charles later acknowledged and while she was pregnant with Charles Fitzroy, another royal bastard, in June 1662. It was during these years that marriage negotiations began between England and Portugal, and Charles married Catherine of Braganza by proxy in 1661, though they did not meet in London until May 1662. The marriage, however, produced no offspring, and Charles did not abandon his mistresses. The next June, Charles forced Queen Catherine to make Castlemaine, a lady of the Queen's bedchamber, even though Castlmaine was pregnant at the time with another

³⁵ George E. Cockayne, *The Complete Royal Peerage of England, Scotland, Ireland, Great Britain, and the United Kingdom* (London: St. Catherine Press, 1936), "James Scott."

³⁶ Margaret Gilmour *The Great Lady, a biography of Barbara Villiers, mistress of Charles II* (New York: A.A. Knopf, 1941), 15.

son by Charles. In September 1663, Castlemaine gave birth to a son by Charles named Henry Fitzroy and moved into apartments at Whitehall. Having a child by the king helped mistresses greatly; as historian Charles Carlton notes, it “enhanced their status and gave them a long term link with the crown.”³⁷ In December 1665, Barbara gave birth to her final son by Charles, George Fitzroy. From the years 1667 to 1670, Charles showered Castlemaine with official titles and monetary and land grants. In 1667, he gave her a pension of 1000 pounds per annum. The following year Charles gave to Castlemaine Berkshire House, an estate worth 4000 pounds. In 1699, Charles increased her annual pension to 4700 pounds. The 1670 was the peak of Barbara’s career in terms of official offices and grants. Charles awarded her a reversion on the office of the keeper of Hampton Court, created her Duchess of Cleveland, Countess of Southampton, and Baroness of Nonesuch, and bestowed significant lands around Nonesuch Palace. In 1673, he gave Cleveland the land grant in Phoenix Park in Dublin. The following year he increased her pension to 12,000 pounds per annum.

From these gifts and titles from 1670-1673, it would appear that Cleveland experienced a drastic increase in power. But her eclipse as mistress by Nell Gwynn and Louise Keroualle, meant that Barbara only collected her court pension with difficulty. Barbara had no more significant grants or gifts from the crown after 1674. Yet she had been a recognized force at court for over a decade. She was also very successful at establishing the positions of her sons at court.³⁸ She continued as Duchess of Cleveland until her death in 1709.³⁹

At the peak of Cleveland’s influence, King Charles created Charles Fitzroy, the first male of their children, earl of Southampton in 1670. In 1673, Charles made his son a Knight of the

³⁷ Carlton, *Royal Mistresses*, 3-5.

³⁸ Cockayne, *Complete Peerage*, “Castlemaine.”

³⁹ S. M. Wynne, “Palmer, Barbara, countess of Castlemaine and *suo jure* duchess of Cleveland (*bap.* 1640, *d.* 1709),” *ODNB*, <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/28285>.

Garter, the highest order of Chivalry in England. In 1675, Charles created his son Baron of Newbury, Earl of Chester, and Duke of Southampton. Southampton received only titles and held no active or even honorary posts. He was just 23 when his father died in 1685. But, Southampton's career continued after the Glorious Revolution. In 1697, William III awarded Southampton a 1,000 pound per annum pension and Southampton succeeded his mother as duke of Cleveland in 1709. He partook in various debates in the House of Lords up until his death in 1730. Although the oldest of the "minor Bastards," Southampton's political career is the least impressive.⁴⁰

Henry Fitzroy, the first of Charles Fitzroy's younger brothers, was born in September 1663. In August 1672, the King formally acknowledged him and made Henry Earl of Euston. In 1675, Charles styled his son Duke of Grafton and in 1678, Grafton began his military career in the Navy. In 1680, Charles made him a Knight of the Garter. In 1681, he became colonel of the First Foot Guards and in 1682 he became master of Trinity house. In 1683, Charles appointed Grafton Vice Admiral of England and briefly commander of the Narrow Seas. In 1685, Henry took on the ceremoniously significant role as Lord High Chamberlain in the coronation of his uncle, James II. He also took his seat in the House of Lords. During this year, he also was an active royalist military commander fighting against his half-brother, James Duke of Monmouth, when Monmouth attempted his short-lived rebellion to usurp James II. In 1687, James II made Grafton a Knight of St. John, a prominent chivalric order. In 1689, Grafton carried the orb in the coronation of William and Mary. In 1690, Grafton died in battle during the siege of Cork helping William's forces fight against the Jacobites.⁴¹ Grafton was very popular and his death was

⁴⁰ J. M. Rigg, "FitzRoy, Charles, second duke of Cleveland and first duke of Southampton (1662–1730)," rev. Matthew Kilburn, *ODNB*, <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/9629>.

⁴¹ J. D. Davies, "FitzRoy, Henry, first duke of Grafton (1663–1690)," *ODNB*, <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/9636>.

widely mourned, according to his biographer, Sir Almeric Fitzroy.⁴² A large stately pageant with royal ceremonial was organized for Grafton before his burial at Westminster to allow for people to pay their respects. Queen Mary, who was Regent of the kingdom while William oversaw the military campaign, the Knights of the Garter, and several other notables attended this pre burial ceremony.⁴³

The last of Castlemaine's children by Charles II, George Fitzroy, was born in December 1664. Ten years later Charles II created him Baron of Pontefract, Viscount of Falmouth, and Earl of Northumberland. In 1683, Charles styled his son Duke of Northumberland, and the following year Charles made him a Knight of the Garter. In 1685, shortly before his death in February, Charles appointed Northumberland Captain and Colonel of the Second Troop of Life Guards. In 1688, Northumberland received what was arguably his most important position at court when James II appointed him Lord of the Bedchamber. In 1701, William III appointed Northumberland Lord Lieutenant of Surrey, Constable of Windsor Castle and Park, and Ranger of Windsor Forest. In 1703, Anne appointed him Colonel of the Royal House Guards and in 1708, promoted him to Major General. In 1712, Anne appointed Northumberland to the Lord Lieutenancy of Berkshire and the following year Anne made him a Privy Councilor. He participated in various debates and votes in the House of Lords up until his death in 1716.⁴⁴ Northumberland became a privy councilor almost twenty years after his father's death, testament to the longevity of his career.

Even while the Duchess of Cleveland and her sons' accrued honors, titles and grants, Charles added the famous "pretty witty" Nell Gwyn to his harem. Nell was unique amongst the

⁴² Sir Almeric Fitzroy, *Henry, Duke of Grafton, 1663-1690: vice-admiral of England and lieutenant of the admiralty, navies and seas of England, master of the Trinity house, colonel of the 1st regiment of foot guards* (London; Christophers, 1921), 84.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 85-86.

⁴⁴ Cockayne, *Complete Peerage*, "Henry Fitzroy."

three mistresses in that she was the only one who did not receive a title.⁴⁵ Yet,, Charles’s grants to Nell and to her son reflect her influence and importance at court. In the winter of 1667-68, Nell had been “promoted” to Charles by the Duke of Buckingham. In 1669, she became pregnant with a son by Charles, Charles Beauclerk, who was born on May 8, 1670. She moved into the west end of Pall Mall in 1671, and Charles granted her a 4,000 pound per annum pension. She continued to receive grants and gifts for the next decade. In 1675, she was appointed Lady of the Queen’s Privy Bedchamber, and in 1676, Charles increased her pension to 5,000 pounds. The following year Charles purchased a freehold in Pall Mall for Nell, while also giving Nell another pension of 800 pounds per year on Irish revenues. In 1680, Charles gave her Windsor House in Burford and also granted her leases of land in Bestwood Park. Her final grant from Charles came two years before his death in 1683, when he gave her the customs paid on Longwood.⁴⁶

Although Nell never actually received a title herself, she clearly was a central figure in Charles’ later years and was a significant presence at court. We can see this from the sheer number of grants and monetary gifts she was given by Charles. We can also see this in the court career of her son.⁴⁷

The perhaps apocryphal story of how Charles Beauclerck gained his title, suggests the perceived power and influence of mistress Gwynn. Supposedly, in May 1670, Nell, frustrated that the other bastard children had received titles in preference to her son, held the infant Charles Beauclerck out her window at arms’ length while a horrified Charles II stood down below. She told the King that if her son was not given a title that she would “drop the little bastard.” Charles II reportedly quickly shouted back “God save the Earl of Burford,” thus ending the encounter

⁴⁵ Donald Adamson and Peter Dewar, *The House of Nell Gwyn; The Fortunes of the Beauclerk Family* (London: Harper Collins, 1974), 2-5.

⁴⁶ Cockayne, *Complete Peerage*, “Nell Gwyn.”

⁴⁷ S. M. Wynne, “Gwyn, Eleanor (1651?-1687),” *ODNB*, <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/11816> .

and granting Nell her wish.⁴⁸ Whether true or not, Charles did create the six-year-old progeny Baron of Heddington and Earl of Burford in 1676. In 1684, his father created him Duke of St. Albans. St. Albans' career at court and in politics continued well after the death of his royal father. In 1688, he served in the Imperial army against the Turks, and in 1691, he took his seat in the House of Lords. In 1695, William III granted St. Albans a pension of 2000 pounds. The highlight of his political career arguably came in 1697 when he served as ambassador extraordinaire to the court of Paris for King William. In this same year, he was also awarded a 800 pound grant from the parliament of Ireland. The final events of political significance in his life occurred in 1718 when George I made him captain of the Pensioners and a Knight of the Garter.⁴⁹ He died in 1726.⁵⁰

Nell Gwynn's greatest rival for Charles' affections was Louis de Kerouaille. Just as Nell was popular to many because of her being an English Protestant, Louise was very unpopular due to her being a French Catholic. And yet, she became the most politically powerful of Charles's mistresses. De Kerouaille's career at the court of Charles II began in 1670 when she was made a maid of honor to Queen Catherine. In 1672, she gave birth to a royal son, Charles Lennox, and the King moved her into apartments at Whitehall. The following year he made her Baroness of Petersfield, Countess of Fareham, Duchess of Portsmouth and made her a Lady of the Queen's Bedchamber. In 1674, Louise was given the estate of Aubingy in France by Louis XIV at the request of Charles II. In 1676, Charles established her pension at 8600 pounds per annum for life, and, from this year onwards, she played an increasingly important role in political discussions between the French government and Charles II. In 1680, Charles increased her

⁴⁸ Allan Fea, *Some Beauties of the Seventeenth Century* (London: Methuen & Co.), 214-216.

⁴⁹ Cockayne, *Complete Peerage*. "Charles Beauclerk."

⁵⁰ William Hunt, "Beauclerk, Charles, first duke of St Albans (1670–1726)," rev. Jonathan Spain, *ODNB*, <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/1847>.

pension to 11,000 pounds per year, and earlier in the year, she was given what was essentially a 10,000 pound bribe or retainer from the French ambassador to help advocate for French interests. These interests included convincing Charles to maintain peace with France, accept Louis territorial expansion into Luxemburg, and most importantly, to accept an Anglo-French Treaty. She exchanged letters with Louis XIV and also used her apartments to facilitate meetings between Charles II and the French ambassador. In 1684 at the request of Charles, Louise's estate in France was created into a duchy, thus making her both an English and a French duchess. She even played a role in the Exclusion Crisis, when the unfounded fear of a secret Catholic conspiracy to murder Charles II and put in power his Catholic brother, James, led to the most bitter partisan politics of the reign. Portsmouth changed sides multiple times going from fellow Catholic York's ally to siding with Monmouth, only to reverse course once again and reconciling with York. From a list of her positions and grants alone, Portsmouth was clearly a prominent figure at court from 1672 until Charles's death in 1685.⁵¹

Portsmouth, like her rival Nell, only had one child with Charles. Also, like her rival, she pushed her son's interest at court. Charles Lennox was born in 1672 right at the moment that Charles offered the Indulgence or allowance for Catholic religious services in private, and Parliament pushed back by insisting on a religious Test for court, military, and governmental officers. In 1675, when he was just 3, the King created Charles Lennox baron of Settrington, Earl of March, Duke of Richmond, Lord of Torboulton, Earl of Darnley, as well as Duke of Lennox in the Scottish peerage! In 1681, Charles made his son a Knight of the Garter. The following year Charles made Richmond Master of the Horse, which as we have seen had been taken away from Monmouth for supporting the Whig opposition in their attempt to disbar the Catholic York

⁵¹ S. M. Wynne, "K roualle, Louise Ren e de Penanco t de, suo jure duchess of Portsmouth and suo jure duchess of Aubigny in the French nobility (1649–1734)," *ODNB*, <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/15460>.

from the throne. At ten, of course, he was too young to serve in this capacity and a commission of individuals did the actual work of Master of the Horse at this point. In 1683, the town of Portsmouth gave Lennox freedom of the borough and the city of York made him High Steward. He was still quite young, and these political moves signified “not Monmouth.” After his father’s death, Richmond changed his stance on religion and politics several times in order to find a role matching his status. After his father’s death, Richmond went to France with his mother Portsmouth, where he professed Roman Catholicism. He even attempted to join the Jacobite campaign in Ireland, but was rejected due to his youth. He attempted a military career in France, and in 1690, Louis XIV gave Richmond a company of horse. But, in February 1692, Richmond secretly returned to England where he converted back to the Church of England in May. In 1693, Richmond took his seat in the House of Lords, and became a Whig. He would go on to bare the scepter and dove in Queen Anne’s coronation, and in 1714, George I made Richmond Lord of the Bedchamber. The following year he was appointed a privy councilor of Ireland. Richmond had a very long-lasting career far after the death of his father.⁵²

Official positions, grants, and titles conferred to an individual by the monarch are a useful tool when measuring who had influence, access, and at least a degree of power in any early modern court. Charles officially recognized his mistresses and bastards. Castlemaine and Portsmouth both received noble titles, and they and Gwynn received official positions at court and were given large amounts of money and land. Two important conclusions can be drawn from the preceding list of grants and titles held by the mistresses and the bastards. The first is that early on, the political and court career of the bastards was (except in the case of Monmouth) almost entirely started and maintained by their mothers’ influence on Charles. Many of these children received noble titles and court positions far before they would have been able to actually

⁵² Cockayne, *Complete Peerage*, “Charles Lennox.”

carry out the duties they conveyed. For example, Richmond was created duke when he was only three, and made Master of the Horse by his father when he was only ten! As the diarist Samuel Pepys noted on 22 February 1664, the king loved Monmouth so much that all the other courtiers “admired it.” Indeed, Pepys noted that the King was “mighty kind to these bastard children”.⁵³ Even on his deathbed in February 1685, Charles pleaded with his brother James to take care of his bastard children and their mothers, and died surrounded by James and five of his natural sons.⁵⁴ The second conclusion we can draw from the list of the official positions is that the bastards continued to have significant court, military, and ceremonial careers befitting their noble status after the death of their father. This speaks to the unique position they had as being “quasi Royals” that their mistress mothers did not.⁵⁵ Monmouth had an extremely significant (albeit short-lived) political career after his father’s death. And so did his younger half brothers. Henry, Duke of Northumberland, was made Lord of the Bedchamber to James II three years after his father died and became Privy Councilor decades later in 1713. Richmond was made Lord of the Bedchamber, by the first Hanoverian king in 1714. The bastards were able to maintain relevancy and continued to maintain official political and court careers long after their father died.

However, official appointments and positions only tell us so much. They are useful for achieving a general understanding of who was in the monarch’s favor at the time, and clearly, the mistresses and the bastards were in favor with Charles at one point or another. However, what the list does not directly tell us is why Charles did this. Why did Charles shower favor upon his mistresses and illegitimate sons? There are multiple intertwined answers to this question. The first simple reason is that it would look bad upon a monarch to have one of his own children (even an illegitimate) live below their perceived station. However, this reason underscores a

⁵³ Samuel Pepys, *The Diary of Samuel Pepys*, various editions.

⁵⁴ Keay, *The Magnificent Monarch*, 205.

⁵⁵ Wolfram Schmidgen. “The Last Royal Bastard of the Multitude,” *Journal of British Studies* 47, 1 (2008): 53-76.

more important reason specifically applicable to Charles. This would be that Charles attempted to prop up his bastard children and their mothers in an attempt to reinforce his position as monarch. I note the mothers of royal bastards rather than mistresses because he took on other mistresses but never showered them with as many titles, positions, etc., as those who bore him children.

After losing to parliamentarians at the battle of Worcester in 1651 and his ensuing legendary escape, Charles lived in exile. This meant that in effect, Charles lived through being an incognito king.⁵⁶ Upon being recalled from exile, Charles had the unique task of restoring the image and function of the monarchy in English politics and society. Part of his strategy was to make himself accessible to the people in an attempt to unite his still divided nation around him.⁵⁷ Another method used by Charles was to use the ceremony of monarchy. Charles' used ceremony in the form of ceremonial dialogue with his people in an attempt to convey to them the majesty and divine nature of kingship, and inspire loyalty.⁵⁸

Charles used these methods of ceremony and access to help legitimize and assert his authority as the newly restored center of power in England. He was far from the only early modern prince to use these methods. However, unlike most early modern monarchs, Charles fathered no legitimate offspring. Charles propped up his bastards not only because he loved them but also because he needed them to serve as quasi-legitimate royal offspring. By asserting the importance of his seed, Charles indirectly asserted the importance of himself at the center of the court. In this aspect, we can say that Charles used his bastards in an attempt to achieve political gain. Yet, how successful was this method for Charles? How did the public view Charles' bastard children and the mistresses? Did this mode of operation strengthen Charles' role as the

⁵⁶ Weiser, *Politics of Access*, 1-2.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 3.

⁵⁸ Keay, *The Magnificent Monarch*, 207-209.

blazing sun at the center of the court, or by enhancing the status of the bastards and subsequently their mistress mothers, did Charles unwittingly create smaller planets that could act as a decentralizing beacons of power at court? To answer these questions, it is first necessary to find out how the bastards and mistresses were viewed at court. Were they popular and subsequently enhance the popularity of Charles or did they negatively affect Charles's image through their unpopularity? After this, establishing whether or not the bastards and mistresses created shadow courts will give us a better understanding as to the role they played at Charles' court, and to early modern courts as a whole.

Chapter II: The Public Perception of the Royal Mistresses and Bastards

To understand the political effect of public perception of the mistresses and bastards, it is first necessary to establish whether the public cared about the mistresses and bastards. This chapter derives “public opinion” about the court from contemporary diarists as well as a few relevant pamphlets and newspapers from the late 17th century. Four contemporary sources stand out above the rest: the diaries of Samuel Pepys, John Reresby, John Evelyn, and the “entering book” of Roger Morrice. Each kept detailed accounts, and the first three spent much time at Charles’s court. This chapter focuses on how the mistresses were viewed by each of them. The conclusions from these sources are supported by other contemporary sources such as newsletters and satire.

The most famous of the three contemporary diarists, Samuel Pepys, was born in London in February 1633. At the age of 18, in December 1655, he married Elizabeth Pepys, and their somewhat tumultuous marriage lasted until her death in 1669. Pepys began to write his diary in January 1660 and continued to make entries in it until 1669. During this decade, Pepys became both an administrator of the royal navy and, increasingly, a figure at court. His first contact with the King came on 23 May 1660, and, by July, Pepys was the office of Clerk of the Acts of the Navy Board. Pepys was a musical enthusiast and the developing musical culture of Charles II’s court is a prevalent topic in his diary. Pepys was also very interested, even titillated by, the King’s mistresses, especially the Duchess of Cleveland. Pepys continued his administrative career, but his observations on the court date largely from the 1660s.⁵⁹

John Evelyn provides another very useful contemporary source for the Restoration Court. Evelyn was born on 31 October, 1620 in Surrey, attended Middle Temple and then

⁵⁹ C. S. Knighton, “Pepys, Samuel (1633–1703),” *ODNB*, <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/21906>.

Balliol College Oxford. Evelyn began keeping a diary at age 11. In 1664, during the Second Anglo Dutch War, he was appointed to the commission for the sick and wounded, and he served on several other commissions, eventually as Commissioner of the Privy Seal following James II's abdication in 1688. So Evelyn's diary, while not as detailed as Pepys's, continued throughout Charles's reign and beyond. Corruption at court is a prevalent theme in Evelyn's diary, and Evelyn holds a very negative overall view of courts. Even so, he found attendance at court necessary, and he seems to have enjoyed aspects of courtly life, whatever he later wrote down in his diary.⁶⁰

John Reresby's memoirs prove especially useful as he both commented on and sought out the ear of the mistresses in pursuit of his own career. Reresby was born in the West Riding of Yorkshire in April 1634, and remained a loyal Stuart supporter throughout his career. In 1659, he journeyed to the royalist court in exile in Paris. There, he sought the favor of the Queen Mother, Henrietta Maria, whose support would help establish his political career. Reresby served in Parliament as a Tory and supporter of Charles II and, in April 1682, was appointed Governor of York. Reresby's political career often required his attendance at court and his memoirs also cover the entire reign of Charles II and beyond..

The entering book of Roger Morrice contains many useful entries regarding the mistresses. Morrice, born about 1628, received both his bachelor's and master's degree from St. Catherine's College Cambridge by 1659. For close to three decades, Morrice served as the Chaplain in London to Baron Holles, Puritan or Presbyterian parliamentarian. His entering book, which he wrote from 1677-1691, is so detailed that it is assumed that he was likely supplying a newsletter to several Presbyterian Whig politicians. While his Whig

⁶⁰ Douglas D. C. Chambers, "Evelyn, John (1620–1706)," *ODNB*, <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/8996>.

and Nonconformist sympathies would not have been welcome in Charles's court during the Exclusion Crisis or after, Morrice had enough contacts that his sense of the court is quite valuable, even though he did not attend court.⁶¹

How, then, did these contemporaries view the mistresses and their role at Court? Let's begin by analyzing their view of the Duchess of Cleveland. Pepys's 1660s were dominated by Cleveland, or as he usually referred to her Lady Castlemaine. Pepys was especially concerned with Cleveland's "power over the king" (May 15, 1663). Pepys criticized the "Counselors of pleasure" who were best able to persuade and gain control over Charles when he is with the Duchess. Cleveland "rules him" (the King) and keeps Charles's focus on pleasure instead of business. On October 17, 1662, Pepys described how nobody "hath more the kings ear" than Cleveland. On July 22, 1663, Pepys described how he has been told that recent rumors that Cleveland had fallen from the King's good graces were false. Instead, Cleveland was "great again as ever she was" and that she "commands the king as much as ever." Overall, Pepys records events involving Lady Castlemaine nearly 100 times in his diary. Pepys also appears to have been fascinated by Cleveland sexually, but, in regards to her importance at court, Pepys often recorded her significant, yet negative influence on Charles.⁶²

John Evelyn shared these sentiments in regards to Cleveland. On September 2, 1676, Evelyn bestowed upon Cleveland the title of "that infamous adulteress."⁶³ He later described Northumberland as the King's natural son by "an impudent woman."⁶⁴ In all, Evelyn referred to Cleveland at least 24 times, directly or indirectly.⁶⁵ Reresby does not mention Cleveland nearly as often as he does Portsmouth. This is likely attributable to the fact that unlike Pepys and

⁶¹ Mark Goldie, "Morrice, Roger (1628/9–1702)," *ODNB*, <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/37785>.

⁶² Pepys, *The Diary of Samuel Pepys*.

⁶³ John Evelyn, *The Diary of John Evelyn*, ed. John Bowle (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983), 97-98.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 505.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 439.

Evelyn, Reresby's memoirs were written later and that Cleveland's "reign" occurred primarily in first decade of the Restoration. Likewise Roger Morrice barely mentions Cleveland. Still, Pepys and Evelyn viewed Cleveland a significant figure at court. They both viewed her as having a negative influence on the King in terms of his decision-making.

These sources provide a similar view of the role of the Duchess of Portsmouth at court, even though Pepys stopped keeping his diary in 1669, and Portsmouth only entered the king's life and his court in 1671.⁶⁶ Evelyn, Reresby, and Morrice all discuss Portsmouth at length.

On June 15, 1675, Evelyn described how Portsmouth had recently been given her title and how she was at the "height of favor."⁶⁷ On February 6, 1685, Evelyn simply stated that he saw Portsmouth along with two other "concubines" with Charles at court.⁶⁸ On October 4, 1683, Evelyn described how he was among the King's entourage when he visited Portsmouth's apartments. Evelyn described with contempt Portsmouth's lavish and expensive apartments, noting that they had been redone "twice or thrice" to satisfy Portsmouth, and that they were far more exquisite and expensive than the Queen's apartments.⁶⁹ Evelyn mentioned Portsmouth either directly or indirectly at least 19 times.⁷⁰ Like Cleveland, Evelyn viewed Portsmouth as being a significant, b negative influence on Charles.

Reresby also mentioned Portsmouth, some 31 times directly or indirectly.⁷¹ On March 30, 1677, he noted he "entertained the King in the Duchess of Portsmouth's apartment's chamber."⁷² On February 18 of the same year, he described how he sought out the King and

⁶⁶ Wynne, "K roualle, Louise."

⁶⁷Evelyn, *Diary of John Evelyn*, 66.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 407-414.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 341-343.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 336.

⁷¹ Andrew Browning, ed., *Memoirs of Sir John Reresby*, 2nd ed. (London: Royal Historical Society, 1991), 608-609.

⁷² *Ibid.*, 115.

eventually found her with Portsmouth.⁷³ On November 6, 1683, Reresby stated with disapproval that the crown followed French interest and engaged in “private commerce” with the French, by means of Portsmouth.⁷⁴ On January 17, 1682, Reresby described how Portsmouth “prevailed with the king to alter his patent” and assign another courtier to serve under the Duke of Richmond, his natural son Charles Lennox. Reresby thought Portsmouth “often made the king break his engagement to others.”⁷⁵ These entries convey not only Reresby’s negative opinion of Portsmouth, but also reveal hints about Portsmouth’s independent agency, a theme we will return to in Chapter III. For now, it is important to note that Reresby shared a similar opinion with Evelyn in regards to Portsmouth. Reresby found her significant but held a negative opinion in regards to her important status at court.

Roger Morrice mentioned Portsmouth several times, at times simply recording Portsmouth’s whereabouts, such as when she dined with several other notables with the king on October 21, 1680.⁷⁶ On June 9, 1681, Morrice reports that Portsmouth was subpoenaed along with several others to be a witness in a slander trial.⁷⁷ On March 26, 1689 Morrice recalled that he had been told Portsmouth had been initially introduced to the King back in May 1670 to advocate for French interests.⁷⁸ On March 28, 1682 he noted that Portsmouth was received in France with “great pomp and state” and that she was living a very extravagant, expensive lifestyle.⁷⁹ On April 15, 1684, Morrice noted that Portsmouth’s influence was increasing at court dramatically.⁸⁰ Perhaps because the entering book was meant to be read by others as a sort of

⁷³ Ibid., 112.

⁷⁴ Ibid., 320.

⁷⁵ Ibid., 245-246.

⁷⁶ John Spurr, ed., *The Entering Book of Roger Morrice 1677-1691, 2, The Reign of Charles II, 1677-85* (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2007), 240-241.

⁷⁷ Ibid., 278-279.

⁷⁸ Ibid., 484-485.

⁷⁹ Ibid., 313.

⁸⁰ Ibid., 428.

newsletter, Morrice does not express his personal view of Portsmouth much.⁸¹ Yet, when used in conjunction with Reresby and Evelyn, we can again see Portsmouth viewed to be a significant figure at court, and a negative influence on Charles.

Nell Gwyn, was not mentioned nearly as much by these diarists as the other two mistresses. Pepys noted on January 11, 1668 that the King “did send several times for Nelly,” which suggests that Pepys noted in their affair virtually from its inception.⁸² On October 24, 1684, Evelyn describes Gwynn as being a daughter of a “comedian & apple-woman.”⁸³ On January 19, 1686, he repeated a rumor that she had converted to Roman Catholicism.⁸⁴ Evelyn mentions Gwynn directly or indirectly at least 17 times.⁸⁵ Morrice also takes note of Nell a few times. On February 2, 1685, Morrice noted that the dying King requested for his brother and successor to “be kind to the duchess and Nelly,” that is to Portsmouth and Gwynn.⁸⁶ On March 26, 1687, Morrice noted that James II had a rather blunt conversation with Nell in regards to the raising of her son St. Albans. James II essentially said that if Nell expected him to care for the bastard, Charles would have to convert to Catholicism. In November 1687, Morrice also records Nell’s death.⁸⁷ These incidents show Nell was considered to be significant to a certain extent, but clearly far less so than Portsmouth or Cleveland. The reason for this disparity may be that Nell was far less politically ambitious when compared to the other mistresses. Perhaps too, Nell Gwynn trumpeted her Englishness and Protestantism along with her common roots.). This may have improved her perception by both the politically astute and the general public.

⁸¹ Goldie, “Morrice, Roger.”

⁸² Pepys, *The Diary of Samuel Pepys*.

⁸³ Evelyn, *Diary of John Evelyn*, 392.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 496-497.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 287.

⁸⁶ Spurr, ed., *The Entering Book*, 455.

⁸⁷ Spurr, ed., *The Entering Book* 84.

An examination of the contemporary diarists has rendered several conclusions. The first is that the mistresses were held to be significant by contemporary courtiers. The second is that Cleveland and Portsmouth (the two most politically active) were considered very unpopular due in large part to the perceived negative influence they were deemed to exert on Charles' ability to govern effectively. Nell was clearly held to be less significant due to her more apolitical nature, and is covered with significantly less contempt due to her greater popularity. More than this, the immense political involvement and influence of Cleveland and Portsmouth no doubt also made them appear as a "favorite," a courtier who had "the fortune to have a larger share in their masters affections than others". There are many examples of royal favorites in English history, including Piers Gaveston and George Villiers (the Favorite of Charles' father and Grandfather, Charles I and James I respectively), who were highly unpopular and met unfortunate ends through assassination. Throughout English history, favorites have most often been highly disliked by jealous courtiers and the public at large, and the mistresses, with their power and influence, constituted as fitting in with the unpopular favorite paradigm in English history.⁸⁸ We can draw this conclusion out further, and suggest that if a large part of Charles' centralization program at the Restoration Court was to garner public support, then these mistresses were a direct hindrance in his attempts at centralization.

This negative view can be corroborated by anonymous contemporary pamphlets. A printed dialogue supposedly between the Duchess of Cleveland, the Duchess of Portsmouth, and the ghost of Jane Shore began with Portsmouth and Cleveland criticizing each other's looks, sexuality, modesty, and intelligence. Cleveland states that "With Messalina I myself could vie" which is in and of itself a very interesting reference to the infamously promiscuous wife of the Roman emperor Claudius. The criticisms of each another end up reflecting badly on themselves.

⁸⁸ Nathaniel Crouch, *The Unfortunate Court Favorites of England* (1695), 1-10.

At the end of the dialog Jane Shore, the unpopular mistress of Edward IV, appears and tells both to repent.⁸⁹ In 1680, another anonymous document that supports this conclusion was published called “Articles of High Treason, and other crimes and misdemeanors against the Duchess of Portsmouth” (it exists as both a printed pamphlet and in manuscript suggesting that it was circulated widely). The charges claimed that Portsmouth had “labored to alter and subvert the government of church and state” and was attempting to “introduce popery and tyranny in the three kingdoms...” and that she cost the state a fortune with her extravagance among many other accusations. The most extreme of these accusations was that she had actually attempted to poison Charles. Since a monarch was the source of a royal mistress’s power this last accusation is certainly false. However, the other accusations again show us a widespread and negative view of the mistress.⁹⁰ Another example of this theme in a contemporary public work can be seen in *A Pleasant battle between two lap dogs of the Utopian court*, which described a satirical battle between an English dog (Nell Gwynn) and a French dog (the Duchess of Portsmouth). The English dog calls the French dog a scoundrel and implies that the French dog is a spy for the French monarch. In the end, Tutty (the English dog) wins the confrontation and is clearly made out to be the better of the two. Interestingly enough, this piece also makes a reference to the infamous Jane Shore as well. The English dog says, “Your French Romish Bitch shall be pulled limb from limb without starving her, as her predecessor Jane Shore was starved not many ages before”. Again, we see not only a contemporary viewpoint as being highly anti Portsmouth, but we also see the idea of the hated mistress favorite as being a longstanding trend in English

⁸⁹ *A dialogue between the Duchess of Cleveland and the Duchess of Portsmouth at their meeting in Paris, with the Ghost of Jane Shore* [London, 1680].

⁹⁰ *Articles of High-Treason and Other High-Crimes and Misdemeanors against the Dutches of Portsmouth* [London, 1680].

history. Nell was held to be far more popular in the general public.⁹¹ These pamphlets also lightly fictionalized the court of Charles II so as to avoid directly criticizing the monarchy and being charged with sedition. For example, *The Court Secret* indirectly analyzes Charles' court and the Duchess of Cleveland by saying it describes the Ottoman court. Not surprisingly, it portrays the Duchess of Cleveland in a negative light. Charles is called Selim II, and the book basically calls Barbara a Persian whore who was trained to govern Charles and convert him to the "sect of Haly" (Catholicism).⁹² Another, even more important recording of Cleveland in a contemporary document can be seen in the Calendar of State Papers, Domestic Series. On June 30, 1666 the CSPD begins by describing the dire state of the nation saying that taxes were so high that "they dare not open their doors" in fear of tax collectors, and that "the people curse the King, wish for Cromwell". The paper goes on to describe how the King was seemingly aloof to these problems. This is in and of itself interesting, however, the reasons listed for the King's aloofness are incredibly important for this study. The paper directly states that "People say, Give the King the Countess of Castlemaine and he cares not what the nation suffers." This is a direct, public accusation declaring that Charles' inability to govern originates with his relationship with the Duchess of Cleveland.⁹³

Analyzing contemporary sources has shown us a general opinion held by politically informed English contemporaries in regards to the influence held by the three most important mistresses of Charles II. The politically informed contemporary diarists show us that all of the mistresses were held to be significant figures at court. They and contemporary printed works have also shown us that not only were Portsmouth and Cleveland unpopular but their negative influence on Charles potentially damaged Charles' public image. What was the source of the

⁹¹ *A Pleasant Battle between Two Lap Dogs of the Utopian Court* [London, 1681].

⁹² *The Court Secret* [London, 1689]

⁹³ *Calendar of State Papers, Domestic Series*, June 30, 1666.

mistresses' significance and importance? Establishing significance is important, however, it is far more important to establish the source of their significance. By looking at the source of Portsmouth and Cleveland's significance and to a lesser extent Nell Gwyn's, we can better understand their unique role at the Restoration Court. We have already been able to establish that they acted as a negative influence on Charles's popularity. However, were the political mistresses simply viewed as negative influences on Charles because of their position near the center or did they themselves act with a certain degree of independent agency? Can a similar question be posed to the most prominent of the bastard children, the Duke of Monmouth? The answers to these questions will be the focus of Chapter III.

Chapter III: Establishing the Independent Agency of the Mistresses

Both Charles and other contemporaries openly recognized the mistresses as important figures at court. This chapter seeks to understand how they negotiated the court, and the extent to which the mistresses operated independently of the king, or had independent agency.

The very term “mistress,” suggests a sexual, non-political function. As Sonya Wynne writes, “the mistresses political influence has usually been considered and dismissed within a paragraph.”⁹⁴ The historian Charles Carlton only slightly alters this common view when he states that, “while neither Nell Gwynn nor Louise de Keroualle exercised any real political power, they were totems around which political factions gathered.”⁹⁵ This statement is not without some merit. By examining courtiers and general public perception, we see that both Cleveland and Portsmouth were seen to represent a negative, Catholic influence on Charles. In this sense, the mistresses were seemingly representative of a political faction. The mistresses’ fortune was obviously directly tied to Charles, and they and their acquaintances served as part of clientage. However, examining their situation further reveals that they were not only recipients but also brokers of his patronage. They essentially acted as mini beacons of patronage around the center (Charles) or in other words, shadow courts. Establishing the existence of these shadow courts requires showing examples of the mistresses’ acting as brokers of patronage and building small clientele networks.

All three mistresses were seen as potential brokers of patronage by courtiers. This is especially true in the cases of Portsmouth and Cleveland but even the seemingly apolitical Nell Gwynn can be established as a mini-broker of patronage. All three used patronage to promote friends and family and were very successful at this.⁹⁶ For example, Cleveland used her position

⁹⁴ Sonya Wynne, “The Mistresses of Charles II and Restoration Court Politics, 1660-1685” (PhD diss., Cambridge University, 1997).

⁹⁵ Carlton. *Royal Mistresses*, 2-5.

⁹⁶ Wynne, “Mistresses of Charles II,” 84.

to convince Charles to promote her great uncle Henry Glenham to the Bishop of St. Asaph in February 1667.⁹⁷ Cleveland also brokered assistance to those outside her family. For example, in 1674 Peter Mews sought out Cleveland's influence in his attempts to gain the bishopric of London.⁹⁸ In 1666 a certain Mile de Plancy was informed by Lord Arlington that his concerns over promotion would be addressed by Barbara whenever Charles had the proper finances. This event is interesting because it not only shows an example of another courtier seeking out the mistress for patronage, but also another player at court acting as a power broker in Cleveland's name, a prominent feature in early modern patron client relationships.⁹⁹ Even more significantly, on October 30, 1667, Sir Robert Paterson not only acknowledged that a grant he received was directly due to Cleveland's influence but also that he was "serviceable" to her for the rest of his life.¹⁰⁰ Cleveland was building her own network of clients. In a 1675 letter Henry Howard admitted his obligation to support Cleveland's candidate for a position due to her previous patronage to him. Howard admitted this even though his support would conflict with his obligation as a client to the King to support another candidate. This is an example of conflicting patronage obligations for clients of multiple power brokers, a crucial part of the chaotic nature of early modern courts.¹⁰¹ Another example of Cleveland receiving an obligation from a patronage client can be seen in her relationship with Dr. Thomas Wood. Essentially, Cleveland used her influence to gain for Dr. Wood the Bishopric of Lichfield and in return expected (and received) his influence in an inheritance dispute between her and other members of the Wood family (Mary Wood was married to Cleveland's son, Charles Fitzroy).¹⁰² The historian Brian Masters

⁹⁷ Ibid., 84-85.

⁹⁸ Ibid., 86.

⁹⁹ Ibid., 85.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., 85.

¹⁰¹ Ibid., 86.

¹⁰² Brian Masters, *The Mistresses of Charles II* (London: Constable & Robinson 1997), 87.

states that courtiers knew how Charles “paid heed” to the Duchess of Cleveland’s opinions and how her presence at court directly resulted in the creation of factions.¹⁰³ Masters argues that Barbara convinced Charles to “dispense with elder statesmen and replace them with her own creatures.”¹⁰⁴ Contemporaries noted that Cleveland had built a small patron-client network.

Portsmouth used her position as royal mistress in much the same way as Cleveland. We have already noted how Reresby noted viewed Portsmouth’s role as patron broker. When Reresby described how the duchess had “prevailed with the king to alter his patent.”¹⁰⁵ Reresby himself sought Portsmouth’s patronage on February 12, 1684. Reresby waited on. He asked her to “put the king in mind of a former promise he had made to accept my second son Tamworth in that quality when a vacancy should happen.”¹⁰⁶ Here is an example of a prominent courtier seeking out patronage through a mistress, suggesting that she had the power, even if it was largely the power to sway the king.

Portsmouth’s ability to help others can be seen elsewhere as well. In 1673, Richard Sessions went to Portsmouth in an attempt to gain a monetary grant from the King.¹⁰⁷ In 1676, a French ship owner who had been arrested by Irish officials wrote to her assistance in grant his pardon.¹⁰⁸ In 1683, Colonel John Fitzpatrick is also reported to have courted Portsmouth’s favor to better his position at court. In the same year, the lord advocate of Scotland also is reported to have courted Portsmouth’s favor.¹⁰⁹ According to one letter from French minister Colbert in October 1671, Portsmouth had gained such access and influence over the King that even

¹⁰³ Ibid., 56.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid., 67.

¹⁰⁵ Reresby, *Memoirs*, 286.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid., 330-331.

¹⁰⁷ Wynne, “Mistresses of Charles,” 92.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid., 94-95.

government ministers “therefore seek her friendship.”¹¹⁰ Even Charles’ brother, York, II) approached Portsmouth in order to be reinstated to the position of Lord High Admiral in 1684.¹¹¹ York also may have consulted Portsmouth in regards to the marriage of his daughter and she may have acted as a political conduit between Louis XIV and Charles.¹¹² One historian notes that “new Secretaries of State were careful to cultivate the favor of the Duchess of Portsmouth.” Sidney Godolphin attributed his appointment directly to Portsmouth.¹¹³ Charles’ brother is also said to

Even Nell Gwyn, the least politically active of the, was a potential patron to courtiers. For example, in 1680 Lady Ann Baker wrote that the king had been swayed on an issue “by Madame Gwyn’s means or some other powerful person”.¹¹⁴ Apparently the patronage of Nell worked, for in 1682 the Count of Yarmouth wrote to his wife stating his pleasure that Nell Gwyn had been “courtly” to them, and he presented his service to Nell Gwyn. Here the Count acted as Nell’s client, offering his services to her in exchange for patronage his wife received from Nell.¹¹⁵ Even Monmouth, came to Nell Gwynn for help. When he fell out of favor with his father later in Charles’ reign due to his role in the Exclusion Crisis, Monmouth asked Nell to intercede on his behalf.¹¹⁶

Through all these examples, we see that the mistresses clearly were seen as a potential area for patronage indirectly of the monarch, albeit usually through exerting their direct influence

¹¹⁰ Henri Forneron, ed., *Louise de Keroualle, Duchess of Portsmouth, 1649-1734: Society in the Court of Charles II, Compiled from State Papers Preserved in the Archives of the French Foreign Office*, (London: S. Sonnenchein, Lowrey & Company, 1888), 66-70.

¹¹¹ Bryan Bevan, *Charles the Second’s French Mistress, A biography of Louise de Keroualle* (London: Robert Hale, 1972), 151.

¹¹² John Lindsey, *Charles II and Madame Carwell* (London: Andrew Melrose, 1937), 194-197.

¹¹³ *Ibid.*, 151-152.

¹¹⁴ Wynne., “Mistresses of Charles,” 91.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁶ Fea, *Some Beauties*, 217.

on the monarch. As John Adamson writes, early modern courts were not “a single monolithic institution,” but were instead “a series of separate and potentially competing foyers of patronage.”¹¹⁷ Clearly, the mistresses of Charles II acted as separate “foyers of patronage” for restoration courtiers. They were not simple sexual concubines, although this was inevitably the base of their power. They built upon this foundation through receiving grants and titles (as shown in the first chapter) and through having children with Charles, which as discussed, greatly enhanced their individual patronage. Therefore, when analyzing the mistresses of the Restoration, we should view mistresses as potential players in the complicated network of patron-client relationships. Mistresses might use these patron-client networks for their desires, which could conflict with those of the monarch. While the mini-courts of mistresses were far too dependent on that of the king to directly threaten the integrity of the system that of his eldest natural son could threaten the court itself. His court of supporters would be less a “shadow” within the larger court network. James Duke of Monmouth would act as a direct reversionary threat to Charles and would come very close to succeeding.

¹¹⁷ Adamson, *Princely Courts*, 14-15.

Chapter IV: The Duke of Monmouth, the Reversionary and the Rebel

Monmouth's major titles and grants discussed in the first chapter only give a partial sense of Monmouth's significance. Monmouth influence extended from court to a large section of the public. Due to Charles II's lack of children by his wife, Monmouth played a unique role as a quasi-royal first son. He was the last royal bastard with pretensions to the throne.¹¹⁸ Ever since William the Bastard's conquest of England in 1066, natural sons and illegitimate lines had been a factor in successions.¹¹⁹ Monmouth used his unique position as a quasi-legitimate royal bastard to attempt to create a ceremonial dialogue between himself and the common people of England. Monmouth was able to build a powerful reversionary faction around himself during the Exclusion Crisis, and then a less powerful rebellious faction during the reign of his uncle, James II. Monmouth created a different type of "shadow court" from those of the mistresses, who essentially worked within the existing court. Monmouth would eventually break from the Restoration Court entirely to set up what amounted to an independent reversionary court during the Exclusion Crisis. Monmouth's attempt to create an anti-court helps us to better understand early modern courts as a whole.

Monmouth's grants and titles show that he was held dear by his father and became an important figure at court. Monmouth experienced an unsettled, traumatic early childhood after an attempted kidnaping (his mother suspected Commonwealth culprits), Lucy moved Monmouth from Schiedam to Boxtel and soon after to Paris. After an affair with the Viscount Taffee, Lucy took Monmouth with her to The Hague in 1655 and to London in the following year. There, Lucy and Monmouth were arrested by the Commonwealth regime but were eventually deemed non-threatening to the republic and were sent back to Flanders. By late 1657, Lucy ended up in

¹¹⁸ Schmidgen, "Last Royal Bastard," 53.

¹¹⁹ David Bates, "William I (1027/8–1087)," *ODNB*, <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/29448>.

Brussels with Monmouth. Here, she began to write threatening letters to Charles which prompted him to send agents to attempt to kidnap Monmouth. After an embarrassing failed attempt in December 1657, Charles' agents eventually acquired Monmouth in March 1658. Monmouth had received little to no formal education up to this point in his life, and could not read or write at age nine, though for the next few years various tutors and academies attempted to educate him. Monmouth was not summoned to the Restoration Court until the summer 1662. Upon arrival, favor was quickly showered upon Monmouth in the form of grants, titles, and an arranged marriage to wealthy Scottish heiress Anne Scott which took place on April 20, 1663. As Monmouth got older, he enjoyed the usual hobbies of courtiers such as hunting and dancing and, like his father, was a known womanizer. Monmouth's military career has been addressed in chapter I. Monmouth became one of his father's premier commanding army officers. In 1674, Charles required that all military orders go first to Monmouth before being sent to him, and all colonels were instructed to obey Monmouth's orders. He was even able to introduce several reforms into the armed forces and in 1678 was given the title of Captain General of all the land forces of England, Wales, and Berwick and was sent to command the English forces fighting France in the Flanders in late 1678.¹²⁰

Up to this point it is clear that Monmouth made a successful career (mainly in the military) as a client of Charles' patronage. When did Monmouth's position change? And did Monmouth move outside his father's orbit or was he pushed out? Here, we might ask about his relations with his uncle. For, as long as there was no legitimate son, York was next in line. Indeed, one might even see York as the reversionary interest. Monmouth did not openly side with the opposition until very late in the 1670s. However, there were early signs of a potential

¹²⁰ Tim Harris, "Scott [Crofts], James, duke of Monmouth and first duke of Buccleuch (1649–1685)," *ODNB*, <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/24879>.

rift between the future James II and Monmouth. On October 27, 1662, Pepys reported that there were “whispers” at court that Lucy Walter was actually married to Charles, which would make Monmouth legitimate. On 23 December, 1662, Pepys described how there existed “great factions at court.” Essentially, if the King was to die without a child by the Queen, there were some who were beginning to support the succession of Monmouth over James. On 9 November, 1663, Pepys again reported on similar rumors that Charles planned to legitimize Monmouth. An even more important foreshadowing of the conflict to come was an incident Pepys described that occurred on February 22, 1664. When In short, Monmouth was presented with a “French book in verse,” the gift was presented in such “high style” that the Duke of York was “mightily offended at it.” Such offense only makes sense in light of the coming struggle over precedence.¹²¹ But, what caused Monmouth finally to exert his independence? Up until 1678, Monmouth was on decent terms with York. The two dined and hunted together several times, and Monmouth was made godfather to York’s daughter in 1676. However, in April of 1678. when Monmouth was appointed Captain-General, York insisted that the warrant style Monmouth a “natural son” (this was after years of trying to delay Monmouth being given any such power in the military). This was an obvious move on York’s part to emphasize the bastardy of Monmouth. Monmouth secretly had his secretary cut out the word natural before presenting it to the King. Charles signed the document without having noticed the change. York brought the change to Charles’ attention, causing the King to revoke his previous warrant and issue a new one emphasizing Monmouth’s illegitimacy. Both Monmouth and York emerged from the scuffle angry with one another. York was not only frustrated by Monmouth’s attempts to deemphasize his bastardy, he was also frustrated that Monmouth was receiving the position in the first place. Monmouth, on

¹²¹ Pepys, *The Diary of Samuel Pepys*.

the other hand, was furious that “his honor had been stained by the taint of bastardy.” Up to this point Monmouth had not sided with opposition at court in any political matters of state.

However, it is no surprise that a month after this incident, for the first time in his career in the House of Lords, Monmouth sided with the opposition in a bill regarding army levies. This bill marked the move of Monmouth to the opposition, eventually to the Whigs.¹²²

As stated before, this “break” from the court as a reversionary interest is what makes Monmouth’s illegitimate court different from the mistresses. The mistresses acted as shadows, drawing power from the center and acting with independent agency but still acting within the established Restoration Court. Monmouth’s illegitimate court differed greatly, for during the Exclusion Crisis years, Monmouth’s residence at Hedge Lane would, in effect, act as a completely independent rival court. Before further explaining this, it is necessary to understand how Monmouth’s unique position gave him the opportunity and ability to assert and, albeit briefly, break from court and act as a rival, reversionary interest.

The answer is that Monmouth used his unique position to present himself as a potential successor. His position was unique because he was the eldest son of a monarch who had no legitimate children. Due to this, Monmouth was in effect a quasi-royal. As the historian Wolfram Schmidgen argues, this unique position in the “grey area” of legitimacy allowed for Monmouth to take advantage of attributes that illegitimacy and legitimacy provided him. Through his quasi legitimacy through his royal blood, Monmouth was able to not only gain the advantage of patronage and favoritism at court as a client of his father, he was also able to relate and garner respect from the nobility as a holder of a dukedom himself.¹²³ More than this, however, Monmouth was able to use his royal blood to also take advantage of the “mystique” of

¹²² Harris, “Scott, James.”

¹²³ Schmidgen, “Last Royal Bastard,” 55.

monarchy. For instance, Monmouth undertook quasi royal progresses through the countryside where many common people would come to see him. For example, in the summer of 1680, Monmouth undertook a progress to Bath and then to Dorset and then to Oxford in September, all of which were highly attended by commoners and Whig nobles alike.

However, more shocking than this is Monmouth's use of the ceremony of touching for the king's evil. This ancient ceremony was used by English kings including Charles II as a form of ceremonial dialogue with the common people. By supposedly curing these commoners inflicted with scrofula, kings was enforcing his divinely ordained royal position, and imparting this view upon their subjects.¹²⁴ Monmouth himself took advantage of this ceremony, and used it in an attempt to emphasize his royal position. This became known as the "touching crisis of Monmouth" and caused such an uproar among the population that Charles responded by dramatically increasing the number of those upon whom he performed the official ceremony.¹²⁵ Charles saw Monmouth's use of his quasi-legitimate position as significant enough threat to his plans for the succession to respond to it. Schmidgen argues that Monmouth's bastard nature actually allowed for people to relate to and understand him while giving them a unique connection to the monarchy. Many of the common people who sided with the Whig opposition believed that Monmouth would, due to his more lowly stature by his bastard birth, be forced to be a weaker and more accommodating monarch to popular interest if he did succeed to the throne¹²⁶ We see an example of this in October 1679, when a pamphlet, *Appeal from the Country to the City*, stated that "he who has the worst title, ever makes the best king." Contemporaries

¹²⁴ R.O. Bucholz, *The Augustan Court: Queen Anne and the Decline of Court Culture* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1993), 206-209.

¹²⁵ Schmidgen. "Last Royal Bastard," 70-71.

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*, 63.

viewed Monmouth as a potentially more accommodating protestant and preferable choice as the heir of Charles II than the Catholic York.¹²⁷

Monmouth attempted to promote his own claim to the crown from 1678. Returning from his command in the Flanders, Monmouth found a London that was beginning to boil over due to the Popish Plot. It during this anti-Catholic, and thus potentially anti-York, hysteria that Monmouth was first formally presented as a potential successor to Charles in the House of Commons in the spring 1679. Charles sent Monmouth to repel Scottish Presbyterian rebels, in part to get him out of town, and, in June 1679, Monmouth crushed the Scottish Covenanter rebels. . His already growing popularity was increased further with this victory and it is around this time that Whig opposition looked to Monmouth as a potential leader. Anthony Earl of Shaftesbury, a leading figure of the early Whig party, began to meet regularly with Monmouth. It was during this time that Monmouth sent his client, Sir Thomas Armstrong, on a search for the “black box,” the supposed irrefutable evidence that Charles had in fact been married to Lucy Walter before his marriage to Catherine.¹²⁸ The existence of the supposed “black box” and the marriage as a whole has been dismissed by most historians, the rumor was definitely present about 1680.¹²⁹ Charles was forced to address and refute the “Black Box” theory that there had been a marriage through multiple statements.¹³⁰ Charles tried to exile Monmouth for a second time in December 1679, though Monmouth refused to leave.¹³¹

Monmouth used measures such as touching for the kings evil, undertaking “royal” progresses, and stirring up old rumors of his mother’s supposed marriage to Charles to increase

¹²⁷ Harris, “Scott, James.”

¹²⁸ Ibid.

¹²⁹ Ibid.

¹³⁰ Ibid.

¹³¹ Ibid.

dramatically his position as a potential legitimate successor. For a few years between 1681 and 1683, Monmouth rallied his London supporters to his residence at Bishopsgate Street and, later, Hedge Lane. Many opposition Whig party lords, such as Shaftesbury, would attend upon Monmouth. Starting in late 1680, Monmouth began to use his London residence to dine with Whig lords, presenting them an alternate center to discuss politics and seek patronage, in effect making Monmouth's residence an alternate court.¹³² This trend continued when Monmouth moved to Hedge Lane after being banished from court in December 1681. There, he continued to act as an alternate court for Whig opposition Lords attempting to exclude James II from the succession. As historian Newton Key argues, the reversionary faction was so prominent in contemporary politics of the period that they were known as the "Duke of Monmouth's Lords" or the "Hedge Lane Lords." Although his supporters did not succeed in barring James II from the succession and instilling the Duke as a protestant successor to Charles, they did pose a serious threat as an alternate or anti-court just outside the bounds of the official court at Whitehall.¹³³ If the Restoration court was a solar system, Monmouth was in effect a rival star to Charles, drawing some planets or opposition lords away from Whitehall. On the other hand, although the mistresses had a surprisingly great amount of independent agency as patrons, their ability to play the role of patron came directly from being extremely close to the King, in effect their close orbit to the sun that was the source of their small (yet significant) independent agency. Monmouth's attempt at an independent court was shut down as the king banned even private feasts or political dinners. By 1682, Monmouth was reduced to plotting overthrow of the court with a hard core of conspirators. Many of his co-conspirators were arrested, tried, and executed in what became

¹³² Ibid.

¹³³ Newton Key, "'High feeding and Smart drinking': Associating Hedge-Lane Lords in Exclusion Crisis London," in *Exclusion and Revolution: the worlds of Roger Morrice, 1675-1700*, ed. Jason McElligott (Aldershot, Hants.: Ashgate, 2006), 160-162.

known as the Rye House Plot in 1683. Amazingly enough, Monmouth apologized to his father, and was rehabilitated and accepted back at court. He soon left the country, but the loyalist press's reporting on his return to court suggest that Monmouth's role at court was still important. After Charles died and his uncle succeeded to the throne, Monmouth attempted a short lived uprising in 1685. He was declared King by his followers at Taunton, but his tenure as pretender was short lived. He was defeated at Sedgemoor on the July 5, 1685.¹³⁴ He was captured on the 12th, and was beheaded three days later on the order of his uncle James II. Regardless, his failed revolution does not diminish his significance as an important reversionary interest.¹³⁵

Monmouth's anti- or shadow court at Hedge Lane was similar to the situation under the first Hanoverian, when George I banished his son, who set up camp at Leicester House (actually not far from Hedge Lane). The future George II sided with political opposition and creating what in effect amounted to a rival court for much of his father's reign.¹³⁶

¹³⁴ Cockayne, *Complete Peerage*, "James Scott."

¹³⁵ Harris, "Scott, James."

¹³⁶ John Cannon, "George II (1683–1760)," ODNB, <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/10539>.

Chapter V: The Survivors

Monmouth overshadowed his younger siblings. The other sons of the three political mistresses (who were also half-brothers of Monmouth) are often ignored by Restoration historians. Certainly his half-brother never established a shadow court of patronage like their mothers nor advanced their own claims to the throne. Yet, they did exhibit longevity. The lesser bastards had long court careers that carried on regardless of changing reigns, revolutions, and transfer from one ruling house to another. Their careers as political survivors gives another insight into the importance of title and court position in the 17th and 18th centuries.

Pepys and other contemporary diarists recognized that the King loved his bastard children.¹³⁷ On 6 November, 1679, Evelyn described Grafton's remarriage to his wife after she reached a proper age of consent.¹³⁸ On March 30, 1684, Evelyn recalled how both the Dukes of Saint Albans, Richmond, and Northumberland all accompanied their father to the altar after a ceremony.¹³⁹ And we have already seen that their royal father gave these boys numerous titles and grants of land. Yet, we cannot claim that any of the boys born in the 1660s and 1670s played any great role in court patronage due to the obvious reason that they were much too young to actively work as either clients or patrons until well into the 1680s, and Charles died in 1685. Instead, they were both used by Charles and by their mistress mothers. As Charles Carlton states, having a child by Charles gave the mistresses a powerful, "long term link to the crown," thereby giving them access to a long-standing conduit of patronage.¹⁴⁰ Besides the telling but probably apocryphal story of Nell Gwynn holding her son ransom for his title, she also used her influence

¹³⁷ Pepys, *The Diary of Samuel Pepys*.

¹³⁸ Evelyn, *Diary of John Evelyn*, 184-185.

¹³⁹ *Ibid.*, 374-375.

¹⁴⁰ Carlton, *Royal Mistresses*, 3.

to convince Charles to grant him the title of Grand Falconer of England.¹⁴¹ Mistresses were also able to convince Charles to “potentially increase their sphere of influence” by arranging marriages for their children with the children of prominent courtiers.¹⁴²

The royal sons were not only used by their mothers, they were also used by the King himself. Charles gave these titles to his children because they were, in effect, the only royal family since Charles and Catherine had no children of their own. Moreover, it would be undignified for the King’s natural sons to live without titles befitting of their stature. However, the King also used them for more direct political purposes, most notably amongst these being during the Exclusion Crisis. In the previous chapter, Monmouth’s role as an independent reversionary interest has been discussed and to no surprise, lost him (for a time) his father’s favor. On December 1, 1681, Reresby described how the king “declared his displeasure with the Duke of Monmouth,” by creating the Duke of Richmond Master of the Horse and presenting the Duke of Grafton with Monmouth’s command of a regiment of foot guards.¹⁴³ Reresby could easily read the meaning of Charles’s action here.

Given their dependence on the favor of their royal father and mistress mothers, one would expect these lesser bastards to have vanished from court after their father ended, died. They continued at court and politics, however, far longer. Most continued to receive court titles and positions far after their father’s reign. For example, Grafton was made a Knight of St. John during the reign of James II and carried the orb in the coronation of William and Mary while continuing his military career during both of their reigns until his death during the reign of William and Mary. His brother, St. Albans, career survived even longer. During the reign of

¹⁴¹ Masters, *Mistresses of Charles II*, 108-115.

¹⁴² Wynne, “Mistresses of Charles,” 87-88.

¹⁴³ Browning, *Memoirs*, 238-240.

William III, St. Albans received a 2000 pound pension from the crown and also served William as ambassador extraordinaire to Paris. As late as 1718 under the reign of George I, he was made Captain of the Pensioners and a Knight of the Garter, well over thirty years after Charles had died! We see a similar pattern of longevity in St. Albans' and Grafton's brother, Northumberland. In 1688, Northumberland served his uncle James II as lord of the bedchamber. He even became a Privy Councilor in 1713. Clearly, the longevity of the "lesser" bastard's careers is unquestionable, some even lasting after the ascension of the Hanoverians.¹⁴⁴

These bastards also continued to assume fairly significant roles at court. Reresby describes on November 26, 1688 how although Grafton allied with James II as a commander at the battle of Sedgemoor against his half-brother Monmouth early in James' reign, Grafton defected from his uncle's camp and transferred his loyalty to the future monarchs, William and Mary.¹⁴⁵ Grafton was not the royal bastard who showed considerable political acumen and ability to adapt and survive. His brother, Northumberland, was similarly loyal to James early on in his regime and was actually present on the night of his uncle's flight from Whitehall palace on 10 December, 1688. However, he did not follow his uncle, instead staying and carving out a role under the reign of William and Mary and then Anne and George I.¹⁴⁶ Similarly, their half-brother Richmond sided with James and actually went to France, where until 1692 he had a somewhat successful military career under Louis XIV. However, in 1692 he returned to England, professed his allegiance to William, and took up his seat in the House of Lords in the following year. Incredibly, even in the face of Jacobite suspicions, Richmond's political career continued even

¹⁴⁴ Cockayne, *Complete Peerage*, "George Fitzroy."

¹⁴⁵ Browning, *Memoirs*, 532-533.

¹⁴⁶ J. M. Rigg, "FitzRoy, George, duke of Northumberland (1665-1716)," rev. Matthew Kilburn, *ODNB*, <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/9633>.

into the reign of George I, who promoted him to Privy Councilor of Ireland in 1715.¹⁴⁷ It seems fair to characterize these courtiers as survivors, showing some measure of independent agency and great political adaptability to survive in prominent positions through several reigns.

These bastards were not heads of shadow courts, but they were significant and long-lasting political figures at court. Why could these bastards, who could not have exercised any independent agency in the 1660s and 1670s due to their youth, survive several regime changes and remain prominent figures at court? The answer may lie in their unique position as “quasi-royals”.¹⁴⁸ Evelyn described how when the Moorish ambassador made a state visit in January of 1682, the ambassador said, “god bless the duchess of Portsmouth and her prince son,” the Duke of Richmond.¹⁴⁹ Similarly, in an epitaph of the Duke of Grafton from 1690, Grafton is referred to as “this son of Mars” and “great Caesars son,” clear references to his military and to his royal roots.¹⁵⁰ Again we see this recognition of the bastards “tainted” royal blood in a poem about Grafton written on October 27, 1690 by Richard Cheese. In it, the author describes Grafton as a noble duke and even calls him “princely Grafton,” another clear reference to his connection to royal blood.¹⁵¹ Ultimately, this connection to royalty was what gave these bastards their ability to survive. Their mothers’ influence gained them their initial starts, and their social status allowed them to act as political survivors in a wildly shifting political landscape after their father’s death. Royal bastards may have more often than not been less significant than their legitimate counterparts, but they nonetheless occupy a unique grey area of being royal and illegitimate at the same time. The survivor bastards of Charles II are a testament to this position and leave the

¹⁴⁷ Timothy J. McCann, “Lennox, Charles, first duke of Richmond, first duke of Lennox, and duke of Aubigny in the French nobility (1672–1723),” *ODNB*, <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/16449>.

¹⁴⁸ Schmidgen, “Last Royal Bastard,” 53-76.

¹⁴⁹ Evelyn, *Diary of John Evelyn*, 265-270.

¹⁵⁰ *An Epitaph of the Duke of Grafton* (1690, Edinburgh: Aungervyle Society, reprinted, n.d.).

¹⁵¹ J.F., *An Elegy On the Death of His Grace the Duke of Grafton* (London: Richard Cheese, 1690) <http://tei.it.ox.ac.uk/tcp/Texts-HTML/free/B03/B03415.html>.

door open for comparative studies of other illegitimate children throughout early modern court history and royal history as a whole.

Conclusion: The Future of Shadow Courts

The Restoration Court of Charles II continues to be a very popular subject for historians of the early modern period. Historians such as Bucholz, Keay, and Carlton have examined the Restoration Court. This thesis has sought to contribute to the field of court studies, to look at the Restoration Court through the roles of a few courtiers, rather than through that of King Charles himself. This thesis has sought to show how the illegitimate children of the monarch and their mothers fit into Charles's court, and how they themselves played roles as clients and even patrons within the court system. While some historians argue that Monmouth and the mistresses were not politically significant in their own right, and that Monmouth in particular was a mere puppet of assertive Whig politicians and that the mistresses were mere "political totems" that did not themselves exercise any real world political power, this thesis has argued differently.¹⁵² Monmouth did indeed have his own political ambitions and was himself politically significant and the mistresses themselves were able to use their positions of access to the monarch to not only advance their own positions (and those of their children) but also to assert themselves in the politics of the day.

By looking at court grants, contemporary diaries and other printed sources, in conjunction with secondary sources, this thesis has attempted to show that Monmouth, like a great many historians have argued, was himself a politically apt individual who used his unique position (and the ambiguity of his origins during his father's exile) to advance his position and his own political agenda (namely the exclusion of his uncle) by acting as a separate, independent, reversionary interest from Charles' court. Similarly, using the same method this thesis has attempted to show that the three politically significant mistresses of Charles II's reign were more than just concubines. The mistresses must be viewed as influential players in restoration politics,

¹⁵² Carlton, *Royal Mistresses*, 2-10.

who were well known and often despised by contemporaries of the time due to the great amount of influence they exerted on Charles. At the very least, this thesis has shown that the mistresses deserve examination by historians, not as simple interesting court figures, but as political players with a great deal of power within the court system, a system in which access to the monarch was power.

As stated before, many works have been conducted on the mistresses and Monmouth. This thesis has in part meant to take a stand on those arguments and advocate for further research into the political significance of Monmouth and even more so the mistresses. However, this thesis has also examined a largely under examined aspect of the Restoration Court and beyond. This would be the “lesser” bastards of Charles II. These half-brothers of Monmouth have largely been written off as simple pawns in their mistress mother’s attempts to gain power at court. But their long term significance at court as survivors (albeit far less powerful than their mothers or their half-brother Monmouth) shows us that they indeed had independent agency and political acumen in and of themselves, without the aid of their mothers after their youth.

The power structure of court revolved around access to a monarch in an increasingly centralized state. The mistresses and bastards of Charles II played important roles in the power structure of court. The paradigm of influential bastards and mistresses that this thesis has advocated and argued for can be potentially applied to the court of France as well. The court of Louis XIV was highly ceremonial and was undergoing a shift towards a more centralized state during the Restoration period of Charles II.¹⁵³ However, a key similarity shared between Louis and Charles is that they both produced numerous bastards. They also both had numerous mistresses. How do the bastards and mistresses of Louis XIV’s court compare to those of Charles’? Were they more like Monmouth and the politically significant mistresses, using their

¹⁵³ Elias, *The Civilizing Process*, 222-248.

position of access to establish and advance their own political goals and ambitions. Or, were they more like the lesser bastards, using their position to secure longevity and long term (albeit less) significance? Or perhaps they were something else entirely? Clearly however, the idea of mistress “shadow courts” and potential bastard independent agency is one that can be studied in greatly varying courts of the early modern period. It is also an idea that can be applied to royal courts in other areas of history. Mistresses and the resulting bastardy existed at the English court before the restoration period, and continued after it. For example, James II had a bastard son named James Fitzjames who later went on to become Duke of Berwick. He played a role in Jacobite military campaigns and an even more important role as a Marshall of France in the French military until his death in battle.¹⁵⁴ An example of a bastard in previous times can be found during the Tudor reign of Henry VII. Henry’s struggles to produce a legitimate male heir are well known and chronicled, but few know of the illegitimate son he had before the future Edward VI was born. His name was Henry Fitzroy, and before his premature death, there were rumors of his potential legitimization and succession to the throne.¹⁵⁵ In short, the idea of illegitimate shadow courts can not only be studied and applied to other early modern courts but also to other historical courts before and after the early modern period. The illegitimates of historical courts have often been written off, but through study, we can better understand their roles and power within court systems as a whole.

¹⁵⁴ Stuart Handley, “Fitzjames, James, duke of Berwick upon Tweed (1670–1734),” *ODNB*, <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/9610>.

¹⁵⁵ Beverley A. Murphy, “Fitzroy, Henry, duke of Richmond and Somerset (1519–1536),” *ODNB*, <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/9635>.

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